

Written evidence from the Community Security Trust [CCI0042]

Introduction

1. This submission is from the Community Security Trust ([CST](#)), a Jewish charity that advises and supports the UK Jewish community in matters of communal security, antisemitism, extremism and terrorism, and is recognised by Government and Police as a best practice model of a minority-community security organisation. CST administers the Government's 'Jewish Community Protective Security Grant' that significantly contributes towards the ongoing costs of providing commercial and protective security measures for the Jewish community.
2. CST seeks to promote good relations between the Jewish community and other members of British society by working towards the elimination of racism in the form of antisemitism and seeking to improve community cohesion.
3. Since 1984, CST and its predecessors have been recording and publishing antisemitic incident figures in the UK which include anti-Jewish hate crimes and hate incidents that have been reported by victims, witnesses, or someone acting on their behalf. CST has 'Third Party Reporting' status and has signed a national information sharing agreement with the National Police Chief's Council to best share and collate antisemitism reported to both parties.
4. All CST publications can be downloaded in PDF format from the CST website [here](#).
5. CST works in close and trusted collaboration with Police, Government and other Hate Crime bodies, and with other groups representing 'protected characteristic' minorities including but not limited to GALOP (LGBTQ+); Tell Mama (anti-Muslim hatred); members of the London based CATCH hate crime partnership; and with other members of the Hate Crime IAG.
6. CST has always sought to work with other minority communities. In recent years this has included leading on two specific CST projects, both free of charge, and both with significant reach:
 - [SAFE](#) (Security Advice For Everyone) – aims to share CST expertise and knowledge on developing community security infrastructure with other communities.
 - [Stand Up!](#) – joint programme with [Maccabi GB](#) aiming to provide anti-discrimination educational programming at schools, with a specific focus on anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim hatred.

Inquiry Questions

7. What assessments have been made of community cohesion in the UK in a local and national context?

CST monitors, records and publishes reports on antisemitism. This includes CST's annual Antisemitic Incidents Reports which documents antisemitic incidents and hate crimes reported directly to CST either through engagement with victims or witnesses of antisemitism, or via a national information sharing agreement with Police.

All CST publications, including annual Antisemitic Incident Reports, can be found on the CST website [here](#). The most recent Antisemitic Incidents Report (Jan-June 2024) can be found [here](#) and the 2023 annual Antisemitic Incidents Report [here](#). CST will be releasing the 2024 annual Antisemitic Incidents Report in February 2025.

From a CST, and Jewish communal, perspective a key indicator of challenges towards community cohesion can be measured in recorded antisemitic incidents directed towards the Jewish community. As CST's reports show, levels of recorded antisemitic incidents have been on an upward trajectory in recent years leading to sustained high levels even prior to the October 7 attack in 2023. There are several reasons for this, including an increased awareness to report antisemitic incidents; previous rounds of conflict in Israel and Gaza; Covid; and the antisemitism crisis in the Labour Party.

The Israel-Palestine conflict also impacts levels of antisemitism in the UK. Every escalation of the regional conflict triggers a rise in antisemitic incidents directed towards the local British Jewish community, which traditionally fall back to slightly higher base line levels of incidents once the escalation is over.

The Hamas attack in Southern Israel and subsequent regional war(s) changed this pattern due to the much longer period of time that the conflict has lasted. There was a significant spike in antisemitic incidents immediately following the October 7 attack, leading to CST recording its highest ever annual total in 2023 (4,103) with 66% of incidents occurring in the final three months of the year. In 2024 antisemitic incidents did drop, but not to pre-October 7th 2023 levels, whereby the antisemitic incident baseline is around 2.5 times higher than during the first 9 months of 2023.

Antisemitic incidents reported to and recorded by CST are categorised by type with 'Abusive Behaviour' containing by far the highest percentage of incidents and 'Extreme Violence' the lowest. The most common type of incident tends to be verbal antisemitic abuse, but incidents can take the form of assault and in rarer cases extreme violence. Antisemitic incidents online usually count for around one-third of incidents recorded, and incidents where perpetrators or victims are considered minors is a growing trend. In

recent years the proportion of incidents including minors, in both categories, have doubled from around 10% to 20%.

Official Home Office statistics of Hate Crime in England and Wales for the year ending March 2024 (available [here](#)) broadly align with CST figures, showing an increase in antisemitic hate crimes as well as an increase of hate crimes targeting other religions. These statistics also demonstrate a disproportionate impact on Jewish people considering its relatively small UK population, with 121 religious hate crimes per 10,000 of the Jewish population being by far the highest proportion, dropping to 14 hate crimes per 10,000 of the population for the next category of 'perceived religion of the victim' (characterised as 'other'). It is important to note that under UK law, antisemitic hate crimes can be categorised as either being religiously or racially motivated.

