Independent Review of Prevent

By William Shawcross CVO

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Return to an Address of the Honourable

the House of Commons

dated 8 February 2023

for

Independent Review of Prevent

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Foreword

Terrorism is a ruthless and deliberate act to murder innocents and to destroy the freedoms we cherish. Each attack causes incalculable and endless pain to the families of those murdered and tears at the fabric of our democratic society.

No counter-terrorism programme will ever be able to shield us from all harm, but every society has a duty to try to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.

Prevent seeks to divert people away from being radicalised into terrorism and back towards lawful life within society. This is a far more humane approach than waiting until someone has crossed a criminal threshold and then bringing punitive action. In the last 20 years, Prevent has evolved and adapted as we have learned more about how to counter radicalisation effectively.

This review is part of that evolution.

My purpose has been to ensure that the government's approach to preventing radicalisation and terrorism is as successful as possible. I found a programme that is broadly right in its objectives, admirable in its intentions and that fulfils many of its functions to good effect. However, there is room for improvement.

Prevent must return to its core mission – countering all those ideologies that can lead people to committing or supporting acts of terrorism. This can only be done if Prevent properly understands the nature of these ideologies and how they attract and suborn individuals.

It is correct for Prevent to be increasingly concerned about the growing threat from the Extreme Right. But the facts clearly demonstrate that the most lethal threat in the last 20 years has come from Islamism, and this threat continues.

Since this Independent Review of Prevent was commissioned in 2019, six terrorist attacks have blighted our nation. These took place at Fishmongers' Hall (November 2019), Whitemoor Prison (January 2020), Streatham (February 2020), Reading (June 2020), Southend (October 2021), and Liverpool (November 2021). In addition, shortly before this report was completed, a British citizen held Jewish civilians hostage at a synagogue in Texas (January 2022). All these attacks were Islamist in nature.

Prevent must address all extremist ideologies proportionately according to the threat each represents. However, my research shows that the present boundaries around what is termed by Prevent as extremist Islamist ideology are drawn too narrowly while the boundaries around the ideology of the Extreme Right-Wing are too broad. This does not allow Prevent to reflect accurately, and deal effectively with, the lethal risks we actually face.

Several issues in Prevent can be addressed by updating the Statutory Prevent Duty and the programme's guidance to its officials. I believe also that delivery should be restructured along regional boundaries. Training of frontline staff should be strengthened so they acquire a deeper and more consistent understanding of extremists' worldviews, and have stronger confidence in the decisions they make.

I have also outlined reforms which will better enable Prevent work to be held to account. I recommend that the Home Office create a new unit to examine issues and complaints from both within the system and from the wider public. Prevent should have nothing to hide.

Other democracies have programmes similar to Prevent. But rarely are these subjected to the same critical attack as is Prevent in Britain. One of the most constant and strident accusations is that Prevent unfairly targets Muslims living here. This is simply not the case.

Islamism as an ideology is not the same as Islam as a faith. In many parts of the world, Muslims are the principal victims of Islamist extremism – in both its non-violent and violent manifestations. Millions have been killed or had their lives ruined by the attacks of terrorist groups like al-Qa'ida, Islamic State, Boko Haram, and others. It is not anti-Muslim to try to prevent the spread of that brutal ideology in Britain or to stop our country's Muslim children being lured online into the hell of Islamist wars in Syria and elsewhere.

In conducting this Review, I have seen at first hand the essential work carried out every day by police, health workers, local authority and social services staff, teachers and prison officers across the country. It is they who take the onerous responsibility of raising concerns when they fear that individuals are at risk of being radicalised by dangerous ideologies – and then undertake the difficult work of supporting their withdrawal from extremist paths.

This is unsung and often dangerous work which should be praised. Instead, these men and women are too often abused by some bad faith actors who seek to undermine Prevent through distortions and disinformation.

Such harassment is wholly unacceptable.

Prevent's frontline professionals must be much more clearly supported and empowered. Government, and other institutions, ought at the highest levels to express pride in Prevent, while always seeking to improve it.

It is also vital to acknowledge that all too often those who commit terrorist acts in this country have been previously referred to Prevent. This review seeks to address why Prevent apparently failed to understand the danger in these cases and how such failures might be avoided in the future.

I would like to thank all the many people, both inside and outside Prevent, who engaged with my review and gave me honest and sincere portrayals.

Prevent has already done much to stop extremists, to rescue the misguided and to protect innocents. I strongly believe that by enhancing its approach and staying true to its core mission, Prevent will continue to play its vital part in keeping our country a free and safe place for all its citizens.

1. Executive summary

1.1 Prevent has a noble ambition: stopping people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. I heard time and again about how Prevent saves lives, helps tackle the causes of radicalisation, prevents individuals from potentially carrying out an act of terrorism, and assists others to disengage from extremism. **The government should be proud of Prevent's positive impact in this regard.** Prevent's architecture is sophisticated and impressive. The caricature of Prevent as an authoritarian and thinly veiled means of persecuting British Muslims is not only untrue, it is an insult to all those in the Prevent network doing such diligent work to stop individuals from being radicalised into terrorism.

1.2 Despite this, all too often those who commit terrorist acts in this country have been previously referred to Prevent. Prevent apparently failed to understand the danger in these cases and this review demonstrates how such failures might be avoided in the future.

1.3 The Statutory Prevent Duty works well to ensure that public agencies consider radicalisation as a risk, facilitate engagement with partners, and that counter-radicalisation measures are implemented on the ground. I have found the duty to be especially effective in schools, where awareness of radicalisation risk has been successfully embedded within safeguarding work, and support from Home Office and Department for Education leads are strong. **I was greatly encouraged by the dedication and diligence of Prevent's multi-agency Channel panels** – the process for supporting individuals. I observed these panels working on complex cases featuring a wide variety of risk.

1.4 However, I have found several areas that require improvement. Above all, **Prevent must return to its overarching objective: to stop individuals from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism**. Prevent is a crucial pillar of the UK's counter-terrorism architecture, yet it has increasingly come to be seen as synonymous with safeguarding – i.e. an emphasis on protecting those referred into Prevent from harm and addressing their personal vulnerabilities. Whilst safeguarding rightly sits as an element of Prevent work, the programme's core focus must shift to protecting the public from those inclined to pose a security threat. Prevent must not overlook the reality that most would-be terrorists pose a threat on account of their own agency and ideological fervour. Prevent too often bestows a status of victimhood on all who come into contact with it, confusing practitioners and officials as to Prevent's fundamental purpose.

1.5 Prevent's first objective – to tackle the causes of radicalisation and respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism – is not being sufficiently met. **Prevent is not doing**

enough to counter non-violent Islamist extremism. Challenging extremist ideology should not be limited to proscribed organisations but should also cover domestic extremists operating below the terrorism threshold who can create an environment conducive to terrorism. **Prevent has a double standard when dealing with the Extreme Right-Wing and Islamism.** Prevent takes an expansive approach to the Extreme Right-Wing, capturing a variety of influences that, at times, has been so broad it has included mildly controversial or provocative forms of mainstream, right-wing leaning commentary that have no meaningful connection to terrorism or radicalisation. However, with Islamism, Prevent tends to take a much narrower approach centred around proscribed organisations, ignoring the contribution of non-violent Islamist narratives and networks to terrorism. Prevent must ensure a consistent and evidence-based approach to setting its threshold and criteria, and ensure it does not overlook key non-violent radicalising influences.

1.6 I was consistently unable to determine how many Prevent-funded civil society organisations (CSOs) and community projects are achieving impact. I found there were inadequate mechanisms to evaluate individual projects. **Funding too often goes towards generic projects** dealing with community cohesion and hate crime, and few CSOs could be seen publicly to contest extremist discourse. Of particular concern, I discovered that **some CSOs have promoted extremist narratives**, including statements that appear sympathetic to the Taliban. As a core principle, the government must cease to engage with or fund those aligned with extremism.

1.7 I was disturbed by the **prevalence of antisemitism within the Channel** cases I observed. Individuals discussed at Channel panels tended to harbour violent and fanatical beliefs about Jews, often expressing an intent to kill, assault or blow-up members of the Jewish community. Prevent must better understand and tackle antisemitism where it is relevant to its work. As part of this pursuit, Prevent work should cover UK extremist networks supportive of terrorist movements that explicitly target Jewish communities. Prevent should also better address the anti-Jewish component of both Islamist and Extreme Right-Wing ideology.

1.8 It is clear that **Prevent is out of kilter with the rest of the counter-terrorism system,** and the UK terrorism threat picture. Islamist extremism represents the primary terrorist threat to this country – consistently accounting for the majority of terrorist attack plots both carried out and thwarted by the intelligence services.[1] **At present, 80% of the Counter Terrorism Police network's live investigations are Islamist while 10% are Extreme Right-Wing.** The fact that only 22% of Prevent referrals for the year 2020-21

[1] Lauren Turner, 'MI5: 31 late-stage terror plots foiled in four years in the UK', BBC News, 10 September 2021, available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-58512901

concerned Islamism suggests a loss of focus and failure to identify warning signs. This misalignment has been partly driven by a sharp uptick of 'Mixed, Unclear, or Unstable' referrals, which constituted over half of Prevent referrals for the year 2020-21. Mental health and neurodevelopmental issues, as well as personal and domestic difficulties are often factors in such referrals.

1.9 In my assessment, **Prevent is carrying the weight for mental health services**. Vulnerable people who do not necessarily pose a terrorism risk are being referred to Prevent to access other types of much-needed support. This is a serious misallocation of resources and risks diverting attention from the threat itself.

1.10 The Desistance and Disengagement Programme (DDP) is a positive addition to Prevent's mission, with tailored interventions providing tangible benefits to an offender's life circumstances. However, I am **not satisfied that sufficient precaution is being applied to rehabilitation work.** As the murderous Fishmongers Hall attack of 2019 showed, optimism bias can have tragic consequences. Procedures need to be built in that can correct this. It is vital to avoid complacency around the danger that ideologically driven offenders may continue to pose, and how this can differ from other types of offending. This requires staff to understand the ideology itself, how it manifests, and the risks it can pose.

1.11 There is a **lack of training** on how to manage controversial issues of substance regarding extremist ideology. There is also a lack of confidence in the ability to refer effectively and recognise extremism-related behaviour in Islamist cases. I am concerned that a culture of timidity exists among practitioners in the round when it comes to tackling Islamism. If left as it is, potentially fatal blind spots will emerge and grow.

