

## BACKGROUND REPORT ON PREVENT

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**Title:** PREVENT: Further information

**Date:** 18 November 2022

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The 2011 Prevent strategy included three main objectives:

- To respond to the ideological challenges of radicalism and extremism and prevent the threat that society faces from individuals and groups who promote such ideals.
- Prevent people from being drawn to terrorism through the provision of relevant support and advice that adopts a rights-based early intervention approach.
- Work with specified authorities, including 'sectors and institutions' to identify radicalisation and extremism in British society.

As a result, professionals are now obligated to report any suspicious activity to a local Prevent body. An assessment will then be conducted, whether further action is required, and support is provided for those who are exploited or vulnerable. As part of this, the Home Office will collect data, implement local and regional Prevent coordinators, support the Prevent Oversight Board, and monitor and assess the delivery of the Prevent duty in up to 50 priority areas.

### **Who is responsible?**

As a form of safeguarding, ultimately Prevent is everybody's business. However, relevant training is a legal requirement for those who work in specified authorities where there are risks of radicalisation that need to be addressed. This refers to public-facing bodies such as local authorities, the NHS, schools, higher education, the probation service and the police amongst others. Prevent thus aims to ensure that frontline staff are equipped with the knowledge required to recognise those vulnerable to radicalisation, and the appropriate procedure for reporting those that they think are at risk.

### **The CONTEST Strategy**

Prevent is one of four elements of CONTEST, which is the government's counter-terrorism strategy. CONTEST was first developed by the Home Office in 2003, and it has been revised several times since, with the latest revision in June 2018. The strategy is premised upon the four Ps, which include:

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<b>Pursue</b>	To stop terrorist attacks from happening.
<b>Prevent</b>	To prevent people from becoming terrorists.
<b>Protect</b>	To strengthen the UK's protection against extremism, radicalisation and terrorism.
<b>Prepare</b>	To mitigate the impact of terrorist attacks in the UK.

### Promoting British Values

Prevent aims to protect and promote the fundamental British values which include:

- Democracy
- Rule of Law
- Tolerance
- Individual Liberty

Although such values are not only applicable to the UK alone, but these are also the fundamental principles that shape policy and practice, with the promotion of these values already embedded in legislative and guidance documentation

The policy and legislative framework set out the government's commitment to equality and inclusion. In accordance with UK Equality law, each person is entitled to the same rights and to live their life free from prejudice and marginalisation based on their sociodemographic status. With respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs as well as those without faith, we believe in the celebration of diversity and difference in a society that protects and promotes international human rights. Prevent procedure outlines that anyone who aims to challenge these values may represent a threat to British society.

### Reason why Prevent was created

Safeguarding is at the heart of the Prevent policy, as well as the wider counter-terrorism strategy. With an overall aim to safeguard children, young people and adults from the threat faced by those who pose extremist or radicalised views. It places a duty on public sector organisations to prevent people from being drawn towards such views and ensures that support is in place for those who are vulnerable.

Prevent is a measure that aims to reduce the threat of terrorism in the UK. Since the turn of the millennium, governments around the world have implemented state counter-terrorism strategies in response to an increase of terrorist incidences. The first permanent terrorism strategy was outlined within the Terrorism Act; a measure that increased police powers, allowed for more stop-and-search- measures, created new offences and widened the definition of terrorism.

In 2003, the government implemented the first CONTEST strategy as part of their post 9/11 counter-terrorism approach. Since its launch, there have been numerous attacks across the UK, including the July 2005 bombings, the attack on London Bridge, Westminster Bridge and Manchester Arena in 2017. The strategy has been revised several times, with later measures also aiming to deal with a perceived

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growing risk of 'home-grown' terrorism. Throughout this period the UK terrorism threat level moved from substantial to severe several times.

### **Extremism and Radicalisation**

Prevent responds to the ideological challenges which can occur because of extremism and radicalism, reducing the threat of terrorism from those who pose such views. As part of Prevent Duty, frontline staff have a responsibility to be aware of the meaning of such terminology.

