

Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission

Counter-Extremism Report

April 2019

1. Counter Extremism Overview

1.1 The Home Office defines extremism as:

‘The vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs’

Counter Extremism strategy 2015

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/counter-extremism-strategy>

1.2 The four priorities of the Home Office Counter Extremism Strategy are:

- Countering extremist ideology
- Building a partnership with all those opposed to extremism
- Disrupting extremists
- Building more cohesive communities (updated to ‘more resilient communities’)

1.3 The Home Office Counter Extremism department funds 40 Community Coordinators across the UK to deliver on these priorities in selected local authorities. The Coordinator network collaborate to monitor national patterns of extremism and to share knowledge and best practice.

1.4 Funding for Community Coordinator posts is granted on an annual basis. Hackney has confirmed funding for 2019/20.

2. Countering Extremism in Hackney

2.1 There is no current evidence of organised extremist activity from within Hackney.

2.1.1 Manifestations of extremism seen in Hackney include; some instances of street preaching from visiting groups; occasional visiting speakers and events with extremist narratives; online extremism or extremism in the mainstream media focused towards Hackney individuals and communities; some instances of hate crime; harmful cultural practices such as FGM and forced marriage.

2.1.2 There have been some meetings of the national Far-Left in Hackney in the past year which have passed peacefully and without concern.

2.1.3 The national rise of Far-Right groups has not yet impacted Hackney but we stay abreast of activity in neighbouring boroughs.

2.1.4 There is some local support in Hackney for borderline extremist groups who affiliate themselves to faith groups, however the level of support is low and is not an immediate cause for concern.

- 2.2 Potential areas of risk for future extremism in the borough are:
- 2.2.1 Cultural, religious and economic segregation, which can risk an increase in extremism as marginalised groups and individuals become more vulnerable as victims. Marginalised individuals are also a potential target for extremist recruitment as they are more easily preyed upon by divisive media narratives and strategic extremist groups.
 - 2.2.2 Extremist activity in neighbouring boroughs has the risk of moving to Hackney, extremists are not constrained by borough boundaries.
 - 2.2.3 Occasional visiting speakers and events with extreme narratives risk increasing support for extremism in the borough.
 - 2.2.4 Low level membership of borderline extreme groups could potentially grow in the borough the future. It is also possible that borderline extreme groups could move towards more extreme activity and carry their members with them. There is no evidence to suggest this is the case to date, but this remains an area for future awareness.
 - 2.2.5 Online extremism and extremism in the mainstream media continues to grow and there is an increased risk that Hackney individuals and communities may feel targeted by these extremist narratives.
 - 2.2.6 Hate crime against all of the protected characteristics (race, faith, sexual orientation, gender identity) has the risk of increasing extremism as it has been shown that perpetrators of hate crime are likely to increase the severity of their attacks if incidents or crime go unchecked. Equally, those who have become marginalised due to experiencing hate crime themselves can be targeted by extremist groups to exploit this vulnerability.
 - 2.2.7 Harmful cultural practices such as FGM and forced marriage are practised in some communities represented in Hackney.
- 2.3 The Counter Extremism (CE) programme in Hackney addresses all of the above risks. The CE programme is community led and builds partnership with local community and faith organisations to develop proactive CE events, programmes and actions. All activities aim to develop community resilience against the wider risks of extremism and to safeguard Hackney against extremism in the future.

3. 2018/19 Highlights

- 3.1 The Hackney CE Coordinator has now engaged face-to-face with 105 voluntary sector and faith organisations. There has been further indirect contact by phone or email with an additional 40+ organisations.
- 3.2 There is now increased diversity in the Community Safety Team's community contact directory, to include race and faith minorities, LGBT+ and disability groups.
- 3.3 A regular community mailing ensures fair access for partners to funding and training opportunities, promotes community resilience projects and promotes appropriate wider council services such as safeguarding.

