

## Appendix 2

### BRIEFING NOTE: INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF PREVENT, 2023

#### **OBJECTIVE 1: TACKLING THE CAUSES OF RADICALISATION**

##### **Islamist Ideology:**

- Islamist terrorism is currently the largest terrorist threat facing the United Kingdom. In the years since the 2017 Westminster Bridge attack, the vast majority of realised and foiled plots have been Islamist in nature. At present, 80% of the Counter Terrorism Police network's live investigations are Islamist while 10% are Extreme Right-Wing
- There is a lack of understanding from Prevent staff of Islamist Ideology and Prevent should ensure its staff are aware that one can be radicalised, or 'ideologically motivated' via simple ideas and beliefs.
- There is a reticence for staff to see grievance narratives as a foundation of extremist ideology – Prevent tends to focus on the sharp, violent end of Islamist extremism

**RECOMMENDATION 1. Revise Prevent objective one of three in the duty guidance to 'Tackle the IDEOLOGICAL cause of terrorism'**

**RECOMMENDATION 4. Improve understanding of 'blasphemy' as part of the wider Islamist threat.**

**RECOMMENDATION 7. Keep current terminology to describe Islamist and Extreme Right-Wing ideology to ensure language is accurate and accessible for practitioners, public sector staff, and the wider public.**

##### **Vulnerability Vs Ideology:**

- Within discussions around Islamism Prevent staff placed greater emphasis on the 'vulnerabilities' of the individual, such as mental health, and ideology was treated as a secondary factor, and efforts to deradicalize were more focused around curing these rather than tackling the ideology directly.

**RECOMMENDATION 2. Move away from 'vulnerability' language and towards 'susceptibility', wherever accurate.**

##### **Islamism & Extreme Right Wing:**

- Prevent has a good level of awareness of non-violent extremists who promote wider Extreme Right-Wing ideological narratives. Prevent does not seek to engage and consult with Extreme Right-Wing sympathisers, and it recognises Extreme Right-Wing grievance narratives as being a key part of the problem.

**RECOMMENDATION 3. Reset thresholds to ensure proportionality across Prevent workstreams.**

##### **Civil Society Organisations:**

- When meeting the CSOs there was impressive evidence regarding the dedication and passion many demonstrated towards their work, there was also insufficient evidence that CSOs in this sample were consistently and publicly contesting extremist discourse and rebutting extremist groups. They often appear to be only tangentially linked to Prevent's overall objective of stopping people from being drawn into terrorism.
- There is evidence that some organisations funded by Prevent had either themselves promoted extremism or supported extremists.

**RECOMMENDATION 9. Restrict Prevent funding to groups and projects which challenge extremist and terrorist ideology via counter-narratives and activities.**

**RECOMMENDATION 25. Ensure Prevent does not fund, work with, or consult with extremism-linked groups or individuals, and applies the same thresholds for non-engagement across ideologies.**

**RECOMMENDATION 32. Prevent-funded civil society organisations and counter-narrative projects should take on extremism-linked activists who seek to demonise the scheme.**

#### **OBJECTIVE 2: SAFEGUARDING AND SUPPORTING THOSE MOST AT RISK OF RADICALISATION THROUGH SUPPORT AND EARLY INTERVENTION**

##### **Vulnerability Framework**

- From a Prevent perspective, the risk of radicalisation has been viewed across the following categories (of which there can be crossover):
  - Statutory vulnerability – Where a partner has a legal duty of care, particularly regarding children and young people, or adults at risk of manipulation or exploitation

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- Personal vulnerability – Where concerns relate to an individual’s external circumstance, such as problems accessing education, housing or employment, which might diminish feelings of control and perhaps increase susceptibility to manipulation or exploitation
- Ideological ‘vulnerability’ – The holding of core beliefs which, in practice, require the oppression of others. Such beliefs provide justification for a ‘them and us’ perspective, and foster a sense of grievance and injustice that, in time, can encourage an individual to become involved in terrorism

The majority of Prevent training material focuses on the first two elements, however a lack of material to support the view that those who hold an ideology may not have wider vulnerabilities.