### **Terrorism**

The current UK definition of Terrorism is from the Terrorism Act 2000, in which it defines it to be 'an action that endangers or causes serious violence to a person/people or seriously interferes with or disrupts an electronic system. The use or threat must be designed to influence the government or to intimidate the public and is made from the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideology cause' – Revised Prevent duty.

### **Extremism**

The government defines extremism as the 'vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values of democracy, rule of law, tolerance and individual liberty'. The definition of extremism also includes calls for the deaths of a member of the armed forces, both in the UK and overseas.

### **Radicalisation**

On the other hand, radicalisation refers to the process in which a person comes to sympathise with and support terrorist or extremist ideologies. There is no obvious profile of a person that is at risk of radicalisation, and the process itself can be different for each individual and ideology. Although it does not necessarily happen overnight, for some radicalisation can be a short process whereas, for others, it can occur gradually over a period of years. For example, the Far-Right extremist groups promote a narrative of a racist and cultural threat which may appeal to some. Those who support the far right convince supporters that they are not amplifying hatred but instead, telling the truth. However, such values are in direct contradiction to the British values of equality, tolerance, and democracy, and are often premised on misguided and stereotypical misconceptions. Whereas Islamist extremists attempt to create an atmosphere that is conducive to more people supporting their cause, and to do so they may attack principles of participation and cohesion.

### **Who is at risk?**

Terrorist groups aspire to radicalise people to gain support for their ideologies, through the use of bonding, peer pressure and indoctrination. There is no distinctive way of identifying an individual who may be susceptible to being radicalised. Furthermore, the risks may depend on the area, the age of the individual and the context, and professionals also have a responsibility to understand concerns within their local region. However, there it has been suggested that there are some indicators which may indicate that a person is being drawn to terrorism, such as:

- Behaving in a way that is out of character or secretive
- Being rejected by others

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- Signs of being stressed or depressed
- Linked to persons linked to extremism
- Victim/witness to race or hate crime
- Change in behaviour or appearances in line with ideological influences
- Possessing Literature related to extreme views
- Having Tattoos of symbols associated with extremist ideologies
- Sharing extremist websites
- Showing sympathy for extremist ideologies.

### **The role of social media**

People can be radicalised by others they already know, through contact with extremist groups, or via the internet, including social media. The internet has transformed the way we live, and the majority of us now use some form of social media regularly. However, such online platforms are also used as a way of radicalising a large number of people, with terrorist organisations often using modern technology to recruit people to their cause.

### **Prevent in different contexts**

Under section 26 of the 2015 Act, public sector agencies have a responsibility to ensure that staff are given specific Prevent training. Management is responsible for ensuring that professionals are also aware of any changes and that their Prevent training is kept up to date; with refresher training every three years minimum.

### **Schools**

School settings need 'to create and enforce a clear and rigorous expectation to promote fundamental British values'. They have a responsibility to establish mechanisms to enable students to develop an understanding of the risk of radicalisation, or they should adopt existing ones to ensure that this has been met. Moreover, teachers and wider school staff should be able to identify children who may be at risk of radicalisation. Schools should 'provide a safe space', in which children and young people can develop and understand the threat of radicalism and extremism. The discussion of the British values, as well as the risk of extremism, should be included within the PSHE or Citizenship curriculum, ensuring that children and young people feel heard and valued and that they are aware of the threat of terrorism in an age-appropriate manner. Schools also have a responsibility to work in partnership with the parent and the child or young person's family

### **Nurseries, Early Years Settings and Childcare Providers**

There has been some question as to the role of early years providers in implementing Prevent duty, as well as critiques of the relevance of teaching such notions to pre-school aged children. However, early years educators can play a critical role in identifying those at risk and are key members of the team around the child. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework has been updated to include Prevent and Ofsted will inspect settings concerning how they are promoting children's welfare and actively preventing radicalisation and extremism.