CST records physical descriptions of offenders in around a third of reported antisemitic incidents and categorises them as per Police ethnic Identity Codes ([here](#)). During times where antisemitic incidents in the UK are not impacted by an escalation of the conflict in the Middle East, the most common description of perpetrators is usually within the 'white' category. When antisemitism is triggered by escalations in the conflict, perpetrators described as 'white' are usually outnumbered by those across the 'South Asian' and 'Arab or North African' categories combined. This suggests a particular breakdown in cohesion between minority ethnic and faith groups during periods of heightened tension.

Since October 7th 2023, as well as increased levels of reported antisemitism, CST has received reports and concerns of increasing marginalisation of Jewish people across various sectors including business, health, arts, culture and the charitable sector, increasing the existential vulnerability of many Jewish people and damaging community cohesion in these professional worlds. The interfaith sector has suffered in particular, with many Jewish interfaith actors and groups feeling isolated and in some cases being actively shunned.

8. What are the primary barriers and threats to community cohesion?

Religiously and racially aggravated hate crimes and incidents, especially when there has been an increase in inter-minority hate crimes and incidents, are a primary barrier and threat to community cohesion.

Faith groups, minority ethnic communities and all groups affected by hate crime would ideally support one another through an element of shared experience as opposed to target one another.

As has been experienced across Europe and wider afield, from a Jewish community and CST perspective, a significant threat to community cohesion would be a terror attack against a Jewish community where the perpetrator/s come from another minority community. Several fatal Islamist-inspired terrorist attacks in France against Jewish targets have led to increased vulnerability of the French Jewish community. In general these terrorist attacks and other antisemitic murders in France have been carried out by radicalised or antisemitic French Muslims. A similar incident in the UK would not only be catastrophic for the UK Jewish community, but also likely for community relations and wider cohesion.

Siloed communities can also be a barrier. The UK Jewish community, for example, is relatively small and not geographically diverse. Despite the 2011 census showing that at least one person identifying as Jewish lived in every Local Authority, most Jews live in London and Manchester. This means that vast numbers of the UK population are likely to not know, or have not met, a Jewish person.

This lack of exposure can mean that perceptions of Jewish people vary wildly, and that in some cases Jewish people can be de-humanised with longstanding antisemitic tropes and attitudes being attached to poorly informed perceptions. In 2017, CST and the Institute for Jewish Policy Research published a study on '[Antisemitism in Great Britain](#)' that demonstrated although most British people were not antisemitic a small but significant percentage could be (based on belief in several antisemitic tropes) and a larger percentage subscribed to at least one antisemitic trope – this was coined in the report as the 'elastic view'.

The report also surveyed levels of antisemitism (and anti-Israelism) among key religious and political groupings. It demonstrated that levels of antisemitism in 2017 were consistently higher (2 to 4 times) among the UK Muslim population than among the population in general. Non-religious Muslims were the least likely group among Muslim communities to hold antisemitic attitudes and came closest to the levels found in the general population, although they remained above average. Yet most Muslims (60%) – religious or not – agreed with the statement 'A British Jew is just as British as any other person,' and most either disagreed with, or were neutral on, every individual antisemitic statement presented to them in the poll.

As outlined above, the importation of foreign conflicts into the UK can also act as a threat and/or barrier. Strong attitudes on and responses to the ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict, which can manifest in antisemitic attitudes, can and does threaten community cohesion.

9. How can social media impact community cohesion?

CST's assessment is that social media is likely to be one of the primary drivers negatively affecting community cohesion in the UK today. There are several aspects of the social media landscape that contribute to this. The first is the central role that social media plays within communities. From community organising, sharing information and as the primary mode of communication, communities across the UK have a distinct digital component. This fact means that these communities are therefore susceptible to the broad range of harms that occur online. Digital connections between communities, as well as the nature of the social media landscape also means that these harms can travel at pace online.

For example, following the October 7 attack, misinformation became a distinct issue for the Jewish community. Soon after the attack a [message circulated](#) on WhatsApp groups within the Jewish community alleging that Hamas supporters were planning to attack Jews on Halloween. This caused some fear across Jewish communities globally with CST receiving calls from concerned community members. As a consequence, [CST issued public messaging](#) stating that the potential threat was likely false. Whilst it is unclear where this misinformation emanated from and it was an isolated incident, it demonstrates acutely how the pace and spread of misinformation can have a detrimental effect on communities.

There are a range of online harms that CST sees as having a particularly detrimental effect on community cohesion, these include but are not limited to – mis/disinformation, hate, abuse and extremism. These areas should not be treated as distinct as there is crossover between these harms, i.e. misinformation can be hateful and abusive.

