XXXXX final assessment

An MP’s Strategy Briefing and its Rationale

STUDENT ID: XXXXX

**MP: Robbie Moore, Member for Keighley**

**ISSUE: Historic child sexual exploitation in Bradford**

**Part 1: MP and Issue Profile:**

Moore was first elected in 2019, as a ‘red-wall’ Conservative, backbench member of Parliament for Keighley, which is a part of the City of Bradford Borough of West Yorkshire. As a newly elected Conservative member of the red-wall, with a majority of only 2218, it is important that Moore is seen to be active in the constituency, as well as championing its causes in Westminster. Key amongst these causes is the issue of child sexual exploitation, largely amongst the Pakistani community in Bradford, which was first raised publicly over 20 years ago, by the former member for Keighley Anne Cryer (Burn, 2019). Moore has raised the issue in Parliament four times- in an e-petitions debate (Hansard HC Deb, 3 Feb 2021); two departmental questions to the Minister for Justice (Hansard HC Deb, 9 Nov 2021 and 14 Dec 2021) and in an urgent debate he called on ‘Child Sexual Exploitation: Bradford’ (Hansard HC Deb, 26 Oct 2021). The urgent debate was attended by only one opposition MP, the MP for Rotherham Sarah Champion, highlighting a need to build cross-party consensus on the issue. Moore has made repeated calls on his social media platforms, in the local press and on his website for a ‘Rotherham-style’ inquiry into the issue. This is a reference to the issue of historic child sexual abuse in Rotherham, which resulted in two inquiries - one on a local level and one on a national level. For the purposes of this strategy briefing I will be focusing on a national inquiry. It is important to note that any actions undertaken by Moore should keep in mind the intricacies of the situation, particularly regarding the Pakistani community, as previous attempts to address this issue have been hindered due to a lack of consideration for cultural or religious differences (Home Affairs Select Committee, 5 June 2013).

**Part 2: Strategy Briefing: Two sections - Raising Awareness; then Applying Pressure.**

GOAL: The government holding an independent inquiry into historic child sexual exploitation in Bradford.

SECTION 1: Raising awareness both inside and outside of Parliament in order to a) build cross-party support and b) increase the salience of the issue. (3 MONTHS)

* **Constituency events/meetings with members of the local community.** This is particularly important in establishing a dialogue between 4 key bodies: representatives of the Pakistani community in Bradford; local organisations/charities; victims/families and the City Council. Three actions may be taken, consecutively:
  1. Individual meetings with representatives of the four key bodies outlined, establishing personal ties with each (See Appendix A for detailed lists of representatives).
  2. Once personal relationships have been established, organise events bringing together the key bodies – with a specific emphasis on reaching into the Pakistani community (See Appendix B for examples of events that may be run). Publicise these events on social media. Invite other Bradford/ West Yorkshire MPs (especially opposition members).
  3. Run public outreach events, aimed at reaching broad sections of Bradford’s population (See Appendix C for examples). Make use of social media and hashtags.
* **Join the APPG for Adult Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse** – key method of reaching opposition party MPs as well as Peers in order to assure cross-party consensus vital to Section 2. Three actions may be taken:
  1. Lobby the following members for support through private meetings (see Appendix D for examples of support): Sarah Champion (Lab); Dr Lisa Cameron (SNP) and Baroness Sheila Hollins (Crossbench). See Appendix E for other MPs to lobby via email.
  2. Contact the National Commission on Forced Marriage, specifically it’s chairperson Baroness Butler-Sloss (Crossbench), lobby for support in the Lords through private meetings (see Appendix D).
  3. Host functions inside parliament alongside the APPG and its Secretariat, inviting the key Constituency groupings, as well as other national bodies related to the subject and members of parliament (see Appendix F for detailed list).
* **File an Early Day Motion on the subject**, using allies made throughout process as sponsors and supporters – key in demonstrating cross-party nature of the issue, important in Section 2.