- Presenting Prevent as a largely safeguarding initiative may cause confusion, for practitioners and frontline professionals alike, about what it is that the scheme is seeking to do, which is to stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.

### Channel

- For every Prevent failure that is exposed in the media there are other stories of lives turned around and potential harms averted that the public will never read about
- Successful cases tend to focus on young people who have been provided with Channel-commissioned one-to-one support.
- Prevent’s triage structure is a sophisticated model for ensuring individuals can be provided with the right support.
- Information provided to the review indicated that Channel panels clearly work most effectively when representatives are present who have had direct and consistent one-to-one contact with the individual referred.
- Overwhelming presence of extreme antisemitism in the cases observed as part of the review process
- A significant number of cases referred to Channel involve some element of mental health concern, and/or other complex needs.<sup>108</sup> This includes young people on the autistic spectrum. Even among the lone actors or the self-initiated who have committed TACT offenses, it is still the minority that are believed to suffer from mental health difficulties. Prevent is overly focused on issues such as mental health and social isolation as drivers of radicalisation. This is likely compounded by observations that practitioners are more comfortable discussing these issues rather than ideology.
- Channel appears to be used as a sorting system or ‘fast track’ to other forms of support. This is not what Prevent was designed for and is diverting valuable resources from minimising actual terrorism risk.

**RECOMMENDATION 5. Explore the prevalence of antisemitism in Channel cases and whether this is reflected in a breakdown of Channel referrals more widely.**

**RECOMMENDATION 18. Counter Terrorism Police should investigate removing referral data for cases that did not make it to Channel, categorised as requiring ‘no further action’, after three years instead of the current six.**

**RECOMMENDATION 20. The Home Office should investigate whether there is an imbalance, or disparity, in thresholds applied to Islamist and Extreme Right-Wing Channel cases, and if so why.**

### Referral Data

#### Islamist

- Referral data shows how referrals for Islamist radicalisation have dramatically reduced, both as absolute numbers, as well as a proportion of annual Prevent referrals. I share the view of several respected experts, that the Islamist threat is severely under-represented in Prevent referrals and cases adopted at Channel.
- The following possibilities may explain the growing disparity between Prevent referrals and the UK terrorism threat picture:
  - Islamism may be harder for the public sector to identify than other forms of extremism, leading to lower numbers of Islamist-related referrals, as well the possibility that not all Islamist-referrals are being categorised appropriately
  - fears of being accused of being racist, anti-Muslim, or culturally-insensitive may inhibit Islamist-related referrals in a way that that does not appear to be the case for other types of ideological concern
  - anti-Prevent advocacy, which is a key focus among domestic Islamist groups, may inhibit consent for Channel support, which is voluntary, and therefore drive down the number of individuals with Islamist-related risks who agree to participate in Channel.
- Disinformation about Prevent, particularly the narrative that Prevent intends to harm Muslim communities, has affected Prevent delivery and this type of referral. Narratives about Prevent in the media often tend to

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be negative and focus upon allegations of inappropriate referrals, which can be portrayed as motivated by anti-Muslim sentiment or racial stereotyping.

### **Extreme Right Wing**

- An increased focus on the Extreme Right-Wing in Prevent training and RICU materials, as well as in the popular discourse, could affect some of the decisions being made around Prevent referrals and cases assessed at Channel.

### **Mixed, Unclear, Unstable**

- In the year ending 31 March 2021, over half of all referrals to Prevent were categorised as MUU. This represents a dramatic increase since 2018.
- The growth of MUU referrals is, according to some Prevent co-ordinators, because 'agencies are unsure' of how else to provide support for vulnerable individuals flagged to the system.
- There are no recognised terrorist attacks in the UK perpetrated by assailants who could be described as falling within the MUU category

**RECOMMENDATION 15. Develop a plan to improve the quality of referrals around revised core objectives.**

**RECOMMENDATION 16. Improve Prevent datasets by revising how referrals are categorised.**

**RECOMMENDATION 17. The government should launch new initiatives to encourage referrals from friends, family and community cohorts.**