1.12 There is a **concerted campaign by some, including a number of Islamist groups, to undermine and delegitimise Prevent** through the spread of disinformation, misinformation and half-truths. Accusations that have since been debunked continue to circulate in communities and on various online platforms. This suggests that certain criticisms of Prevent are being made by those naturally hostile to it. Some actors who oppose Prevent, such as Islamist groups and their sympathisers, are themselves radicalising influences. This campaign has been particularly damaging because of the way in which it has focused many of its efforts within British Muslim communities, discouraging those communities from engaging with Prevent, while also stirring up grievance and mistrust towards wider British society, non-Muslims, and those Muslims who do engage with Prevent and counter-extremism. I was particularly concerned to learn that Muslims working in Prevent have suffered intimidation and even death threats. The government must do more to recognise and tackle the disinformation and demonisation around Prevent, and to protect frontline staff against intimidation.

2. Introduction

2.1 On 26 January 2021, I was appointed by the Home Secretary, the Rt. Hon. Priti Patel MP, to conduct an independent investigation into the Prevent strand of the government's counter-terrorism strategy.

2.2 To carry out that task, over the course of 11 months, my team and I conducted 115 meetings, engaged with over 800 people and analysed over 650 sources of written material (see Annex A). My interviews included both the dedicated practitioners of Prevent and experts in the field of counter-terrorism and counter-extremism. I am grateful for their insight and for the help of all those who have participated, together with the assistance of both ministers and officials in facilitating this review.

2.3 I also want to put on record my gratitude to Lord Carlile KC, a skilled lawyer of great expertise in this subject, who had originally been appointed to undertake this review. I am indebted to him for the detailed research and careful thinking he undertook before he had to stand down.

2.4 The attacks in America on 11 September 2001, and the July 2005 suicide bombings in London, fundamentally changed the way Britain approached the need to counter the threat of terrorism. The Prevent programme has gone through numerous iterations since it was first devised in 2003.

2.5 One of four strands of the CONTEST counter-terrorism strategy, Prevent was focussed from the outset on trying to stop the emergence of the next generation of terrorists by working with Muslim groups to counter-radicalisation. Since then, Prevent's focus has broadened to include other forms of terrorism, and while the strategy has changed considerably, the objective is still to prevent people from becoming terrorists.

2.6 Following the 2005 bombings targeting London's transport system, in which 52 people were murdered, Prevent underwent further changes. It was publicly launched for the first time in 2006, and was revised again in 2007. Prevent had previously been described as the least well-developed strand of the counter-terrorism strategy. Accordingly, CONTEST 2009 placed a renewed emphasis on the importance of countering ideology, and stopping people from supporting violent extremism. A more detailed history of the evolution of Prevent is included as an annex to this report.

2.7 The most recent review of Prevent was undertaken in 2011. As well as expanding Prevent to counter Extreme Right-Wing terrorism, that review also noted the mistakes that had been made around engagement with Islamist groups.

2.8 The following years saw an intensification of the threat. First, there was the murder of Fusilier Lee Rigby on a London street in May 2013. Separately, in 2014, revelations that a group of individuals had sought to gain undue Islamist influence over several schools in Birmingham emphasised the need to promote Fundamental British Values in our education system.[2] Meanwhile, during the Syrian civil war, the country witnessed approximately a thousand people travelling to Iraq and Syria to join jihadist groups.

2.9 All this necessitated further action. In 2015, the Counter Terrorism and Security Act made Prevent a statutory duty within specific public authorities. That year also saw the launch of the government's first Counter Extremism Strategy. However, the legislation that would have served as the backbone of that strategy was never passed. In 2017, the government instead announced the creation of a Commission for Countering Extremism.

2.10 Britain witnessed a series of devastating attacks in 2017. While these were mostly Islamist in nature, one of the attacks that year saw Muslim worshipper Makram Ali killed by Extreme Right-Wing terrorist Darren Osborne near Finsbury Park Mosque. The previous year had also seen the murder of Jo Cox MP by an Extreme Right-Wing terrorist. The most recent evolution of Prevent came with the newly launched CONTEST strategy in 2018. With a significant number of individuals now convicted of terrorism offences, Prevent also took on the responsibility for trying to convince those who had already engaged in terrorist activity to abandon extremism.

2.11 Since then, Britain has continued to suffer terrorist attacks, in Parliament Square (2018), Fishmonger's Hall (2019), HMP Whitemoor (2020), Streatham (2020), Reading (2020), Southend (2021), and Liverpool (2021). All these attacks were associated with Islamist terrorism.

2.12 In line with the terms of reference, this review examines whether the Prevent strategy is achieving its objectives as set out in CONTEST 2018 to:

- tackle the causes of radicalisation and respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism
- safeguard and support those most at risk of radicalisation through early intervention, identifying them and offering support
- enable those who have already engaged in terrorism to disengage and rehabilitate

[2] See the 2014 independent report by the Education Commissioner Peter Clarke into Birmingham Schools. Clarke concludes "…the[re is] very clear evidence that young people are being encouraged to accept unquestioningly attitude to a particular hardline strand of Sunni Islam raises real concerns about their vulnerability to radicalisation in the future. I have heard evidence to the effect that there are real fears that their current experiences will make it harder for them to question or challenge radical influences." See: Peter Clarke CVO OBE QPM, 'Report into allegations concerning Birmingham schools arising from the "Trojan Horse" letter', July 2014, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/340526/HC_576_accessible_-.pdf

2.13 The review considers how efficient Prevent is in delivering at the national and local level, including within devolved administrations, and how effectively the Statutory Prevent Duty is being implemented.

2.14 I was also tasked with considering how the strategy should evolve in line with current and emerging threats, and how the government should respond to criticisms and complaints about Prevent.

2.15 The destructive nature of terrorism extends well beyond any material or economic impact it causes. Along with the devastation that it inflicts on the individuals and families who fall victim to attacks, terrorism tears at the fabric of society, causing fear and division.

2.16 A period of intensive and particularly devastating attacks could erode confidence in the ability of free societies to protect their citizens from terrorism. Accordingly, the value of preventing people from being radicalised into terrorism is incalculable. I take it as my starting point for this review that trying to prevent people from becoming terrorists is clearly the right thing to do.

3. Prevent's first objective: tackle the causes of radicalisation and respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism

3.1 Prevent's first objective is arguably its most important. The first half of this chapter outlines what I consider to be the first principles in responding to the ideological challenge of terrorism, from key definitions to some common misconceptions – particularly regarding Islamism. I also reflect on some of the key challenges faced by Prevent, which I then go on to explore further throughout the report.

3.2 The second half of this chapter addresses various aspects of Prevent policy and delivery work in respect to the programme's first objective.

First principles

Terrorism and Prevent

3.3 Terrorism, as defined in British statute, is the use or threat of action[3] designed to influence the government or intimidate the public for the advancement of a political, religious, racial or ideological cause.[4] Terrorism, therefore, is a very particular form of violent criminal activity.

3.4 Extremists have disparate views, but almost all of them believe their actions are backed by a political and social imperative and, in the case of those acting in the name of religious belief, are divinely-mandated.

3.5 It is right that Prevent has broadened its scope over the last decade to now include all forms of extremist ideology. It is also right that Prevent is designed to address radicalisation on a case-by-case basis. The trajectory toward violence varies for each individual. Radicalisation does, however, require the adoption of, or subscription to, an ideology that reorientates an individual's entire worldview through that ideological lens, becoming embedded within their identity and actions. Terrorists can only be labelled as

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[3] Action falls within this category if it (a) involves serious violence against a person, (b) involves serious damage to property, (c) endangers a person's life, other than that of the person committing the action, (d) creates a serious risk to the health or safety of the public or a section of the public, or (e) is designed seriously to interfere with or seriously to disrupt an electronic system.

[4] Terrorism Act 2000

such if an ideological motivating factor can be demonstrated.[5] That is not to suggest that other forms of violence are any less serious. But if they lack an ideological component then they are necessarily out of scope for counter-terrorism.

3.6 As Lord Carlile explained, in his oversight report on the 2011 Prevent review, "challenging the ideology that supports terrorism and those who promote it [...] must be [Prevent's] first and main objective".[6]

3.7 For Prevent to succeed in achieving its first objective, it must understand the nature of the problem it is attempting to confront. Lord Carlile correctly advised Prevent to focus on "combating the ideas espoused by extremist groups".[7] But that is, in my view, still the least developed part of Prevent's sophisticated system, and the one that is most misunderstood by those who work within it.

Islamist ideology

3.8 The 2011 Prevent strategy is explicit: "Previous work in this area has made some progress but has not consistently reached the few people who are most susceptible to terrorist propaganda. It has failed to recognise the way in which terrorist ideology makes use of ideas espoused by extremist organisations and has not fully understood the implications this should have for the scope for our work."[8] Throughout the course of the review it became clear that this issue has not been rectified.

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5 The Crown Prosecution Service is very clear on this: "[...]terrorism offences are distinct from other types of crime in that individuals who commit terrorism-related offences have political, religious racial and/or ideological motivations, unlike typical criminal motivations, which may be personal gain or revenge, for example. The CPS and Counter Terrorism Policing have specialist units that were set up specifically to investigate and prosecute terrorism cases." See: Crown Prosecution Service, 'Terrorism', available at: https://www.cps.gov.uk/crime-info/terrorism

6 Lord Carlile of Berriew, 'Report to the Home Secretary of Independent Oversight of Prevent Review and Strategy', HM Government, 2011, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97977/lord-carlile-report.pdf p.8

7 Ibid

8 Echoing this view, in his keynote address as outgoing National Lead for Counter Terrorism Policing Sir Mark Rowley noted that Far Right and Islamist extremism "creates a fertile environment that allows the acute threat of terrorism to exist and thrive." See: Mark Rowley, 'Extremism and Terrorism: The need for a whole society response', Policy Exchange, 26 February 2018, available at: https://policyexchange.org.uk/pxevents/the-colin-cramphorn-memorial-lecture-by-mark-rowley/. This was an outlook I saw reflected in multiple submissions to the review's call for evidence.

3.9 I have heard several examples of the role of Islamist ideology being misinterpreted, misunderstood, or even overlooked by Prevent staff. By contrast, when analysing terrorism associated with the Extreme Right-Wing, core ideas, goals, and narratives were generally taken seriously and accepted as a radicalising influence.

3.10 It is worth restating that 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.

It is worth restating that Islamist terrorism is currently the largest terrorist threat facing the United Kingdom.

