

# The impact of Exceptional Experiences and disclosure on mental health and wellbeing

April 2024  
uNHIDDEN  
Berkeley Square, London



*"Humankind cannot bear very much reality."*

**T.S. Elliot**, Four Quartets

*"Tread softly because you tread on my dreams."*

**W.B. Yeats**, He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven



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## Executive Summary

In June 2021, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence of the US Government produced a report that stated that Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena (UAPs) are real, and concluded that they probably represent physical objects, have been shown to exhibit unusual flight characteristics and clearly pose a safety of flight issue. In 2023, Senators Schumer and Rounds introduced proposed legislation in the US Congress that referred to Non-Human Intelligence (NHI) more than 20 times. While the final version was substantially amended, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that President Biden signed into law in December 2023 contained the term “non-human intelligence,” the first such legislative reference in U.S. history. In March 2024, the All-domain Anomaly Resolution Office (AARO) published a report that found “no evidence...that any sighting of a UAP represented extraterrestrial technology,” but did not comment on the existence of “non-human intelligence” more broadly.

What all these governmental announcements and reports fail to address is the impact of UAPs on the mental health and wellbeing of individuals who have Exceptional Experiences and see things that they cannot explain. Real anxiety and distress may result from hyperbolic news coverage and pervasive stigma surrounding UAPs. uNHIDDEN was formed in summer 2023 to be an advocate for individuals who have had Exceptional Experiences and to promote better mental health practices around the UAP topic. Our Medical Advisory Board is comprised of practising doctors and clinical psychologists. We are here to find ways to support individual experiencers now and to make plans to deal with the possible ontological shock to society at large, should there be some form of disclosure.

This White Paper contains uNHIDDEN’s analysis of the difficulties that are currently faced by UAP experiencers when they try to access appropriate mental health care and support irrespective of whether their sightings turn out to have prosaic explanations. We also share our thoughts on the importance of a ‘controlled’ rather than a ‘catastrophic’ disclosure, and some of the steps that can be taken to make a controlled disclosure more likely. Government officials and healthcare providers will find value in many of our recommendations, which were gleaned from a review of the available literature and advice from doctors, psychologists and other professionals.

### Exceptional Experiences

According to a YouGov poll from 2021, 7% of Britons say that they have seen or experienced a UAP/UFO. Yet the stigma associated with reporting a sighting remains high. Despite huge advances in our understanding of mental health issues in other areas, UAP experiencers suffer a double harm: first, the frightening or disorientating nature of the experience itself; and second, having their attempts to share what they have seen with friends, family and the medical profession, rejected as a lie, a mistake or a sign of mental illness. Protocols developed by the Center for Information, Research and Counselling about Exceptional Experiences (CIRCEE) in France show, for example, the benefits of training therapists to adopt a non-judgemental approach to counselling patients who report having had Exceptional Experiences. Indeed, CIRCEE’s founder, Professor Thomas Rabeyron, crafted the definition of an Exceptional Experience to be:

*“a rare, spontaneous or provoked experience, involving from the subject's point of view a non-ordinary interaction with his or her environment. It often generates intense emotions, both positive and negative, stemming from its unusual and strange nature.”*

Such an experience may be objectively real, imagined or some combination; but in any case, the anxiety and distress to the individual is part of his or her ‘lived experience.’ Such individuals may need care, support and, in some cases, treatment.

Support for UAP experiencers is hindered by the fact that the UK Government refuses to recognise publicly that UAPs are real phenomena that have real consequences for real people. All questions related to the UAP topic to the UK Government seem to be met by its stock answer, dating back to Sir Bob Ainsworth's decision to close the Ministry of Defence's UFO desk in 2009: that in more than 50 years, the Ministry of Defence has found no evidence of a military threat from UAPs, UFOs, extraterrestrials or other such terms. A change of policy and a recognition of the reality of UAPs would provide legitimacy to people trying to seek help and make it far easier for the medical profession to provide care and treatment. How can doctors be expected to treat the impact of something that the UK Government will not even acknowledge? It would also help move the conversation forward if the UK Government recognised the possibility that not all Exceptional Experiences can be explained by prosaic psychological and/or environmental factors. This is part of moving toward a more non-judgmental approach.

### **Anxiety from the lack of reliable news stories covering UAPs**

The mainstream media (MSM) is remarkably reluctant to cover news stories about UAPs, and this leads to a lack of reliable information about the topic and the promotion of more 'fringe' sources such as X (formerly known as Twitter) and various niche podcasts. There is a dissonance between repeated UK Government denials and other sources of information – for example, videos of unidentified craft displaying flight characteristics beyond current human technology and confirmed as genuine by the U.S. Navy. Experiencers and people who have not personally experienced UAP sightings may react in different ways to the lack of proper and accurate news coverage. Both groups are also at risk of relying on less reputable sources of information and are vulnerable to hyperbole and deliberate manipulation. Internationally, governments have an opportunity to address the UAP issue now and provide a clear, consistent narrative on which people can start to rely. uNHIDDEN is playing its part, with a section titled 'The Facts' on its website that only includes evidence about UAPs that is entirely based on reliable and referenced sources.

### **Ontological shock and "controlled disclosure"**

Sociologist Anthony Giddens referred to ontological security as a sense of order and continuity in the way in which an individual sees the world. If an event occurs that is not consistent with the meaning of an individual's life, it will threaten that individual's ontological security – and such an event is an 'ontological shock'. The term has now been adopted within UAP circles for the shock of finding that humans are not alone in the universe.

Speaking at the Sol Symposium at the University of Stanford in November 2023, retired US Army Colonel Karl Nell set out a plan for what he termed "controlled disclosure." He presented a systematic programme of activities based around the governmental, humanities, scientific and business aspects of UAP disclosure. However, medical and psychological aspects were not included. uNHIDDEN believes that this is an omission that should be remedied.

uNHIDDEN's view is that a people-centric approach to UAP disclosure is essential, and action from various governments to consider how this can be best achieved is needed now. Just as doctors share news of a cancer diagnosis in a way that is both truthful and kind before following up with a programme of support, we should expect a UAP disclosure process to follow similar principles. At the heart of this process is the trust that exists between doctor and patient. We need to build the same trust between governments and their citizens in the context of UAP disclosure.

### **uNHIDDEN's five recommendations**

1. The UK Government should publicly acknowledge that UAP sightings and other forms of Exceptional Experiences are real, and that the people who have experienced them may need care and support.
2. The NHS and professional bodies should develop guidance for health and social care professionals, to make it easier for them to consult patients presenting with Exceptional Experiences in a non-judgmental and evidence-based manner.
3. The UK Government should provide credible information on the UAP topic to the public, and the media needs to play its part by reporting newsworthy stories about UAPs fairly and properly.
4. The UK Government should commission multidisciplinary research that considers both the medical and psychological aspects of how the general population might react to UAP disclosure, and identifies the most vulnerable individuals, groups, and communities, and what sort of help and support might be beneficial.
5. The UK Government should develop a plan for UAP disclosure that brings together multiple branches of government and community groups as a single, open, shared endeavour, putting people and their wellbeing first. This needs to be done in a way that builds trust.



## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 The origin of the term 'Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena'

It is said that people have seen strange things in the sky for millennia, perhaps for as long as humanity has been around. However, the phrase 'Unidentified Flying Object' was coined by the U.S. Air Force in 1952<sup>1</sup>, five years after the first widely publicised US sighting, reported by private pilot Kenneth Arnold in 1947, that gave rise to the term 'flying saucer'.

The term 'Unidentified Aerial Phenomenon' was preferred to UFOs by Dr Richard F Haines, psychologist and former Chief Scientist at NARCAP (National Aviation Reporting Center on Anomalous Phenomena), in his 1980 book titled *Observing UFOs*<sup>2</sup>. Haines wrote:

*"An Unidentified Aerial Phenomena, UAP, is the visual stimulus that provokes a sighting report of an object or light seen in the sky, the appearance and/or flight dynamics of which do not suggest a logical, conventional flying object and which remains unidentified after close scrutiny of all available evidence by persons who are technically capable of making both a technical identification as well as a common sense identification, if one is possible."*

UAP was redefined as 'Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena' in the 2022 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of the U.S., which was signed into law in December 2021. The change was made in recognition of the fact that the search for UAPs should include space and undersea phenomena, as well as objects seen in the air.

### 1.2 Developments around UAPs and Non-Human Intelligence – a recent timeline

The modern era of developments around UAPs began with the publication of a *New York Times* article by Leslie Kean, Ralph Blumenthal and Helene Cooper in December 2017. Headlined *Glowing Auras and 'Black Money': The Pentagon's Mysterious U.F.O. Program*<sup>3</sup>, the article revealed that, despite previous denials, the U.S. Government had been investigating UAPs through a program that the article called the Advanced Aerospace Threat Identification Program (AATIP) but was more correctly called the Advanced Aerospace Weapon System Application Program (AAWSAP).

In June 2021, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) produced an unclassified report<sup>4</sup> unequivocally stating that the U.S. Government is studying UAPs, and that some UAPs are physical objects that exhibit unusual flight characteristics and pose a genuine risk to flight safety. The classified full version of the ODNI's report has not been released to the public.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Airforce Declassification Office website. Article on 'UFOs' available at: [Air Force Declassification Office > Top Flight Documents > Unidentified Flying Objects \(af.mil\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> Source: NARCAP website. 'The definition of Unidentified Aerial Phenomena or UAP' by Ted Roe. Available at: [Definition of Unidentified Aerial Phenomena, UAP — National Aviation Reporting Center on Anomalous Phenomena \(narcap.org\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> Source: New York Times website. 'Glowing Auras and 'Black Money': The Pentagon's Mysterious U.F.O. Program' by Helene Cooper, Ralph Blumenthal and Lesley Kean, 16<sup>th</sup> December 2017. Available here: [Glowing Auras and 'Black Money': The Pentagon's Mysterious U.F.O. Program - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> Source: Office of the Director of National Intelligence website. 'Preliminary Assessment: Unidentified Aerial Phenomena, 25<sup>th</sup> June 2021. Available at: [Preliminary-Assessment-UAP-20210625.pdf \(dni.gov\)](#)

Subsequently, the U.S. Government enacted several rounds of UAP legislation and established the All-domain Anomaly Resolution Office (AARO), with the assigned mission to<sup>5</sup>:

*“minimize technical and intelligence surprise by synchronizing scientific, intelligence, and operational detection identification, attribution, and mitigation of unidentified anomalous phenomena in the vicinity of national security areas.”*

The ODNI has produced two further reports on UAPs, and there have been three U.S. Congressional UAP hearings (two in the House of Representatives and one in the Senate).

At a Congressional UAP hearing in July 2023, three witnesses gave evidence under oath as to their knowledge and sightings of UAPs and crash-retrieval programmes. These were Rt Commander David Fravor and Rt Lieutenant Ryan Graves, both former U.S. Navy pilots, and David Grusch (a former National Reconnaissance Officer Representative for the UAP Task Force, a previous U.S. Government UAP study programme). Mr Grusch testified to the following<sup>6</sup>:

*“I was informed, in the course of my official duties, of a multi-decade UAP crash retrieval and reverse engineering program to which I was denied access to those additional read-on’s. I made the decision based on the data I collected, to report this information to my superiors and multiple Inspectors General, and in effect become a whistleblower.”*

Mr Grusch’s complaint to the Inspector General of the Intelligence Community, Thomas Monaghan, was found to be:

*“credible and urgent.”<sup>7</sup>*

In July 2023, Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer, Senator Mike Rounds and others introduced the UAP Disclosure Act (UAPDA) as an amendment<sup>8</sup> to the 2024 NDAA. The UAPDA referred to the term “non-human intelligence” more than twenty times, and defined it as follows:

*“any sentient intelligent non-human lifeform regardless of nature or ultimate origin that may be presumed responsible for unidentified anomalous phenomena.”*

The amendment also stated several reasons why the legislation was necessary, including:

*“credible evidence and testimony indicates that Federal Government unidentified anomalous phenomena records exist that have not been declassified or subject to mandatory declassification review.”*

While the final version was substantially amended, the 2024 NDAA that President Biden signed into law in December 2023 contained the term “non-human intelligence,” which was the first such reference in U.S. legislative history.

