



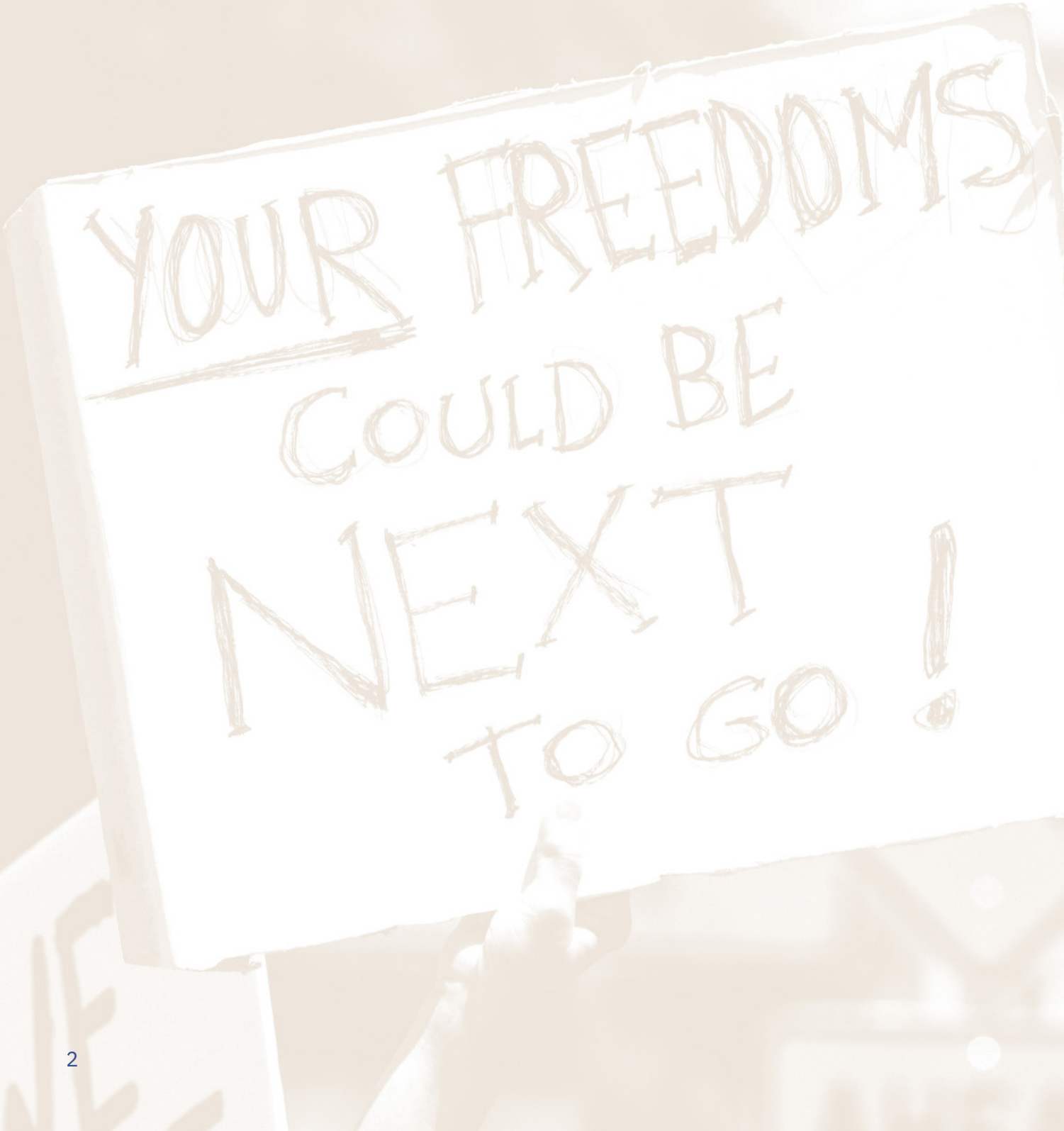
PROTECTING PEOPLE AND DEMOCRACY IN AN AGE OF DIVISION

Strategic Plan 2026–2029

1. Statue of Lady Justice, The Guildhall, Bath, UK © Simon Lees;
2. Police stand guard outside the Citizens Advice Bureau after it was burnt during a far-right riot in Sunderland, UK, August 2024 © Chemival;
3. Barbed wire fence © Fahroni;
4. Demonstration against right-wing violence targeting immigrants and refugees in North Finchley, London, UK, August 2024 © Monkey Butler Images.