3.11 Perpetrators are driven by a violent expression of Islamism. Islamism has been described as follows: an extremist religio-political ideology founded in the 20th century in the Middle East and South Asia that has advocated for an expansionist 'Islamic' state governed by *sharia* ('Islamic principles and law'). Not all Islamist groups share a violent methodology for change – some do not exercise violence in pursuit of their goals, while others see

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Concerns about the role of non-violent extremism in motivating terrorist action have been expressed by leaders across the political divide. Prominently, this includes Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron in his 2011 Munich Security Conference speech: "Islamist extremism is a political ideology supported by a minority. At the furthest end are those who back terrorism to promote their ultimate goal: an entire Islamist realm, governed by an interpretation of Sharia. Move along the spectrum, and you find people who may reject violence, but who accept various parts of the extremist worldview, including real hostility towards Western democracy and liberal values." See: 'PM's speech at Munich Security Conference', 5 February 2011, GOV.UK, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-speech-at-munich-security-conference

Similarly, in an address for the Royal United Services Institute shortly following the twentieth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, former Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair stated: "Radical Islam believes not only in Islamism – the turning of the religion into a political doctrine – but in the justification of struggle, if necessary armed struggle, to achieve it. Other Islamists agree with the ends but eschew violence. But the ideology is in inevitable conflict with open, modern, culturally tolerant societies. [...] In my view, Islamism, both the ideology and the violence, is a first-order security threat; and, unchecked, it will come to us, even if centred far from us, as 9/11 demonstrated." See: 'Tony Blair: Speech at the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (RUSI)', 6 September 2021, Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, available at: https://institute.global/tony-blair/tony-blair-speech-royal-united-services-institute-defence-and-security-studies-rusi

violence as a legitimate response to activities pursued by a state.[9] The Islamist worldview poses challenges for liberal societies beyond the confines of counter-terrorism. Some contemporary Islamist groups in the West have largely de-emphasised the goal of a sharia-governed state in the West, in favour of reviving Islam as a comprehensive political ideology within Muslim communities and gaining political influence within wider society.[10]

3.12 Early Islamist ideologues, such as Sayyid Qutb and Abul A'la Mawdudi critiqued the modern Western order, contending that 'secularisation and westernisation' are at the root of all contemporary problems of Arab and Muslim societies.[11] Islamism agitates against Western political precepts such as secularism (separation of religion and state), liberal values (equal rights and freedoms for all individuals) and democracy (authority derived from man-made law). Islamists deploy Islamic scripture as a vehicle for shaping all moral and political judgements.

3.13 Islamist groups may exhibit some or all of the narratives listed below, and some groups may choose to focus on one of these themes in particular, such as campaigning for the 'oppressed'.

3.14 While I consider that to varying degrees these narratives can be a precondition of a violent extremist mindset, that is not to say that all Islamist groups who publicise these narratives intend to drive individuals toward terrorism.

3.15 I believe they are, however, providing 'fertile ground' for violent extremist groups to radicalise and recruit (see footnote 8). Further, I believe they can lead to a range of other social harms, including racial or religious bigotry and hate crimes.

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9 A prominent example is the Muslim Brotherhood's defence of Hamas suicide bombings and the killing of civilians. See: 'Muslim Brotherhood Review: Main Findings', 17 December 2015, GOV.UK, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/486932/Muslim_Brotherhood_Review_Main_Findings.pdf. Also see: 'Understanding Islamism', Policy Exchange, available at: https://policyexchange.org.uk/understanding-islamism/#About/

10 US-based scholar of Islamism Dr Lorenzo Vidino described the goals of Muslim Brotherhood-influenced milieus as follows: "(1) Spread their religious and political views to British Muslim communities (2) Become official or de facto representatives of British Muslim communities in the eyes of the government and the media (3) Support domestic and international Islamist causes with local Muslim communities and British policy-makers and public." See: Lorenzo Vidino, 'The Muslim Brotherhood in the United Kingdom', December 2015, page 4, available at: https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2191/f/downloads/MB%20in%20the%20UK.pdf

11 'Muslim Brotherhood Review: Main Findings', 17 December 2015, GOV.UK, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/486932/Muslim_Brotherhood_Review_Main_Findings.pdf

3.16 The Islamist endeavour is an imperialist one – one that strives to implement sharia governance as widely as possible. Yet for 'non-violent' proponents in the UK, their perceived religious cause has a variety of more practical motivations that I have divided into several non-exhaustive themes.

3.17 Some of these have been covered in reports previously published by the government, such as John Jenkins' 2015 Muslim Brotherhood review which highlighted the disparity between the Islamist group's public narrative in the West ("emphasis[ing] engagement not violence") and that espoused overseas.[12] In the case of Shakeel Begg v BBC (2016), Justice Haddon-Cave set out ten 'extremist Islamic positions' which helped form his judgement. This included: "advocating armed fighting in defence of Islam (qital) as a universal individual religious obligation (fard al 'ayn)" and "[the] doctrine that the precepts of the Muslim faith negate and supersede all other natural ties, such as those of family, kinship and nation".[13] In 2019, the Commission for Countering Extremism explored the history and growth of Islamist movements, and commented that: "One commonality among Islamist movements is their claim to authenticity and normative Islamic practice [which] can come at the cost of other Islamic traditions or other identities."[14] Much of Jenkins, Haddon Cave and the Commission for Countering Extremism's insightful explanations regarding non-violent Islamist groups and narratives are captured below.

[12] The review stated that "the Muslim Brotherhood historically focused on remodelling individuals and communities through grassroots activism. They have engaged politically where possible. But they have also selectively used violence and sometimes terror in pursuit of their institutional goals. Their public narrative – notably in the West - emphasised engagement not violence. But there have been significant differences between Muslim Brotherhood communications in English and Arabic". See: 'Muslim Brotherhood Review: Main Findings', 17 December 2015, GOV.UK, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/486932/Muslim_Brotherhood_Review_Main_Findings.pdf

[13] The Hon. Mr Justice Haddon-Cave, 'Approved Judgement', Shakeel Begg v British Broadcasting Corporation, EWHC, 28 October 2016, p.29, available at: https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/shakeel-begg-v-bbc-judgment-final-20161028.pdf

[14] Commission for Countering Extremism, 'Challenging Hateful Extremism', October 2019, pages 42-43, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/874101/200320_Challenging_Hateful_Extremism.pdf

Key Islamist narratives

- Commanding that (their interpretation of) the Islamic faith is placed at the centre of an individual's identity, and must govern all social and political decision-making.
- Portraying Muslim communities as under constant attack (both globally and at home) and often uniquely targeted in comparison to other religious communities, stirring up an undue sense of alarm, resentment and anger.
- Campaigning for the 'oppressed' – characterising Islamist extremists who have been sanctioned by the state (such as those charged under terrorism legislation), as religious 'freedom fighters' who have been targeted as a result of their faith (i.e. evidence of bullet point 2 above).
- Insisting that society, in part or as a whole, adhere to (their interpretation of) Islamic principles, the neglect of which reveals an intrinsic anti-Muslim prejudice in British society (or 'institutional Islamophobia'). For some groups, this narrative is used to rationalise the need for a united Islamic state (where such prejudice, it is claimed, would be absent).
- Promoting conspiratorial narratives. This could be as broad as claims about the government itself (e.g. challenging orthodox or state-driven narratives around terrorist attacks), or targeted toward specific communities (e.g. conspiracies in relation to Jews, or the minority Ahmadiyya Islamic sect).
- Justifying violent activity in certain circumstances. For example, some Islamists may condemn suicide bombings and knife attacks in the UK, but when carried out in other contexts, such as within overseas perceived Islamic territory, these types of attacks are considered necessary (for religious or political purposes) or morally defensible. This narrative can also be used to excuse or equivocate upon other forms of violence committed in 'defence of the Islamic faith'. For example, attacks against those accused of committing blasphemy against Islam's prophet Muhammed.
- Lastly, as highlighted by Justice Haddon-Cave, I consider the "citing with approval of Islamic scholars who espouse [an] extremist worldview" or "referring with approbation to notorious violent, extremist, Islamic ideologies (e.g. Sayyid Qutb and Abdullah Azzam)" as an indication of the adherence to Islamist ideology.

3.18 Terrorism is only one manifestation of Islamist ideology. The Islamist worldview is by nature supremacist. Islamists have encouraged the hatred of Jews, homosexuals, minority Muslim sects, Muslim liberals and human rights advocates, and the harassment and abuse of Muslim women and girls.

3.19 Advocating Islamist beliefs is not a crime in the UK. However, individuals who breach anti-terrorism legislation, for example by encouraging terrorism in pursuit of their Islamist goals, can be prosecuted for doing so.

3.20 As I detail in the report, confronting these narratives must form a principal component of Prevent activity. Further, challenging these narratives necessitates challenging those who promote them. It is for this reason I am critical of a host of domestic actors, whose public output exhibits sympathies for the Islamist cause and divergence from the liberal principles (or 'Fundamental British Values') that the state should actively encourage.

3.21 In the report I refer to some actors as 'Islamist', others in a more associative fashion (e.g. 'Islamist-aligned' or 'Islamist-linked') and sometimes I specify their relationship to Islamist violence (e.g. supportive of 'violent Islamism' or 'non-violent Islamist narratives'). In some cases I refer to 'Islamist extremism' to differentiate from other extremist ideologies.

3.22 There appeared to be lack of consistent understanding within Prevent as to the nature of Islamist ideology and its deployment of Islamic scripture. I saw particularly striking evidence of this in a report from a government department which discussed young travellers to Syria. Under motivational factors, the report identified several including (i) the aspiration to fight for 'Daesh', (ii) wanting to live under a Caliphate and (iii) the wish to undertake violent jihad. The latter two are clearly rooted in religious precepts. Yet this same report stated that of the factors identified, religion does not feature significantly as young people did not always appear to have a 'nuanced understanding of Islam' as a religion. In my view, this displays a misunderstanding of the way in which Islamism utilises Islamic concepts. This can also be seen in the report's explanation of why the call to establish a Caliphate could attract young people to join it. Instead of recognising its religious derivation, its attraction is described in secular terms e.g. providing a 'utopia' for young people and a way for them to 'rebel' against their parents. As I go on to explain, it is important that officials do not interpret religion and ideology as interchangeable or mutually exclusive. One can be superficially religious and yet deeply ideological.

3.23 It is a common mistake in the wider field to equate ideological motivation with theological literacy or intellectual capability. This risks making an inaccurate assessment that one cannot be ideologically motivated without a grasp of the canon of literature underpinning the ideology itself. Afterall, ideology is, at its most basic level, "a set of beliefs or principles".[15] Prevent should ensure its staff are aware that one can be radicalised, or 'ideologically motivated' via simple ideas and beliefs.