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<sup>5</sup> Source: AARO website. Article headed ‘About AARO’. Available at: [About AARO](#)

<sup>6</sup> Source: [www.oversight.house.gov](http://www.oversight.house.gov). David Grusch’s opening statement to the House Oversight Committee Hearing on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2023. Available at: [Microsoft Word - Dave G HOC Speech FINAL For Trans \(house.gov\)](#)

<sup>7</sup> Source: *The Debrief* website. ‘Intelligence Officials Say U.S. has Retrieved Craft of Non-Human Origin’ by Lesley Kean and Ralph Blumental, 5<sup>th</sup> June 2023. Available at: [Intelligence Officials Say U.S. Has Retrieved Craft of Non-Human Origin - The Debrief](#)

<sup>8</sup> Source: Congress.gov website. The amendment text is available at: [S.Amdt.797 to S.2226 - 118th Congress \(2023-2024\) | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#)

Following the watering-down of the UAPDA, Senators Schumer and Rounds entered into a colloquy in the Senate, suggesting that future legislation will go beyond the UAP provisions of the 2024 NDAA. Senator Schumer said<sup>9</sup>:

*“The U.S. Government has gathered a great deal of information about UAPs over many decades but has refused to share it with the American people. That is wrong, and, additionally, it breeds mistrust. We have also been notified by multiple credible sources that information on UAPs has also been withheld from Congress, which if true is a violation of the laws requiring full notification to the legislative branch, especially as it relates to the four congressional leaders, defense committees, and the intelligence committee.”*

Speaking at the Sol Symposium at the University of Stanford in November 2023, retired Army Colonel Karl Nell set out a plan for ‘controlled disclosure,’ asserting the importance of managing the UAP narrative carefully for the sake of national security and global socio-economic stability. The alternative he suggested was ‘catastrophic disclosure,’ which would consist of an unmoderated release of information that could be massively disruptive and dangerous to society.

In March 2024, AARO published a report<sup>10</sup> that found

*“no evidence...that any sighting of a UAP represented extraterrestrial technology”*

but implicitly acknowledged that the UAP sightings themselves were real. The report did not discuss the possibility of ‘non-human intelligence,’ which is a broader term than ‘extraterrestrial.’ The report attracted significant criticism from many, for example including from former analyst at the Department of Defense Marik von Rennenkampff, who wrote<sup>11</sup>:

*“Unfortunately, the report from the Pentagon’s All-domain Anomaly Resolution Office (AARO) contains an array of striking omissions and one particularly egregious misrepresentation. The result is a misleading report which, like so much government UFO-related propaganda over seven decades, tells the reader just to move on, nothing to see here.”*

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<sup>9</sup> Source: Senate Democrats website. ‘Majority Leader Schumer And Republican Senator Mike Rounds Floor Colloquy On Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena Provisions In The NDAA And Future Legislation On UAPs’, 13<sup>th</sup> December 2023. Available here: [Majority Leader Schumer And Republican S... | The Senate Democratic Caucus](#)

<sup>10</sup> ‘Report on the Historical Record of U.S. Government Involvement with Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena, Volume 1, The Department of Defense All-Domain Anomaly Resolution Office, February 2024. Available at: [Unclassified Final DSD AARO Historical Report](#)

<sup>11</sup>Source: the Hill website ‘Pentagon’s flawed UFO report demands congressional action’, Marik von Rennenkampff, 15<sup>th</sup> March 2024. Available at: [Pentagon’s flawed UFO report demands congressional action | The Hill](#)

### 1.3 The absence of equivalent developments in the UK

In contrast to the U.S. Government, the UK Government's public position on UAPs has not changed for more than a decade. The topic was raised in the House of Lords on 30th June 2021<sup>12</sup>, a few days after publication of the ODNI's preliminary assessment on UAPs. Baroness Goldie, Minister of State at the Ministry of Defence, said:

*"We are of course aware of the US assessment. The MoD has no plans to conduct its own report into UAP because, in over 50 years, no such reporting indicated the existence of any military threat to the UK."*

This reference to the lack of "military threat" has been the formula used by the UK Government in relation to any question around UFOs, UAPs or extraterrestrials since the closure of the 'UFO Desk' at the Ministry of Defence in December 2009<sup>13</sup>. Papers declassified in 2013 show that the then-Secretary of State for Defence, Sir Bob Ainsworth, took this position based on advice from Carl Mantell<sup>14</sup> from the RAF's Air Command.

Correspondence with the UK Government since then follows this line regarding lack of "military threat," seemingly regardless of the question posed. For example, a London-based neuroscientist wrote to the Ministry of Defence to offer to help with research on pilots who may have seen UAPs. The reply he received from MOD Air Command Secretariat in June 2023 read as follows<sup>15</sup>:

*"While I thank you for your interest in conducting research on behalf of the Ministry of Defence (MOD), I must inform you that the MOD has no opinion on the existence of either extra-terrestrials, Unidentified Flying Objects (UFO) or Unidentified Aerial Phenomena (UAP)...In over 50 years, no sighting reported to the Department has indicated the existence of any military threat to the United Kingdom and it is deemed more valuable to prioritise MOD staff towards other Defence-related activities."*

This lack of willingness to engage with the public on matters of legitimate concern around UAPs pervades other areas of Government. For example, in August 2023, uNHIDDEN made a Freedom of Information Act request to the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA)<sup>16</sup>. Specifically, the request was as follows:

*"Please provide copies of any risk assessments (quantified or unquantified) that the Civil Aviation Authority has carried out to assure itself that the existing measures in place are sufficient to protect pilots and air passengers from any risks associated with Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena (UAPs). Please, further, provide copies of correspondence in relation to the risk from UAPs to and from air safety and regulatory bodies in the United States; and any guidance given to pilots about UAP risks."*

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<sup>12</sup> Hansard Volume 813, 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021

<sup>13</sup> Source: Daily Telegraph website. 'MoD department that investigated UFO sightings 'closed'' by Andrew Hough, 4<sup>th</sup> December 2009. Available at: [MoD department that investigated UFO sightings 'closed' \(telegraph.co.uk\)](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/ukpol/defence/2009/12/04/moD-department-that-investigated-ufo-sightings-closed/)

<sup>14</sup> Source: BBC Website. 'UFO sightings: Files explain why MoD closed down special desk', 21<sup>st</sup> June 2013. Available at: [UFO sightings: Files explain why MoD closed down special desk - BBC News](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-20130621-ufo-sightings-files-explain-why-moD-closed-down-special-desk)

<sup>15</sup> Private correspondence shared with uNHIDDEN dated 27<sup>th</sup> June 2023

<sup>16</sup> FOIA request made on 14<sup>th</sup> August 2023. The request and subsequent correspondence are available at: [Risk assessments on Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena \(UAPs\) - a Freedom of Information request to Civil Aviation Authority - WhatDoTheyKnow](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/risk-assessments-on-unidentified-anomalous-phenomena-uaps-a-freedom-of-information-request-to-civil-aviation-authority)

The response from the CAA was as surprising as it was brief:

*"Following a review of held information it has been determined, on the balance of probability, that the CAA holds no information within scope of the above original enquiry."*

uNHIDDEN's subsequent requests seeking an explanation as to why the CAA had not carried out a risk assessment or been in touch with U.S. authorities have not been answered. A request for a meeting was denied.

The closest the UK has ever come to disclosure was the publication of the *Condign Report*<sup>17</sup>, which was released after a Freedom of Information Act request in 2006. That report covered a time period beginning in 1996 and evaluated approximately 10,000 sightings and reports that had been gathered by DI55, a section of the Directorate of Scientific and Technical Intelligence (DSTI) within the Defence Intelligence Staff (DIS), which in turn was part of the Ministry of Defence (MoD). Interestingly, although the report downplayed both the defence threat of UAPs and the likelihood of extraterrestrial control, it concluded:

*"That UAP exist is indisputable. Credited with the ability to hover, land, take-off, accelerate to exceptional velocities and vanish, they can reportedly alter their direction of flight suddenly and clearly can exhibit aerodynamic characteristics well beyond those of any known aircraft or missile – either manned or unmanned."*

Perhaps the UK Government's overarching mindset when it comes to UFOs and the public was revealed by David West, who was then serving as the Ministry of Defence UFO Desk Officer based in a civilian branch of the MoD called "S6 (Air)". In his excellent book, *UFO Drawings from the National Archives*, UFO historian David Clarke notes<sup>18</sup>:

*"In his responses to letters from members of the public, West established the tone of bored detachment that would become a characteristic feature of statements made by the UFO desk during the half century that followed. For example, in 1958 he informed colleagues that 'for the most part we expect to be politely unhelpful' when asked what the MoD knew about UFOs."*

Many recent correspondents with the MoD on the UAP topic would, no doubt, recognise this sense of bored detachment and polite unhelpfulness in the responses that they have received (if they were lucky enough to receive a reply at all).

Finally, when considering the lack of developments in the UK compared to the US, it is worth noting the paucity of coverage of the UAP topic in the mainstream media. Amongst the very limited media interest there has been, David Grusch gave an interview to BBC Radio 4's *World Tonight* on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2023.<sup>19</sup> Interestingly, in relation to the UK and UAPs, Mr Grusch said:

*"It does cross into other countries and other allies to include the Five Eyes Alliance..."*

The UK is a Five Eyes Alliance member, along with the U.S., Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

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<sup>17</sup> Source: BBC website. 'UFO study finds no sign of aliens', by Mark Simpson, 7<sup>th</sup> May 2006. Available at: [BBC NEWS | UK | UFO study finds no sign of aliens](#)

<sup>18</sup> 'UFO Drawings from the National Archives', David Clarke, pp13, (2017), Four Corners Irregulars

<sup>19</sup> David Grusch World Tonight Interview to Julian Worricker, 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2023, transcript available here: [Grusch on BBC radio 4 - Aug 3 2023 \(otter.ai\)](#)

Further evidence of the likelihood that information about UAPs has been shared across the Five Eyes members comes from the letter<sup>20</sup> sent by Canadian MP Larry Maguire on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2023 and addressed to Canadian Defence Minister Anita Anand. Mr Macguire wrote that recovered UAP foreign material

*“is studied through the Five Eyes Foreign Material Program (FMP).”*

There is some evidence, however, that the UK Government is giving thought to how a possible announcement on the existence extraterrestrial life might be handled. At a hearing of the Science, Innovation and Technology Select Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2023, Stephen Metcalfe MP asked whether the Government had a plan for such an eventuality. Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, Michelle Donelan MP replied as follows<sup>21</sup>:

*“The communication plan would depend on the exact specifics of the hypothetical that we are talking about and how it would play out, and would also be a cross-Government undertaking with particular Cabinet Office involvement.”*

Sitting beside her, Permanent Secretary Sarah Munby added:

*“We have a small effort within our space team looking at the question of how we would handle such an announcement.”*

Ms Donelan added that the whole question of an announcement was taken “appropriately seriously.” In addition, she noted that there were no plans to hold hearings on the UAP topic in the UK.

It is worth noting, though, that, back in 2010, the Royal Society held a Discussion Meeting on the subject of the detection of extra-terrestrial life and the consequences for science and society. A related paper the following year (Dominik & Zarnecki (2011))<sup>22</sup> stated:

*“If extra-terrestrial life happens to be detected, a coordinated response that takes into account all the related sensitivities should already be in place.”*

More than a decade later, then, the UK Government appears to be only at the early stages of developing a plan and nothing is available in the public domain. We return, in Section 4, to the importance of this being done in a way that brings together multiple branches of government and community groups as a single, open, shared endeavour.

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<sup>20</sup> Source: CBC website. “Manitoba MP suggests Canada, allies aware of 'recovered UAP' or UFO materials in note to defence minister” by Bryce Hoyer, 25<sup>th</sup> June 2023. Available at: [Manitoba MP suggests Canada, allies aware of 'recovered UAP' or UFO materials in note to defence minister | CBC News](#)

<sup>21</sup> Source: transcript of oral evidence given to the House of Commons Science, Innovation and Technology Committee on the work of the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, 13<sup>th</sup> December 2023. Available at: [committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/14006/pdf/](#).

<sup>22</sup> Dominik, M., & Zarnecki, J, ‘The detection of extraterrestrial life and the consequences for science and society’, Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A, 13<sup>th</sup> February 2011. Available at: [The detection of extra-terrestrial life and the consequences for science and society | Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A: Mathematical, Physical and Engineering Sciences \(royalsocietypublishing.org\)](#)

## 1.4 About uNHIDDEN

uNHIDDEN was established in summer 2023 to support good mental health, reduce anxiety around Exceptional Experiences and to encourage a better, kinder disclosure process. An Exceptional Experience may be real, imagined or some combination; but the anxiety and distress is all too real, and what has happened is part of the individual's 'lived experience.' These individuals need care, support and, in some cases, treatment. The general population will need support should the disclosure of the existence of non-human intelligence take place. Good mental health and well-being requires considerable care in the way that any such announcement is handled, and well-formulated strategies for the aftermath.

uNHIDDEN has the following six main functions and purposes:

1. To promote supportive, fact-based conversations around Exceptional Experiences.
2. To develop relevant resources for counsellors and other health and social care professionals to draw upon in their work.
3. To liaise with other organisations in the mental health arena to bring attention to the importance and seriousness of this topic.
4. To coordinate with other legitimate organisations working in the field to promote positive action that will improve wellbeing and outcomes.
5. To campaign for a better, kinder disclosure, including undertaking research on 'ontological shock' and developing strategies for dealing with it, at individual, family, community and societal levels.
6. To serve as a trusted resource for anyone who is worried about exceptional things that they have seen.

uNHIDDEN is a mental health and wellbeing charity, not a UAP or UFO group. We are led by a Medical Advisory Board comprised of practising doctors and clinical psychologists who are responsible for guiding our organisation's policy development and decisions relating to patient care. Our Medical Advisory Board is a safeguard to ensure that uNHIDDEN is ethically sound and follows best medical practice.

