

# DEFUSE

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FEEL SAFER IN PUBLIC LIFE

WHITE PAPER

## THE RISE OF THE ONLINE BODYGUARD

**A strategic review of today's personal protection industry introducing a methodology designed to keep influencers and public figures safe from abuse, threats and intimidation in the 21st century.**

By Philip Grindell MSc





Before I dive in and introduce the methodology that will keep those in public life safe from the escalating abuse, threats and intimidation that now inhabit their lives on a daily basis, I thought it prudent to introduce myself.

I want to take you back to June 2016. Jo Cox, the relatively new Labour MP for Batley & Spen in West Yorkshire was on her way to meet her constituents at a routine surgery when she was ambushed and fatally attacked by a far-right extremist armed with a firearm and knife.

Jo Cox MP was the first British Member of Parliament to be murdered by a non-terrorist group such as the IRA. In fact, she was one of a number who had been attacked this century, with a member of staff being fatally injured defending another MP and in another attack the MP receiving serious injuries.

I was the person brought in to stop that happening again.

Over the next three years I led a team that investigated thousands of cases where MPs were being targeted, and I confess to being shocked by the volume and level of vitriol directed at them. It demanded excellence on a daily basis, being exposed to the most private and personal elements of the MPs lives requires huge empathy and discretion.

As someone who had grown up with two sisters and had enjoyed the benefits of being managed by some brilliant female bosses, I was especially shocked by the abuse targeted at the female MPs.

What became increasingly clear was that whilst the likelihood of a physical attack was low, psychological and reputational harm was a daily occurrence and increasingly harmful.

Such was the impact that it was termed as a 'Threat to Democracy' and saw a number of MPs stand down at the next general election in 2019.

During this period, I was approached by a number of other interested parties requesting that I investigate threats made to non-parliamentary figures who were increasingly being abused, threatened and intimidated, very often online but with little expertise available to them.

This identified the need for this expertise to be made available to others outside of Parliament which led me to launch Defuse.

## **The Harm that is caused:**

What has become increasingly clear to me is the psychological harm that is caused, and this is often compounded by the reputational damage that often accompanies this.



### **Social Media**

The use of social media and the internet brings new challenges and it is where most of the harm is done.

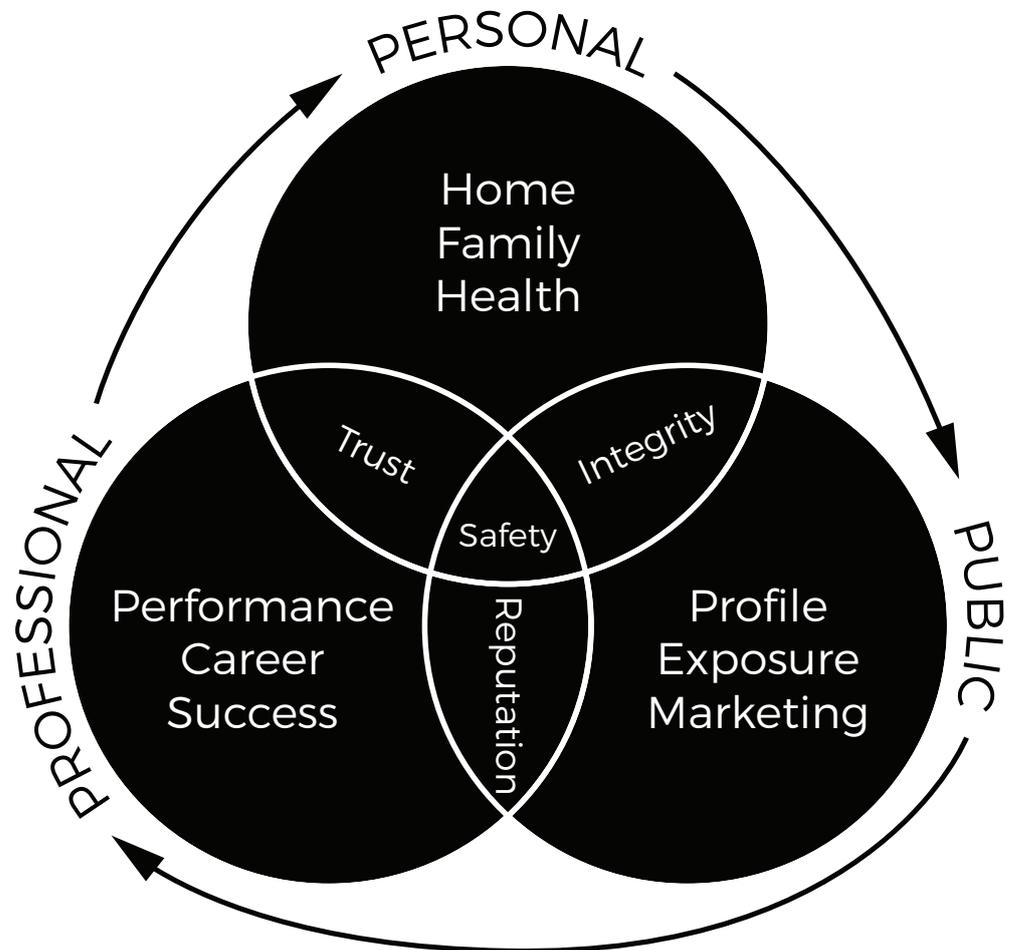
Influencers and public figures, be they athletes, media celebrities, business leaders or politicians are often required to have a social media presence. Often, even if they don't have a personal account, the brand or business they represent does and they can be routinely blamed for issues that are more aligned to that than to them on a personal level.