PROTECTING PEOPLE AND DEMOCRACY IN AN AGE OF DIVISION

Strategic Plan 2026–2029



A hand-drawn protest sign with the text "YOUR FREEDOMS COULD BE NEXT TO GO!" written in bold, capital letters. The sign is held by a hand, and a finger points to the word "NEXT". The background is a blurred outdoor scene with a building and trees.

YOUR FREEDOMS
COULD BE
NEXT
TO GO!

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**DR KATE FERGUSON
AND ANDY FEARN**

Co-Executive Directors, Protection Approaches

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**P
A** Protection
Approaches

Protection Approaches works to change how the world views identity-based violence - and by so doing - change the way we respond to and prevent it.

on your side



A UK-wide support and reporting service for East and Southeast Asian communities who experienced racism or any form of hate

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Talk to us. Get support.
We are #OnYourSide.

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A MESSAGE FROM

DR KATE FERGUSON AND ANDY FEARN

Co-Executive Directors, Protection Approaches

Mobilising grievance, demonising “the other” and wielding division are the staid tactics of authoritarian movements throughout history and across the world. Identity has always been weaponised to advance political projects, secure territory, turn financial profit, and achieve notoriety.

These strategies are not new—but they are returning with new force. The playbook is back—modernised and gaining ground.

Protection Approaches began in 2014 with the knowledge that identity-based violence is a collective harm, felt most acutely by those it targets but ultimately fracturing entire societies. Therefore, our work has always been driven by the conviction that identity-based violence is not inevitable but without early and serious action, its impacts deepen, touching more lives and cutting deeper into our societies.

MORE THAN A DECADE LATER, THAT CONVICTION HAS ONLY BECOME MORE URGENT.

As experts in identity-based violence, it is our core responsibility to raise warning of what is coming, work with communities at risk to prepare for worse to come, and advance the solutions that are needed to turn the tide towards an inclusive, safe, and fair democratic sustainable future. This strategic plan sets out how.

Authoritarian actors, political extremists, and transnational hate networks increasingly exploit grievance, manipulate difference, and erode trust in democratic institutions in pursuit of power. Enabled by a disrupted information environment and rapid technological change, these dynamics allow division, disinformation, and hostility to spread faster and further than ever before.

Contemporary identity-based violence is changing. Misogyny and hostility towards LGBTQ+ communities are intensifying, from classrooms to the foreign policy objectives of chauvinist states. Migrants and minorities are scapegoated for structural problems they did not create, racialising grievance and legitimising hierarchies of belonging as a new far right resurgence gathers momentum. Foreign governments are reaching across borders to oppress and suppress challenge. Unchecked, these lines of social rupture mean trust in governments and democratic institutions is collapsing. Belief in conspiracy and falsehoods is no longer uncommon. People feel more divided, more anxious, and less confident about their future.

**THESE HARMS ARE NOT PERIPHERAL TO THE CHALLENGES
DEFINING OUR TIME; THEY ARE CENTRAL TO THEM.**

In an era of aggressive statecraft, democratic backsliding, and growing geopolitical instability, societies are increasingly targeted not only through military or economic means, but through efforts to fracture the social foundations that make democratic life possible. The fastest way to weaken a democracy today is often not confrontation at its borders, but division within it.

This moment demands a fundamental shift in how we understand prevention and security. We cannot meet these threats only at the point of crisis, nor rely solely on enforcement once harm has already taken place. The most credible and cost-effective defence is to strengthen what is being deliberately targeted: the connective social fabric that enables diverse societies to function, sustains trust in institutions, and allows disagreement without dehumanisation or violence.