[15] The Cambridge English Dictionary, 'Ideology', available at: https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/ideology

Prevent should ensure its staff are aware that one can be radicalised, or 'ideologically motivated' via simple ideas and beliefs.

3.24 There is a reticence within Prevent to view grievance narratives (the framing of events to foster resentment) as a foundation of extremist ideology. Such narratives are often taken at face value, offering a reason in-and-of itself why someone would be driven to extremism or terrorism. However, extremist groups often rely on and lead with grievance narratives when recruiting individuals to their cause. Staff must be aware when making their assessments that grievances are used strategically by groups in this way – where one narrative is no longer relevant, it is replaced by another.

3.25 Prevent tends to focus its analysis on the sharp, violent end of the Islamist ideological spectrum. For example, Prevent papers and reports go into great detail on the activities of groups such as Islamic State and al-Qa'ida. There is, however, minimal coverage of the wider Islamist movement and its foundational ideas and narratives, including the promotion of grievance narratives. This risks creating a blind spot to the influence of the wider ideological movement, including groups based in the UK who do not cross the terrorism threshold but nevertheless create a permissive environment from which terrorists can radicalise and recruit.

Vulnerability versus ideology

3.26 When discussing Islamism, Prevent staff frequently came back to issues relating to mental health concerns and 'vulnerabilities'. Ideology, if acknowledged at all, was treated as a secondary factor and a derivative of a wider psychological or social issue. Put simply, ideology was not seen as an essential part of the trajectory towards terrorism, instead it was viewed as one of many potential radicalising factors.

3.27 Vulnerability, however, is largely considered a prerequisite to being radicalised. Prevent's efforts to de-radicalise individuals are therefore focused on curing these vulnerabilities via social activities, mentoring and mental health provision.

3.28 While there may be benefits to this approach, it cannot be successful unless coupled with efforts to address the individual's ideological indoctrination. Cases where it is felt that ideological intervention is not required need to be supported by clear evidence against robust criteria. Afterall, one does not have to be vulnerable to be attracted to an extremist worldview.

3.29 This overemphasis on vulnerability, and underemphasis of ideology, may be down to the expertise Prevent currently relies upon. Prevent frequently seeks guidance from academics or psychologists with a clinical or theoretical background, many of whom

somewhat inevitably tend to focus on psychological factors in the radicalisation process, giving less weight to the role of extremist ideas and worldviews. Decisions about the membership of advisory boards appear to take place within departments with little ministerial oversight or independent scrutiny. This appears to have led to a medicalised understanding of terrorism within the system – one that mischaracterises radicalisation as an illness, rather than having an ideological root in ideas and beliefs.

3.30 To counter this, Prevent advisory boards must include experts who can show they have worked on the ideological drivers of terrorism, and practitioners with real life experience. They should include researchers with a track record of work on extremist ideology, grievance narratives, or groups, or specialist practitioners (and trusted former extremists) who have practical experience working with extremists. I am aware that the Commission for Countering Extremism advises the government on extremism and also has links to relevant external expertise. The Commission for Countering Extremism should be of assistance in reviewing such boards to ensure they have the necessary degree of relevant expertise. Membership and terms of reference should require ministerial oversight and agreement.

3.31 The failure by frontline Prevent practitioners to understand fully the nature of ideology as the primary driver in Islamist radicalisation risks several potentially serious consequences. Recent attacks, inquests, and inquiries have highlighted the dreadful dangers of underestimating the motivating force of ideology.[16] Treating terrorism as a mental illness, or a social deficiency that can be placated by social services, might make acts of extreme violence seem more intelligible to some – yet ultimately this approach fails to grasp the inherently ideological nature of radicalisation and terrorism.

3.32 Staff working in prisons, in communities, and in central government risk missing crucial warning signs, misdiagnosing problems, and responding ineffectively unless the Home Office urgently corrects this.

3.33 Improvements across the Prevent system as a whole must be made to enhance understanding and expertise on the ideological nature of terrorism and the drivers of

[16] For example, see Point 82-7 in the Fishmongers' Hall Inquest report entitled 'Specific matters relating to the management of terrorist offenders in the community'. See: 'Regulation 28 Report on Action to Prevent Future Deaths – 3 November 2021', available at: https://fishmongershallinquests.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Fishmongers_-Hall-Inquests-PFD-Report-Final.pdf. Also, see Sentencing Remarks by The Hon. Mr Justice Sweeney in the case of The Queen v Khairi Saadallah (January 22 2021): The Hon. Mr Justice Sweeney, 'Sentencing Remarks: R v Khairi Saadallah, 2021, available at: https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/R-v-Khairi-Saadallah-Sentencing-Remarks.pdf. Also, see Sentencing Remarks by The Hon. Mr Justice Haddon-Cave in the case of The Queen v Ahmed Hassan (23 March 2018): The Hon. Mr Justice Haddon-Cave, 'Sentencing Remarks: R v Hassan', 2018, https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/r-vhassan-sentencing.pdf

radicalisation. This can include the social and psychological 'push factors' that might contribute to some individuals being more inclined to turn towards extremist activity. But crucially, it must also recognise the 'pull factors' of political movements that utilise religious or socio-political ambitions to attract individuals to their cause.

Islamism and the Extreme Right-Wing

3.34 The 2011 Prevent Strategy, as framed by Lord Carlile, is clear and correct: "Likewise [to Islamist extremists], extreme right-wing groups, whose white supremacist ideology advocates the use of violence to address perceived social injustice, have provided both the inspiration and justification for people who have committed extreme right-wing terrorist acts."[17]

3.35 When it comes to the threat posed by the Extreme Right-Wing, Prevent recognises and accepts the ideological motivation behind individual action. By my observation, 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. As previously mentioned, and explored in detail later on in the report, the same often cannot be said about Prevent's treatment of non-violent Islamist radicalising influences. Prevent must seek to uphold the same standards across all extreme ideologies if it is to effectively thwart radicalisation of all forms.

3.36 That is not to say that all extremist worldviews should be considered as identical to one another. Afterall, each ideology has its own history, objectives, target audience and narratives of persuasion.

Objective setting

3.37 These issues may be the result of imprecise language in Prevent's first objective, which specifies the need to 'tackle the causes of radicalisation', yet only to 'respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism'. This objective might be read as suggesting that the causes of radicalisation and the ideological challenges associated with terrorism are distinct from one another. It also refers to terrorist ideology as opposed to the wider extremist narratives. I do not view extremist or terrorist ideology as merely a challenge, but an actual cause of terrorism.

[17] HM Government, 'Prevent Strategy', June 2011, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf

3.38 Stipulating that Prevent tackles the array of radicalising factors, away from extremist ideology, may contribute to the approach of seeking to address terrorism too far upstream, such as through mental health provision and community activities.

3.39 The language outlining Prevent's objectives must not risk misinterpretation by practitioners and officials. I suggest a narrower and more direct objective that specifies the need to 'tackle the ideological causes of terrorism'.

Key terminology

3.40 Finally, there is a wariness about using the term 'Islamism'. I believe this has in part been caused by Islamist-aligned activists themselves, who continue to perpetuate the narrative that there is no such thing as 'Islamism', and that core Islamist ideas are part of normative Islamic belief and practice. Criticism of Islamism, or even using the term 'Islamism' in relation to terrorism and extremism, is thus characterised as motivated by prejudice. This claim is flawed and inaccurate. In fact, the term itself is a neutral descriptor, and is widely used by respected scholars, as well as by some leading Islamist writers and activists[18] to describe the ideological movement. The term also helpfully and rightly distinguishes between Islamists, those who subscribe to and promote a hard-line political ideology, and Muslims, those who follow and practice Islam.[19]

[18] For example, the Muslim Brotherhood's official English website describes Muslim Brotherhood spiritual leader Yusuf Al-Qaradawi as a "leading Islamist intellectual". See: Marc Lynch, 'The Qaradawi Index', IkhwanWeb, 22 January 2010, available at: https://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=22745

The Islamist activist Azzam Tamimi titled his 2001 book on then prominent Islamist figure and Tunisian political leader, Rachid Ghannouchi, 'A Democrat within Islamism'. See: Azzam S. Tamimi, 'Rachid Ghannouchi: A Democrat Within Islamism', Oxford University Press, 6 December 2001, available at: https://academic.oup.com/book/3344

Brookings' 2016 interview series that featured leaders from mainstream Islamists movements, in the spirit of open discussion and constructive dialogue, was titled 'Islamists on Islamism today'. See: Brookings interview series, 'Islamists on Islamism Today' 2017, available at: https://www.brookings.edu/series/islamists-on-islamism-today

Several other examples can be found at: Sir John Jenkins, Dr Martyn Frampton and Tom Wilson, 'Understanding Islamism', Policy Exchange, 2020, available at: www.policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Understanding-Islamism.pdf

[19] Particularly in the Middle East, 'Islamism' is used to differentiate between left-leaning socialists, secularists and communists from activists in favour of strict Islamic governance.

3.41 Critics such as the National Association of Muslim Police argue that 'Islamism' links Islam as a faith – and, by extension, all its followers – with terrorism.[20] They allege its usage "fuels Islamophobia further along with extreme right wing ideology". This is a strong charge, although I saw no convincing evidence to suggest this sentiment is widespread.

3.42 I strongly believe that use of the term 'Islamist' is essential within Prevent. First, certain alternative terms, such as 'adherents of Osama bin Laden's ideology'[21] or 'Islamic State-inspired terrorism', do not capture the totality of the current threat today. These terms would be even more dated by the emergence of new terrorist groups in the future. Others, including 'anti-Islamic activity',[22] compel the state to take a theological position. Further, evasive or convoluted language (e.g. 'Terrorist Groups who Abuse Religious Motives'[23]) not only insults the intelligence of the general public, it suggests that government is cordoning off one specific topic in any discussion around the possible root causes of terrorism. I was also not convinced that options such as 'faith-claimed terrorism'[24] were any more effective in detaching religion from acts of terror.

3.43 Scrubbing 'Islamism' from official documentation negates Islamists' use of faith in justifying their activity and in motivating believers to embrace their cause. This may be the intent. But it cannot be considered an intellectually honest approach nor a sustainable and plausible one for the people of this country who are owed an honest explanation for the motivations behind acts of terrorism. Doing so would deny government the ability to name the problem and therefore deliver effective policy.