There is also the role of foreign interference in having a detrimental impact on community cohesion. Today this often has a distinct online component and reflects efforts by hostile states such as Iran, Russia and China in fomenting division. For example, [‘The amplification of far-right narratives by foreign threat actors’](#) examines just such behaviour during the UK riots in summer 2024. France also highlighted [the role Russian networks played](#) online in encouraging instability and division via a spate of antisemitic incidents in Paris in November 2023.

CST has also noted the role of social media in amplifying content from Iranian State PressTV that targets the UK Jewish community. The PressTV programme ‘Palestine Declassified’, presented by former MP Chris Williamson and produced by former

university professor David Miller, regularly pushes conspiratorial narratives targeting Jewish individuals, organisations, schools and other community institutions. This content is then amplified across social media. CST has previously had to issue security advice to Jewish schools as a consequence of these programmes and associated social media posts. This includes repeating the allegation that Jewish-Muslim interfaith activities are a 'Zionist plot'. Key Islamist actors have often used online platforms to sabotage Jewish-Muslim interfaith opportunities and to sow distrust between communities. These tactics are amplified and spread online.

Whilst it is challenging to make an assessment of the spread of this content, it is likely that social media channels and online community groups (e.g. Facebook and WhatsApp) help facilitate this content spreading amongst communities. Key to this is that our current social media landscape is largely designed to foster and attract engagement – [studies show](#) that it is often therefore content that is negative or designed to stoke fear, concern or anger that is likely to receive more attention, thus often having a detrimental impact on community cohesion.

10. What can be done at a local and national level to improve community cohesion?

There is a need for Government to consider a wide-ranging strategy to foster community cohesion. This should be framed by Government confidently expressing what it considers the fundamental values to be for a multicultural society and encouraging community cohesion interventions and practices within that framework.

Once this has been established there needs to be a consideration of how to support communities, including a specific focus on the education sector. This needs to challenge the risk of widespread mis/disinformation; to encourage critical thinking; encourage digital media literacy; and promote a keen sense of citizenship and civic duty.

Responsible interfaith networks need to be identified and supported. Communities should be encouraged to responsibly explore their disagreements to find more concrete shared ground or develop better abilities to respectfully disagree.

11. What examples are there of best practice which has positively impacted community cohesion?

In 2019 CST developed the CST-[SAFE](#) (Security Advice For Everyone) Programme. It actively seeks opportunities to share, for free, CST's communal security knowledge and

expertise with groups outside the Jewish community who are also vulnerable to violence, terrorism, extremism and hate crime.

SAFE was established in response to the significant increase in requests for CST support from other minority and faith communities following the 2019 terror attacks against mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand and churches in Sri Lanka.

Since inception, CST-SAFE has delivered over 700 sessions for around 16,000 participants representing close to 4000 places of worship. It works in partnership with Local Authorities (most notably with the Mayor's Office of Policing and Crime in London), Police and Crime Commissioners, police, faith groups and others to share CST expertise built, developed, and honed through our experiences in protecting the Jewish community over decades.

A significant benefit of CST-SAFE is the impact that it has in improving community cohesion. In many cases, a CST-SAFE representative engaging with a minority community could be the only time there has been interaction with a Jewish communal body.

12. How should community cohesion be best approached in schools?

CST and Maccabi GB (the UK's leading Anglo-Jewish sports, health and wellbeing charity) established the [Stand Up!](#) Project in 2017. Partnering with Tell MAMA, it is a free anti-discrimination interfaith programme that brings Jewish and Muslim educators into classrooms to facilitate informal conversations with young people around all forms of hate, with a specific focus on antisemitism and anti-Muslim hate. Young people are provided with the tools on how to report hate crime, whilst developing their sense of social responsibility to their local communities and British society.

Established with a grant from MHCLG, it has since secured multi-year support from philanthropic foundations and successive grants from the Mayor of London's Shared Endeavour Fund to support its operations in London.

Since inception, it has reached over 100,000 young people, and as with SAFE its reach is currently only limited by capacity. It undertakes extensive monitoring and evaluation of the programme with encouraging results.

Stand Up! models a cross faith, inclusive and intersectional approach in educating about and responding to hate, seeking to highlight and foster community cohesion. By its focus on working within school settings it takes a pro-active approach to anti-discrimination, and as a result community cohesion, and can also be deployed as an appropriate

intervention when intra- or inter- school cohesion is challenged through discriminatory behaviour by pupils.

It remains a good example of a programme that approaches challenges to community cohesion within the school sector in an appropriate manner.

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