Our trustee board is made up of the following:

John Priestland FInstP, CPhys, FICE – Chairman  
Dr Vinod Arujuna, MBBCh, MBA  
Dr Rachel Pugh FRCP

Our Medical Advisory Board is made up of the following:

Dr Daniel Stubbings BA, Hons, MPsych(clin), Ph.D., PgCTHE, HCPC, CPsychol, AFBPsS, FHEA  
Dr Rachel Pugh FRCP  
Dr Daniel Weaver BSc MBBCh

uNHIDDEN is also pleased to be supported by some leading figures who share our values and contribute to our mission. These Ambassadors join our "all hands" meetings and are fully involved in our work. Our uNHIDDEN Ambassadors are:

Sean Cahill, retired U.S. Navy Chief Master-at-Arms  
Alex Dietrich, retired U.S. Navy Fighter Pilot  
Rear Admiral (U.S. Navy Retired) and Oceanographer Tim Gallaudet  
Dr Beatriz Villarroel, Astronomer

We also have a number of other volunteers working with us, some of whom make up uNHIDDEN's Community Engagement Group and Development Committee.

uNHIDDEN aims to work positively and proactively with other organisations and governments to help educate, support and (where possible) reassure the people affected by the UAP/NHI topics. We are not, at least at present, a care-providing delivery organisation. However, we believe that purposeful and serious action by a civilian group can make a difference. This is what we are trying to achieve.

### **1.5 About this White Paper**

This White Paper has been put together to explain why there is a need for a better and more proactive approach to the care of people affected by Exceptional Experiences. In this White Paper, we set out our recommendations for the development of strategies for a kinder, more people-centric disclosure, should this take place. We set out the evidence of that need and make a number of recommendations as to what should be done, largely by parts of the UK Government. Our recommendations set out the actions to be taken in order to improve the co-ordination and delivery of care now, and to step up the planning and preparedness for possible disclosure in the future.

We welcome constructive comments on this White Paper and the recommendations in particular. Please send these to [contact@unhidden.org](mailto:contact@unhidden.org). We want to refine the analysis and recommendations further based on the feedback and information we receive.



## 2. Exceptional Experiences

### 2.1. What do we mean by Exceptional Experiences?

According to a YouGov poll from May 2021,<sup>23</sup> one in fourteen Britons (7%) say that they have seen a UFO. Many respondents also have a family member (6%), friend (6%) or someone else (6%) they know who says they have seen one. This means that, overall, one in five Britons (20%) say that they, or someone they know, have seen a UFO.

This statistic, while higher than many may expect, offers no indication of the type and nature of the claimed experience, which may range from a simple sighting of something unusual in the sky to a report of being abducted.

A more recent study<sup>24</sup> from March 2021 and commissioned by Blaze TV (a British free-to-air TV channel) suggested that 11% of the British public believe they have seen a UFO. 31% of respondents also said that there should be a dedicated task force for dealing with extraterrestrial threats.

A much earlier study, by MORI in February 1998<sup>25</sup>, asked 721 adults aged 18+ across Great Britain about their experiences of the paranormal. 37% said that they personally had experiences of ghosts; 35% said that they had experienced telepathy; and the figures for premonition/Extra Sensory Perception (ESP) and out-of-body experiences were 41% and 21%, respectively.

What links UFO/UAP sightings and paranormal experiences is that both are examples of Exceptional Experiences, a term that was defined by Rabeyron et al (2010)<sup>26</sup> as follows:

*"An exceptional experience is usually a rare, spontaneous or provoked experience, involving from the subject's point of view a non-ordinary interaction with his or her environment. It often generates intense emotions, both positive and negative, stemming from its unusual and strange nature."*

Rabeyron quotes Ross<sup>27</sup> (1992) in stating that more than half of people say they have had an 'Exceptional Experience' in their lifetime, a figure that also appears in the results of a Gallup poll<sup>28</sup> from 1991. This

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<sup>23</sup> Source: YouGov website. 'Half of Britons think aliens exist – and 7% claim to have seen an UFO', YouGov, 25<sup>th</sup> June 2021. Available at: [Half of Britons think aliens exist – and 7% claim to have seen an UFO | YouGov](#)

<sup>24</sup> Source: Engineering and Technology website. 'UFOs hovering in the minds of the British public, survey reveals', 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2021. Available at: [UFOs hovering in the minds of the British public, survey reveals | Engineering and Technology Magazine \(theiet.org\)](#)

<sup>25</sup> Source: IPSOS website. 'Paranormal Survey', 1<sup>st</sup> February 1998. Available at: [Paranormal Survey | Ipsos](#)

<sup>26</sup> Rabeyron T, Chouvier B and Le Maléfan P, 'Clinical approach of exceptional experiences: From trauma to paranormal solution', L'évolution psychiatrique 75 (2010) 633–65. Available here: [Clinique des expériences exceptionnelles : du trauma à la solution paranormale - ScienceDirect](#)

<sup>27</sup> Ross C, 'Paranormal Experiences in the General Population' 1992, The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease, Vol 80(6) pp: 357-361

<sup>28</sup> Source: Center for Inquiry website. 'Belief in Paranormal Phenomena Among Adult Americans', George H Gallup Jr & Frank Newport, Winter 1991. Available here: [cdn.centerforinquiry.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/29/1991/01/22165217/p36.pdf](#)



*"Participants reporting recovered memories of alien abduction were more prone than control participants to exhibit false recall..."*

It is noteworthy that Clancy starts with the premise that the traumatic events in question "are unlikely to have occurred."

Indeed, Christopher C French's article in *The Psychologist*, the journal of the British Psychological Society, from 2015<sup>35</sup> summarises the conventional thinking around Exceptional Experiences connected with UAPs and NHI:

*"The most obvious explanation is that they are suffering from false memories, and there is increasing evidence to support such a claim."*

French goes on to suggest sleep paralysis as an explanation for other aspects of the abduction narrative, including "seeing a UFO, having a 'missing time' experience, or finding puzzling scars on one's body."

However, what is the impact on the bond of trust between psychologist and patient if the starting point for a consultation is a denial of the reality of the patient's testimony? It is difficult to identify other circumstances where patients present with accounts of distressing events that are systematically denied by psychologists and other medical professionals. How would it be if the standard response to historic sexual abuse was that it was due to false memories? The key question is less the absolute truth of what is reported by a patient, but rather whether the medical and psychological needs of patients presenting with Exceptional Experiences are being met. We turn to this key question in the next section.

## 2.2 Stigma and lack of care for people who have Exceptional Experiences

According to Psychology Today, shame is defined as<sup>36</sup>:

*"a self-critical emotion, according to which individuals display a negative consideration of themselves."*

The related concept of stigma is defined by Dolezal (2022)<sup>37</sup> as follows:

*"Stigma is a socialized conception of what is disgraceful, unacceptable or abnormal within a particular social group, and being marked as stigmatized does not merely designate someone as different, but denotes them as profoundly discredited, denigrated, devalued and disgraced."*

The social ostracism that comes from stigma – and the shame it causes – leads to psychological isolation.

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<sup>35</sup> French, C, 'Close Encounters of the Psychological Kind', *The Psychologist*, 15<sup>th</sup> September 2015. Available at: [Close encounters of the psychological kind | BPS](#)

<sup>36</sup> Redaelli, S., 'The Psychology of Shame', *Psychology Today*, 27<sup>th</sup> September 2020. Available at: [The Psychology of Shame | Psychology Today United Kingdom](#)

<sup>37</sup> Dolezal, L, "Shame, Anxiety and Clinical Encounters", *J Eval Clin Pract.* 2022 Oct; 28(5): 854–860. Available at: [Shame anxiety, stigma and clinical encounters - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)

Lazare (1987)<sup>38</sup> suggests that this experience of stigma and shame may extend to the medical system itself, and that visits to doctors' offices and hospitals can be:

*"potentially humiliating physical and psychological exposure. Patients respond by avoiding the healthcare system, withholding information, complaining, and suing."*

He adds that clinicians themselves can feel shamed in these medical encounters.

Undoubtedly, there is stigma in relation to sightings of UAPs and shame among those who try to report them. For example, testifying at the July 2023 Congressional hearing, Ryan Graves suggested that only 5% of sightings by pilots were reported, as they were fearful of retribution and/or being taken off flight status if they came forward. As Graves put it:<sup>39</sup>

*"The stigma attached to UAP is real and powerful and challenges national security. It silences commercial pilots who fear professional repercussions, discourages witnesses. It is only compounded by recent government claims questioning the credibility of eyewitness testimony."*

Research by Dr Daniel Stubbings<sup>40</sup>, a member of the uNHIDDEN Medical Advisory Board, suggests that only 28% of participants reported their sighting anywhere and 14% used a UFO reporting organisation, which suggests that events are vastly under-reported.

Further evidence of the stigma that exists even in official circles is available in the NASA's UAP Independent Study Team (UAPIST) report<sup>41</sup>, which was published in September 2023. The report's authors write:

*"The negative perception surrounding the reporting of UAP poses an obstacle to collecting data on these phenomena."*

So serious is the stigma that even some of the very scientists commissioned by NASA to write it suffered directly from their public association with the UAP issue. The report expresses this as follows:

*"At least one scientist serving on the study team reported receiving negative (hate) mail from colleagues due to their membership. Others were ridiculed and criticised on social media... These experiences further confirm the negative stigma associated with studying unusual or unexplained phenomena."*

If pilots and scientists on a Government-led study feel pressure of this nature, is it any wonder that members of the public who have Exceptional Experiences feel reluctant to come forward?

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<sup>38</sup> Lazare A. Shame and humiliation in the medical encounter. Arch Intern Med. 1987;147:1653–1658. Available at: [Shame and humiliation in the medical encounter - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/3781111/)

<sup>39</sup> Transcript of Ryan Graves' testimony to the House of Representatives Oversight Committee. Available at: [House Hearing on UFOs & Government Conspiracy | Transcripts \(rev.com\)](https://www.house.gov/committees/oversight/documents/20230727/115166/115166.pdf)

<sup>40</sup> Stubbings, D., Ali, S. & Wong, A, 'Who Sees UFOs? The Relationship Between Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena Sightings and Personality Factors', Journal of Scientific Exploration, 2024, Vol 38, No 1.

<sup>41</sup> NASA Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena Independent Study Team Report (September 2023). Available at: [uap-independent-study-team-final-report.pdf \(nasa.gov\)](https://www.nasa.gov/pdf/20230901main_uap-independent-study-team-final-report.pdf)

Author Paul Sinclair writes movingly in his book *Night People*<sup>42</sup> about his experience of ‘seeing’ a group of grey aliens around his bed one night and receiving a “series of bizarre punched out lesions” on his back behind his right shoulder blade (to quote the medical notes). The medical notes also record that his “shirt was intact.”

Mr Sinclair describes the frustration he felt on presenting at Bridlington Hospital Accident & Emergency Department and telling the doctor that he had woken up with the wounds. The doctor did not believe him, noting that they were serious injuries and penetrated deep below the surface, so he would undoubtedly have been aware of them when they were inflicted upon him. Sinclair explains his reluctance to speak freely:

*“I could have screamed with frustration, I wanted to tell him the truth but knew that it would make my situation even worse. It was better to let him think I was a liar than to say what really happened and risk having the words ‘mental illness’ added to my notes.”*

Since its formation in summer 2023, uNHIDDEN has received numerous messages from people who say that they have experienced strange things and are not able to have the open conversations about these experiences that they feel they need. For example:

*“Would it be possible to talk to somebody in relation to certain unexplained experiences of mine?... Those phenomenas are deeply concerning me, and I just assume that I need to talk about in [sic] in a non-judgemental manner.”*

*“My name is [removed] and I’m an experienter...With this comes a great deal of anxiety, from my experiences and the information they have released. I have mentioned this in therapy to fall on deaf ears so I’m grateful for you guys starting this [i.e uNHIDDEN].”*

*“I am someone who has often tried to speak about the phenomena and the latest developments with others but have usually been ignored., shut down or had friends and acquaintances distance from me because I have pursued the topic socially.”*

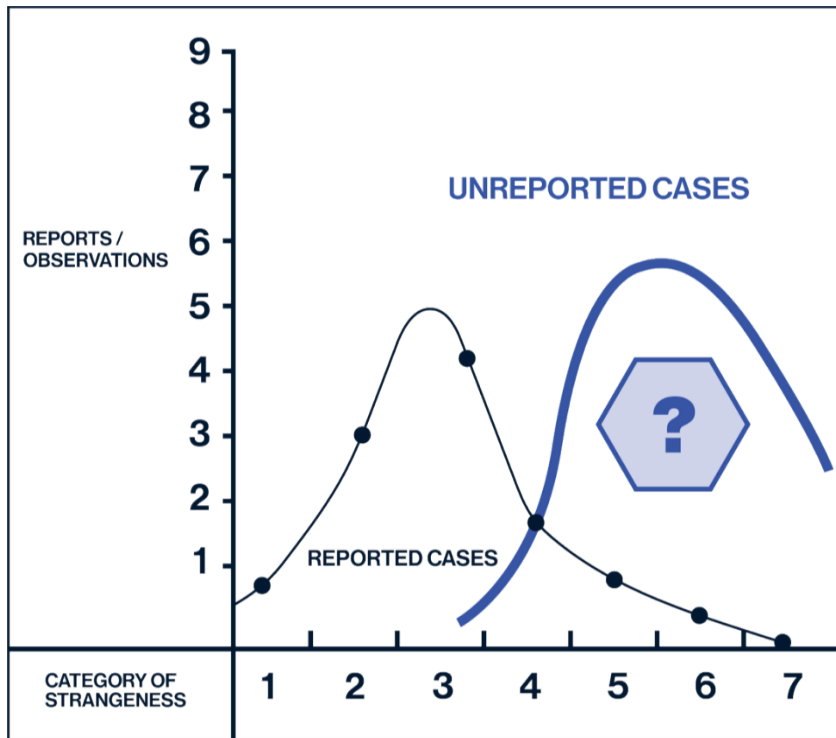
*“I have nobody to talk to about my experiences of NHIs etc.”*

*“I am very concerned for people who experience for the first time and have nowhere to turn.”*

uNHIDDEN is not able to undertake therapy sessions itself, nor refer patients to therapists. However, these messages demonstrate a significant unmet demand for therapy, care and support for UAP experiencers, driven in part by stigma.