### **Further and Higher Education**

Further and higher education institutions also have a responsibility to ensure that they protect each student from the influences of radicalisation. As well as identifying

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those at risk of being drawn to extremism, students should be equipped with the necessary skills to explore political and social issues critically and without discrimination. Educational providers are also responsible for challenging any extremist ideas what support or are shared by a terrorist group. However, it is important to remember that students have the right to freedom of speech, and educational providers should thus encourage a balanced presentation of political ideas.

### **Local Authorities**

Local Authorities have a significant role to play in ensuring that Prevent duty is effectively implemented within any particular constituency with 'due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn to terrorism'. The use of the phrase 'due regard' means that authorities need to ensure that appropriate measures are in place and that these are effectively implemented, whilst also considering the other factors that impact upon their regular functions. As well as providing practical support to prevent this, local authorities should also complete a Counter-Terrorism Local Profile (CTLP) to inform a robust assessment of the area and any potential risks of radicalisation.

### **The Police**

As well as playing a significant role in identifying those at risk, the police are also responsible for the coordination of activity, including requesting relevant information from other panel partners about an individual. They have a responsibility to build relationships such as working in partnership with faith leaders and religious organisations to help identify those at risk.

### **Other Services**

As well as education providers, local authorities and the police, Prevent duty applies within a wide range of public-facing bodies. For example, the NHS set out the Prevent Implementation to lead and oversee the health elements of the strategy. Other organisations such as social services, drug and alcohol treatment services and the probation services also have a responsibility to ensure that staff have received the necessary training.

### **Working together and Channel**

Building relationships in which information can be shared freely is essential for the Prevent strategy to be effective, and throughout the literature, it is reiterated that a multi-agency approach is essential in ensuring compliance to the duty. Multi-agency working aims to streamline services and boost efficiency through effective partnership, and it is one of the core values that underpins practice in the UK.

### **Implementing Channel**

Prevent duty builds on existing partnerships, premised upon multi-agency working through the Channel process. This was first piloted in 2007, and it was rolled out across the country in April 2012. It focuses on providing support to individuals and groups who may be at risk of being radicalised and have been classed as vulnerable to being drawn to terrorism. With its main aims being:

- Identifying those at risk
- Assessment of the nature and extent of risk

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- Implementing an appropriate support plan

Local authorities and public-facing bodies have a responsibility to establish and cooperate with a local Channel Programme, which then provides a clear structure for professionals to report and share information about an individual.

### Why is Prevent controversial?

Ultimately, Prevent duty aims to keep people safe, in line with British values, yet, there have been several critiques of the measure. For example, UNISON highlighted concerns regarding the vagueness of the duty and the quality of training. This has been maintained across various sources, with several commentators indicating a need for improvement.

There have also been some suggestions that the current government strategy is indicative of islamophobia, with reference to increased surveillance on the lives of specifically Muslim individuals. Several commentators have called out the measure as being divisive and have suggested that it serves to further perpetuate the them vs us mentality. However, the implementation of Prevent duty is consistent with existing legislation and the values and principles that have underpinned practice for some time. Thus, practice should consistently be in line with the Equality Act 2010, which states that a person should not be discriminated against or prejudiced due to their faith or belief. It is stressed that anybody can be at risk of being drawn in by extremist or radical ideologies.

It has also been suggested that Prevent duty may also cause some potential conflicts with duty. For example, there have also been some concerns raised regarding the sharing of personal information. Information should only be shared in line with the Data Protection Act, and this should be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

### Background Papers

Revised Prevent duty guidance: for England and Wales

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance/revised-prevent-duty-guidance-for-england-and-wales>

Counter-terrorism strategy (CONTEST) 2018

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/counter-terrorism-strategy-contest-2018>

Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/6/contents/enacted>

Terrorism Act

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/11/contents>

Is PREVENT racist

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/blogs/campaigns-blog/prevent-program-racist>

Anti-extremism Prevent strategy 'failing to engage Muslim communities'

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-61679347>