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[20] Written evidence submission from NAMP (National Association of Muslim Police) (HCL0062)', Parliament.UK, October 2019, available at: http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/home-affairs-committee/islamophobia/written/106456.html

[21] Dominic Kennedy, 'Police may drop "Islamist" term when describing terror attacks', The Times, July 20 2020, available at: https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/police-may-drop-term-islamist-when-describing-terror-attacks-7pjsf8pn7

[22] 'Tories attack Islamic terrorism "rebranding"', The Telegraph, 18 January 2008, available at: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1575925/Tories-attack-Islamic-terrorism-rebranding.html

[23] 'Counter-Terrorism Reference Curriculum', NATO, May 2020, available at: https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/6/pdf/200612-DEEP-CTRC.pdf

[24] Dominic Kennedy, 'Police may drop "Islamist" term when describing terror attacks', The Times, July 20 2020, available at: https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/police-may-drop-term-islamist-when-describing-terror-attacks-7pjsf8pn7

Delivery of objective one

RICU's coverage of ideologies

3.44 Prevent must be consistent in the thresholds that it applies across ideologies to ensure a proportionate and effective response.

> **Prevent must be consistent in the threshold that it applies across ideologies to ensure a proportionate and effective response.**

3.45 My examination of the analysis products produced by Prevent's Research Information and Communications Unit (RICU) over the past four years has shown this not to be the case.

3.46 While the products related to Islamist terrorism focus on the most serious material relating to violent Islamist ideology, mostly Islamic State and al-Qa'ida, much of the material covering Extreme Right-Wing falls well below the threshold for even non-violent extremism.

3.47 This material tends to deal with broader themes and often covers content that relates to narratives on social media. These products not only covered non-violent far right extremism, but also examples of centre-right debate, populism, and controversial or distasteful forms of right-leaning commentary and intolerance. Some of this material falls well short of the extremism threshold altogether.

3.48 I saw one RICU analysis product from 2020 on Right-Wing terrorist and extremist activity online which referenced books by mainstream British conservative commentators as "key cultural nationalist ideological texts". The same document listed "key texts" for white nationalists as including historic works of the Western philosophic and literary canon.

3.49 A RICU analysis product from 2019, which discussed a cohort of social media users it termed "Actively Patriotic and Proud", listed a prominent Conservative politician and former member of the government as being among figures "associated with far-right sympathetic audiences, and Brexit".

3.50 Another RICU product about far right radicalisation online named a highly popular American podcast host, claiming that this individual had been described as a gateway to the far right. It was suggested that he had hosted a disproportionate number of influencers from the "far right of the political spectrum," although no examples were provided.

3.51 I do not consider the above to be appropriate subjects for RICU analysis or Prevent's attention, particularly as little care was made to clarify that these mainstream conservatives should not actually be considered part of the far right themselves. The analysis products in question did not present sufficient or convincing evidence that this material is relevant to countering terrorism or meeting Prevent's objectives. Their inclusion in RICU's output is liable to confuse practitioners about where they should focus efforts to stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.

3.52 I have seen nothing to suggest that RICU has formally adopted an official policy of applying radically different standards to different ideologies. In practice, however, the bar for what RICU includes on Islamism looks to be relatively high, whereas the bar for what is included on Extreme Right-Wing is comparably low.

3.53 This risks creating false equivalence in the minds of Prevent practitioners about the scale and nature of the threats from Extreme Right-Wing and Islamism. That makes it more difficult to respond proportionately to the unique challenges of these two different ideologies. It also short-changes those, such as Muslim communities, who are threatened by Extreme Right-Wing terrorism and deserve a robust response to this threat. Conflating the dangers posed by the Extreme Right-Wing with the vote to leave the European Union and the views of mainstream Conservative politicians fails to help provide that response.

3.54 This inconsistency goes to the heart of the fundamental question of how Prevent should approach ideology as part of its objective of tackling radicalisation.

3.55 RICU's analysis products convey the sense that for the Extreme Right-Wing, non-violent trends and narratives are of crucial importance, but that for Islamism, it is largely only the terrorist ideology and the narratives of the most serious jihadist groups that are relevant.

3.56 I was pleased to see RICU has produced several high quality and detailed research products on al-Qa'ida and Islamic State. However, RICU should expand its horizons when it comes to its analysing violent Islamist organisations.

3.57 Since early 2019, the government has proscribed both Hizbollah and Hamas in their entirety. I would have expected to see research from RICU providing an in-depth investigation on the pro-Hizbollah support network within the UK, and a commitment to do so for the more recently proscribed whole of Hamas.

3.58 This is particularly important as there are examples of British individuals who travelled to Hamas controlled territory before going on to join other terrorist groups and perpetrate acts of terrorism. They have included:

- an Islamic State suicide bomber

- a member of the infamous gang of British Islamic State recruits that included Mohammed Emwazi,[25] a Kuwaiti-British man implicated in beheading western captives of Islamic State in Syria
- an individual involved in bomb making to target coalition troops in Afghanistan who in 2017 attempted a terrorist attack in Westminster[26]

3.59 By contrast, in recent years RICU has produced analysis products about several Extreme Right-Wing associated groups that either have no known presence in the UK, or no known connections with terrorism.

3.60 It would be proportionate to also devote some resources to better understanding Extreme Left and Anarchist terrorism (categorised as part of Left, Anarchist and Single Issue Terrorism, or 'LASIT').

Prevent-funded civil society organisations

3.61 The number of civil society organisations (CSOs) that Prevent provides funding for varies year-on-year, from around 70 to 100. In 2020–21, Prevent funded 79 CSOs to deliver projects across 44 local authorities in England and Wales.[27] The projects ranged from theatre groups to sporting clubs and education workshops. Some projects cite their aims as promoting tolerance, interfaith or intercommunity dialogue, or reducing feelings of isolation or marginalisation. Others tackle social problems, such as drug abuse or unemployment. I met six of these CSOs and was impressed by the dedication and passion many demonstrated towards their work.

3.62 CSOs are intended to help meet Prevent's first objective to "tackle the causes of radicalisation and respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism". A submission to the call for evidence described CSOs as the 'key area' in ensuring Prevent did just this.[28]

3.63 However, I am sympathetic to the criticism that while these projects have worthy aims, in practice they often appear to be only tangentially linked to Prevent's overall objective of

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[25] See article published in The Times on February 23, 2017, authored by David Brown, Gabriella Swerling, John Simpson and Sean O'Neill.

[26] 'Khalid Mohammed Omar Ali [case number T20177181]', Central Criminal Court (Old Bailey), 20 July 2018, available at: https://www.thelawpages.com/court-cases/Khalid-Mohamed-Omar-Ali-23476-1.law

[27] Note that some of these CSOs delivered projects in multiple local authorities.

[28] This submission also praised a Lambeth-funded project that worked "with young people to respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism by recognising, understanding, and challenging far-right and Islamist narratives". This is certainly in scope for Prevent, although I will return to the subject of projects that focus on both far right and Islamist extremism simultaneously.

stopping people from being drawn into terrorism.[29] For example, one CSO was singled out for praise in the call for evidence for "educating primary age children on the dangers of stereotyping and disinformation, and the importance of critical thinking". These are laudable skills to possess but I judge this work to be too far removed from Prevent's key objectives.

3.64 To better understand the work of the 'Prevent and RICU'-funded CSOs, I conducted open-source research into a sample of 15 projects.[30] I found insufficient evidence that these CSOs were countering Islamist ideology or non-violent extremist groups and ideologues.

3.65 For example, one CSO claimed to focus primarily on tackling Islamist extremism for female Muslim students via an online magazine. However, much of the content was not relevant to Islamist related issues and none of it appeared to directly engage with countering Islamist ideology. While this approach could be said to provide young Muslim women with non-Islamist content that might interest them, this does not amount to 'tackling Islamist extremism'. Of further concern, the social media accounts run as part of this project were found to have promoted individuals who have on other occasions espoused extreme and intolerant narratives.

3.66 RICU has sought to bolster the communications capacity of a network of CSOs to help them "speak out credibly to undermine terrorist narratives, deny the space for extremists to exploit grievances and build resilience among vulnerable people".[31] Despite this, of the sample of 15 CSOs which I reviewed, I found insufficient evidence that CSOs in this sample were consistently and publicly contesting extremist discourse and rebutting extremist groups. I consider this to be an essential part of tackling radicalisation and the ideological causes of terrorism. While different CSOs will engage in different kinds of counter-narrative and counter-extremism work, often away from public view, I would expect to see some of these CSOs carry out the vital work of directly challenging extremists in public and in open online fora.

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[29] A submission to the call for evidence described how certain Prevent activities were "closer to general youth work, rather than counter-radicalisation focussed on challenging extremist beliefs and ideas". See also Thomas, 'Divorced but still co-habiting? Britain's Prevent/Community Cohesion policy tension', 2014, Page 27

[30] During 2020/21, there were 110 projects that received local authority or RICU support.

[31] During 2020/21, RICU provided communications support to 45 CSOs, 14 of which also received local authority funds to deliver local Prevent projects.

…of the sample of 15 CSOs which I reviewed, I found insufficient evidence that CSOs in this sample were consistently and publicly contesting extremist discourse and rebutting extremist groups.

3.67 Recent internal evaluations suggested that a large proportion of local Prevent community projects had little or no demonstrable impact, and in some cases were counterproductive, such as undermining support for freedom of speech.

3.68 There were media reports in June 2018 that most government 'de-radicalisation' programmes were failing, and that a study commissioned by the Home Office had found that 95% of Prevent 'de-radicalisation' programmes were ineffective.[32] The media report referred to research by the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) which examined 33 projects and found that only two were effective and that some were counterproductive.[33] The Home Office was not able to provide me with this specific piece of BIT research, stating that no one report collating all BIT findings was received by them.

3.69 Nonetheless, I examined several individual BIT evaluation reports that the Home Office provided. The picture presented by these reports is a mixed one.[34] The evidence suggests that far too many Prevent-funded programmes have been ineffective and delivered poor outcomes. In some instances programmes even had a detrimental effect on participants and the extent of their potential resilience to radicalisation.

3.70 Notably, two of the projects that were judged to be positive overall were also found to be having a negative impact on the participants' support for free speech. In all, five of the projects were assessed to have a negative impact on the participants' level of support for freedom of speech and expression if it offended others. Two of these evaluations noted that the programmes particularly had this negative effect for Muslim participants and their levels of support for free speech. I consider this to be a counterproductive outcome of a Prevent-funded project and worthy of serious reflection.

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[32] Fiona Hamilton, 'Most programmes to stop radicalisation are failing', The Times, 6 June 2018, available at: https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/most-programmes-to-stop-radicalisation-are-failing-0bwh9pbtd

[33] Ibid

[34] Overall, 11 of the 30 projects were assessed to be ineffective or poor, while a further three were judged to have mixed effectiveness, and in six cases the evaluations were inconclusive. Of the 30 individual evaluations only a third were assessed to be having an overall positive impact. Even here, the evidence presented suggested that some of these projects were failing to be effective on a number of the key indicators they were seeking to influence, particularly around attitudinal change.