## **OBJECTIVE 3: ENABLE THOSE ALREADY ENGAGED IN TERRORISM TO DISENGAGE AND REHABILITATE**

### **Desistence and Disengagement Programme**

- The Fishmongers' Hall attacker, Usman Khan, fatally demonstrated how ideologically-committed offenders can exploit well-intentioned rehabilitative efforts and 'game' the system. The subsequent stabbing attacks in Streatham and Reading further highlight the risk extremist prisoners pose to the public after release, and the Whitemoor prison attack typifies the risk extremist prisoners pose to other offenders and staff.
- Convicted terrorists may not repeat TACT-level offences, but their role in the radicalisation of others – both inside and outside the prison estate, and wider non-criminal extremist activity, ought not be underestimated.
- There appears to be an enduring problem regarding a lack of confidence and capability of prison officers in identifying Islamist and other risk-related behaviours, and differentiating between Islamist activity and orthodox Islamic practice.
- From a wider Prevent perspective, local authority Prevent coordinators do not always attend MAPPA meetings, including those discussing offenders of terrorism concern due to be released. This is a missed opportunity for information sharing between prison, probation, police and local authority Prevent partners during this transition.

**RECOMMENDATION 27. Review Prevent-related staffing and training in prisons.**

**RECOMMENDATION 29. The Home Office should implement a further due diligence procedure around the recruitment of intervention providers.**

## **FURTHER FINDINGS**

### **Strengthening The Prevent Duty**

- There is evidence that the duty should extend beyond public sector organisations.
- Different sectors are monitored by different bodies, ie DfE, Home Office, HM Inspector of Constabulary. This makes oversight of Prevent difficult and different agencies have incomparable levels of expertise in counter radicalisation.
- Based on attacks committed by those seeking or being granted asylum to the UK in recent years there is evidence to suggest the duty should be extended to Immigration & asylum.

**RECOMMENDATION 6. Revise the Prevent Duty to ensure the scheme meets its revised objectives - "have due regard to the need to prevent people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism"**

**RECOMMENDATION 8. Explore extending the Prevent Duty to immigration and asylum**

## **Sector Specific Guidance**

**HE/FE**

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- A 2017 study found that a quarter of Islamist related offences in UK were committed by individuals who had some form of HE, as well as several high profile attacks perpetrated by former students in Britain. The current guidance states that relevant members of staff are expected to “have an understanding of the factors that make people support terrorist ideologies or engage in terrorist-related activity”. While this is the right approach, the term ‘relevant staff’ is open to interpretation.
- HE providers are less likely to identify a radicalisation concern than a wider safeguarding issue
- Evidence that Islamist preachers being invited onto campus platforms without challenge and uncertainty as to whether staff are aware of such events, or have the training and resources required to conduct due diligence

**RECOMMENDATION 28. Higher education staff responsible for authorising on-campus events with external speakers should be provided with training on how to manage and assess risk.**

**RECOMMENDATION 33. Develop specific measures to counter the anti-Prevent campaign at universities.**

### Schools:

- The duty is well embedded and broadly well understood, forming an integrated part of safeguarding practices and training. Institutions have absorbed Prevent within existing safeguarding processes and recognised the need to encompass risk of radicalisation alongside forms of exploitation and abuse
- Some frontline staff in schools and colleges require strengthened training on the causes of radicalisation and the ideological nature of terrorism, following the number of schoolchildren who travelled, or attempted to travel, to Syria to join Islamic State
- There was support for schools promoting Fundamental British Values as a way of cementing a sense of ‘belonging’ with British society, however there were concerns about linking Fundamental British Values lessons to Prevent, as opposed to a broader citizenship agenda.

### Health:

- Data on Prevent referrals from the sector illustrate that they predominantly relate to people in their 20s – an age when individuals are unlikely to have regular touch points with other institutions subject to the duty.
- Some confusion exists around patient confidentiality and when it can or should be overruled
- The fragmented structure of the healthcare system, with Prevent not applying to GPs, does not help with consistency
- MEND have used NHS hospitals to publicise their brand, distribute literature and promote their campaigns.