SECTION 2: Applying pressure on the government to call a national inquiry into child sexual exploitation in Bradford (6 MONTHS)

* **Backbench Business Committee** – application for a debate. This aims to raise further awareness for the issue amongst members of the house not yet reached by previous efforts. This can be separated into two steps:
  1. Preparation for the application: a) individual meetings with key opposition party members from Section 1 in order to request they co-sponsor the application; b) contacting other backbench MPs from Section 1 in order to request they speak in the debate. A minimum of 8 is required. (See Appendix G for lists of Members to contact in both cases).
  2. Application – to be submitted by preceding Friday at 2.30pm. See Appendix H for application form.
     + I suggest that the application is for a General Debate, in either Westminster Hall or the Chamber. This is due to the fact that a) the aim is not to pass a substantive motion, and b) it increases the likelihood of a successful application.
     + I suggest that the debate length is reflective of the number of members who have agreed to speak. 8-15 for a 90-minute application, 16+ for a 3-hour application.
     + I suggest the reasons given for the debate are as follows: long-standing nature of issue; cross-party nature (EDM as evidence); impact on the constituency (demonstrated through constituency events in Section 1).
* **Prime Ministers Question Time –** application for a question at PMQs, following the Backbench Business Debate which served to raise awareness and support amongst the wider house.
  1. Fill in the question form (available on the intranet) with ‘E’, or ‘Engagements’, and submit to the Table Office by 12.30pm on the preceding Thursday.
  2. If this should be unsuccessful – write a letter to the Speaker’s office, outlining the importance and cross-party support for the issue and request you are selected when ‘bobbing’. (See Appendix I for example question).

**Part 3: Rationale:**

The parliament of the modern day is a drastically different parliament to that of fifty or sixty years ago – it has developed from one of largely executive dominance (Foster, 2015), to a House that is a “more (…) questioning, less predictable body” (Norton, 2016. p.192). A key aspect of this development lies in the strengthened role of the backbencher, through scrutiny tools becoming more powerful, and importantly, more diverse. This, coupled with contextual factors such as Speaker Bercow’s defence of the backbencher and a trend of MP’s dealignment with their parties, creates a unique storm. Throughout this essay, I will argue that this change is the result of two factors: the increased priority given to constituency matters by MPs, and significant procedural reforms in the House itself. Both of these factors have combined to change the culture of parliament, through reducing partisanship, allowing members to scrutinise and influence the executive more closely and effectively.

The British electorate consistently ranks representing the views of constituents as the most important of ten possible activities undertaken by MPs (McKay, 2010), marking a substantial change from the post-war years, where MP’s were expected to make only annual visits to their constituency (Norton, 1994). This change exemplifies a long-term trend of Members moving towards constituency-focused activities, a change borne of several factors. Key amongst these factors is the post-war expanse of the welfare state, with MPs being called upon to facilitate “greater mediation with local authorities” (Norris, 1997. p.34) and members of the public, due to the increased presence of the state in ordinary people’s lives. This, coupled with the expansion of secondary education and the growth of the mass media, led to cognitive mobilisation – more people understanding the political process, and therefore attempting to influence it through their MPs (Norton, 1994). This societal development meant that an MP’s role expanded to include that of Searing’s (1995) role of ‘welfare-officer’, or Norris’ (1997) concept of ‘service-responsiveness’ – that is, an MP “dealing with government departments on behalf of individual constituents and local groups” (p.29). This development of another constituency-focused aspect to an MPs role is key in understanding the change to Parliament’s culture, in contributing to the individualisation of MPs. As Members were increasingly focused on constituency needs – indeed, MPs surveyed in 1967 received between 25 and 75 letters from constituency sources a week, a number that increased to 50 a day in 1986 (Norton, 1994) – they had another perspective to acknowledge, separate to the party. This created a Parliament that was less oriented on party-lines, with MPs less likely to blindly follow the party Whip without considering the constituency response.

However, the motivation for Members to focus on constituency-related issues goes further than simply the impact of the creation of the Welfare State on society and provides further evidence of the changing culture of parliament as a result of said focus. Changes within the electorate, such as decreasing party loyalty and a decline in party’s brands value (Raymond, 2016), mean that MPs can rely less on voting blocs, and are therefore incentivised to develop a ‘personal vote’ amongst their constituents through constituency casework (Cain et al. 1987; Parker, 2019). This meant that, increasingly, Members of Parliament began to rely on their constituents’ affinity towards them personally in order to be elected, rather than an affinity towards a specific party. The electoral necessity of focusing on constituency-related issues (as opposed to national or party-dictated foci) resulted in further eroded partisanship in the House of Commons – and greater individualisation of MPs behaviour as a result. The tangible electoral advantage from developing a ‘personal vote’ is clear, when looking at empirical studies completed by McKay (2010). There is a statistical significance at the 0.001 level of a positive relationship between an MPs focus on constituency issues and trust in an MP, demonstrating a substantive positive electoral advantage to such a focus. This point is furthered by Blidook and Kerby’s (2011) findings that MPs speeches tend to be more constituency-focused when they represent marginal areas – demonstrating the perceived advantage of the ‘personal vote’ over the partisan one. It is undoubtable that the bulk of an MPs work is spent on constituency-related issues, marking a substantial change from the early post-war period. It is the impact of this change on the culture of the House of Commons that is key in understanding the developed role of backbenchers in being able to scrutinise the executive. Through creating a distance between themselves and the party, and moving closer to the electorate – indeed, through relying on constituents more for election through the cultivation of a ‘personal vote’ – Members within the House of Commons strengthen their ability to scrutinise the executive. The decrease in loyalty to the party is the key aftershock of the increased focus on constituency affairs and contributes to a major change to the culture of Westminster – one that is exemplified in the increased number of ‘rebellions’ of MPs experienced in modern parliaments (Cowley & Stuart, 2014).