### **Eco-Terrorism – Intimidation directed at your family and your reputation**

This will be a significant threat in the years ahead. Increasingly, movements will be infiltrated by more extreme environmental activists willing to take more direct action. Recent history has already demonstrated that protesting outside a business HQ has limited impact. The real impact is made when these extreme elements target the senior Directors and CEOs of big business where it really hurts, at home. Intimidation and abuse targeted at their families and loved ones will increase the pressure, with the potential consequences of CEOs being asked to rethink what their priorities are. This is not just a security threat, but one where the psychological and reputational harm may have significant repercussions on share prices and cause commercial upheaval.

### The 3 key roles at risk

Influencers & public figures have three key roles, they have their personal lives, their public role and their professional role.



It is where these differing and yet intersecting roles meet that the issues can be most harmful.

Too often we have seen influencers and public figures compromised when their differing roles demonstrate a lack of congruency.

A 'happily married man' exposed as having an affair or of secretly being gay can damage his public reputation, impacting not just on his marketability, but on his health, happiness and ultimately his performance at work.

An athlete that has been found to have posted something regrettable, way before they became successful or a TV presenter presenting a clean and healthy image yet exposed as being a recreational drug user, will harm their profile, perhaps bring them into disrepute and can cost them their contract and career.

A CEO representing a business's new environmentally friendly policy, despite planning a significant home extension at the cost of the local fauna and wildlife, impacting the share price,

upsetting both shareholders and the environmentalist Eco-Terrorists.