3.71 Similarly, evaluations for three of the projects indicated that the programmes were negatively influencing participants' level of trust in institutions such as the police, government, and media.

3.72 Problems around parity and consistency in countering different extremist ideologies have been a limitation for some of these programmes. In two of the programmes, BIT observed the need for content to address Islamist extremism and not focus exclusively on far right-related issues. BIT recommended recruiting facilitators knowledgeable of Islamism and improving training. I agree.

3.73 Simply reducing 'vulnerabilities' and establishing a greater number of protective factors fails to adequately address the driving influences of terrorism. Further, 'ideology agnostic' project work often fails to target the specific narratives of extremist recruiters that exploit religious or socio-political influences.[35]

3.74 CSOs categorised as ideology agnostic take two forms: those that seek to tackle both Extreme Right-Wing and Islamism, and those that seek to build resilience against radicalisation in a general way, such as by trying to improve critical thinking skills. Where organisations claim to do work to counter both ideologies, it is reasonable to consider whether they can have sufficient expertise, as well as the adequate reach into differing audiences. CSOs which seek to make participants more resilient to radicalisation in general are inevitably unable to provide detail on how to combat specific extremist narratives. CSOs must demonstrate how they directly confront ideologies in a way that goes beyond simply instilling better critical thinking abilities or encouraging tolerance.

3.75 Projects which seek to promote a sense of British identity, or which explore respect and tolerance, can help build resilience, critical thinking, and a sense of belonging, while reducing isolation. However, Prevent needs to make a better assessment of whether such non-specific projects sufficiently reduce the risk of terrorist activity.

3.76 While I was able to draw on BIT evaluations of local Prevent delivery projects, comparable evaluations were not available for all 'Prevent and RICU'-funded CSOs. The materials presented to me about the work of 'Prevent and RICU'-funded CSOs did not demonstrate how these organisations counter extremist ideology specifically or, in certain cases, how their activities relate to Prevent's stated objectives.

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[35] Data provided on 'Prevent and RICU'-funded CSOs detailed that of the 110 projects funded in this category during 2020/21, 46 were focussed on countering Islamist radicalisation, and 12 on Extreme Right-Wing radicalisation. However, 51 of the 'Prevent and RICU'-funded CSOs, the largest cohort, were listed as doing ideology agnostic work. A number of these CSOs were described as working to counter the Extreme Right-Wing threat alongside Islamism. Data on these organisations and the work they are funded to do was extremely limited.

3.77 Short descriptions of the activities of 'Prevent and RICU'-funded CSOs I was given may not represent the entirety of their work. However, I found it notable that these descriptions were occasionally very general and neither focused on tackling radicalisation nor extremist ideology: for example, "supporting disadvantaged young people and families" or "delivering community engagement, employment, support and more general activities". I consider this indicative of how Prevent has too often strayed into community cohesion and wider public health work and with little-to-no benefit to Prevent's stated objectives.

3.78 Further, research conducted for Counter Terrorism Policing in 2019 indicated a lack of awareness of these projects among police staff, and that those who were aware considered them to have little or no relevance to their Prevent work. The study also considered whether much of this work might better belong with social integration strategies rather than being funded by Prevent.

3.79 It is my belief that commissioning programmes which challenge specific extremist arguments for the purpose of deconstructing them, and delegitimising the groups that promote them, would be a more effective and targeted approach.

3.80 I have been assured that the Home Office has used past evaluation work to inform the decisions it makes about which projects it continues to fund. Much of this work may be beneficial to those it reaches and worthy of government support. However, based on this evidence I cannot conclude that all the 'Prevent and RICU'-funded projects are directly contributing to meeting Prevent's stated objectives.

3.81 CSOs that conduct positive work in the community could continue to receive government funding outside of Prevent and counter-terrorism. CSOs that can demonstrate effectiveness in helping meet Prevent's stated objectives ought to receive more sustainable support.

Concerns regarding CSOs

3.82 During the course of the review, I became aware that a few Prevent-funded groups had either promoted extremism or had engaged with persons whose extremism would have emerged on reasonable enquiry. This raises questions about who it is acceptable for Prevent to engage with, and how decisions are made about who Prevent and RICU partner with to deliver counter-narrative projects.

3.83 It is my belief that those who are linked to extremism or are sympathetic, or even supportive of extremists and their ideas, cannot effectively undertake counter-radicalisation work. Partnering with such groups inevitably undermines Prevent's objectives. This is consistent with the stance taken in the 2011 Prevent Strategy and with government policy.

3.84 Prevent 2011 states: "In future, neither Prevent funding nor support will be given to organisations that hold extremist views or support terrorist-related activity of any kind, in this country or overseas. This applies irrespective of the source of the funding: central government, local government or policing."[36]

3.85 Within my open-source research into a sample of 15 of the CSOs, I found unacceptable examples of some of these organisations promoting Islamist extremist sentiments, or of validating and associating with Islamist extremists.

3.86 These findings raise serious questions about whether Prevent is knowingly taking this approach, and, if not, whether it operates robust due diligence procedures and has an acceptable level of understanding of Islamist extremism.

3.87 In one of the most egregious cases, the leader of a Prevent-funded CSO was found to have publicly made statements in 2021 that were sympathetic to the Taliban,[37] and referred to militant Islamist groups – whose military wings were proscribed in the UK – as "so-called 'terrorists' of the legitimate resistance groups".[38]

3.88 In his role as a religious figure, the individual spoke of the circumstances under which Muslim members of Britain's armed forces should refuse orders,[39] and during an appearance on a British Muslim television channel earlier in 2021, alleged that (a) Prevent is 'targeting' the Muslim community in a manner that is "uncharacteristic of a democracy" and has "bad intentions", (b) criticised the "totally unacceptable" and 'undemocratic' way in which Ofsted has treated Muslim children and teachers, (c) alleged that there are "only four or five imams who are allowed to go onto national media", and

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36 HM Government, 'Prevent Strategy', June 2011, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf

37 As recorded in the following August 2021 local newspaper, the individual told a BBC station that "we need to give the Taliban a chance", that Afghans were "not fleeing for their lives" but "taking an amazing opportunity" to gain asylum, that civilians trying to flee were "economic migrants, [taking] an opportunity to escape the poverty of a country", that "The concerns of the locals have been over reported [in] the media", and that "[we need to] trust people, give them the benefit of [the] doubt and opportunity". Ellie Danemann, 'Give Taliban 'the benefit of doubt and opportunity', says Leading Nottingham scholar', Nottingham Live, 23 August 2021, available at: https://www.nottinghampost.com/news/give-taliban-the-benefit-doubt-5819029

38 Dr Musharraf Hussain, 'Why we must stand with the Palestinians', 2021, https://www.musharrafhussain.com/why-we-must-stand-with-the-palestinians/ – At this time, Hamas' military wing had been proscribed (March 2001). Its political wing was subsequently proscribed in November 2021. Palestinian Islamic Jihad has been proscribed since March 2001.

39 The individual wrote: "Yes, Muslims should join the armed forces, a British Muslim soldier should abstain from fighting against Muslims, however, if he goes to a Muslim country for peaceful purposes that is commendable." See: Dr Musharraf Hussain, 'School and College issues', Dr Musharraf Hussain (blog), available at: https://www.musharrafhussain.com/questions/schools-colleges/

(d) claimed that the government "does not want Muslims to be Muslims, it wants to gag us, it is actually taking our religious freedom".[40]

3.89 In May 2021, the CSO shared a video on its YouTube channel featuring music with lyrics promoting what I regard to be an antisemitic conspiracy theory about the 'Zionist lobby'.[41] In February 2022, the CSO hosted a podcast discussion[42] with an individual who had a record of promoting antisemitic narratives.[43]

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40 'Muslims on William Shawcross' appointment to lead Prevent review', YouTube, 5 February 2021, available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N6xTH5Nxe0I

41 For example, the lyrics include:

"Every coin is a bullet, if you're Marks and Spencer,
And when your sipping Coca-Cola,
That's another pistol in the holster of the soulless soldiers,
You say you know about the Zionist lobby,
But you put money in their pocket when you're buying their coffee,
Talking about revolution, sitting in Starbucks…"

See: 'National Demo for Palestine', YouTube, 22 May 2021, available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WMglX6DQkQM

42 The discussion itself did not appear to be of extremism concern; it was titled 'Muslim habits in our real and online lives'. See: Karimia Institute (@officialkarimia), Twitter, 1 February 2022, available at: https://twitter.com/officialkarimia/status/1488406814198837258

43 At the time of being invited onto the podcast, this individual had been criticised in the Jewish press for condemning the Palestinian Solidarity Campaign's dissociation from Gilad Atzmon over his record of antisemitism. The individual claimed that that a pro-Palestinian organisation should "be working to END Zionism" and not fear about "hurt[ing] Zionist sensibilities". Atzmon has previously accused Jews of exploiting the Holocaust and suggested that there is a Zionist plan for world domination. On Twitter, the individual has claimed that captured Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit was "well cared for by Hamas compared to Pal prisoners tortured by Israel" and has made a comparison between Israeli Jews and Nazi SS officers. In 2008, the individual was awarded a VIP passport to Gaza by Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh. See: See: 'Lauren Booth's attack points up new split in PSC', Jewish Chronicle, 1 December 2011, available at: https://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/laurenbooth-s-attack-points-up-new-split-in-psc-1.29769; Jessica Elgot, 'Labour MP apologises for backing "antisemitic" jazz musician', The Guardian, 21 December 2018, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/dec/21/labour-mp-chris-williamson-apologises-for-backing-jazz-musician-gilad-atzmon; Lauren Booth (@LaurenBoothUK), Twitter, 20 November 2012, available at: https://twitter.com/LaurenBoothUK/status/270959878191869953; Lauren Booth (@LaurenBoothUK), Twitter, 19 November 2012, available at: https://twitter.com/LaurenBoothUK/status/270592433962770433?s=20&t=tcyREz3cPwf1Uzr_e6EBiQ; Harry's Place, available at: http://hurryupharry.net/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/booth-haniyeh-august-2008.jpg; Image taken from article titled 'Lauren Booth: Attacks the PSC, Defends Atzmon', Harry's Place, 28 November 2011: http://hurryupharry.net/2011/11/28/lauren-booth-attacks-the-psc-defends-atzmon/

3.90 Previously, in 2015, the same head of this CSO signed an open letter, with others including some prominent British Islamists,[44] that condemned the legislation establishing the Statutory Prevent Duty as threatening to create a "McCarthyite witch-hunt against Muslims".[45]

3.91 In the materials provided by the Home Office, this particular CSO was described as "supporting individuals and families to develop life skills, moral and spiritual values through education, worship and recreation", and as a "national charity offering support to Muslim organisations, particularly in deprived areas".