**THIS IS THE WORK PROTECTION APPROACHES
WAS CREATED TO DO.**

For more than a decade we have worked across communities, governments, and international partners to transform how identity-based violence is understood and prevented. From grassroots programmes in towns and cities across the UK to international efforts to confront the risks of mass atrocities and democratic erosion, we work to strengthen prevention, support those closest to emerging threats, and build the evidence and political momentum needed to act earlier.

We are not neutral observers of these trends. We are part of a growing movement determined to confront them. Our role is to raise the alarm where risks are ignored, amplify the insight of communities experiencing rising threats, and help build the prevention architecture capable of protecting people and democratic societies in the years ahead.

As the world changes, the way in which we uphold our responsibilities of national and international safety must change with it. The scale of this moment demands ambition, courage, and doing things differently.

**THIS STRATEGIC PLAN SETS OUT HOW WE WILL DO THAT
BETWEEN 2026 AND 2029.**

Over the next four years we will demonstrate the central role identity-based violence plays in the crises defining our world; transform the prevention of and response to identity-based harms through advocacy, partnerships, and resource mobilisation; and continue building an organisation capable of meeting the scale of the challenge ahead.

WE HOPE YOU WILL JOIN US.

With the support of partners and funders who recognise the urgency of this work, we can make societies safer, fairer, and more resilient — protecting people today while helping to secure a more inclusive and democratic future.

DR KATE FERGUSON AND ANDY FEARN



MISSION

*We work to prevent and protect people
from identity-based violence.*

VISION

*We seek a world that is safer for all because
everyone accepts and respects each other,
regardless of identity.*



VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

Our dedication to our values and adherence to our principles drives not only what we do but also how we do it. We call this doing the hard work, so we can do the right thing. The pursuit of this practice is the method at the heart of our work and decision-making.

We know that

Identity-based violence exists in varied forms in all societies.

Identity-based violence against one group ultimately increases the insecurity of all.

Understanding the roots and causes of identity-based violence helps unlock solutions.

Everyone has the power to, individually and collectively, respond to and help prevent identity-based violence – but the responsibility to do so is not equal.

We commit to

Work in solidarity and with reciprocity with community partners.

Remain flexible so we can respond to the needs of those at risk and maximise our ability to contribute to prevention and protection.

Remember that the scale of this moment requires us to be brave, take risks, and pursue meaningful impact that others are not.

Put our mission before our sustainability and so we will do what is right, not what is easy.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1 DEMONSTRATE IDENTITY-BASED VIOLENCE AS CENTRAL TO THE CRISES DEFINING OUR WORLD

We cannot overcome the struggle between authoritarianism and inclusive democracy without understanding and responding to the ways in which identity, grievance, and division are exploited.

We are raising the alarm, warning of what is coming and the extent to which emerging and future identity-based crises will hit the UK and the world. We will continue to demonstrate the central role identity-based harms play in many of the most serious challenges facing communities, states and the world. We will always resist those who weaponise difference to achieve autocratic or exclusionary control. We will keep working with communities and governments to strengthen resilience, trust, and defence of rights and values.

At this critical moment, we will leverage a decade of knowledge and practice to:

Demonstrate the scale of threat posed to the UK and the world by identity-based violence.

Show why resistance to division, the erosion of rights, and unravelling of the social-democratic fabric is essential to safeguarding the sustainable future of democracy.

Build understanding of why and how individuals, groups and states commit identity-based violence.

Support and amplify the insights of those closest to rising risks, not only to warn of crises but to shape better prevention and response.

Track and communicate the ways in which contemporary forms of discrimination, division, and oppression are changing.

2 TRANSFORM THE PREVENTION OF, AND RESPONSE TO, IDENTITY-BASED VIOLENCE

Meeting the intensifying challenge posed by identity-based harms requires rapid transformation of and investment in community-to-system prevention and response.