The second factor that is key to understanding the development of a less party-driven culture in Parliament is well-established, and less nuanced than the role of the constituency: reforms to parliamentary procedure. Norton (2000) establishes that in order for parliamentary reform to take place, three key conditions are necessary – “a window of opportunity”, “a reform agenda” and “leadership” (p.4). Whilst the second two factors are relatively easy to create, the first often means a watershed moment, where the appetite for reform is possible – a moment such as the Expenses Scandal of 2008-9, coinciding with the financial crash. This provided the impetus for the parliamentary reforms, recommended by the Wright committee, which substantially reinforced the role of the backbencher through diversifying the scrutiny tools available, with development of a cross-party consensus a key trend in the reforms. The establishment of the Backbench Business Committee marks one of the most important of the Wright reforms, when considering its role in bolstering the influence of backbenchers in Parliament. Its impact on changing the culture of the House is through addressing both the executive superiority involved in setting the agenda – the prior system was seen to reinforce the “dominance of partisanship in the Commons” (Foster, 2015. p.199) – as well as encouraging cross-party consensus. This enabled Parliament to move away from Kings (1976) ‘opposition-mode’, into a system where backbenchers were encouraged to collaborate across party-lines, allowing them to “view themselves as parliamentarians” (p.19) first-and-foremost. This is exemplified by the fact that 38 out of 46 substantive motions scheduled for debate by the Backbench Business Committee, during the 2010-12 session, had sponsors from more than one party, with a number of bids being rejected as they focused on partisan issues (Backbench Business Committee, 2011). The establishment of the Backbench Business Committee represents an effective tool that Backbenchers can use when scrutinising the executive, whilst the emphasis on cross-party working serves to strengthen this, in discouraging party political manoeuvring. The success of the committee is, however, contested in several key areas – with some arguing that it hasn’t gone far enough in its mission to reduce the power of the government in controlling the agenda. Through its failure to act on two key Wright committee recommendations, the creation of the House Business Committee and a ‘voteable agenda’, the powers of the Backbench Business Committee are, effectively, neutered (Evans, 2021). Nevertheless, the creation of the Backbench Business Committee marks a watershed moment in the history of the House of Commons, in that it creates a formal institution through which backbenchers are able to inform and influence the agenda as one body, not divided by partisan lines.

Whilst the Backbench Business Committee represents one key reform which served to strengthen the role of the backbencher in the Commons, others have had similar effects. The reforms to the Select Committee system, for example, through the introduction of ballots amongst all members in order to elect the Chairs, marks a key change to the role of the backbencher, whilst serving to yet again entrench the importance of cross-party consensus. Importantly, it also serves to address the imbalance between executive and legislature, particularly regarding the supply of information to the House: the strengthened influence of Select Committees, through the Wright Reforms, served to provide “a degree of specialisation previously lacking”, whilst also “providing the House with an alternate source of advice” (Norton, 2016. p.193). This therefore adds an additional level of diversity in the scrutiny tools available to backbenchers, whilst re-enforcing the importance of cross-party workings. The reinforced role of the backbencher has been aided, in part, by contextual factors too – key amongst them being the election of Speaker Bercow in 2009. Bercow’s tenure was beneficial to the influence of backbenchers in multiple ways, such as the number of Urgent Questions granted increasing sharply from around 0.1 per day from 1990-2008 to 0.88 in the 2017-18 Parliament (House of Commons Library, 2020). This increased emphasis on holding the government to account through parliamentary mechanisms demonstrates not only the diversity of measures available to backbench MPs, but also the increased importance placed on their opinions and views – increasing their influence in the House. The impact of this on the culture of the House of Commons cannot be overestimated.