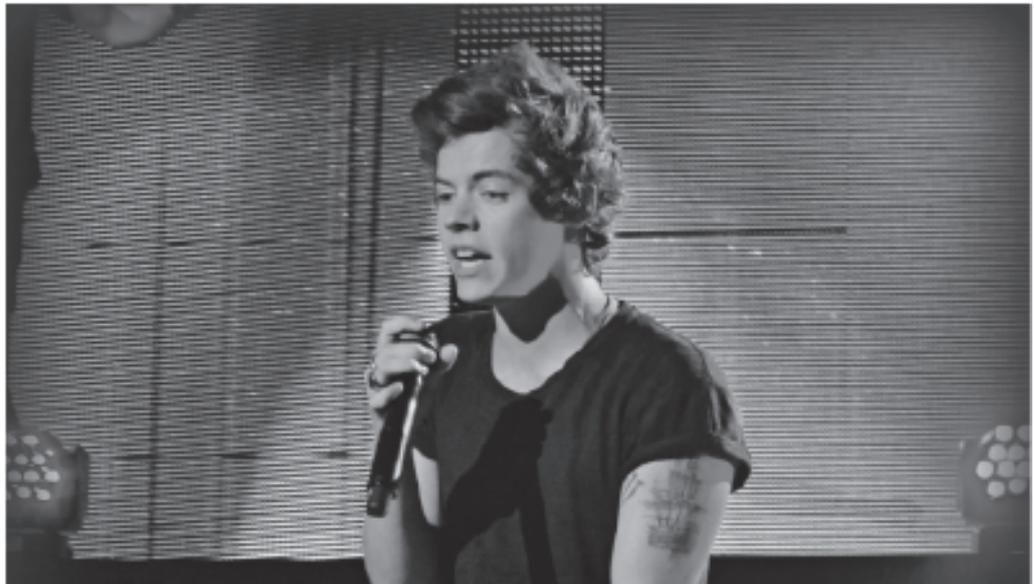
Once upon a time these issues may have been managed by a well-tuned PR strategy.

However, in the current age each story will become viral in minutes causing untold harm to the individual, their families and their professional reputation. And the real concern is that none of the stories even have to be true, misinformation spreads like wildfire. It is well known that bad news travels much faster than good news.

Tragically, it is no longer unusual to hear of a public figure taking their own life due to the pressure and negativity they become inundated with.

### **The old way of protecting Influencers & Public Figures no longer works**

The fact is that the protection team cannot make the subject of abuse feel safer. Once they have finished escorting their subject to and from their destination and the door shuts, the client will start to look at their social media, and almost inevitably focus on the negative and harmful content. The effect will be diminishing mental health which may cause hyper-vigilance and depression.



Former One Direction star Harry Styles stated 'I never really encountered this kind of behaviour before. I've employed a night guard. I continue to lock my bedroom door at night.' He also said he continues to check for 'weak spots' in his home after he began being stalked by a homeless person he tried to help. He went on to say 'Until that point, I never felt unsafe or uneasy in my own home' stating that the stalker's 'erratic and frightening behaviour' left him feeling insecure at home.<sup>1</sup> That feeling of fear and anxiety was despite the presence of a security guard outside his home and advice from his security staff.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7571043/Harry-Styles-scared-uncomfortable-homeless-man-stalked-him.html>

The world of close protection, bodyguards and minders has often been the go-to method of keeping these figures safe. According to industry sources, there has been an explosion in the demand in recent years, much of it filled by former military operatives deployed back into the locations they had previously served in. However, as those markets diminish, many of these operatives return home and look to the domestic marketplace.

The problem is that many lack experience and detailed knowledge of UK legislation governing what they can and can't do for the domestic role, and to the uninitiated it can be difficult to know whether you are selecting the correct person for the role. As Jacquie Davis, arguably the world's leading female bodyguard was previously quoted as saying 'Most of my clients are Executives, I shy away from the pop bands and singers, they have minders, not Bodyguards' <sup>2</sup>

The training that many 'Bodyguards' now undertake is adequate for their role, however most will agree that experience in the field is the best teacher.

However, thus far I am yet to find a UK based bodyguard who has been trained (other than by Defuse Global) in recognising the '8 Pre-Attack Warning Behaviours' or the difference between a 'Hunter and a Howler' and the linguistic signals of an escalating threat.

The British Bodyguard Association is quoted as defining the role as 'irrespective of the many niche areas of security, close protection operatives (CPO's), or bodyguards, can commonly be defined by the single most important requirement expected of them in their professional capacity; to provide physical protection to a principal, shielding them from any potential harm and to quickly get them to safety'. <sup>3</sup>

That is all well and good, but the landscape has changed, and the real harm now occurs behind closed doors, be that of a hotel room, a mansion or their office.