3.92 I was subsequently informed that the Home Office had previously conducted extremism-related due diligence on this individual, and in November 2020 concluded that they considered that the head of this CSO posed a 'significant' risk rating. I am alarmed by some of the material discovered within these assessments, particularly as significant issues raised include those dating back several years. In my view, this ought to have had immediate consequences for the funding of this CSO by Prevent.

3.93 In the case of another CSO, it was found that this institution had recently hosted an individual whose public output repeatedly engages antisemitic tropes, such as comparing the actions of the Israeli government to that of the Nazis,[46] and who has openly donated funds to Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh.[47] Shortly prior to the event hosted by the CSO,[48] this individual tweeted that when Haniyeh presented her with a Palestinian passport, it

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[44] This includes representatives from Hizb ut-Tahrir, the Islamic Human Rights Commission (see footnote 329) and CAGE (see footnote 70), and individuals such as Shakeel Begg (see 6.207) and Azad Ali (see footnote 186).

[45] Alexandra Topping, Nishaat Ismail, Shiv Malik, 'British Muslims condemn terror laws for creating "witch-hunt" against Islam', The Guardian, 11 March 2015, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/11/british-muslims-terror-laws-witch-hunt-islam-cage-hizb-ut-tahrir

[46] The individual has referred to Benjamin Netanyahu's "Nazi regime", the "Nazi-style atrocities carried out by Israel", the "nazi regime in Tel Aviv" and the "babykiller state of Israel". See: Yvonne Ridley (@yvonneridley), Twitter, 2 Aug 2014, available at: https://twitter.com/yvonneridley/status/495638375760924672?s=20&t=oVC3vbOla09UUeXlj8fvVw; Yvonne Ridley (@yvonneridley), Twitter, 2 August 2014, available at: https://twitter.com/yvonneridley/status/495540881177739264?s=20&t=oVC3vbOla09UUeXlj8fvVw; Yvonne Ridley (@yvonneridley), Twitter, 31 July 2014, available at: https://twitter.com/yvonneridley/status/494739471443980288?s=20&t=oVC3vbOla09UUeXlj8fvVw; Yvonne Ridley (@yvonneridley), Twitter, 25 July 2014, available at: https://twitter.com/yvonneridley/status/492626717291581441?s=20&t=K1hyPMVyoq-SJTJa0PhWuA

[47] 'Yvonne Ridley in Gaza condemning Egypt and the international community', YouTube, 22 March 2009, available at: https://youtube.com/watch?v=_p5gAMATmiY

[48] See invitation for the discussion here: Kristiane Backer (Official), Facebook, 29 May 2021, available at: https://it-it.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=318283373200353&set=ecnf.100050560776424

was "one of the proudest moments in my life".[49] Further, it was reported in The Telegraph and The Times in 2018 that the institution has been attended by a number of terrorist suspects, including members of the so-called 'Beatles' Islamic State cell. While the institution has stated that it rejects and condemns extremism and terrorism,[50] with such coverage raised in prominent media outlets, I am disappointed that the severity of these concerns was not sufficient for the CSO to have its Prevent funding re-considered.

3.94 In the case of a third CSO, which is supported to do counter-radicalisation work specific to Muslim communities, it is apparent that the group's founder had in 2019 welcomed the Chair of trustees of an organisation in the local area which had previously hosted Islamist speakers.[51]

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[49] Yvonne Ridley (@yvonneridley), Twitter, 1 July 2021, available at: https://twitter.com/yvonneridley/status/1410734473352663041?s=20&t=wy-Bzc6VVoljqor8F2y3lw

[50] The institution responded to these reports with the following statement: "[CSO] has been on the record rejecting and condemning extremism and terrorism. The Charity's vision and mission is to be a vibrant and welcoming community hub and resource that encourages and promotes a sense of belonging, unity and pride for both Muslims and the wider community; and to contribute to building cohesive and resilient communities."

[51] In March 2019, the founder and CEO of a Prevent-funded organisation promoted the Nottingham Islam Information Point (NIIP). He praised their work for a community event and shared pictures alongside the NIIP's chair of trustees and of the NIIP logo. See his following tweet: Asad Fazil MBE (@AsadFazil7), Twitter, 3 March 2019, available at: https://twitter.com/AsadFazil7/status/1102332550595395584

NIIP have previously held a fundraising event for Interpal, a Specially Designated Global Terrorist group in the US and a registered charity in the UK. NIIP have campaigned for the release of "our brother" Guantanamo Bay detainee Shaker Aamer, determined by the US Government to be a "member of al-Qaeda tied to the European support network" and a "close associate of Usama bin Laden" with "connections to several other senior extremist members". NIIP have hosted guest speakers such as Abu Usamah At-Thahabi, previously filmed stating that homosexuals should be "thrown from a mountain", that "the time is fast approaching" when Muslims will win the jihad against non-believers, and describing Christians and Jews as the 'enemies of Islam'. Note that at-Thahabi has publicly stated that his comments were taken out of context, that he encourages Muslims to "peacefully coexist here in the UK with non-Muslims" and that it was the "religious duty of all Muslims to obey UK law". See: NIIP Facebook, https://www.facebook.com/nottinghamislaminformationpoint/photos/a.1514991545440888/2072800422993328/?type=3&theater ; NIIP Facebook, https://www.facebook.com/nottinghamislaminformationpoint/photos/a.1514991595440883/1515033715436671/?type=3&theater ; NIIP Facebook, https://Facebook.com/nottinghamislaminformationpoint/photos/a.1514991542107555/1515017488771627/?type=3&theater%2C; 'Radical cleric praises bin Laden', Daily Mail, 4 February 2007, available at: https://Dailymail.co.uk/news/article-433871/Radical-cleric-praises-bin-Laden.html

3.95 In a fourth CSO examined, evidence emerged that one of its projects had invited extremist speakers to its events.[52] This included a cleric whose online religious guidance condones financial and physical abuse under certain conditions within marital relationships,[53] and an Imam who had previously posted support for convicted al-Qa'ida operative Aafia Siddiqui[54] (See 'The case of Faisal Akram' on page 59).[55] The project's website had also published content of concern, including one article which could undermine support for free speech among Muslim communities.[56]

3.96 In addition, in May 2021, there were media reports that the head of one Prevent-funded CSO had given a speech at a protest in the spring of 2021 during which he voiced the

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[52] One of the speakers of concern, Abdur Rahman Ibn Yusuf Mangera, subsequently pulled out of the event: 'Imams Online or "Imams in line"', 5Pillars, 25 January 2017, available at: https://5pillarsuk.com/2017/01/25/imams-online-or-imams-in-line/

[53] Abdur Rahman ibn Yusuf Mangera has advised that "some corrective forms of a little beating" is religiously sanctioned against women who are suspected to have committed adultery or are "disobedient to their husbands". He has also said that "beating is not restricted to just this suspicion but also to the unwillingness to cooperate in matters necessary to ensure the functionality of family life." See: 'Wife Beating', ZamZam Academy, 4 September 2010, available at: https://web.archive.org/web/20190930120117/https://www.zamzamacademy.com/2010/09/wife-beating/. Mangera has stated that a husband has "the right to restrict" where his wife goes, "but he should permit her every now and then to go out and learn the essentials of her din [faith]. In the case that he does not allow her to leave (for whatever reason), she will have to obey him, and is not permitted to leave without his permission". See: 'Husband Doesn't Let Wife Go To Classes', ZamZam Academy, 4 September 2010, available at: http://www.zamzamacademy.com/2010/09/husband-doesnt-let-wife-go-to-classes/. He has further claimed that a husband has fiscal control over his wife's earnings and the right to "prohibit her from squandering her wealth. See: 'Husband Says Wife CANNOT Use Any Of The Money She Earns Without His Permission', ZamZam Academy, 4 September 2010, available at: http://www.zamzamacademy.com/2010/09/husband-says-wife-cannot-use-any-of-the-money-she-earns-without-his-permission/

[54] On 24 September 2010, Shaykh Abdul Hameed had previously posted on Facebook "May Allah grant. Dr.aafia Siddiqui Jannah thru her hardships, mke this is sentence a mean of getting close to Allah, and may she be freed n united with family! [sic]". See: Abdul Hameed Facebook, available at: facebook.com/haaris.abdulsamad/posts/120773121310808

[55] On September 23, 2010, Aafia Siddiqui was sentenced in Manhattan Federal Court to 86 years in prison for the attempted murder of US nationals in Afghanistan and six additional crimes. See: 'Aafia Siddiqui Sentenced in Manhattan Federal Court to 86 Years for Attempting to Murder U.S Nationals in Afghanistan and Six Additional Crimes', Federal Bureau of Investigation, September 23 2010, available at: archives.fbi.gov/archives/newyork/press-releases/2010/nyfo092310.htm

[56] Dr Qari Muhammad Asim, 'Follow The Path Of The Prophet (SAW), ImamsOnline, [date unknown], available at: http://imamsonline.com/draw-muhammad-vs-follow-muhammad-contest/

kind of antisemitic sentiments that contribute to extremist narratives.[57] The public attention given to this incident will no doubt have been damaging to public confidence in Prevent.

3.97 Prevent lets the vast majority of Muslims in this country down when it gives legitimacy and influence to those which promote Islamist narratives. Prevent and RICU-funded CSOs must ensure they do not undermine the good work they may do by endorsing and supporting figures whose narratives arguably contribute to a sense of communal grievance and alienation.