By combining advocacy, resource mobilisation, and direct support, we will transform community partnership and funding in the UK, ensuring that organisations on the ground are sustainably delivering solutions without shouldering full responsibility to resolve challenges. In these critical few years, we will work to transform UK policy and grand strategy to meet the threats of a rising far right, international hate-based networks, and global authoritarian resurgence. We will expand our work into Europe to connect and activate new leadership.

Continuing our dynamic outsider-insider approach to transformation, we will:

Advocate for greater investment from public and private donors.

Provide training, knowledge-sharing networks, and access to evidence on what works.

Work with funders and philanthropists to increase the amount of resources going to organisations that prevent identity-based violence and build cohesive and inclusive communities, including by developing new funding streams and public funding mechanisms.

Convene partnerships and networks across communities, civil society, government, academia, and funders to strengthen collective action, connect community insight to policy and systems change, and improve coordinated responses to identity-based violence.

Grow our emergency response programme and share experience of catalytic advocacy that connects human rights defenders, intelligence gathering, and political work to secure civilian protection.

Develop concrete policy options, strategic analysis, and technical advice to local and national governments, and to international institutions.

3 ACHIEVE OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Continuing to build an inclusive, supportive and productive internal culture is integral to delivering our mission and to the sustainability of the organisation.

We commit to reject the trend of entrenchment in the face of an uncertain political and philanthropic landscape and instead embrace disruption and imagination. Our responsibility is to the mission and to the wider movement so we will work to identify and encourage forms of giving that strengthen the long-term prevention of identity-based violence. We will work with partners across different ecosystems of change against the trend of competition, and we will prioritise growing core and unrestricted funding so we can stay focused on our mission, brave in our ambitions, and responsive to emerging needs.

We commit to retain and protect the integrity of our work and commitments to nuance in a world where fractured information consumption will likely intensify, where echo chambers become smaller and more deliberately weaponised, and where room for disagreement will feel more difficult.

We will:

Be open and transparent as we strive to create a culture that reflects our values and fosters experimentation.

Be creative in sustaining organisational growth in a time of domestic and international funding contraction.

Prepare to meet the diversifying challenges our organisation and staff will face.

Never pretend this part of the work is easy nor that we hold all the answers.