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<sup>42</sup> ‘Night People’, Paul Sinclair, 2020, Truth Proof Publishing, pp116-123



Source: Jacques Vallée’s presentation to the Sol Symposium and Paris Echoes conference

Speaking at the Sol Symposium at the University of Stanford in November 2023, the distinguished researcher Jacques Vallée described a scale for the level of ‘strangeness’ connected with various UAP sightings, ranging from low ‘strangeness’ (Level 1) to high ‘strangeness’ (Level 7).

More than 50% of experiences went unreported in all seven categories, but Vallée’s research showed that people were most likely to report at Levels 2-3. At Level 1, a UAP experiencer may not regard it as significant enough to be worth reporting. Above Level 3, the proportion of people who report what they saw falls sharply. Perhaps this is because an experiencer may simply not have the words or concepts needed to express what has happened to them when the experience is highly unusual in nature. As such, there may be a significant proportion of unreported UAP cases, and new strategies and approaches may well be needed.

Building on Jacques Vallée’s wider body of work, it is worth noting the CAPELLA<sup>43</sup> data warehouse that includes 248,141 reports of UAP sightings occurring from 593BC to the present time. These are broken down into four classifications: (i) ‘flyby’ events (48%), (ii) ‘close encounters’ (31%), (iii) ‘manoeuvre’ events (15%) and (iv) ‘anomalies’ (6%). This is an extraordinarily comprehensive and detailed resource that could be highly valuable to help inform new approaches to understand and support affected individuals. It is also an overwhelming number and variety of cases to all be attributed to false memory syndrome, as the conventional psychological response would have us believe. (Indeed, approximately 0.6% of sightings are correlated with radar data). There appears to be considerable merit in joining up this more technical

<sup>43</sup> Details of the CAPELLA classification system are included in ‘Inside the US Government Covert UFO Programme: Initial Revelations’, James Lacatski, Colm Kelleher and George Knapp, RTMA LLC, (2023) pp177-182

approach to UAP sightings with the medical and therapy dimension, such that doctors collaborate with physical scientists and engineers to help increase understanding and deliver better patient outcomes.

The CAPELLA data warehouse also includes the statistic that approximately 0.5% of sightings reported a physiological reaction by the witnesses. Linking this figure, the 7% of people who have seen UAPs from the 2021 YouGov survey and there being 44,792,013<sup>44</sup> adults in England, one reaches the statistic that there may be 15,677 adults who have been affected physiologically – perhaps injured – by UAPs. This is not an inconsequential number.

We note the lack of research into the health-related effects of UAPs. One study that has been undertaken was by Worsham et al (2022) into the association between UFO sightings and emergency department visits. The paper noted:

*“The possible associations between UFO sightings—which may reflect nearby extraterrestrial beings, technology, or activity—and human health remain unknown despite the frequency with which sightings are reported.”*

The authors go on to note that UFO sightings were not associated with increases in ED visits for heart attacks or cardiac arrests, psychosis, or respiratory complaints, so there is no direct correlation reported. In short, uNHIDDEN notes that people who have Exceptional Experiences have the ‘double whammy’ of, first, having an unusual experience that may be frightening, and then, secondly, being disbelieved and stigmatised by their friends, family and potentially their own doctor. What can be done to standardise and regularise the pathway for triage, diagnosis and treatment for individuals with Exceptional Experiences, and how can coming forward to seek help be made less intimidating and worrisome?

### 2.3 The need for guidance and support for practitioners around Exceptional Experiences

The Universal Declaration of Ethical Principles for Psychologists<sup>45</sup> sets out a moral framework and generic set of ethical principles for psychology organisations worldwide. It has four simple principles:

*Principle I: Respect for the Dignity of Persons and Peoples*

*Principle II: Competent Caring for the Well-Being of Persons and Peoples*

*Principle III: Integrity*

*Principle IV: Professional and Scientific Responsibilities to Society*

The four pillars of medical ethics are: autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice. These ethical principles form the basis of clinical judgement and decision-making when medical professionals are confronted with moral problems. However, while these pillars offer a common moral code relevant to ethical issues in a healthcare setting, they do not provide specific rules or guidelines which doctors can refer to. For this reason, various medical associations and organisations, such as the General Medical Council (GMC), have developed a comprehensive ethical system to which all licensed doctors must adhere

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<sup>44</sup> Source: Local Government Association website. Available here: [Population, all persons aged 18 and over in England | LG Inform \(local.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>45</sup> Source: website of the International Union of Psychological Science. Available at: [Universal Declaration of Ethical Principles for Psychologists - International Union of Psychological Science \(iupsys.net\)](#)

and consult when facing an ethical dilemma. The GMC's 'Good Medical Practice' document<sup>46</sup> sets out the standards of care expected of all medical professionals, including:

- making the care of patients the first concern;
- providing a good standard of practice and care, and working within competence;
- working in partnership with patients and supporting them to make informed decisions about their care;
- treating colleagues with respect and helping to create an environment that is compassionate, supportive and fair;
- acting with honesty and integrity and being open if things go wrong; and
- protecting and promoting the health of patients and the public.

The above standards would seem entirely consistent with providing care and support to people who have had Exceptional Experiences, yet the reality is rather different.

Doctors and clinical psychologists to whom uNHIDDEN has spoken suggest that it is difficult to know how best to respond to a patient presenting with an account of an Exceptional Experience. This is especially the case in primary care settings with time limitations. One General Practitioner we spoke to<sup>47</sup> said:

*"We are trained to take a focused history exam and then make a clinical judgement, usually along the lines of:*

- 1. Is there something here I can treat?*
- 2. Is there something here I need to investigate?*
- 3. Does this person need referral to secondary care?*
- 4. (Increasingly), will secondary care reject the referral despite being an appropriate referral?*

*So the default contact that people who have had Exceptional Experiences have with a GP (especially if in a large practice where there is little continuity) is going to be brief and it is probably a difficult forum to explore sensitive topics like this. Additionally, psychiatrists and CMHTs [Community Mental Health Teams] who have much longer appointments to build rapport and obtain histories are thin on ground and difficult to refer to."*

A clinical psychologist we spoke to<sup>48</sup> stated that he tries to adopt a non-judgmental approach to patients with Exceptional Experiences, but he is worried that if he strays from the line that allegations of UAP encounters are caused by anything other than recognised prosaic explanations, then he will be open to criticism from his colleagues, especially if his cases are reviewed. In particular, he is concerned about the suggestion that a non-judgmental approach may be seen as actually supporting or encouraging the patient in maintaining a view that the Exceptional Experience was real. He believes this could risk his competence to practise with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). Of course, psychological

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<sup>46</sup> Source: General Medical Council 'Good medical practice' (2024). Available at: [good-medical-practice-2024---english-102607294.pdf \(gmc-uk.org\)](https://www.gmc-uk.org/good-medical-practice-2024---english-102607294.pdf)

<sup>47</sup> Source: Private conversation with uNHIDDEN

<sup>48</sup> Source: private conversation with uNHIDDEN



therapy is supposed to be non-judgmental; but when it comes to UAPs, a pre-judgment that the account is not real has been made.

In contrast, Rabeyron (2021)<sup>31</sup> puts forward his methodology (Psychodynamic Psychotherapy focused on Anomalous Experiences (PPAE)) based on a properly non-judgmental and open listening approach, built upon phenomenological exploration, subjective inscription and subjective integration of the anomalous experience. He describes the CIRCEE approach in the following way:

*“Overtly, we listen to the patient in an open and non-judgmental attitude in order to increase their ability to speak freely of an experience that was not described before due to the fear of being considered crazy. Implicitly, we tell the patient “Here, you can say everything you want, even experiences that seem impossible.” This attitude also suggests that we “take seriously” what the person is saying in order to help the expression of all the emotions linked to the experience, in particular feelings of fear, culpability, and shame, that were not expressed before.”*

The CIRCEE approach also aims to ‘depathologise’ the Exceptional Experience. The need for this is clearly established by Roxburgh & Evenden (2021) in their book, ‘What is Paranormal?’<sup>49</sup> which includes a chapter titled ‘They daren’t tell people: therapists’ experiences of working with clients who report anomalous experiences.’ The authors conducted semi-structured face-to-face interviews with eight therapists who had worked with at least one client reporting an Exceptional Experience (referred to therein as AEs [Anomalous Experiences]). The authors concluded that:

*“Participants [i.e. the therapists] felt that clients were apprehensive about disclosure of AEs due to fears about how AEs might be interpreted. Findings highlight the importance of therapists exploring the meaning of AEs with clients, rather than imposing an explanation and having access to accurate and reliable information about AEs.”*

Further evidence of the unpreparedness of clinicians to deal with patients presenting with Exceptional Experiences comes from Corbeau (2004),<sup>50</sup> who reports a study conducted with 640 mental health practitioners in the Netherlands. Nearly half of these clinicians responded that their patients reported anomalous experiences, but four out of five also reported a lack of information about this topic. Similarly, academic researchers in the field of anomalous experiences report that they are ill-equipped to deal with the psychological distress that negative experiences of this kind can produce (Coelho et al., 2008)<sup>51</sup>.

Rabeyron (2021) talks about many people having an intense fear that they are going crazy after an Exceptional Experience, a fear that he describes as not without foundation. He notes:

*“...some of these experiences are confused with or reduced to a medical condition. This pathologization of anomalous [or ‘exceptional’] experiences can sometimes even induce a “secondary trauma” when the person attempts to share such an experience and has the feeling that it is reduced to a mental disorder.”*

To reassure patients, Rabeyron adds:

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<sup>49</sup> Roxburgh, E and Evenden R, ‘What is Paranormal?’ 2021, Routledge

<sup>50</sup> Corbeau I. (2004). ‘Psi in de geestelijke gezondheidszorg. Tijdschrift Voor’ Parapsychol. 71, 10–15.

<sup>51</sup> Coelho C., Tierney I., Lamont P. (2008). Contacts by distressed individuals to UK parapsychology and anomalous experience research units—A retrospective survey looking to the future. Eur. J. Parapsychol. 23, 31–59

*"We usually explain that such experiences do not mean they are becoming crazy and that many people have experienced similar things. This can seem obvious, but in certain situations, it might bring a real relief because the stigmatization of these experiences can be particularly pronounced."*

CIRCEE has developed a counselling service in which four clinical psychologists provide therapy to around 95 patients per year. People who wish to share their Exceptional Experiences contact CIRCEE through its website. Phone or video conference interviews are then available. CIRCEE considers it very important to schedule several sessions with each patient – typically three to ten, but more if deemed necessary. UAP sightings account for about 6% of interview requests at the counselling service.

Lansley & Rabeyron<sup>52</sup> explain that once a climate of trust has been created with the patient, there is a higher likelihood that the patient will share the more 'valuable' (from a psychological perspective) aspects of the experience, which allows the therapist to understand the "subjective attribution" and the "psychic reality" of the person who is reporting it. They explain:

*"The "non-judgmental space" proposed during the interviews offers the possibility of deploying and developing the whole experience from a psychological point of view and not just the "objective" description of the UFO: what are the feelings related with UFO encounters or alien abductions? In what context did the observation take place? Had the person experienced any unusual events, either before or after the experience? What impact did it have on their life? What is their interpretation of their experience?"*

## 2.4 Observations and recommendations around care for Exceptional Experiences

uNHIDDEN has formulated suggestions to make it easier for people to have conversations about UAPs and non-human intelligence. By turning UAPs into a 'safe' topic, the stigma associated with it will reduce as more people are prepared to talk about it.