You can have the best bodyguard in the world, but they cannot stop the abuse, threats and intimidation being targeted via the internet, and nor can they help with the reputational or psychological harm that is caused.

In fact, the International Bodyguard Association states 'The tradecraft of the bodyguard at very basic level requires a practitioner to be trained competently at least in the management of threat through protective escort, protective driving, also an ability to search and recognise improvised explosive devices and electronic surveillance devices and the response protocols that follows their discovery'.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bodyguardcareers.com/2008/10/28/interview-with-jacqueline-davis/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.the-bba.org.uk/careers>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.ibabodyguards.com/news>

That is not to say that hiring a real professional, such as Jacquie Davis, is not money well spent when there is a genuine threat or operating in a hostile environment, but even then they require accurate analysis of the threat and support and you may find that their priority is keeping their principal safe as opposed to providing opportunities to enhance their celebrity status.

The truth is that most influencers and public figures are rarely aware that any threat is outstanding, and often there is no need for them to know. What they do express however, is feeling unsafe. When they have a stalker, often unknown, they then feel unsafe leaving their homes. The temptation is to hire a bodyguard, which may be worthwhile but how will you know unless you have identified the stalker and are well versed in the science beyond the threats they pose?

**Anxiety was a huge hurdle for me to deal with this past year and the security concerns didn't help! (Kendal Jenner)<sup>5</sup>**



Increasingly TV and media celebrities are offered the service of a psychologist, which is a huge step forward, until one starts to research who the experts actually are.

The truth is that many are well meaning people, often with a Psychology degree and a member of the British Psychological Society (BPS), the problem is that they are not clinically or forensically trained or qualified.

The BPS website qualifies this “Unfortunately, some people who claim to be ‘psychologists’ may not have the necessary levels of skills and knowledge, nor have professional recognition or personal liability insurance, putting production companies at risk if they employ them”.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/4cVPjcFly4TrNWq0XR5Imz7/15-celebrities-get-super-real-about-their-mental-health-issues>

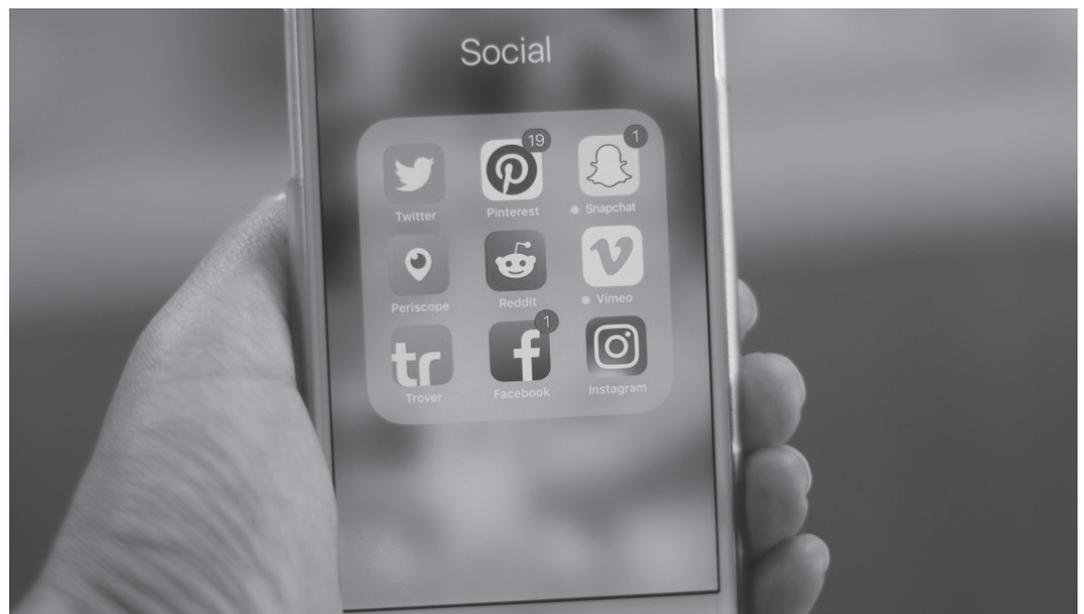
<sup>6</sup>

<https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/www.bps.org.uk/files/Policy/Policy%20-%20Files/Psychology%20and%20Media%20Production%20-%20Guidance%20for%20Commissioners%20and%20Producers.pdf>

