

WMSF Response to the “Prevent” Strategy

This guidance needs to be read in conjunction with Prevent duty guidance, updated April 2019: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance/revise-prevent-duty-guidance-for-england-and-wales> .

Key roles and responsibilities:

WMSF Prevent Officer: **Anthony Evans** (DSL), aevans@wmsf.ac.uk or 0208 748 6969 ext 258

Local Prevent Co-ordinator: **Tina Bencik**, tina.bencik@lbhf.gov.uk

What is “Prevent”?

The **Prevent** strategy, published by the Government in 2011, is part of the overall counter-terrorism strategy, **CONTEST**. The aim of the Prevent strategy is to reduce the threat to the UK from terrorism by stopping people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. In the Act this has simply been expressed as the need to “prevent people from being drawn into terrorism”.

The 2011 Prevent strategy has three specific strategic objectives:

- respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism and the threat we face from those who promote it
- prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and ensure that they are given appropriate advice and support
- work with sectors and institutions where there are risks of radicalisation that we need to address.

Terrorist groups often draw on extremist ideology, developed by extremist organisations. Some people who join terrorist groups have previously been members of extremist organisations and have been radicalised by them. The Government has defined extremism in the Prevent strategy as: “vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also include in our definition of extremism calls for the death of members of our armed forces”.

CHANNEL is a key element of the “Prevent” strategy and is a multi-agency approach to protect people at risk from radicalisation. Channel uses existing collaboration between local authorities, statutory partners (such as the education and health sectors, social services, children’s and youth services and offender management services), the police and the local community to:

- identify individuals at risk of being drawn into terrorism;

- assess the nature and extent of that risk; and
- develop the most appropriate support plan for the individuals concerned.

Channel is about safeguarding children and adults from being drawn into committing terrorist-related activity. It is about early intervention to protect and divert people away from the risk they face before illegality occurs.

There is no such thing as a 'typical extremist' and those involved in extremism come from a range of backgrounds and experiences. Most individuals, even those who hold radical views, do not become involved in violent extremism. Numerous factors can contribute to and influence the range of behaviours that are defined as violent extremism. There should be no bias or profiling when discussing potential cases.

It is vital that all professionals who have contact with vulnerable individuals are able to recognise vulnerabilities and know what to do if they have any concerns.

Who is at risk?

Anyone can be radicalised, but factors such as being easily influenced and impressionable make children and young people particularly vulnerable.

Young people who are at risk of radicalisation may have low self-esteem or be victims of bullying or discrimination. They may feel:

- isolated and lonely or wanting to belong
- unhappy about themselves and what others might think of them
- embarrassed or judged about their culture, gender, religion or race
- stressed or depressed
- fed up of being bullied or treated badly by other people or by society
- angry at other people or the government
- confused about what they are doing
- pressured to stand up for other people who are being oppressed

How does it happen?

People can be radicalised by family members or friends, through direct contact with extremist groups, or through the internet. Extremist messages or membership of an extremist group can offer a sense of purpose, community and identity which may be appealing, especially if someone is experiencing challenges in their life.

Teenagers can be at greater risk because they are more independent, exploring new things and pushing boundaries as they grow and discover more about their identity, faith and sense of belonging.

Extremist groups often target young people via the internet and social media.

The process may involve:

- being groomed online or in person
- exploitation, including sexual exploitation
- psychological manipulation
- exposure to violent material and other inappropriate information
- the risk of physical harm or death through extremist acts

What are the signs?

It can be hard to know when extreme views become something dangerous, and the signs of radicalisation aren't always obvious.

There is no specific profile for a person likely to become involved in extremism or a single indicator of when a person might move to adopt violence in support of extremist ideas.

Radicalisation can be difficult to spot, but signs that could indicate a child is being radicalised include:

- a change in behaviour
- changing their circle of friends
- isolating themselves from family and friends
- talking as if from a scripted speech
- unwillingness or inability to discuss their views
- a sudden disrespectful attitude towards others
- increased levels of anger
- increased secretiveness, especially around internet use
- accessing extremist material online
- using extremist or hate terms to exclude others or incite violence
- writing or creating artwork promoting violent extremist messages

Process for referral

If, like any other safeguarding concern, a member of staff has any concern, they need to raise this with the safeguarding team and email safeguarding@wmsf.ac.uk using the appropriate form. In urgent situations, a member of the safeguarding team or LG must be contacted immediately. No concern should be deemed too small, or irrelevant, and should always be referred.

The safeguarding team will consult with the member of staff and may try to gain more information at this point. If there are *any concerns* about radicalisation and/or extremism, the DSL will always contact the local Prevent officer, Tina Bencik, at the earliest opportunity. An appropriate referral will be made at this point if the parties deem this appropriate. This may be to the CHANNEL programme, or it can also include referrals to Children's Services, CAMHS/NHS or police if appropriate. If the student is under 18, parents will be notified of the referral unless other guidance is given.

Preventative Measures

WMSF ensures the following are in place:

- Guidance to parents and carers on how to keep young people safe from extremism and radicalisation
- Tutorial programme to cover topics related to radicalisation, including online
- Displays visible across the Sixth Form site
- Staff training/updates yearly on the “Prevent” strategy
- LGFL blocks on any extremist content