One of the inspirations for uNHIDDEN is a charity in the construction sector called Mates In Mind. Construction has a suicide rate of four times equivalent industries, and Mates In Mind is making it easier for construction workers to talk about depression and mental health and to ask each other how they really feel. uNHIDDEN is doing something similar in the world of UAPs. For example, our '#ChatUAP' campaign, which we launched in March 2024, shares ideas and best practice for starting a conversation about UAPs. We are also sharing participants' reflections on how things have gone when they have tried to raise the UAP topic. There is no one fail-safe way to have a good conversation about UAPs, but the more people try (and share what happened when they did), the more comfortable other people will feel in doing the same.

uNHIDDEN acknowledges the challenges of introducing care for people who have had Exceptional Experiences in an already busy and resource-constrained National Health Service. In particular, guidance and support for health professionals is needed, through the NHS and professional bodies, to make it easier for them to consult patients presenting with Exceptional Experiences in a non-judgmental way. It would be particularly helpful if Exceptional Experiences and their impact on individuals were to be recognised in classifications of mental disorders – especially the World Health Organisation's International

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<sup>52</sup> Lansley, H and Rabeyron, T, 'Clinical Approach to UFO Sightings and Alien Abductions'. Shared as a pre-print.

Classification of Disease (the latest version of which is ICD-11) and the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (of which the latest version is DSM-5). The next version of the latter, which will be DSM-6, is not expected to be published until at least 2025 and uNHIDDEN is working with other organisations, including UAP MED and CIRCEE, to make the case for this proposal.

From a protocol and practise perspective, there is an opportunity to build on the 15 years of work of CIRCEE and bring a version of Professor Rabeyron's PPAE methodology to the UK and other English-speaking parts of the world. This will require not only translation (from French to English), but also consideration and adaption of its approach into other consulting and regulatory regimes since the way clinical psychologists and therapists practise in the UK is substantively different from that of France.

There are roles for the 'third sector' in the provision of care and support. We hope that uNHIDDEN will be able to grow into an organisation that is better able to fund clinical functions, if not deliver actual therapy itself. However, most fundamentally, the transformation of care for people who have had Exceptional Experiences will only be unlocked if the UK Government recognises that sightings of UAPs are legitimate. This is why in his article, 'Why is the UK so far behind on UAP Policy', which appeared in 'The Debrief' in November 2023<sup>53</sup>, uNHIDDEN's founder, John Priestland, wrote:

*"If I may offer a suggested new line-to-take [for the UK Government], it would be something like the following:*

*'The Government acknowledges the legitimacy of observations of anomalous objects in the sky. We are working with our international partners to investigate the causes and their implications.'*

*"This would be transformational in that it would start to reduce the stigma associated with the UAP topic. People who have seen unusual things would be able to feel that their experiences were seen as legitimate, so they could start to seek the help they need."*

Summarising uNHIDDEN's recommendations around Exceptional Experiences, there are two that relate to the points made in this Section 2:

- 1. The UK Government should publicly acknowledge that UAP sightings and other forms of Exceptional Experiences are real, and that the people who have experienced them may need care and support.**
- 2. The NHS and professional bodies should develop guidance for health and social care professionals, to make it easier for them to consult patients presenting with Exceptional Experiences in a non-judgmental and evidence-based manner.**

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<sup>53</sup> 'Why is the UK so far behind on UAP policy', The Debrief, 2<sup>nd</sup> November 202, available here: [Why Is the United Kingdom So Far Behind on UAP Policy? - The Debrief](#)

### 3. Anxiety from the lack of reliable news stories covering UAPs

#### 3.1 Psychological consequences of frightening and uncertain news stories

Addressing the impact of frightening mass media and its impact on paranormal beliefs, especially beliefs in UAPs (then referred to as UFOs), Sparks et al (1995)<sup>54</sup> note that:

*"...individuals report that they occasionally experience very intense fright reactions that last anywhere from minutes to years after initial exposure to the stimulus."*

Some of the experiences associated with such fright reactions include sleep disturbances (e.g., bad dreams, nightmares, difficulties going to sleep), experiences of flashbacks to the images seen, or a "significant stress reaction." While Sparks et al are primarily considering reactions to a "scary movie or show," the same stress reactions are likely to be present from news media reports about UAPs or non-human intelligence.

The link between mental health and news consumption is explored by McLaughlin et al (2022)<sup>55</sup>, which defined 'problematic news consumption' as "a cycle of being absorbed in news content, compulsively checking the news, and experiencing interference with daily life." The study found that 16.5% of about 1,100 people surveyed showed signs of "severely problematic" news consumption, leading to greater levels of stress, anxiety and poor health.

Interviewed about this research in the Guardian<sup>56</sup>, one of the study's authors, Professor Bryan McLaughlin from Texas Tech University, said:

*"The 24-hour-news cycle could bring about a constant state of high alert in some people, making the world seem like a dark and dangerous place. For these individuals, a vicious cycle can develop in which, rather than tuning out, they become drawn further in, obsessing over the news and checking for updates around the clock to alleviate their emotional distress. But it doesn't help, and the more they check the news, the more it begins to interfere with other aspects of their lives."*

What Professor McLaughlin describes is often termed 'doomscrolling', which is commonly defined as<sup>57</sup>

*"a habit of scrolling through social media and news feeds where users obsessively seek for depressing and negative information."*

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<sup>54</sup> Sparks, G, Sparks, C & Grey, K, 'Media Impact on Fright Reactions and Belief in UFOs', Communication Research, 1995, 22:1

<sup>55</sup> McLaughlin B, Gotlieb MR, Mills DJ. Caught in a dangerous world: problematic news consumption and its relationship to mental and physical ill-being. Health Commun. 2022;1-11. doi:10.1080/10410236.2022.2106086. Available here: [Caught in a Dangerous World: Problematic News Consumption and Its Relationship to Mental and Physical Ill-Being: Health Communication: Vol 38, No 12 - Get Access \(tandfonline.com\)](#)

<sup>56</sup> 'Doomscrolling linked to poor physical and mental health, study finds', Caitlin Cassidy, The Guardian, 5<sup>th</sup> September 2022. Available here: [Doomscrolling linked to poor physical and mental health, study finds | Mental health | The Guardian](#)

<sup>57</sup> Source: Choosing Therapy website. 'Doomscrolling: What It Is & How to Stop' by Matt Glowiak, 15<sup>th</sup> March 2024. Available at: [Doomscrolling: What It Is & How to Stop \(choosingtherapy.com\)](#)

The term gained prominence during the COVID-19 outbreak, when individuals sought every source of information and news available via the Internet and social media due to the unknown nature of the pandemic. It is therefore the uncertain and potentially personally risky nature of a news topic that is a trigger for doomscrolling. COVID-19 shares a number of similarities to UAPs in that often legacy media and trusted government information sources on the topic fall behind or simply fail to cover news stories to the extent that satisfy the needs of content consumers. Satici et al (2022) point out that people need to address their anxiety about this sort of uncertainty:

*"Without a doubt, uncertain stimuli like pandemics and outbreaks lead individuals to get stuck in uncontrollable and uncomfortable thoughts which can be eased by getting related answers about the unknown. This urge to get all the facts to protect ourselves from danger and to have a feeling of control over it has kept us engaged with scrolling our phones long hours for more information and news, which are primarily negative."*

In a study of 460 participants, Satici et al compared social media usage with the DASS-21 depression anxiety stress scale. The result showed that doomscrolling had significant negative relationships with conscientiousness, extraversion and agreeableness, and it had a significant positive relationship with neuroticism. The researchers concluded that:

*"...individuals who are more engaged with doomscrolling are more likely to experience psychological distress which in turn leads to lower mental well-being, life satisfaction and harmony in life."*

The evidence therefore suggests that news coverage of UAPs, which by its nature is uncertain and frightening, may lead to anxiety, stress, and diminished mental health in our society. The way in which governments and the media handle the UAP topic is therefore of considerable importance.

### 3.2 The media's coverage of UAPs

Media coverage of UAPs is often disrespectful and laced with innuendo about the fringe nature of those who "choose to believe." For example, when UAP experts Jeremy Corbell and Nick Pope appeared on TalkTV in August 2023<sup>i</sup>, they were introduced by news anchor Rosanna Lockwood with the words<sup>58</sup>:

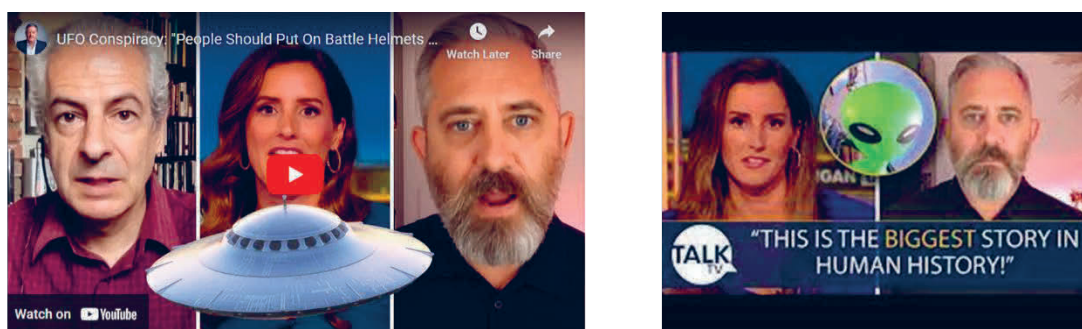
*"...it might be time to grab your tinfoil hats..."*

while the *X-Files* theme tune played in the background.

Lockwood was heavily criticised for this and re-interviewed Corbell a week later, intending the discussion to be much more serious and respectful. While the interview itself was, and Lockwood was contrite about the earlier interview, TalkTV still put out a clip of the interview with a graphic featuring a luminous green alien. (The previous interview graphic had been a flying disc.)

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<sup>58</sup> Source: Talk TV. Clips on YouTube at: <https://youtu.be/fmO44leMHT4> and <https://youtu.be/gYVQvwa1F3g>



Whereas the first TalkTalk interview, with Nick Pope and Jeremy Corbell, carried the image of a flying saucer, the second (a week later) which was intended to be much more serious, contained the graphic of a blow-up luminous “alien”.

There are also countless examples of poorly researched news stories about UAPs, the purpose of which is to titillate and trivialise. For example, the following recent headlines have appeared in British newspapers or on news websites:

- ‘Black alien chased my brother into our bedroom after we saw triangular UFO’ (Daily Star, 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024<sup>59</sup>)
- ‘Fire in the sky: disturbing video as family spots ‘flaming UFO’ soaring overhead and baffled experts say no way it’s a plane or drone’ (The Sun, 12<sup>th</sup> December 2023<sup>60</sup>)
- ‘‘UFO’ reported over China with ‘three light sources’ that moved quickly without emitting any sound - and witnesses say it was not an aircraft’ (MailOnline, 16<sup>th</sup> January 2024<sup>61</sup>)
- ‘UK’s UFO hotspot where councillors are demanding an inquiry into strange encounters’ (Daily Express, 9<sup>th</sup> November 2023<sup>62</sup>)
- ‘Super-intelligent aliens are going to destroy humanity? Whatever’ (The Guardian, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2023<sup>63</sup>).

The final article in this list is noteworthy for its nihilistic advice from author Joel Snape:

*“Personally, I’ve hit on a solution to all this [i.e. stories about UAPs]: stop caring about any of it. In galactic terms, we’re here for less than a blink: it seems unlikely that some galactic super-*

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<sup>59</sup> Source: Daily Star website. Available at: [‘Black alien chased my brother into our bedroom after we saw triangular UFO’ - Daily Star](#)

<sup>60</sup> Source: The Sun website. Available at: [Disturbing video as family spots ‘flaming UFO’ soaring overhead and baffled experts say no way it’s a plane or drone | The Sun](#)

<sup>61</sup> Source: MailOnline. Available at: [‘UFO’ reported over China with ‘three light sources’ that moved quickly without emitting any sound - and witnesses say it was not an aircraft | Daily Mail Online](#)

<sup>62</sup> Source: Daily Mail website. Available at: [UK’s UFO hotspot where councillors want a Government inquiry | UK | News | Express.co.uk](#)

<sup>63</sup> Source: Guardian website. Available at: [Super-intelligent aliens are going to destroy humanity? Whatever | Joel Snape | The Guardian](#)

*predator is going to wipe us all out in the 80 years I'm alive, but in the event that they do, it's even less likely that we will know about it before it happens."*

It is the absence of serious news articles on the UAP topic that is a cause for more concern. Despite the fact that UAPs have featured heavily in the U.S. Congress with a public hearing and new UAP provisions in the National Defense Authorization Act, mainstream media coverage has been largely non-existent. Indeed, *The New York Times* rejected the original news story by journalists Lesley Kean and Ralph Blumenthal about David Grusch's claims of a secret crash retrieval programme. *The Washington Post* was also reluctant to accept it, and the story instead appeared in the independent online news outlet, *The Debrief*.