When working in Parliament I saw the psychological harm caused by the relentless online targeting and the hostility communicated. Intelligent, resilient, confident people who present a calm presence and yet are crumbling behind the scenes, terrified and often in tears, concerned about leaving the safety of Parliament in fear of the unknown threat from the one of many trolls, either to themselves or to those who work with them not to mention their loved ones.

Despite my reassurance, professional help was required and without that, their mental health deteriorated and with it their rational thought process became blurred with some withdrawing from speaking out on important topics or questioned their own voting decisions.

When Jessy Nelson of Little Mix fame revealed her own battles with depression and the ramifications of the abuse she received on Twitter, it was news to many. She said 'OK, I'm just gonna ignore this'. It was the worst thing I could have done."<sup>7</sup> The trolls only got more vicious if she showed any signs of being upset, she says. "It was like the more people knew it affected me the more they wanted to do it".



What should have been the happiest time of her life became the complete opposite. As a result, she decided to come off Twitter, which whilst an understandable choice is disappointing because she is a successful strong young woman who has a voice and could use it there to make a real difference.

The fact is that many influencers and public figures feel that they are forced off social media, which has the impact of empowering those who target them as they have achieved their aim of intimidation and abuse. Equally, as in the example above, their voice is silenced, and they are no longer able to raise important issues via that medium.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bbcthree/article/919c481a-882c-44d7-826f-5e6a25537543>

## Defuse - The Online Bodyguard



Whilst the natural and more traditional method of ‘protecting’ an influencer or public figure is to wrap a protection team around them, this is not always the best use of resources within the UK setting. When we look at how politicians are protected, it is not through bodyguards.

One of my responsibilities when in Parliament was to make recommendations to the Home Office for those MPs at the highest level of risk who might benefit from protection. There are less than a dozen politicians who have bodyguards. Why? Well because whilst they are at risk, those risks are not best managed by the use of a bodyguard. My job was to mitigate or defuse these risks using less intrusive methods.

### **Are you at risk of physical harm?**

The truth is that very few people are at genuine risk of a physical attack, despite the volume of online hate and abuse. Most of the abuse and threats received are designed to be abusive and intimidate, to influence behaviour. Those that genuinely pose a threat are unlikely to make any threats and are termed Hunters.

Many influencers and public figures talk quite liberally of the ‘death threats’ they receive when in truth, from a security perspective they are unlikely to be genuine credible threats. The question is ‘How do you know who poses a threat from all the threats made?’ How do you distinguish the Howlers from the Hunters?

That is what Defuse specialises in and why Defuse stands out from the other providers. Defuse is a consultancy with genuine operational expertise in these matters, coupled with a forensic methodology to properly analyse these issues from a security perspective.

It is because of this that Defuse have devised The SAFER Model, an all-encompassing process to ensure that a full wraparound service is provided based on the genuine needs of an influencer or public figure being targeted or feeling vulnerable, back up by significant experience where it really matters....keeping influencers and public figures safe and ensuring they can continue to function at their very best in the high-pressure world they exist in.

**The SAFER Model**

The SAFER Model is designed to take the client on a journey, ensuring that all relevant information is identified and captured, assessed, analysed and then actioned.



**The first part of the model is the Search and seize element:**

This can be a stand-alone element but is of most value when part of the entire model. One of the key concerns is knowing what is 'out there' about you. Our research team, with significant expertise within the criminal and counter terrorist environment, will search the Internet to ascertain what is publicly available about you. If we can't find it, it is unlikely that anyone else can.