The increased importance of constituency work and key reforms to parliamentary procedure have created an environment in which the culture of the House of Commons has become less partisan, in many key functions. Changes amongst the electorate resulting in less party-loyalty, and Party’s brands value declining, has meant that more focus than ever has had to be given to constituency issues – inevitably creating a distance between MPs and their party’s. This has been compounded by procedural changes in the House itself – with the Expenses Scandal marking a watershed moment of reform resulting in a diversified selection of tools with which to scrutinise the executive. An increased emphasis on cross-party consensus played a key role in these reforms, with the result being that backbenchers have more power, and feel they owe less to their parties, than ever before. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic creates further questions as to the ability of the legislature to effectively scrutinise the executive, with scholars such as Mencarelli (2021) asking – does it fulfil Norton’s (2000) criteria for reform as a “window of opportunity” (p.4)?

APPENDIX A – List of Constituency representatives:

**Representatives of the Pakistani Community in Bradford:**

* Bradford Council of Mosques – have supported previous reviews into the issue
* Keighley Muslim Association
* Pakistan Club Bradford

**Local Charities:**

* Bradford Rape Crisis - including specialised services for BAME victims of sexual abuse
* Bradford ‘Survive and Thrive’
* Roshni Ghar – West Yorkshire based mental health charity providing culturally sensitive support for South Asian women
* Palm Cove Society – supported accommodation for vulnerable adults
* Oasis Refuge – refuge in Bradford
* Staying Put – Bradford-based phone helpline for women and children affected by domestic abuse
* Karma Nirvana – Leeds-based charity supporting victims of forced marriage and honour-based violence.

**Representatives of victims/families:**

* PACE – Parents against child exploitation

**Council:**

* Bradford Safeguarding Children Board
* Bradford District Council Children’s Services – have done previous work with the Bradford Council of Mosques
* Tracy Brabin – Mayor of West Yorkshire, police commissioner.

APPENDIX B – Example events involving constituency representatives:

* Bringing charities into local Madrasas run by Mosques, in order to educate on Child Sexual Exploitation through workshops.
* An Iftar event (if events fall during Ramadan), bringing together all of the key groups for a discussion on working together in order to tackle the issue of child sexual exploitation.
* Running volunteer days in local refuges, allowing members of the Muslim community such as Imams as well as representatives of the council, local charities and other Bradford/ West Yorkshire-based MPs to see first-hand the impact of Child Sexual Exploitation.
* Reception at the Pakistan Club Bradford, inviting all key bodies.

APPENDIX C – Ideas for public outreach events

* Setting up a panel at the ‘Bradford Literary Festival’ with key groups highlighted in Appendix A.
* Organising groups in Appendix A to go and do guest speaking events with students on the topic
* Organising panel events including the groups in Appendix A at the University of Bradford; possibly organising a Week of events regarding the topic bringing in National bodies in Appendix F for events/panels at the University.

APPENDIX D – Examples of support in the Commons and Lords:

**Support in the Commons:**

* Supporting any future EDMs you may put forward on the issue.
* Attending any future debates you may have on the issue.
* Tabling questions to Ministers, such as: departmental question time; written questions to the Minister for Justice.
* Lobbying own contacts/ members of their own party to support the cause.
* Attending functions run by the APPG for Adult Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse.

**Support in the Lords:**

* Tabling debates on the subject in order to raise awareness amongst the Lords
* Lobbying key contacts in the Lords/ members of own grouping to support the cause.
* Attending functions run by the APPG for Adult Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse.

APPENDIX E – Members to Lobby via email:

**Members of the APPG on Adult Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse:**

Jim Shannon MP (DUP)

Lilian Greenwood MP (Labour)

Lucy Allan MP (Conservative)

Pauline Latham MP (Conservative)

Baroness Lorely Burt (Liberal Democrats)

Baroness Uddin (Non-affiliated)

**Members of the APPG on Domestic Abuse:**

Vicky Foxcroft MP (Labour)

Baroness Thornton (Labour)

Caroline Lucas MP (Green)

Alex Norris MP (Labour)

Baroness Brady (Conservative)

Theo Clarke MP (Conservative)

Sir Peter Bottomley MP (Conservative)

Gavin Newlands MP (SNP)

Alison Thewliss MP (SNP)

Baroness Verma (non-affiliated)

Emma Hardy MP (Labour)

Naz Shah MP (Labour)

Kate Griffiths MP (Conservative)

Fleur Anderson MP (Labour)