The other low point of recent media coverage was the question put to former governor of New Jersey Chris Christie in a Republican Presidential primary debate in August 2023<sup>64</sup>. Moderator Martha MacCallum asked Christie what he would do as President to level with Americans on what the government knows about encounters with extraterrestrials. She added that more people are taking the concept of unidentified flying objects seriously following the recent Congressional hearing. Yet Christie responded with the remark:

*"I get the UFO question?"*

Christie then jokingly insinuated that MacCallum had asked him the question because they were both from New Jersey.

The one news channel that has taken the UAP topic seriously is *News Nation*. It featured an in-depth interview with David Grusch by journalist Ross Coulthart on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2023<sup>65</sup> and has covered UAP events prominently over the past year. News Nation's viewing figures have soared as a result, but it is still tiny compared to the major news outlets, ranking 62<sup>nd</sup> in the list of all cable stations in October 2023<sup>66</sup>.

Just as News Nation's share of the media market has grown, there has also been a huge growth in the number of UAP-specific podcasts that have sprung up to cater to the needs of the 'UAP community'. Leading examples include: *Need to Know*, hosted by Ross Coulthart and Bryce Zabel; *That UFO Podcast* with Andy McGrillen; *Engaging the Phenomenon* with James Landoli; and *Weaponized* with George Knapp and Jeremy Corbell. There is also occasional coverage of UAP-related issues on more general podcasts, often with huge followings. For example, David Grusch appeared on the *Joe Rogan Experience*. Curt Jaimungal's *Theory of Everything* podcast and Matt Forde's *The Good Trouble Show* also frequently feature UAP material and interviewees.

These podcasts are often promoted heavily on social media, such as X. Here one can find any variety of speculative claims, conspiracy theories and debunking, as well as some very valuable, well-informed and useful material. The worry, though, is that on X, false news travels faster than true stories. Vosoughi et al

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<sup>64</sup> Source: USA Today News website: 'Out of this world: Chris Christie shocked by lone question about UFOs at Republican Debate'. Available at: ['I get the UFO question?' Candidate Chris Christie surprised at debate \(usatoday.com\)](https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/elections/2023/08/29/christie-ufo-question/1234567890/)

<sup>65</sup> Source: News Nation website. 'We are not alone: The UFO Whistleblower Speaks. Available at: <https://www.newsnationnow.com/space/ufo/we-are-not-alone-the-ufo-whistleblower-speaks/> (Unfortunately, this link is not available outside the US, but the interview is available from other sources).

<sup>66</sup> Source: Mediaite website. 'NewsNation Sees Record Ratings Amid Major News Cycle'. 25<sup>th</sup> October 2023. Available at: [NewsNation Sees Record Ratings Amid Massive News Cycle \(mediaite.com\)](https://www.mediaite.com/television/newsnation-sees-record-ratings-amid-major-news-cycle/)

(2018)<sup>67</sup> used a data set of rumor cascades on Twitter from 2006 to 2017 to understand how false and true stories spread, and concluded:

*“False news reached more people than the truth; the top 1% of false news cascades diffused to between 1000 and 100,000 people, whereas the truth rarely diffused to more than 1,000 people. Falsehood also diffused faster than the truth. The degree of novelty and the emotional reactions of recipients may be responsible for the differences observed.”*

The inference may be that false stories about UAPs may spread more quickly and widely than true ones. However, it may be that the stories that are actually creating the most anxiety from a mental health and wellbeing perspective are comments from leading UAP commentators purporting to be their genuine knowledge, view or experience. Some of these statements can, to coin a phrase used by Lue Elizondo on the *Theory of Everything* podcast, properly be regarded as “somber”<sup>68</sup> in terms of the possible threat or malevolence of non-human intelligence to humanity. Three examples of these types of comments are given below:

*“I am talking here about malevolence. I am talking here about deliberately targeted attacks by alleged non-human intelligences that weren’t accidental. They were deliberate acts of murder, killing and mutilation.”* Leading UAP journalist **Ross Coulthart** speaking on *That UFO Podcast*<sup>69</sup>

*“There’s a whole other reality that surrounds us that we just simply don’t have the ability to see or interact with...There is a force out there that can control our environment, that can put thoughts into our heads”* Former CIA Officer and COO of ‘To The Stars Academy’, **Jim Semivan**, speaking on *Engaging the Phenomenon*<sup>70</sup>.

*“What if there was knowledge...that was so volatile, so earth shattering that the mere knowledge of that getting out could predicate an action that could potentially threaten the entire species?”* Former Head of AARO, **Lue Elizondo**, speaking on the *Theory of Everything Podcast*<sup>71</sup>.

These are extraordinary statements that are difficult for any listener to process and place in their proper context. The intermittent and uncoordinated nature of this ‘threat’ narrative takes us back to the ‘doomscrolling’ observations of Section 3.1 above. This is not the best way for the truth about UAPs to be shared with members of the public, who deserve better from the media and their governments. Having covered the media in this Section, we turn to governmental communication on UAPs in Section 3.3 below.

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<sup>67</sup> Vosough S, Roy D & Aral S, ‘The spread of true and false news online’, (2018), *Science*, Vol 359 Issue 6380, pp 1146-1151. Available at: [The spread of true and false news online | Science](#)

<sup>68</sup> Source: *The Theory of Everything* Podcast with Lue Elizondo (2020), available at: [\(22\) Lue Elizondo Reveals The Terrifying Truth Behind UFOs - YouTube](#)

<sup>69</sup> Source: *That UFO Podcast* with Ross Coulthart (2023), available at: [That UFO Podcast / Ross Coulthart; Within plain sight? \(audioboom.com\)](#)

<sup>70</sup> Source: *Engaging the Phenomenon* Podcast with James Landoli (2023). [Jim Semivan - To The Stars\\*, UFO Legacy Programs, and Experiencers - YouTube](#)

<sup>71</sup> Source: *The Theory of Everything* Podcast. ‘The Best of Lue Elizondo: UFOs, Human History, Altered DNA’. (2023). Available here: [UFOs, Altered DNA, Hidden History | Best of Lue Elizondo - YouTube](#)



### 3.3 Government communication strategies

#### 3.3.1 U.S. Government

The U.S. Government is not a single and indivisible whole. In a constitutional sense, it is made up of three branches: the executive, the legislative and the judiciary. Congress is made up of the Senate and the House of Representatives, and the executive is made up of a myriad of different departments and agencies. For example, the U.S. Intelligence Community is a coalition of 18 agencies and organisations, including the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI).

While it should probably not be a surprise that different parts of the U.S. Government have different messages on UAPs, it should still be regarded as both unhelpful and potentially confusing. Many members of the public are not well-versed on the 'machinery of government' and will struggle with the idea that 'The Government' appears to have mixed messages on the UAP topic.

Indeed, the communication strategies of different parts of the U.S. Governmental machine diverge quite radically. For example, take these three statements from different parts of the U.S. Government made during a single month:

- On 19th January 2024, former AARO Director, Dr Sean Kirkpatrick, wrote in his *Scientific American* opinion piece:  
*"During a full-scale, year-long investigation ...AARO discovered a few things, and none were about aliens<sup>72</sup>."*  
The sub-headline to the story confirmed that AARO has "found no evidence of aliens."
- On 13th December 2023, Republican Senator Mike Rounds said in his Floor Colloquy<sup>9</sup>:  
*"...there is, we believe, information and data [about UAPs] that has been collected by more than just the Department of Defense, but by other agencies of the federal government as well."*
- Responding to what the Inspector General of the Intelligence Community (ICIG) said in a Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility (SCIF) on 12th January 2024, Representative Jared Moskowitz tweeted<sup>73</sup>:  
*"Based on what we heard many of Grush [sic] claims have merit."*

So, which is it? Is there no evidence of NHI? Or has UAP information and data been collected, and whistleblower David Grusch's claims been confirmed?

Even more to the point about the responsibility of governments to avoid uncertain and frightening messages is the need to avoid some of the more extreme UAP theories, which have been stated as fact without full clarity and explanation. For example, in a media briefing on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2024 after the Congressional meeting with the ICIG, Representative Anna Paulina Luna noted that David Grusch

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<sup>72</sup> 'Here's what I learnt as the U.S. Government's UFO Hunter', Sean Kirkpatrick, *Scientific American*, 19<sup>th</sup> January 2024. Available here: [Here's What I Learned as the U.S. Government's UFO Hunter | Scientific American](#)

<sup>73</sup> Rep Jared Moskowitz tweet of 12<sup>th</sup> January 2024. Available at: [Jared Moskowitz](#)

previously referred to NHI entities as "interdimensional".<sup>74</sup> This led to Chad Pergram from Fox News asking Representative Luna live on air what "interdimensional" means when it comes to UAPs. "Is this something that bends time and space?" he asked. Rep Luna did not respond. What is a casual viewer to make of this? Is this sort of under-developed reference to something at the more extreme end of the spectrum of UAP theories likely to make ordinary citizens sleep easier in the beds?

A similar and probably related comment of an extraordinary nature came from Representative Eric Burlison in a live Discord conversation with Matt Laslo<sup>75</sup>. He said:

*"To which David Grusch, and others within the UAP community, have responded to me about this and said, they're not traveling here, they're "phasing" into our existence."*

There has also been criticism of the way in which media access around the launch of the AARO Historical Report was handled. Key journalists and even News Nation were restricted from attending the media briefing. Indeed, so draconian were the restrictions on media access for the launch that Liberation Times Editor Christopher Sharp wrote<sup>76</sup>:

*"The Pentagon's treatment of journalists is what one might expect from an authoritarian regime & has no place in a democratic country.*

*"Journalists should have refused the terms offered to be complicit in its info warfare efforts on UAP.*

*"It is wrong and should be called out."*

This lack of transparency does not increase public confidence in the U.S. Government's narrative around UAPs and would seem to increase some individuals' anxiety that they are being manipulated in a wholly unnecessary way.

### 3.3.2 UK Government

As described in Section 1.3, the UK Government is reluctant to comment on the question of UAPs. When it does, it uses the "no military threat" line that originated with the decision in 2009 by Sir Bob Ainsworth to close the UFO Desk at the Ministry of Defence. There appears to be no pressure from MPs or the media for this line to change, and therefore no effective scrutiny of the UK Government's position. This vacuum of leadership and communication at the governmental level by default leaves everything to podcasts, social media and limited media that are prepared to cover the UAP topic for UK citizens.

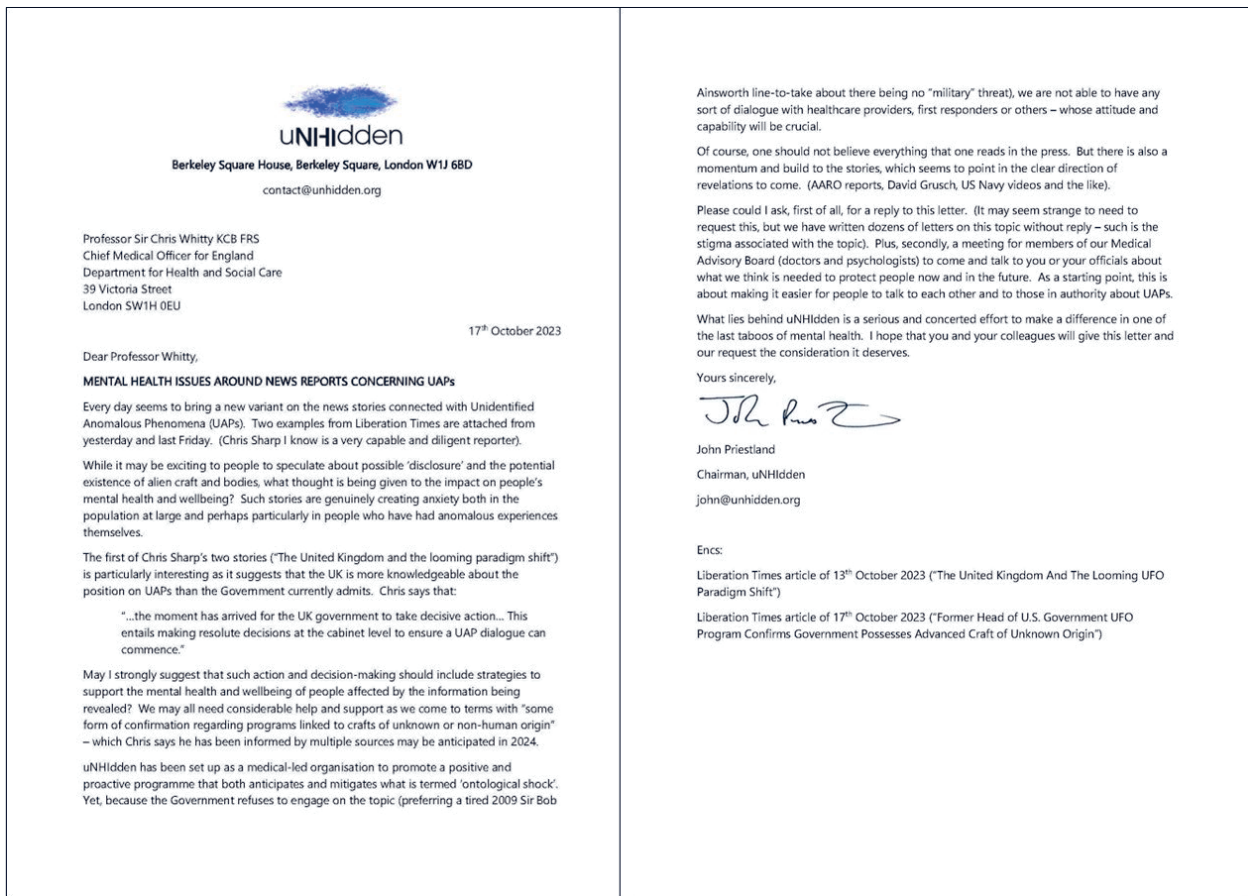
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<sup>74</sup> Source: Fox News website. 'Close encounters of congressional kind: Lawmakers struggle to grasp alleged 'interdimensional' nature of UFOs', Chad Pergram, 17<sup>th</sup> January 2024. Available at: [Close Encounters of congressional kind: Lawmakers struggle to grasp alleged 'interdimensional' nature of UFOs | Fox News](#)

<sup>75</sup> Source: Transcript of Q&A with Congressman Eric Burlison from 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2024 posted on X. Available here: <https://twitter.com/MiddleOfMayhem/status/1771704103242285437>

<sup>76</sup> Source: Christopher Sharp Tweet on X, 7<sup>th</sup> March 2024. Available at:

Specifically, on the subject of mental health issues around news reports concerning UAPs, uNHIDDEN wrote to Professor Sir Chris Whitty, Chief Medical Officer for England, on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2023.