### Local Authorities:

- Although funding is awarded to the areas where the threat and risk is greatest, recent terror attacks have revealed the reality that perpetrators either resided in or spent significant time in unfunded areas. These areas do not receive the same level of oversight of Prevent delivery from the Home Office as funded areas
- When done well, partnership working was highlighted as a great strength of Prevent and evidence was found in multiple areas of strong multi-agency buy-in within the Channel process. However, patchy information sharing, most notably between counter-terrorism and Channel partners, was also seen as a barrier to a more effective delivery of the duty.

### Oversight of Prevent

It is clear that comprehensive oversight over Prevent is not currently in place in any kind of systematic manner. If done in a transparent way, proper oversight could help with public trust and confidence, countering those opponents who accuse the scheme of being unaccountable. As matters stand, it is not clear where valid complaints and concerns about Prevent should be raised, nor is there an independent process that can examine and rebut false claims disseminated by bad faith actors.

### Training:

Prevent training, in both delivery and content, is insufficient. The quality of training is inconsistent across sectors, within institutions, and regions – there is an ‘overreliance’ on online delivery, and a lack of requisite information required for staff to understand extremism-related risk, including extremist ideology.

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The training provision for frontline staff developed by central government, Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent (WRAP), is widely considered amongst those closely involved with Prevent to be not fit for purpose.

The training is 'too superficial' to help staff understand the nature of radicalisation and there is inadequate assurance and ability from frontline practitioners and Home Office officials when it comes to recognising Islamist ideas, narratives and behaviours.

**RECOMMENDATION 22. Develop a new training and induction package for all government and public sector staff working in counter-extremism and counter-terrorism.**

**RECOMMENDATION 23. Ensure Prevent training upholds a consistent and proportionate threshold across ideological threats and avoids using double standards.**

**RECOMMENDATION 24. Training for Prevent, Channel, and public sector staff subject to the duty should include clear guidance on how and when to make appropriate referral decisions.**

**RECOMMENDATION 31. RICU should equip Prevent practitioners with better information about extremism- linked campaigns to undermine their work.**

### Dovetail:

Home Office's Dovetail evaluation could not definitively say whether it achieved one of its key aims: to free up police to work on higher risk counter-terrorism cases. There was also concern that placing greater risk management with local authorities has led to weaknesses in the system for mitigating counter-terrorism risk. There was significant variability in implementation, with some sites requiring greater support from Counter Terrorism Police and the Home Office than others.

There is a recommendation that the Home Office trials a hybrid approach to Dovetail, in which the existing transfer of responsibilities remains (as per the Dovetail approach) with the following modifications:

- referrals into Channel are carried out by both Police and local authority simultaneously
- initial visit to referee is carried out by either the Police or local authority (whomever the panel decide is best placed to assess risk with each case)
- completion of all risk assessments and information gathering is carried out by the Police

**RECOMMENDATION 19. Streamline the Channel case management process by testing a hybrid model for referrals, risk assessment and information gathering.**

### Regionalisation

The disparities in local delivery of Prevent in different parts of the country have been described as a "postcode lottery". Co-ordinating and harmonising practices and standards would help to address the existing picture in which operating procedures differ across regions and sectors.

A regional structure should facilitate a more strategic approach to resourcing and help mitigate the issue of poor information sharing by different Prevent partners in different areas.

The Homeland Security Group ought to retain between 15 and 20 priority areas that would maintain greater levels of support and funding for local co-ordinators and local projects. These would be areas that have consistently seen a high level of risk over several years, with priority status and funding being awarded for a three to five year period.

**RECOMMENDATION 11. Move national Prevent delivery to a regionalised model that has consistent lines with the centre of Prevent in the Home Office.**

**RECOMMENDATION 12. Ensure high level decision-making within Prevent is always informed by proper consideration of the terrorism threat picture. This should ensure that any action taken is proportionate.**

**RECOMMENDATION 13. Lengthen the Prevent funding cycle to between two and five years in order to better sustain positive local work.**

### Scotland & Wales

The devolved government structures in Scotland and Wales have led to an inconsistency across the UK

**RECOMMENDATION 14. The Scottish Government should restructure Scottish Prevent in-line with the regionalisation model for England and Wales. This would move Prevent from the communities and integration agenda towards other strands of CONTEST.**