Much is made of the anonymity of the internet and using hidden servers, and that is true. Whilst we cannot promise we can identify everyone, and nor can anyone else, what we can guarantee is that we have a very good track record, and using the expertise we have, we know where to look and how to follow the trails that often give up these details.

This element forms part of the Digital Vulnerability Assessment we offer clients who want to protect their reputation and know what is online about them, perhaps some historical comments, pictures or videos that may come back to haunt them, destroying their careers, sponsorship opportunities and their reputation. It is the ultimate 'due diligence' check.

### **Assessing what we find.**

This where we assess the information we have found online. The importance of this is first and foremost to ascertain whether any communications received have reached the criminal threshold. The threshold is relatively high and without the knowledge of this, false promises can be made. Should you wish to report the findings to the police or social media platforms, Defuse has the experience to ensure that this is presented in the appropriate fashion to maximise a successful result. A key factor of doing this is to ensure the evidence is captured. Without doing this, it is usually lost for good and without the evidence of not just the message but the details of who sent it, where from and when, any case to prosecute will be significantly diminished.

The assessment facilitates a discussion of what has been identified to enable you to make a decision about what to do next. If the information found is potentially harmful to you, or your career we can then formulate a strategy to mitigate this.

### **What about the threats? How do I know if I am in danger? Analysis is the key here....and we do that Forensically!**

The next element is what Defuse specialises in. Our knowledge and experience of the forensic application of analysing threats and understanding where on the threats timeline the attacker may be is unique. Supported by some of the world's leading Forensic Psychologists, some of whom wrote the science behind our methodology, we can then properly analyse whether the person sending hostile communications poses a threat.

### **Such is our expertise; we are called in to train protection teams to recognise these flags.**

It is accepted that there are a number of pre-attack behaviours that when understood, can be identified and enable the interception of a planned attack. Those that attack are predators, be they terrorists, stalkers or others who because of significant mental health issues may pose a threat. This expertise helped to stop the 'next Jo Cox' attack on a sitting MP.

**In other words: it works and Defuse are the experts in this field!**

**Evaluation** is a conversation with you...and ensures you maintain control.

Once we have completed the elements we then evaluate, with you, what you want to do next. This ensures that you remain in control of the decision-making process and is often why clients come to Defuse rather than the Police.

We will talk through the options with you, in essence providing you with a SWOT analysis to enable you to make the decision that serves you best.

**Our purpose is to Resolve the issues and reassure you ensuring that you feel safer in public life.**

The final element is how we resolve the issue that not only you may have presented us with, but equally what we may have identified. Again, you are in control of this and we will not take any action without your permission, unless your life or that of another is in danger.

Once we have resolved the issues; we will provide you with the very best advice and guidance there is to ensure you feel safe and are reassured that you have the skills needed to stay safe.

Defuse can provide the best psychological support that there is, with specialists in stalking, operating under pressure and even ensuring you have the best health and fitness advice from those that have experience in working with the most elite organisations, and getting them back to their peak mental state as quickly as possible.

We also work with some of the UK's leading organisations with expertise in these matters and where they are charitable, we will make a donation on your behalf.

**The SAFER Model** works, ensuring that we cover all the risk areas, helping you not just feel safer but continuing to perform at your very best.

**Why you should choose Defuse? Because credibility counts!**

The expertise now provided by Defuse has been developed over a number of years of operating in the very heart of the increasingly hostile climate that encompassed Parliament. I set up and then ran the team tasked with keeping our Politicians safe, and successfully identified a threat to an MP which went on to dismantle a major extreme right-wing terrorist group.

Defuse has already been called upon to analyse a number of threats to influencers and public figures. These have included a threat to kill a very high-profile global icon. Defuse was able to ascertain that whilst the threat was not credible, there were diagnosable mental health issues present which would pose their own threats. The online profile of the person of interest was identified and Defuse was able to evidence that the target was in a different part of the country to the person making the threats, and then monitored this to provide early warning of any escalation.