- 3.4 The Hackney CE Coordinator has enabled successful funding for 6 Hackney groups, 2 groups in neighbouring boroughs delivering in Hackney and one national group delivering in Hackney. See Appendix 1 for details of projects in delivery.
- 3.5 The Hackney CE Coordinator has supported Hackney Council's Faith Forum, the Hackney Jewish-Christian Forum and Muslim-Jewish Forum of Stamford Hill. She has supported the development of Ramadan, Eid, Chanukah and Christmas celebrations amongst many other community events.
- 3.6 Nine nominations were drafted to the Faith and Belief Forum Community Awards to recognise the key role that Hackney faith groups play in building community resilience. All nine nominated groups were recognised at the award ceremony in November 2018 and two Hackney Groups were winners in their category – Pray4Youth were awarded for their work with young people drawn into violence and the Muslim Jewish Forum of Stamford Hill were recognised for their pioneering interfaith work. Muslim Jewish Forum were also presented with a 'Judge's Choice' award. This is the first time that Hackney groups have been nominated at the Faith and Belief Forum Awards.
- 3.7 The Hackney CE Coordinator supported the North London Muslim Community Centre to organise community solidarity events after Pittsburgh and Christchurch terrorist attacks. These events are crucial in addressing immediate community tensions and promoting peaceful responses.
- 3.8 Strong working relationships have been built with Mayor and Cabinet Offices, to enable responses to such community tensions in a timely manner, The CE Coordinator will also advise on Cabinet community visits as appropriate.
- 3.9 Active internal Council partnerships have been built with Community Safety, Policy, Culture, Housing and Regeneration teams to maximise the impact of the CE programme. This includes training for other departments and direct support of work-streams such as the Voluntary Sector Review and Hackney Grants awarding panels.
- 3.10 Police partnership with Hackney CE programmes has increased, as the CE Coordinator regularly liaises with Faith and Hate Crime Police Officers in the borough. There is good contact with SO15 Counter Terrorism officers as required, although this latter relationship is led by the Hackney Prevent team.
- 3.11 The Hackney CE Coordinator has worked successfully with community groups and statutory partners to diminish the impact of hate mail, extremist speakers and events in the borough. This includes community led response to Islamophobic hate mail campaigns and recent work to enable the Home Office to deny entry to the UK to a speaker with a history of anti-disability and homophobic hate speech.
- 3.12 Home Office visits have been hosted in Hackney to influence central Government community understanding and responsive policy and practice. Hackney represents London on the Special Interest Group for Countering Extremism (SIGCE).
- 3.13 The Hackney CE Coordinator has co-led two national seminars for the SIGCE, sharing Hackney best practice on 'Community led counter extremism' and 'Understanding the distinctions between orthodox faith practice, conservative cultural practices and extremism'.
- 3.14 Hackney CE and Prevent Co-ordinators continue to work closely together, responding jointly to community tensions and extremism risks.

4. Tackling Hate Crime in Hackney

- 4.1 The Tackling Hate Crime Strategy was adopted by Cabinet in July 2018.
- 4.2 New Police partnership has been developed with the Hate Crime Coordinator for the Central East Command Unit, to access MET hate crime statistics and to monitor hate crime patterns and repeat victimisation in Hackney.
- 4.3 An increased partnership has been developed with hate crime specialists Stop Hate UK. Any Hackney resident, employee or Councillor can contact Stop Hate UK for advice 24hrs a day on 0800 138 1625.
- 4.4 A quarterly Hate Crime Awareness training programme has been established in Hackney with Stop Hate UK and to date training has been provided to Hackney Enforcement Officers and Councillors. Training will be provided for Housing Officers in the next quarter.
- 4.5 A National Hate Crime Awareness Week programme was delivered with internal and external partners including Police and Stop Hate UK. This included training for 45 staff members and three public awareness- raising stalls.

5. **Focus for 2019/20**

- 5.1 Hackney CE funding has been confirmed for 2019/20. Regular community partnership work will continue with a focus on delivery and evaluation of 'Building a Stronger Britain Together' (BSBT) funded projects.
- 5.2 Ongoing funding support will be provided for Hackney organisations to apply to local and national funders for CE focused programmes. This support includes Safer Places of Worship Funding.
- 5.3 A Women's Faith focus group will be developed with Cllr Sade Etti to increase representation of women from faith minorities in civic activity.
- 5.4 Increased partnership is planned with the Hackney VAWG and Public Health teams to develop joint approaches to FGM, Forced Marriage, Honour Based Violence and Harmful Cultural Practices.

Author

Lisa-Raine Hunt, Community Coordinator for Counter Extremism
Hackney Service Centre, 1 Hillman Street, London, E8 1DY
lisa-raine.hunt@hackney.gov.uk
020 8356 3071