The key paragraph of our letter was as follows:

*"While it may be exciting to people to speculate about possible 'disclosure' and the potential existence of alien craft and bodies, what thought is being given to the impact on people's mental health and wellbeing? Such stories are genuinely creating anxiety both in the population at large and perhaps particularly in people who have had anomalous experiences themselves."*

Disappointingly, we did not even receive a reply.

We wrote again on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2024 to Professor Whitty, copied this time to the three Chief Medical Officers of the devolved administrations. At the point of finalising this White Paper, no replies have been received.

### **3.3 Observations and recommendations around unreliable news stories about UAPs**

Media coverage of UAPs has real consequences for people, especially where the information is frightening and uncertain. Too few mainstream media outlets are prepared to cover the UAP topic, leaving interested people to find podcasts, social media and other less well-curated sources as their primary means of securing news and information. Whereas the U.S. Government may be criticised for a lack of consistency in its messaging on UAPs among its various branches and agencies, the UK Government seems to have virtually nothing to say about the UAP topic. The UK Government is therefore abrogating its responsibility for keeping its citizens informed, and this vacuum does UK citizens a disservice in that there is no trusted source of news and commentary.

uNHIDDEN's recommendation that relates to media coverage around UAPs is as follows:

- 3. The UK Government should provide credible information on the UAP topic to the public, and the media needs to play its part by reporting newsworthy stories about UAPs fairly and properly.**

## 4. Ontological shock and “controlled disclosure”

### 4.1. Background on ‘ontological shock’

‘Ontological shock’ is a term that has entered the world of UAPs in recent years. It is used to indicate the disorientation and anxiety that people encounter when they learn of the existence of non-human intelligence. This could include the realisation that humankind may not be the ‘apex predator’ here on Earth, as well as the fact that we may have been lied to by our governments and authorities for decades.

For some, Luis Elizondo’s “somber” speech is a compelling articulation of what this means. Speaking on the *Theories of Everything* podcast with Curt Jaimungal in October 2021<sup>77</sup>, Mr Elizondo said:

*“Imagine everything you’ve been taught...about who we are right, in our background in our past, what if all that turned out to be not entirely accurate in fact? The very history of our species, the meaning of what it means to be a human being and our place in this universe what if all of that is now in question? What if it turns out that a lot of the things we thought were one way aren’t? Are we prepared to have this question with ourselves? Are we prepared to recognise that we are not at the top of the food chain that we are not the alpha predator, and that we are maybe somewhere in the middle.”*

Ontological shock is what Experiencers may feel when they see something strange. Speaking privately to uNHIDDEN, Mario Pavlovich from Edmonton Canada said<sup>78</sup>:

*“Your whole world view shatters. It makes you wonder what else is real. I keep asking, ‘am I living a lie?’”*

Mr Pavlovich recalls an evening in April 2023 when he saw a black triangle in the sky and shadowy figures in his bedroom.

The term ‘ontological shock’ is linked to the term ‘ontological security’ and can be traced back to 1960 when it was used by the psychologist R. D. Laing in his book ‘The Divided Self’<sup>79</sup>. However, the original, psychological sense of the term relates to symptoms of schizophrenia and self-disorders. The decontextualised and sociological use of the term happened in 1991, when Anthony Giddens<sup>80</sup> referred to ontological security as a sense of order and continuity in the way in which an individual sees the world. Meaning is found by experiencing positive and stable emotions, and by avoiding chaos and anxiety. If an event occurs that is not consistent with the meaning of an individual’s life, it will threaten that individual’s ontological security. Such an event is an ontological shock.

The late John Mack used the term ‘ontological shock’ in his 1994 book, ‘Abduction: Human Encounters with Aliens’<sup>81</sup>. He wrote:

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<sup>77</sup> Source: Theories of Everything Podcast – “Luis Elizondo on Biological UFO Samples, Remote Viewing, and explaining ‘Somber’” – premiered 21st October 2021. Available here: [Luis Elizondo on Biological UFO Samples, Remote Viewing, and explaining “Somber” #UFOamnesty - Theories of Everything with Curt Jaimungal | Podcast on Spotify](#)

<sup>78</sup> Private conversation with uNHIDDEN, 1<sup>st</sup> March 2024

<sup>79</sup> ‘The Divided Self: a study of sanity and madness’ by R. D. Laing. Tavistock Publications, London 1960.

<sup>80</sup> ‘Modernity and Self-Identity – Self and Society in the Late Modern Age’ by Anthony Giddens. Stanford University Press, Stanford 1991.

<sup>81</sup> ‘Abduction – Human Encounters with Aliens’ by John E. Mack 432. Charles Schribner, New York 1991.

*"Abductees also experience what I have called "ontological shock" as the reality of their encounters sinks in. They, like all of us, have been raised in the belief that we on Earth are largely alone in the universe and that it would simply not be possible for intelligent beings to enter our world without using a highly advanced form of our technology and obeying the laws of our physics. Abductees tend to persist in the hope that a psychological explanation for their experiences will be found."*

In other words, it would be less damaging to abductees' ontological security if the experience could be explained away as a hallucination since it would keep their worldview more intact.

Alexander Wendt and Raymond Duvall discussed the difference between the physical and ontological threat of UFOs in their 2008 paper, 'Sovereignty and the UFO'<sup>82</sup>. They argued that:

*"Threats can take two forms, physical threats to life and ontological threats to identity or social being... The physical threat, of course, is that ET presence in "our" solar system would indicate a vastly superior technology to human beings; raising the possibility of conquest and even extermination...The ontological threat is that even if the ETs were benign, their confirmed presence would create tremendous pressure for a unified human response, or world government."*

Rabeyron et al (2021)<sup>31</sup> reflect on the lessons from CIRCEE and note that most clinicians are still not taught or trained to recognise anomalous experiences. The danger is that an attitude of rejection can develop, and it is better for a therapist to welcome unusual experiences in a way that conveys to the patient that they are understood, even when these experiences challenge the therapist's conception of reality. Professor Rabeyron concludes:

*"Such a clinical attitude helps the person to "go through" the ontological shock associated with some of these experiences, developing the capacity to regain a state of psychological balance and the ability to give a meaning to the experience. This process can also be an opportunity for maturation and transformational processes sharing certain characteristics with post-traumatic growth."*

In Lesley Kean's and Ralph Blumenthal's article for *The Debrief*<sup>7</sup> that first brought the whistleblower claims of former US intelligence officer David Grusch to the world, Grusch refers to ontological shock as follows:

*"I hope this revelation serves as an ontological shock sociologically and provides a generally uniting issue for nations of the world to re-assess their priorities."*

That is, Grusch appears to be suggesting that the existence of a non-human intelligence could jolt the world onto a new, more unified course. Perhaps he is echoing the former President Ronald Reagan's famous speech to the United Nations in 1987<sup>83</sup> when Reagan said:

*"In our obsession with antagonisms of the moment, we often forget how much unites all the members of humanity. Perhaps we need some outside, universal threat to make us recognize*

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<sup>82</sup> Wendt, A., & Duvall, R., (2008), 'Sovereignty and the UFO', Political Theory 36(4) pp607-633, Sage Publications

<sup>83</sup> Address to the 42nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York from 21st September 1997. Available at: [Address to the 42d Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, New York | Ronald Reagan \(reaganlibrary.gov\)](https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/address-to-the-42d-session-of-the-united-nations-general-assembly-in-new-york-new-york)

*this common bond. I occasionally think how quickly our differences worldwide would vanish if we were facing an alien threat from outside this world."*

Maybe. But it is also plausible that, should disclosure or confirmation take place, we will encounter anxiety and distress on an unprecedented societal level. The book 'After Disclosure'<sup>84</sup> by Bryce Zabel and Richard Dolan suggests that between 10-30% of people will be adversely affected by disclosure, which will be sufficient to require a state of Martial Law to apply for a year. A particular point is the loss of confidence in authorities (plural), including the media.

There are clearly a range of views as to how difficult an announcement on disclosure may be. One of the more extreme and negative views comes from author Whitley Strieber, himself a well-known UFO experimenter. In a post on X<sup>85</sup> on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2024, Mr Strieber wrote:

*"Truth is hell in this case. It's going to be more difficult to handle than anything we have ever done as a species."*

#### 4.2 "Catastrophic disclosure" and how to avoid it

A definition of the term "catastrophic disclosure" was shared by retired U.S. Army Colonel Karl E. Nell at the Sol Foundation Symposium at the University of Stanford on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2023<sup>86</sup>. (Colonel Nell was the U.S. Army's liaison for the UAP Task Force from 2021 to 2022 and worked with David Grusch there):

*"Precipitous and uncontrolled public revelation(s) that demonstrate reality behind UAP, TUO and/or NHI in such manner as may reasonably be assumed to cause significant societal disruption."*

(TUO stands for 'Technologies of Unknown Origin').

Colonel Nell shared a slide titled 'Way Forward: UAP Campaign Plan Lines-of-Effort (LOEs)' to get to the 'strategic endstate' of:

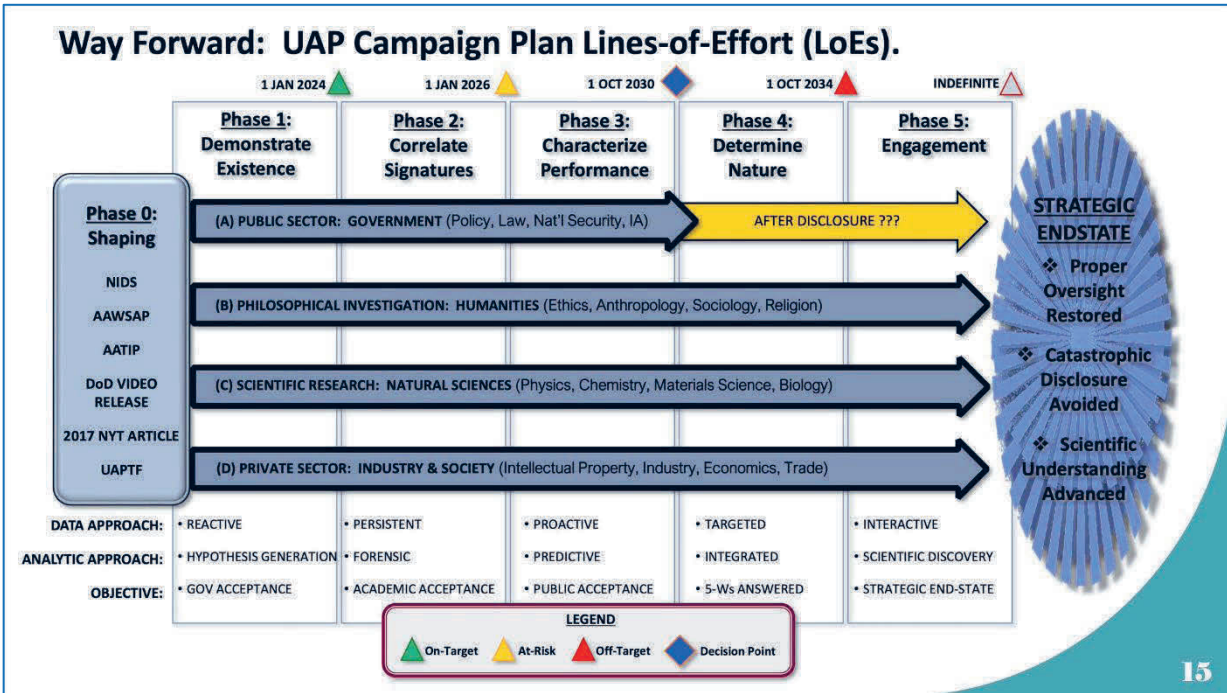
- Proper oversight restored
- Catastrophic disclosure avoided
- Scientific understanding advanced

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<sup>84</sup> 'A.D. After Disclosure: When the Government Finally Reveals the Truth About Alien Contact' by Richard M Dolan and Bryce Zabel, The Career Press Inc, 2012

<sup>85</sup> Source: X post dated 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2024. Available here: [www.twitter.com/WhitleyStrieber/status/1771478384956100835](https://www.twitter.com/WhitleyStrieber/status/1771478384956100835)

<sup>86</sup> Source: Sol Foundation videos. Available here: [\(25\) The Sol Foundation - YouTube](#)



Karl Nell's slide 15 from the Sol Symposium, November 2023

The slide has the feel of a project plan with four workstreams: Government, Humanities, Natural Sciences, and Industry & Society. Curiously, there is no mention of Medical Sciences or Psychology. (The closest link is that 'Biology' is part of 'Natural Sciences', but few doctors would feel that this adequately covers what they do). Indeed, people and their care and wellbeing does not seem to be a key feature of the disclosure plan. Yet Colonel Nell's stated goals were broad transparency on covert UAP programmes "on or before conclusion of the decade."