Another client was a very high-profile businessperson going through a significant transaction. Defuse's services were retained for several months, providing security advice and working with the protection team, tasked with analysing hostile communications and providing intelligence updates and an investigative option.

As well as being a highly trained and experienced Counter Terrorist Security Co-ordinator (CT SecCo) tasked with putting together operational plans to prevent an attack on Royal, Governmental or other high profile events, I completed an MSc in Security Management with my dissertation focussing on the theories that now make up The SAFER Model being tested against the attacks on MPs in the 21st Century, which demonstrated that these theories are operationally applicable. In essence they work! I graduated from Liverpool John Moore's University with an MSc with Merit.



I was later invited to Harvard University to present at an event on the global threat to women in politics with other leading figures. Such is my expertise on the subject of and the abuse to influencers and public figures that I was invited to participate with Lord Bew's report titled 'Intimidation in Public Life'.<sup>8</sup>

More recently, I have been invited to engage with the Law Commission on changes in legislation with regards to misogyny becoming a hate crime as well as being asked to deliver a presentation to the Parliamentary Select Committee on the subject of anti-Semitism and the impact on female Jewish MPs.

I provide pro-bono advice to the Jo Cox Foundation on their security and personal safety matters.

<sup>8</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/666927/6.3637\\_CO\\_v6\\_061217\\_Web3.1\\_\\_2\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/666927/6.3637_CO_v6_061217_Web3.1__2_.pdf)



**Kim Leadbeater**, Jo's sister had this to say "I was instantly impressed with his calm demeanour, professional approach, and sensitivity to my situation. Philip has been a huge help in advising both The Jo Cox Foundation and myself personally on any concerns regarding safety and security. For our family, having someone we can turn to in this way has provided a great deal of comfort and reassurance, and I could not have asked for a better person than Philip to turn to for advice. He is honest, straight-talking and does what he says he will do. I am hugely grateful for the guidance Philip has given me so far, and I would recommend his services without hesitation"



**Baroness Shami Chakrabarti CBE, PC** (Shadow Attorney General) has also benefited from working with Philip and said of him "He contacted me having identified media activity which revealed personal details and photographs of my home, increasing my security vulnerability. Philip met with me and reassured me that he would take care of the matters. He facilitated a full security review of my home, and reviewed my online presence further identifying opportunities to mitigate any further vulnerabilities.

"Throughout this process, Philip kept me fully informed and ensured that I felt safe, reassuring me where necessary and prompting me to take action where appropriate. I have found him to be the consummate professional. He is an expert in respect of threats to public and high-profile figures and managing risk through practical solutions, and perhaps because of his long and distinguished policing career, understands the need to be compassionate and calm in all respects of privacy and confidentiality.



**Simon Causer CSyP, MSyL, Tech IOSH** Head of Security at City of London Corporation and Philip's former boss stated "Philip is an expert in problem solving threat emanating from the online environment. He has a unique skill set derived from several years of work with Members of Parliament and other high-profile individuals. There are few, if any, individuals in the country with the experience of Philip in this field of work".



Sky News called upon me to discuss the issues of Online Abuse following the tragic death of Caroline Flack:



ITV's This Morning Show invited me to join Lucy Alexander to discuss the issues of Cyberbullying and the consequences, where I talked in more detail of what to look out for and how to defuse these situations.'