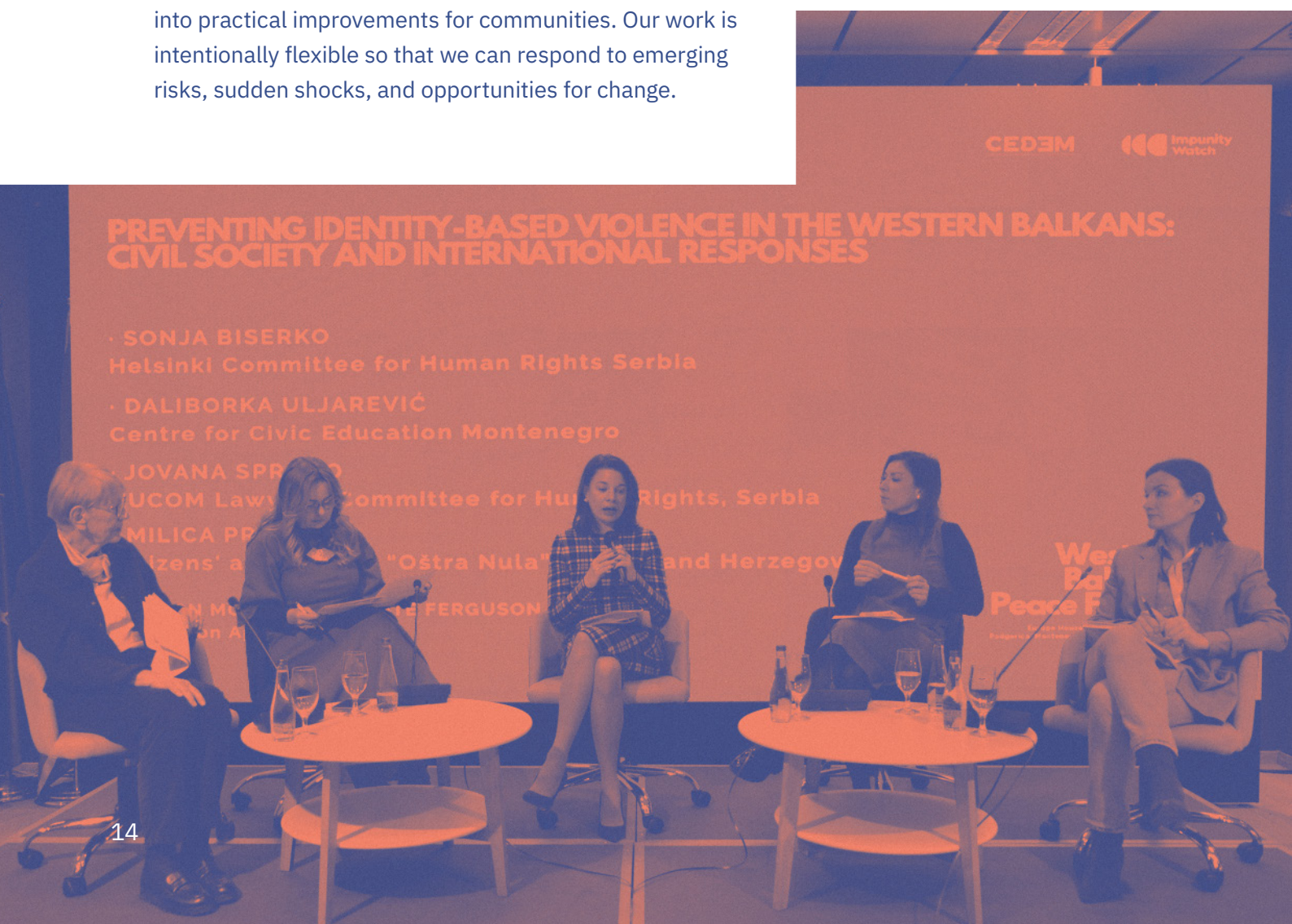


HOW WE DO THE WORK

Preventing identity-based violence requires more than isolated programmes or short-term interventions. It demands sustained work across communities, institutions, and systems to identify and respond to risk early, strengthen resilience, and ensure that the people and organisations closest to emerging threats are able to shape solutions.

Protection Approaches works across these levels simultaneously. Our model combines community partnership, research and analysis, policy influence, and strategic convening to ensure that insights from lived experience inform policy and that policy change translates into practical improvements for communities. Our work is intentionally flexible so that we can respond to emerging risks, sudden shocks, and opportunities for change.

ACROSS ALL OF OUR WORK WE PRIORITISE APPROACHES THAT ARE PARTICIPATORY, PREVENTATIVE, AND ROOTED IN EVIDENCE.



UNDERSTANDING RISK, ROOTS AND IMPACTS

Identity-based violence does not emerge suddenly or without warning. It develops through identifiable processes shaped by social, political, economic, and institutional conditions over time.

Experiences of exclusion, perceived injustice, insecurity, and rapid social change can create fertile ground for grievance-based narratives that blame other groups for structural challenges. When these narratives are amplified by political actors, misinformation, or organised movements, division can escalate into hostility and, in some cases, violence. The forms these harms take – and the scale of their impact – evolve, and so too do the abilities of perpetrators to conceal or seek to legitimise their tactics.

A central part of our work is therefore understanding and raising warning of risk – and developing options to prevent and mitigate. Drawing on international risk and prevention frameworks alongside our own research and community engagement, we analyse the conditions that increase the likelihood of identity-based harm. We never carry out risk assessment without also engaging with what can be done to slow, halt and ultimately reverse the trajectories of harm we are monitoring.

Understanding these dynamics is essential not only for supporting those targeted by identity-based violence, but also for understanding what leads individuals and groups to believe harming others because of identity is legitimate or justified. Whether in our mapping of harmful networks or in community level activity, we recognise prevention is not possible without this difficult and delicate work.