### Prevent & Counter Extremism

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Although Prevent is delineated as a counter-terrorism strategy, in reality, its work is not always easily distinguishable from counter-extremism. Overlapping objectives of the two strategies have led to confusion on the ground among those delivering Prevent around where counter-extremism work ends and the role of Prevent begins. Despite there being a formal separation between Prevent and counter-extremism, some stakeholders felt this line was not always apparent within the Home Office nationally or locally. There is also an understandable reluctance to take on, under the umbrella of Prevent, the wider work concerning issues which made their way into the 2015 Counter Extremism Strategy such as forced marriage and Female Genital Mutilation.

### Perceptions of Prevent

Despite the fierce campaign against Prevent, in recent years, an increasing number of studies have found majority support for the programme or the principles which underpin it. However allegations that Prevent stifles freedom of expression form a significant element of extremist narratives about the strategy. Some evidence outlined concerns that Prevent was discriminatory and leading to unfair targeting of certain ethnic or religious communities. At one end of the spectrum, there was criticism that Prevent was too targeted or oppressive towards Muslims, while at the other end there are those who fear it is insufficiently aggressive towards tackling Islamism within Muslim communities. There is no equivalent campaign against Prevent, either in scale or impact, from activists on the Extreme Right.

### Improving How Prevent Responds

For Prevent to have a future as a successful counter-radicalisation scheme, it is vital that campaigns against it are not allowed to go unchallenged. Those tasked with pushing back against the tactics of disinformation and intimidation need to have a good understanding of how the anti-Prevent network operates, and where it intersects with those involved in promoting extremist ideology. The government should create a dedicated unit within the Homeland Security Group that is able to develop a co-ordinated response for public communications and rapidly, and publicly, rebut misinformation and disinformation stories about Prevent.

**RECOMMENDATION 30. Establish a dedicated unit within the Homeland Security Group to rapidly rebut misinformation about Prevent and challenge inaccuracies via traditional and social media.**

### Present and Future Threats

There is concern within senior levels of government as to whether Prevent has the right systems in place for reacting to new and emerging threats and behaviours, while senior security and local counter-terrorism officials have raised concerns that Prevent may be suffering from 'mission creep', and is increasingly becoming overloaded and/or unfocused.

This should include:

Far Left

Islamism in the UK & overseas

Pro-Khalistan Extremism

Violence and Intimidation associated with Blasphemy – *the incident at Batley Grammar school is evidenced in this stage of the report*

### The Home Office Response:

We fully agree with the findings and welcome the 34 recommendations that the reviewer has made to further strengthen Prevent. We will work at pace to deliver the following changes across Prevent:

- Prevent's first objective will be tackling the ideological causes of terrorism
- we will work with other government partners to step up our approach to disrupt radicalisers and extremists who create a permissive environment for violence and who spread poisonous ideologies that undermine our values and our society
- we will introduce a security threat check process that will ensure Prevent decision- making is consistent with the terrorist threat

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- we will overhaul Prevent training and operational guidance for Prevent staff and others to whom the Prevent Duty applies. This will improve their understanding of the ideological nature of terrorism and mean that the same threshold for saying something is extremist applies across all ideologies
- we will radically reform our Prevent delivery model so that we have agile and more effective operational teams that can drive up the standard of Prevent delivery nationwide
- we will move to a single national model of delivery for the Channel early intervention programme that ensures those susceptible to radicalisation receive multi-agency support, but without losing focus on addressing counter terrorism risk
- we will undertake a full evaluation of Channel, so that it performs better and there is no disparity in the thresholds applied to Islamist or extreme right-wing ideologies
- we will strengthen our oversight and decision-making of the civil society organisations we fund to ensure they challenge extremist and terrorist ideology effectively and that we do not, under any circumstances, work, engage with or fund extremists
- we will do more to rebut those attempting to spread fear and disinformation about Prevent, while continuing to welcome challenge
- we will ensure greater understanding of the prevalence of antisemitism in Channel cases so that we can better disrupt radicalisers who spread antisemitic views or are supportive of those that harass and violently target the Jewish community