## How can we work together to ensure you feel safer?

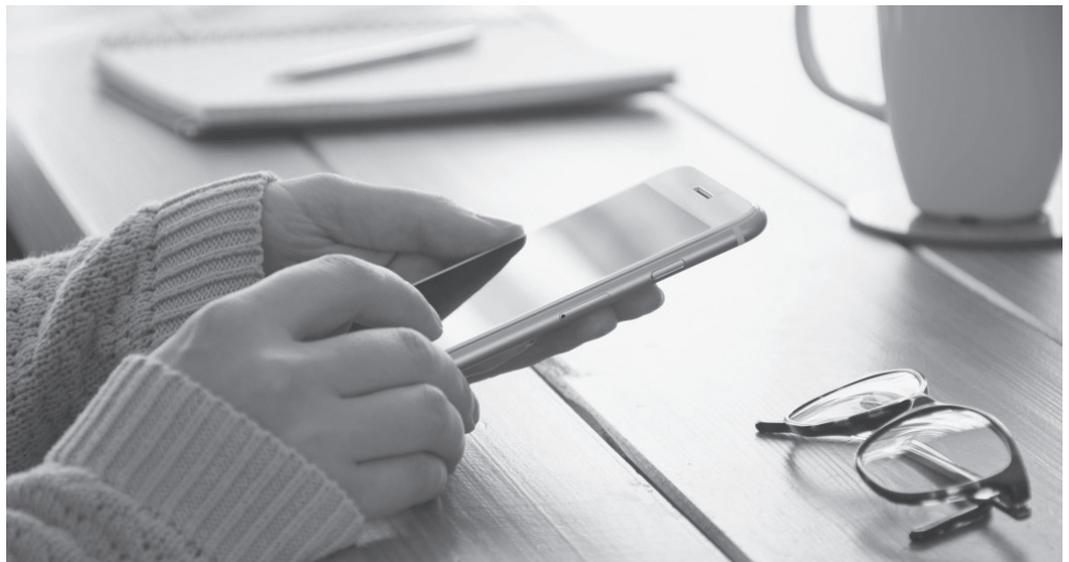
The best strategy is to be proactive so Defuse can help you feel safer before you become overwhelmed. By waiting, much of the harmful content you may want to refer to is likely to have disappeared. This can also include monitoring your social media accounts, live if necessary, to provide greater reassurance and where appropriate divert harmful content.

Everything we discuss is confidential.

### Step 1: Discovery Call:

This is complimentary 30-minute call, either via telephone or Zoom in which we will explore the areas where you feel most vulnerable? Online? At home? In Public? The purpose of the call is to establish how we can work together and how Defuse will make you feel safer. We will talk through the security and safety issues that concern you, the reasons why and any relevant history.

If we can solve the problem in this call, we will do so...free of charge and totally confidentially.



### Step 2: Let's Get Personal:

This is a chargeable 60 minute call, usually via telephone or Zoom. By this stage we will have both signed the Mutual Non-Disclosure Agreement, so can now share detailed information in total confidence. This call starts to look at specifics, such as abusive messages or other communications that are causing you concern or perhaps an individual who you are concerned about.

We look at specific areas that we may fast track to maximise your feeling of safety. If you are struggling emotionally or are feeling really anxious, we can get you the help you need with one of our experts who specialise in these areas straight away.

Equally, if you are feeling unsafe at home, one of our experts can come and complete a security assessment and start discussing options to ensure you are safe at home. We then move on to The SAFER Model.

### **Step 3: The SAFER Model**

The SAFER Model is unique to Defuse. It is a process which ensures that we provide you with the very best service.

The process enables us to **S**earch for and seize all relevant information to uncover whatever is 'out there' about you.

We then **A**ssess that information, to ascertain at what level it sits and what options you have; does it reach the criminal threshold? Is it a Hate Crime? Is there an imminent threat?

Once assessed we **F**orensically Analyse this to identify whether this is a made or posed threat and where on the 'pathway to violence' they may be. In essence it is during this phase we clarify whether this is a genuine threat and the level of risk you are at.

We then **E**valuate what can be done to guide you back to feeling safe again. Again, you maintain control, and through your choices we identify out next steps.

We then **R**esolve the issue and provide appropriate reassurance, to ensure you feel safe, are safe, and have the skills and tools to continue being safe.

This is in effect a 360-degree review of your safety and security and where appropriate your emotional wellbeing, with expert analysis.

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**Book your complimentary discovery call now to start the process and together we will ensure you not only feel safer, but that you are safer!**

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