In practice:

We deliver bold programmes that diagnose emerging risks and drive practical responses. In 2025-2026 we led a flagship programme with the UK National Security Secretariat examining the changing nature of identity-based harms across the UK and Europe – combining high-level convening, national polling, frontline engagement and international fieldwork. This enabled us to produce a clear, multi-level diagnosis of risk, alongside actionable recommendations spanning local, national and regional responses. With narrative testing we translated this analysis into a compelling framework now shaping how policymakers, funders and civil society understand and respond to these threats – demonstrating how rigorous analysis can be mobilised to influence real-world decision-making.

PARTNERING WITH COMMUNITIES AND STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE

Communities experiencing marginalisation or rising hostility are often the first to recognise early warning signs of identity-based harm. They also hold deep knowledge about how risks manifest locally, and what responses are most likely to succeed.

A core part of our work is long-term partnership with community-based organisations working across protected characteristics and across the UK. These organisations play a vital role in supporting victims, building relationships across communities, and responding to tensions before they escalate.

Our role is to support, connect, and amplify this work. We provide training, small grants, and practical support to community organisations, create opportunities for peer learning and collaboration, and ensure that community insight informs decision-making spaces where policy and investment priorities are set. These partnerships are reciprocal and non-extractive. We recognise community organisations not as delivery mechanisms but as experts and leaders in prevention.



In practice:

Over the past three years our Design, Built, Act programme supported thirty community organisations to design and deliver hate crime prevention and victim support initiatives, distributing £150,000 in small grants and reaching more than 50,000 Londoners through community-led activity. Nationally, our Communities Together programme trained more than 600 staff and volunteers from over 200 community organisations across England, significantly increasing participants' confidence in building more cohesive and inclusive communities.

CONVENING PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLECTIVE ACTION

Preventing identity-based violence requires cooperation across many actors: communities, civil society, government, academia, and the private sector. Yet these actors often operate in isolation, limiting collective impact and slowing the development of effective responses.

Protection Approaches convenes partnerships and networks that bring these groups together to collaborate on shared challenges. Our convenings create space for dialogue, shared learning, and collective problem-solving while recognising the power dynamics that shape participation in policy spaces. We focus on building trust between participants, ensuring organisations of different sizes and backgrounds have equal voice, and creating structures where partners feel genuine ownership over shared work.



In practice:

Protection Approaches coordinates several influential civil society and policy forums that connect community expertise with decision-makers. In London we have launched the first Equalities Partnership within the London Resilience Forum, embedding equality-led organisations directly into the city's emergency preparedness and response structures. We also coordinate the MOPAC Hate Crime Stakeholder Reference Group, bringing together community organisations, practitioners, police, prosecutors, and policymakers to shape London's response to hate crime. Alongside this work we continue to convene the UK Atrocity Prevention Working Group, connecting civil society expertise with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and international partners to strengthen the UK's approach to preventing identity-based violence globally. We also convened major donors twice in 2024/25 — bringing together organisations including the National Lottery Community Fund, Wellcome Trust, and BBC Children in Need — to shift thinking on how funding for strong, cohesive communities can be transformed.

INFLUENCING POLICY AND SYSTEMS

Evidence about identity-based violence and social division often fails to translate into meaningful policy change.

