Home Office

PREVENT

Handbook for Elected Members



CONTENTS

Prevent - Handbook for Elected Members	2
The Role of Local Authorities	3
The Role of Elected Members	3
Myths and Misconceptions	6
Glossary	7

Prevent - Handbook for Elected Members

Prevent is a national programme that aims to stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. It works to ensure that people who are susceptible to radicalisation are offered appropriate interventions, and communities are protected against radicalising influences. A Prevent referral should be made where there is a concern that a person may be on a pathway that could lead to terrorism.

Prevent uses a similar approach to public health models, which focus on prevention rather than treatment. Prevent aims to intervene early, identifying people who are susceptible to radicalisation, providing holistic support to address some of the personal and social conditions which make people susceptible.

Alongside this, Prevent aims to tackle the ideological causes of terrorism, focusing on reducing the influence of radicalisers on susceptible audiences as well as reducing the availability of, and access to, terrorist content.

Local Authorities, alongside other public-sector bodies (such as policing, healthcare and education institutions), have a legal duty to implement Prevent to protect people and manage the threat from terrorism. This is set out in Section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (CTSA 2015) and the Prevent duty guidance.

As leaders and representatives of local citizens, Elected Members have the reach and understanding to create and maintain meaningful relationships with their communities. Although tackling radicalisation may appear to be distant from the typical day-to-day role of Elected Members, the delivery of Prevent requires the support of local communities, local partnerships and local leaders to be implemented effectively.

This Handbook looks at the important role that Local Authorities and Elected Members can play at a local level, and how they can lead the vital work that is to help stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. Further detail on the context, purpose and implementation of Prevent can be found on the Prevent GOV.UK page.

ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Local Authorities are at the forefront of tackling radicalisation using their local knowledge, expertise and networks. While national Government provides a framework, guidance, support and some funding for Prevent, it is essential that local partners work together to ensure that local systems and processes are in place to identify and support individuals at risk of radicalisation. To support Local Authorities with meeting the duty, each region has a dedicated Home Office Prevent Adviser.

Prevent can run alongside and complement other safeguarding and support services. Where other services are already supporting an individual, Prevent may still provide case management and regular radicalisation risk assessment where appropriate.

To enable effective delivery of Prevent, the Home Office has worked with a range of local partners to produce the Prevent Duty Toolkit. It has been designed to enable Local Authorities to assure Prevent delivery in their local area against statutory requirements. The 8 benchmarks set out in this Toolkit summarise the operating models typically expected of Local Authorities. The Home Office uses these benchmarks as part of its annual assurance programme to monitor the delivery of Prevent. This is sometimes referred to as a 'benchmarking process'. Home Office Prevent Advisers work with the Local Authority Prevent Lead to identify areas of good practice and areas for improvement, where required.

The Home Office also undertake an annual prioritisation exercise to review the relative threat from terrorism across the country, supporting the provision of dedicated Home Office funding for areas that are responding to the very highest risks. In 2025, the Home Office introduced funding for an additional post based within specified Local Authorities. These Regional Delivery Officer posts are primarily responsible for sharing their expertise and supporting adjacent Local Authorities within that region, particularly with issues such as training, community engagement and working collaboratively to secure funding for Prevent projects.

ROLE OF ELECTED MEMBERS

Elected Members are crucial for successful delivery of Prevent, by overseeing and scrutinising local plans which ensure that citizens are kept safe, and susceptible people are given safeguarding support from the harms of radicalisation. Elected Members also play a critical role in representing members of their local community. They act as both a voice of local citizens; raising issues and concerns, whilst speaking on behalf of the Local Authority to communicate how policies and programmes operate.

There are three key roles for Elected Members in shaping and delivering local Prevent activity:

1) Leadership and Strategic Direction

Elected Members can use their authority and legitimacy to build community trust and resilience, helping communities to reduce susceptibility to terrorism and harmful radicalising influences. In doing so, they can work with individuals and the Local Authority to amplify counter messaging to those aiming to harm the community and misrepresent its values through extremism.

Council Leader

The council leader has overall responsibility for setting the strategic direction of Prevent in their area. As a figurehead for the local area, the leader of the council has responsibility for ensuring understanding of Prevent services and activities locally. By explaining Prevent's position in the context of wider safeguarding practices, the leader can become best positioned to talk about Prevent as a vital

means to protect people from those looking to harm susceptible individuals and protect the local community's values. The leader can also consider the risks, demands and resourcing of Prevent in the broader context of service delivery across the borough.