The absence of a medical voice in and around disclosure is also notable in the composition of the proposed UAP Records Review Board (URRB), which was included in the proposed 'Schumer Amendment' to the NDAA before being removed from the text in December 2023. The table below, which sets out the proposed roles and functions that would have made up the URRB, comes from slide 9 of Nell's presentation:



#	Function	Element of National Power	Explicit in Legislation
URRB-1	Executive Director	P – Political	yes
URRB-2	National Security Official	M – Military & I – Intelligence	yes
URRB-3	Foreign Service Official	D – Diplomatic	yes
URRB-4	Scientist or Engineer	I – Information (Natural Sciences)	yes
URRB-5	Economist	E – Economic & F – Financial	yes
URRB-6	Professional Historian	I – Information (Humanities)	yes
URRB-7	Sociologist	I – Information (Humanities)	yes
URRB-8	Biochemist / Geneticist	I – Information (Natural Sciences)	unconstrained
URRB-9	Constitutional Law Scholar	L – Legal	unconstrained

(The eight and ninth roles are “unconstrained” – that is, they could have been someone from any discipline, including a doctor or psychologist).

To be clear, this is the group that would have been responsible for making a formal determination of whether a UAP record would qualify for postponement of disclosure. (After this, the President would have had the sole ability to overturn or concur with such determination). Why was there no doctor or psychologist on the list? Who, among the nine proposed roles, would have been both qualified and trusted to consider the impact of disclosing a UAP record on people’s health and wellbeing?

Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Intelligence Christopher Mellon also spoke at the Sol Foundation Symposium. His speech was turned into an article in *The Debrief*<sup>87</sup>, which includes the following paragraphs [the **bold** is our emphasis]:

*"I **believe** that a graduated process of disclosure would avert a crisis atmosphere while prompting new investments in technology, scientific research, and a rash of collaborative international meetings and initiatives."*

And:

*"...I **believe** the inevitable ontological shock would eventually prove highly beneficial, stimulating immense creativity, investment, and research."*

Arguably, belief is not a sufficient basis upon which to make decisions of this magnitude. It seems in stark contrast to the data-centric and evidence-based approach of Avi Loeb and Garry Nolan on the first day of the Sol Symposium. Where is the in-depth academic research about the mental health and wellbeing implications of Col. Nell’s programme for “controlled disclosure,” and Mellon’s belief in the benefits of the ontological shock that would follow? Surely doctors and psychologists should be leading the way in

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<sup>87</sup> Source: *The Debrief* website. ‘Disclosure and National Security: Should the U.S. Government reveal what it knows about UAP?’ by Christopher Mellon, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2023. Available here: [Disclosure and National Security: Should the U.S. Government Reveal What It Knows About UAP? - The Debrief](#)

terms of researching and testing different messages and strategies to consider how best to communicate these difficult themes to the general public.

As an example of what can be done, Dr Daniel Stubbings from Cardiff Metropolitan University, a member of the uNHIDDEN Medical Advisory Board, is undertaking an ethics-committee approved study<sup>88</sup> to expose people with no knowledge of the UAP topic to some of the best public information. This will be done in the form of a condensed hour-long 'showreel' of UAP messages and images (e.g. Congressional hearings, U.S. Navy videos, etc). Through a mixture of quantitative (i.e., measuring mood pre- and post- exposure, along with belief in UAPs and some static factors such as personality and rationalism) and qualitative (i.e., interviews conducted afterward to explore more of their subjective experience) methods, the study will start to assess the impact on individuals of disclosure/exposure to UAP information. The early suggestions are that the impact is going to be diverse and mostly unpredictable, with people reacting in very different ways. This is the sort of research that governments should be funding and supporting in a major way.

### **4.3 Observations and recommendations around ontological shock and "controlled disclosure"**

Promoting a kinder, better disclosure that puts people first is one of the reasons why we have set up uNHIDDEN. Helping to develop strategies to manage and mitigate ontological shock is one of our core purposes, together with how best to care for people (and help them better look after each other) after any revelations are made.

The fact that uNHIDDEN is medically-led is important. Our Medical Advisory Board, which is made up of doctors and clinical psychologists, governs what we do. 'Disclosure' of a medical condition following a diagnosis in a medical setting is something that many clinical practitioners face every day. Doctors are bound by obligations to the patient, including respect for patient autonomy, acting for the benefit of the patient, and refraining from anything that would harm the patient. Truth-telling or honesty is therefore considered a basic moral principle, rule, or value, and it would be wholly unethical for a doctor to withhold information about a patient's condition. This may be a key reason why, according to the Ipsos Global Trustworthiness Index in 2021<sup>89</sup>, doctors are considered the world's most trustworthy professionals.

uNHIDDEN's position is that governments would do well to adopt the same duty of candour as applies to the medical profession when it comes to sharing what they know about UAPs and NHI. It may turn out that it is less the information itself that causes harm to people than the loss of trust in the authorities.

The analogy between the disclosure of a medical diagnosis and of UAPs bears another level of exploration. When a doctor shares bad news, he or she should do so in a very careful and caring way. It is not done, for example, by text. An important part of doctors' training is how to break difficult news. Similarly, once the diagnosis has been shared, patients should be given a high level of support – including from a psychological perspective – and should not be left on their own.

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<sup>88</sup> Source: private conversation with Dr Daniel Stubbings.

<sup>89</sup> Source: Ipsos website. 'Doctors become the world's most trusted profession'. 12<sup>th</sup> October 2021. Available here: [Doctors become the world's most trusted profession | Ipsos](#)

The lessons for disclosure of the existence of UAP/NHI are clear:

1. It matters how the news is shared.
2. It matters what support is in place to help people psychologically after they have been told the news.

uNHIDDEN argues that any plan for disclosure needs to put these two points at the very top of the list of priorities.

uNHIDDEN suggests that decisions about what to communicate and how to communicate it, along with the support to be given to people afterwards, require more evidence-based research. We need to get the best experts involved, gather the data, and trial, test and refine the approach that is going to minimise anxiety and disruption.

It is telling that there is little in this Section 4 that relates to the UK. This is because the UK has done nothing to indicate any attempt to avoid or mitigate “catastrophic disclosure,” as it avoids public pronouncements on the UAP topic wherever possible.

uNHIDDEN’s recommendations that relate to ontological shock and better planning for a possible disclosure are as follows:

4. **The UK Government should commission multidisciplinary research that considers both the medical and psychological aspects of how the general population might react to UAP disclosure, and identifies the most vulnerable individuals, groups, and communities, and what sort of help and support might be beneficial.**
5. **The UK Government should develop a plan for UAP disclosure that brings together multiple branches of government and community groups as a single, open, shared endeavour, putting people and their wellbeing first. This needs to be done in a way that builds trust.**

## 5. Conclusion and next steps

As uNHIDDEN Medical Advisory Board Member Dr Daniel Stubbings said when interviewed by journalist Stuart Clark for an Observer article<sup>90</sup>:

*“It only takes one account to be real and it changes the narrative of humanity for ever.”*

Conversely, this means that every UAP story in history – ranging from the Roswell incident to David Grusch’s Congressional testimony – must be false in order to maintain the status quo that humanity is alone in the universe. Applying the principle of Occam’s razor, it is unlikely that there is nothing to see here.

While uNHIDDEN is not an investigative organisation and has no particular insights or information about the existence (or otherwise) of extraterrestrials or other possible forms of NHI, there is much that needs to be done to (i) improve care and support for people who have Exceptional Experiences; (ii) reduce anxiety about the sporadic and sometimes hyperbolic news coverage around UAPs; and (iii) prepare to minimise ontological shock around the (hopefully “controlled”) disclosure of the existence of UAP/NHI. Perseverance in messaging and communication is needed. We hope that elected representatives around the world will start to engage more on the UAP topic and apply pressure to the military and intelligence communities that appear to control access to information about UAPs (and also seem to actively encourage stigma as a way of deterring interest and scrutiny).

uNHIDDEN will continue to work as an advocate and adviser to support this agenda, working with other like-minded bodies around the world. We invite anyone who would like to join us to contact us at [contact@unhidden.org](mailto:contact@unhidden.org).

We will give the final word to Senator Marco Rubio, who in an interview with NewsNation in June 2023<sup>91</sup> said:

*“Either what [David Grusch] is saying [about secret crash retrieval programmes] is partially true or entirely true, or we have some really smart, educated people with high clearances and very important positions in our government who are crazy and are leading us on a goose chase.”*

At uNHIDDEN, while we do not know what is or is not true around UAPs, we strongly argue that it is not crazy to take an interest in the subject matter and enquire about what is going on. We are working to make it easier for people to have conversations, ask questions, and seek help when they have seen something exceptional. By doing so, uNHIDDEN hopes to help reduce societal anxiety both before and after any possible disclosure.

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<sup>90</sup> Source: Guardian website. “It only takes one to be real and it changes humanity for ever’: what if we have been lied to about UFOs’, by Stuart Clark, 14<sup>th</sup> January 2024. Available here: [‘It only takes one to be real and it changes humanity for ever’: what if we’ve been lied to about UFOs? | Alien life | The Guardian](#)

<sup>91</sup> Source: The Hill.com website. “‘True’ or ‘crazy’? UFO whistleblowers coming ‘out of the woodwork’” by Marik von Rennenkampff, 7<sup>th</sup> July 2023. Available at: [‘True’ or ‘crazy’? UFO whistleblowers coming ‘out of the woodwork’ | The Hill](#)

## Appendix A: Glossary

All-domain Anomaly Resolution Office (AARO)	Office within the United States Office of the Secretary of Defense that investigates unidentified flying objects (UFOs) and other phenomena in the air, sea, and/or space and/or on land.
Crash retrievals	Physical retrieval of crashed UAP by humans, for reverse-engineering purposes.
Exotic materials	Advanced materials – for example made up of unusual isotopic ratios – the origin of which cannot be explained.
Extraterrestrials (ETs)	Non-human intelligence from somewhere other than the Earth (i.e. ‘aliens’).
Interdimensional hypothesis	A proposal that UAP sightings are the result of experiencing other “dimensions” that coexist separately alongside our own.
Non-Human Intelligence (NHI)	A blanket term for any intelligent life of non-human origin, whether from the Earth or from off-world origins.
Ontological shock	The anxiety that people feel as and when they realise that there are other non-human intelligences out there (and humankind is not top of the food chain).
(The) Phenomenon	A term used to denote a wider set of strange patterns and observations beyond UAPs that extends to the ‘paranormal’.
Reverse engineering	The idea of studying advanced craft or technology with a view to understanding how they work and recreating them.
Unidentified Anomalous Phenomenon (UAP) – or, previously, Unidentified Aerial Phenomenon	A more modern term for UFO that potentially avoids some of the stigma of the older term. (Aerial was changed to Anomalous as craft are potentially able to move through space and water, as well as the air).
Unidentified Flying Object (UFO)	An increasingly disregarded term for unexplained moving objects in the sky (with many practitioners preferring to use UAP instead).

## Appendix B: Acknowledgements

The White Paper has been put together with input from uNHIDDEN trustees, members of the Medical Advisory Board, representatives from UAP MED (with whom uNHIDDEN is closely aligned) and others who have kindly given up their time. Particular thanks go to the following: Vinod Arujuna, Dr Richard Church, Jonathan Davies, Helen McCaw, John Priestland, Dr Rachel Pugh, Kerry Schlossberg, Dr Daniel Stubbings, Adrian Taylor, Oli Uwins and Dr Daniel Weaver. We are grateful to everyone who contributed.

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We are here to support good mental health and reduce anxiety around Exceptional Experiences, as well as to encourage a better, kinder disclosure.