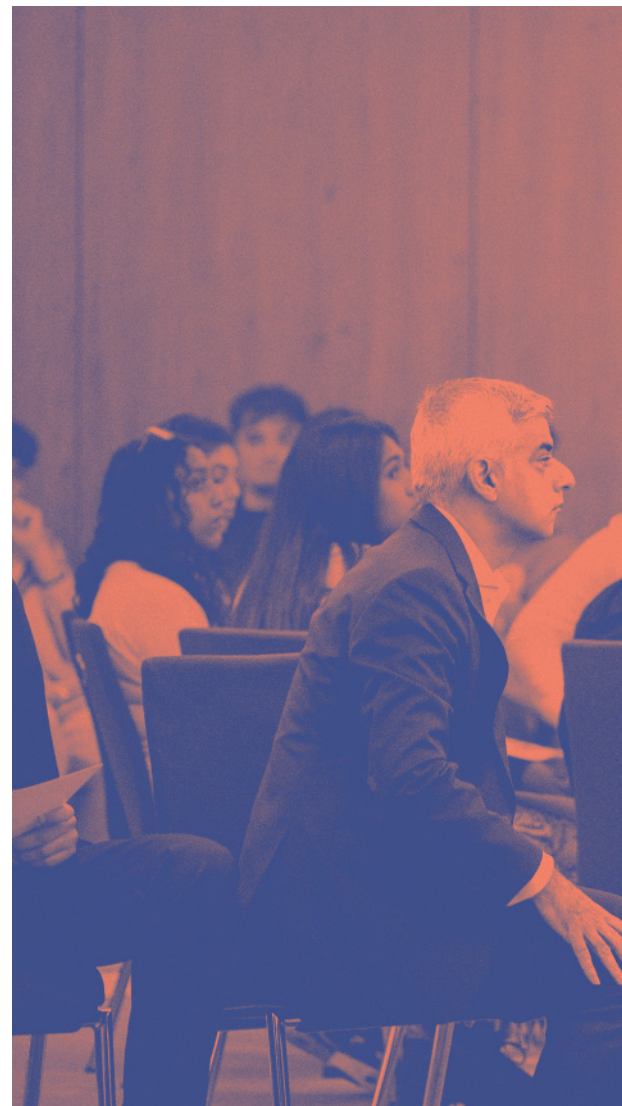
A central part of our work is ensuring that insights from communities and research inform real decisions about policy, funding, and institutional practice.

Our approach combines close collaboration with decision-makers and independent advocacy. This “insider–outsider” model allows us to build trusted relationships within government and institutions while retaining the independence necessary to challenge assumptions, raise concerns, and advocate for more effective responses. It also allows us to identify solutions that are both ambitious and practical — grounded in community knowledge, informed by international evidence, and capable of being implemented within real policy environments.



In practice:

We work at the intersection of policy, politics, and crisis—engaging across local government, Whitehall, Europe, and international partners to shape how identity-based risks are understood and addressed. From advancing civilian protection in acute crises to responding to unrest in the UK, our strategic policy work is dynamic, creative and effective.



Mayor of London Sadiq Khan joins Andy Fearn and the Protection Approaches team for an Active Bystander workshop with teenagers from across the city at County Hall, London, November 2023 © Protection Approaches

CONNECTING COMMUNITY PRACTICE AND SYSTEM CHANGE

Protection Approaches works at community, national, and international levels. This allows us to connect lived experience with structural reform.

Insights from community programmes reveal emerging risks and successful responses. These lessons inform our research and policy advocacy. At the same time, policy change can unlock resources, remove barriers, and strengthen the systems communities rely on.

By linking these levels together, we create a feedback loop in which community insight strengthens policy and policy reform strengthens community resilience.



In practice:

Our GLA-commissioned report, informed by evidence from more than 100 community and faith organisations, directly shaped the new London Resilience Strategy and contributed to new investment strands focused on prevention, trust, and community-led resilience. Locally, we led one of the UK's largest recent listening exercises on identity-based harm in Stoke-on-Trent, engaging more than 1,300 residents and helping shape a new city-wide cohesion strategy that is now being taken forward by the City Council and local partners.





EMBEDDING PREVENTION IN THE COUNTRY'S INFRASTRUCTURE

Institutions such as transport networks, sports bodies, cultural organisations, and employers shape everyday experiences of safety, belonging, and behaviour.

Preventing identity-based violence therefore requires working beyond traditional policy spaces to embed practical tools and knowledge within the institutions people encounter in daily life.

Protection Approaches partners with major institutions to help them recognise and respond to identity-based harm, build inclusive cultures, and strengthen their role in preventing division.



In practice:

We partnered with The Football Association to develop the first Active Bystander training tailored specifically for football environments, training one hundred FA staff across England through a national train-the-trainer programme so the approach can now be delivered through county football associations nationwide. We also work with Transport for London and rail operators including Govia Thameslink Railway to deliver Active Bystander training to staff and passengers.



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