Portfolio Holder

The portfolio holder with responsibility for Prevent plays a vital role in the delivery of Prevent locally. They ensure that the Local Authority is fulfilling its statutory obligations in delivering the Prevent Duty, through holding officials to account and supporting holders of related portfolios (for example, Children's Services or Health) to meet their responsibilities. The portfolio holder should seek to stay updated on the work of the multi-agency partnership boards with responsibility for the governance of Prevent. They can provide advice and insight into how Prevent should be delivered in line with the Council's strategic direction of travel.

2) Community Dialogue

As representatives of their local communities, Elected Members often understand the challenges, tensions and concerns facing the local area. This means that they are well positioned to listen to and raise community concerns, and to be identified as the public face of Prevent delivery for the area. Prevent is not about restricting lawful debate or beliefs; it is about supporting people who may be susceptible to radicalisation to terrorism and managing risk proportionately. As with other safeguarding processes, it is better to share concerns that turn out not to be Prevent-related than for someone who needs support to be missed.

Elected Members should have the confidence and knowledge to engage the community, address concerns and answer questions about Prevent in any forum. By acting as the point of contact between the community and council through ward surgeries, regular emails and general local visibility, Elected Members can help to diffuse tensions and misconceptions about Prevent. In some areas, Elected Members chair regular Prevent Advisory Groups; regular community platforms that provide the public with opportunities to play a role in shaping local Prevent plans, plus forums for dialogue.

It is vital that Elected Members understand their local Prevent referral processes in order to give the best advice and assurance to those concerned about individuals who are susceptible to radicalisation or on a pathway that could lead to terrorism. Given this, Elected Members can enhance the number and quality of Prevent referrals from the community allowing an increasing number of individuals to be supported.

3) Scrutiny

Elected Members may also consider their role in providing transparency and accountability in delivering Prevent through formal scrutiny procedures. By holding to account the local delivery of Prevent, improvements can be made to implementation, and communities can be reassured by increased transparency.

Elected Members have the opportunity to scrutinise the local implementation of Prevent as part of a Scrutiny Committee - these offer a continuous review and evaluation of local Prevent programmes.

Case Study - East Midlands – Prevent & Counter-extremism Network

The East Midlands implemented a Prevent & Counter-extremism Network which brought together Elected Members and Prevent Leads from across the East Midlands region. It was established in recognition of the crucial role of local leaders in Prevent delivery and in building resilient communities. The Network supported local delivery of Prevent and counter-extremism work, provided elected members with an increased awareness of local, regional and national Prevent and counter-extremism policy and practice, and provided opportunities for Local Authorities to share approaches and learning.

Supported by the Home Office and Local Government Association (LGA), the purpose of the Network was to:

- Bring together Prevent cabinet leads from the East Midlands region
- Raise awareness of Prevent and the factors and characteristics that can make an individual susceptible to radicalisation and extremism
- Understand the latest threat picture and emerging issues
- Increase awareness about the delivery of the Prevent duty and counter-extremism work
- Provide a safe environment for elected members to discuss, constructively challenge, and explore some of the issues and barriers to effective Prevent and counter-extremism delivery
- Share positive new stories and promote best practice in local, regional and national Prevent and counter-extremism delivery
- Receive national updates and consider their application at local level, and feed into the Home Office/LGA local developments and concerns.



The Network met every 6 months in virtual, face-to-face or hybrid format. At meetings, each local authority had the opportunity to provide a short update on Prevent and counter-extremism challenges and delivery within their area. National updates and key messages were also delivered by the Home Office, Counter Terrorism Policing and the LGA.

MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS

There are widespread misconceptions surrounding Prevent. These myths do not reflect what the Prevent programme is or how it operates. Some common questions are outlined below:

Does the Prevent strategy target Muslims?

Prevent does not target any one community, or group, or individual and instead seeks to provide guidance to those on the frontlines of our communities who will first see signs of radicalisation and extremism.