Kim Johnson MP (Labour)

Paula Barker MP (Labour)

Baroness Lister (Labour)

Mark Fletcher MP (Conservative)

Bell Ribeiro-Addy MP (Labour)

Jess Phillips MP (Labour)

Maria Miller MP (Conservative)

**Members who have signed related EDMs:**

Wera Hobhouse (Liberal Democrat)

Grahame Morris (Labour)

Louise Haigh (Labour)

Robert Halfon (Conservative)

Mohammad Yasin (Labour)

APPENDIX F – National bodies specialising in Child Sexual Exploitation:

* Aanchal – Women’s Aid
* Aanah project
* Freedom unit
* Muslim Women’s network
* Men’s advice line
* National Commission on Forced Marriage – specifically the following members:
  + Jasvinder Sanghera – founder of Karma Nirvana (centre in Leeds) and independent chair for Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership
  + Dr Usama Hasan and Dr Ghayasuddin Siddiqui – Islamic scholars and activists against forced marriage and child sexual exploitation in Muslim communities.

APPENDIX G – Members to contact regarding Backbench debate application:

Members to meet regarding co-sponsorship:

* Sarah Champion MP, member for Rotherham (Labour)
* Dr Lisa Cameron MP, (SNP)

Members to contact regarding speakers in the debate:

Those members previously lobbied for support via email, as listed in Appendix E.

APPENDIX H – Application form for Backbench Business Committee debate:

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| --- |
| ***The Backbench Business Committee meets every sitting Tuesday to hear representations from Members for debates in backbench time. Please complete this form and email it to*** [***bbcom@parliament.uk***](mailto:bbcom@parliament.uk) ***by 2.30pm on the preceding Friday. You will be invited to present your application to the Committee on Tuesday (usually at 4:15pm) of the following week.***  ***See notes at the end of this form for guidance on your application. For applications related to e-petitions or Select Committee Statements, please contact the Committee staff.*** |

**LEAD BACKBENCH MEMBER/S1**

|  |
| --- |
| **\*Tick to declare**  **relevant interest**  **INTERESTS:** (**Please enter details of interest here.**  (Any additional Lead Backbench Members declaring a relevant interest should also enter details of that interest after their names here.) |

**CONTACT DETAILS**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Email:** | @parliament.uk | **Tel:** |  |

**TITLE OF DEBATE2**

|  |
| --- |
|  |

**MEMBERS WHO WILL SPEAK IN THE DEBATE3 (see guidance overleaf; use additional sheet if necessary)**

***Please insert additional rows as required…***

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **BACKBENCH MEMBER NAME:** | **POLITICAL PARTY:** |
| **1.** |  |  |
| **2.** |  |  |
| **3.** |  |  |
| **4.** |  |  |
| **5.** |  |  |
| **6.** |  |  |
| **7.** |  |  |
| **8.** |  |  |
| ***A minimum of 8 Backbench Member names is advised for a 90-minute debate application*** | | |
| **9.** |  |  |
| **10.** |  |  |
| **11.** |  |  |
| **12.** |  |  |
| **13.** |  |  |
| **14.** |  |  |
| **15.** |  |  |
| ***A minimum of 15 Backbench Member names is advised for a 3-hour debate application*** | | |
| **16.** |  |  |

**What type of debate are you applying for?4**

|  |
| --- |
| **General debate (on a motion for the adjournment or “*That this House has considered* [topic]”)** |
| **Debate on a substantive motion (expresses an opinion; can give rise to a division)\* Chamber only**  **\*Draft text of substantive motion** |
| **In the Chamber In Westminster Hall (Tues ) In Westminster Hall (Thurs) In either** |

**LENGTH OF DEBATE5**

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| --- |
| **90 minutes 3 hours** **6 hours (Chamber)** (Members may tick more than one box) |

**REASONS FOR THE DEBATE6 (use additional sheet if necessary)**

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|  |

APPENDIX I – Example Question for PMQs:

“An independent review by Bradford City Council of 5 cases has found that “children have suffered abuse that no child should have to experience” over a time-span of around 20 years. In many cases, the abuse was reported to the council, and nothing was done, with one victim telling the review that under the recommendation of her social worker, she was put into foster care of the parents of the man who was abusing her – subsequently becoming pregnant and forced to marry her abuser in an ‘Islamic wedding’. She was fifteen. In light of these findings, and the lack of answers for the many more uncovered victims, does the Prime Minister not agree that they deserve justice, and that the best way to do this is through an independent national inquiry?”

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