Anyone who is at risk of any type of radicalisation can receive support from Channel. Channel provides support to individuals for any form of radicalisation, including left-wing extremism, other religious extremism, Northern Ireland-related extremism (within England and Wales), and in some cases those with no ideological focus.

Are there too few Islamist Extremism referrals in Prevent?

Islamist Extremism accounted for 8% of referrals[1] into Prevent in the year ending 31 September 2025 and 12% of the cases adopted by Channel were for concerns relating to Islamist Extremism. A range of steps have been taken to improve the ability of frontline professionals subject to the Prevent Duty to spot the signs of radicalisation, including updated guidance, training and awareness-raising.

Is Prevent doing enough to tackle extreme right-wing terrorism?

Prevent is implemented in a proportionate manner that takes into account the level of risk in any given area or institution. In some areas the risk of extreme right-wing terrorism may be significant and Prevent activity will therefore focus on this threat – including protecting those most likely to be susceptible to it. In 2024/25[1], 1810 individuals were adopted as a Channel case. Of these, 42% were cases referred due to concerns regarding Extreme Right-Wing radicalisation.

Does Prevent encourage spying?

There is nothing in law, in the guidance, or in any form of training that requires, authorises, or encourages any form of spying whatsoever in connection with the Prevent Duty. The Prevent Duty does not require teachers to spy on pupils or to carry out unnecessary intrusion into family life. It is about ensuring that teachers know how to identify behaviour of concern and how to refer pupils who may be at risk of radicalisation for appropriate support.

Does being on the Channel programme mean you get a criminal record?

Being referred to Prevent or supported by Channel is not any form of criminal sanction; Channel is a voluntary early intervention programme to stop people from being drawn into radicalisation or committing terrorist-related activity, and not a programme to further an investigation. It will have no bearing on a person's education or career prospects.

Does Prevent supress freedom of speech?

Prevent is not about supressing religious expression or restricting debate or free speech. It is about protecting those susceptible to radicalisation. It only becomes a terrorism or radicalisation concern where these narratives are used for the purpose of using, encouraging or justifying violence. Democratic debate and open discussion on immigration, integration or shared values are not a Prevent or extremist concern.

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[1] Source: Home Office: Individuals referred to and supported through the Prevent Programme, October 2024 to September 2025 - GOV.UK - **Figures vary year to year and should be read alongside the latest annual statistical release.**

GLOSSARY

Counter radicalisation – refers to the process of protecting people who are susceptible to being drawn into terrorist related activity.

Extremism – Extremism is the promotion or advancement of an ideology based on violence, hatred or intolerance, that aims to:

1. Negate or destroy the fundamental rights and freedom of others; or
2. Undermine, overturn or replace the UK's system of liberal parliamentary democracy and democratic rights or
3. intentionally create a permissive environment for others to achieve the results in (1) or (2).

Interventions - projects intended to divert people who are being drawn into terrorist activity. Interventions can include mentoring, counselling, theological support, encouraging civic engagement, developing support networks (family and peer structures) or providing mainstream services (education, employment, health, finance or housing).

Islamist Terrorism is the threat or use of violence as a means to establish a strict interpretation of an Islamic society. For some this is a political ideology which envisions, for example, the creation of a global Islamic caliphate based on strict implementation of shari'ah law, drawing on political and religious ideas developed in the 20th century by Sayyid Qutb and Abdallah Azzam. Many adherents believe that violence (or jihad as they conceive it) is not only a necessary strategic tool to achieve their aims, but an individual's religious duty.

Radicalisation - refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism or is drawn into terrorist-related activity.

Vulnerabilities – contextual factors (for example, mental ill-health, neurodivergence, social, environmental etc) that may, or may not, affect a person's risk or be relevant to a person's susceptibility to radicalisation.

Extreme Right-Wing Terrorism – describes those involved in Extreme Right-Wing activity who use violence in furtherance of their ideology. These ideologies can be broadly characterised as Cultural Nationalism, White Nationalism and White Supremacism. Individuals and groups may subscribe to ideological tenets and ideas from more than one category.

Terrorism – an action (defined in the Terrorism Act 2000) that endangers or causes serious violence to a person/people; causes serious damage to property; or seriously interferes or disrupts an electronic system. The use of the threat must be designed to influence the government or to intimidate the public and is made for the purpose of advancing political, religious or ideological cause.





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