Prevent and government external engagement

3.98 Throughout the review, experts pointed to how both Prevent, and the government in general, continue to make mistakes in the area of engagement with external partners, particularly Islamist-aligned groups and individuals.[58]

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[57] At a pro-Palestine protest, the individual stated that (a) non-Muslims at the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem were "vile human beings" who were "desecrating" it, (b) that Muslims knew "exactly the strategy that those Jewish, Zionist politicians are doing and we also know how to respond. It's got to be long term, it's got to be economic, it's got to be with strategy", (c) that "our Jewish brethren" are "a lot smarter than us", (d) that should Muslims want to become 'mujahideen' they should emulate the Muslim general Saladin, and (e) praised Palestinian martyrs – "We ask you Allah that you accept every single shahid who has given their life for Palestine". It should be noted that the individual responded to these reports with the following statement: "Reading my speech from the protest back in print, really jolted me, and whilst my objective was to encourage the expression of opinions within democratic and lawful norms, upon reflection I recognise that I could have chosen better and less equivocal words for communicating that message.' | 'Some of my words reflect a clear error of judgment, in the heat of the moment and do not reflect my sentiments or the sentiments of the audience.' | 'I now appreciate that my ill-chosen words will have caused offence and hurt to the Jewish community and I tender my most profound apologies.'" See: David Rose, 'Top imam who helps police to spot extremists labelled Israel a "terrorist state": Priti Patel orders inquiry into speech by prominent Muslim cleric', Daily mail, 23 May 2021, available at: https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9610621/Top-imam-helps-police-spot-extremists-labelled-Israel-terrorist-state-Patel-orders-inquiry.html

[58] For example, in November 2020, MEND founder Sufyan Ismail was invited to address civil servants, although the event was subsequently cancelled after negative media stories. See: Dominic Kennedy, 'Sufyan Ismail: Islamic hardliner invited to address civil servants', The Times, 23 November 2020, available at: https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/sufyan-ismail-islamic-hardliner-invited-to-address-civil-servants-hr7rcpf36. In 2018, Ismail was recorded by Channel 4 Dispatches promoting that he has funded CAGE, adding "I think we're [CAGE and MEND] agreed on principle, its process. We're very different on process, it's almost like your means and ends, you know. Our ends are the same." See Channel 4 Dispatches, 'Who Speaks for British Muslims?', 2018. For more information on MEND, see footnote 186. For more information on CAGE, see footnote 70. Further, in February 2021 a government minister met with the new head of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) despite the government having a "long standing policy of not engaging with the MCB" which they confirmed had "not changed". See: Lucy Fisher, 'Minister under fire for meeting with head of Muslim Council of Britain', The Telegraph, 21 February 2021, available at: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2021/02/21/minister-fire-meeting-head-muslim-council-britain/. For more information on the MCB, see footnote 220.

3.99 This is a particular concern following Lord Carlile's 2011 oversight report noting the importance of avoiding engagement with extremists.[59]

3.100 Such engagement allows extremists – of all ideologies – to gain greater influence within the system, while also being legitimised and emboldened publicly, including in the eyes of those communities to whom they seek to promote their narratives.

3.101 Beyond ensuring that public funding does not reach extremism-linked groups, the question I had to consider is whether some of these organisations should be met with for the purposes of listening to their perspective or in an attempt to change their behaviour. However, the 2011 Prevent Strategy did draw a distinction here, stating that the criteria for funding are different to those for engagement, arguing that there may be instances where the government would judge it necessary to engage with those it would never fund, particularly with certain overseas groups.[60]

3.102 Within the UK today, many of these organisations broadcast their views vocally and openly and it is not clear to me that officials meeting with these groups, or including them within advisory settings, leads to a richer account of their perspectives. There is also no evidence to show it leads to groups changing their behaviour. Instead, meeting with these hard-line or extremism-linked groups risks awarding them the opportunity to unduly influence and undermine the work of officials tasked with meeting Prevent's objectives.

3.103 This is also relevant to the problem of consistency across ideologies, for it is apparent that mistakes around engagement largely concern Islamist extremist groups and their supporters. There is no indication of Prevent partnering with Extreme Right-Wing-linked groups, either for delivering CSO counter-narrative projects, or for advisory purposes.

3.104 That problems centre around Islamist-linked groups is a further indication that there is not sufficient understanding or expertise about Islamism within the system.

3.105 It may also be as a result of officials setting a very high threshold for what they define as 'Islamist extremism' but a relatively low threshold for defining 'Extreme Right-Wing extremism'.

3.106 I am reassured that work is underway across government and within the Commission for Countering Extremism to consider how best to approach the question of engagement. It is also a source of some encouragement that since October 2020, RICU has introduced

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[59] Lord Carlile, 'Report to the Home Secretary of Independent Oversight of Prevent Review and Strategy', 2011, pages 6, 9, 10, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97977/lord-carlile-report.pdf

[60] HM Government, 'Prevent Strategy 2011', page 35, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf

a revised due diligence process involving both quarterly risk assessments and yearly due diligence that involves open-source checks on possible links to extremism and reputational risk. This work should continue to develop and progress, taking the above concerns into consideration.

3.107 I am concerned, however, that this due diligence work has been outsourced to a public relations firm. This is highly sensitive work, and broadly focussed external communications companies cannot be expected to fully understand Prevent or know how to risk assess the needs of counter-extremism CSOs.

3.108 For example, one CSO reported that in their opinion the PR firms Prevent had provided to support their work had failed to understand their campaign, overlooked the personal reputational risk to staff and conducted superficial due diligence.

3.109 A revised and professionalised approach to due diligence would be welcome. The creation of a specific due diligence unit staffed by those with in-built expertise on extremist ideologies would assist in this regard.

Prevent: Disruption powers

3.110 Prevent adopts various means by which it can attempt to counter extremist ideology and reduce radicalisation in the community. One is via its upstream work with civil society organisations which work in local communities and online to counter-extremist narratives and increase resilience to radicalising influences. A second is via its interventions with those who have already subscribed to extremist ideology. A third is via the more direct work of seeking to disrupt the activities and, ultimately, influence, of those groups and individuals who promote extremist and radicalising messages to wider audiences.

3.111 A Home Office restructuring saw the Extremism Disruptions Unit, previously under Counter Extremism, brought into Prevent. This new model focuses on disrupting the activities and influence of those who seek to radicalise others, but on current evidence fall below criminal thresholds.

3.112 This new approach makes sense and appears to be sensible. I cover off the limitations of the Counter Extremism Strategy elsewhere in this report, but essentially, the strategy was too broad in focus and did not achieve the legislative 'teeth' required to have real impact, in part due to very legitimate freedom of speech concerns. It also makes sense that efforts to disrupt radicalisers have a home in Prevent, a programme that has established links across the public sector.

3.113 While it has not been made clear what disruption activity – "an extensive toolkit of disruption options" – means in practice, it is clear that Prevent's role is one of facilitation and co-ordination rather than actual delivery. The former includes gathering information

from a range of partners on where they view risk of radicalisation, the promotion of extremist messages, or materials that could have a radicalising effect. This information is then assessed for the "potential harm it may cause" and the extent of its radicalising influence, before "being prioritised for action".

3.114 While Prevent Disruptions is still in its infancy, I was greatly encouraged to hear it is seeking to target groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood which "pose a risk to the UK but do not meet CT thresholds". I heard from counter-extremism experts about the need for Prevent to disrupt and undermine extremist networks and movements so as to degrade their ability to radicalise others into their worldview.

3.115 The Home Secretary will want to see clear evidence of understanding, vigilance, and ambition here. Where Prevent is unable to take action, clear reasoning and supporting thresholds, criteria and evidence must be available for ministerial scrutiny.

3.116 For Prevent Disruptions to effectively address the ideological challenge of terrorism, it will need to work with its adjacent teams to keep a consistent eye on the activities of 'lower level' yet highly influential individuals and groups. Some individuals and groups appear to have a radicalising effect but keep away from saying anything which would put them anywhere near criminal or terrorism thresholds. Prevent's horizon-scanning capabilities must therefore always include these lower-level radicalisers to enable action if-and-when they cross over into actionable territory.

3.117 This will be impossible without a proper understanding of the problem as a whole, the ideology that motivates extremist movements, and a proper due diligence function to check associations and risk. A clear and proportionate framework for assessing which groups and individuals are fitting subjects for Prevent Disruptions must be developed by specialists with in-depth understanding of wider extremist narratives and domestic networks.

3.118 In particular, Prevent should be looking to disrupt those who legitimise terrorist acts, and those who promote narratives that either align with the ideology of known terrorist groups, or which could be seen as justifying violence for political, religious, or ideological purposes.

3.119 It is important to caution that those implementing Disruptions must ensure that they uphold a consistent threshold across ideologies, and not allow Extreme Right-Wing, Extreme Left Wing, and Islamist groups to be held to different standards.

3.120 Where Home Office-led disruptive action against a particular group is not possible or preferable, this must be for good reason. Furthermore, Prevent co-ordinators, and other government departments such as the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and

Communities (DLUHC), must be aware of the whole spectrum of groups, not just the 'sub-TACT' cohort Prevent Disruptions is targeting. Where action against a group or individual is not possible, it should then be DLUHC's responsibility to ensure their pursuit for credibility is scuppered wherever possible.

3.121 Prevent Disruptions should be treated as a priority strand of the programme and given enough resource to avoid having to limit scope or ambition.

4. Prevent's second objective: how well does Prevent safeguard and support those most at risk of radicalisation through early intervention, identifying them and offering support?

Vulnerability framework

4.1 Prevent has increasingly come to be seen as synonymous with safeguarding, addressing personal vulnerabilities and child protection. This framing is appropriate in certain contexts. It is right and proper for frontline staff tasked with the management and care of genuinely vulnerable people to situate Prevent within a safeguarding framework.

4.2 However, in this report I have tended to refer to 'susceptibility' to radicalisation, rather than 'vulnerability'. As I will go on to explain, I believe the term 'vulnerable' should be reserved for those who, because of circumstances beyond their control, are at particular risk of falling prey to exploitation or abuse. That is not the case for most of those likely to be radicalised.

4.3 From a Prevent perspective, the risk of radicalisation has been viewed across the following categories[61] (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
- 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

4.4 The official material I have seen suggests much of established Prevent training, support, and practice has been built around the first two categories. However, there is noted

[61] These categories have been conceived within an internal document for Prevent but are not official categories.

concern at the prevalence of those considered ideologically 'vulnerable' who, by virtue of presenting no accompanying statutory or personal vulnerabilities, may prove more difficult for those delivering Prevent to identify.

4.5 Those without protective factors to guard against risk of manipulation or abuse will accordingly be more open to exploitation of an extremist nature. I consider those with a lack of protective factors to be at greater risk of harm (such as children who are forced to watch beheading videos or taken abroad to conflict zones) than perpetrators of harm (such as adults that show children beheading videos or take them abroad to conflict zones). It is right for Prevent to consider statutory and personal vulnerabilities as 'push factors' that can increase the risk of radicalisation.

4.6 However, Prevent is primarily about stopping individuals becoming radicalised into terrorism, including many who tend to do so through their own accord rather than because they are particularly vulnerable. I am concerned that the characterisation of Prevent work as wholly focused on supporting vulnerable individuals fails to adequately identify the majority of individuals who become terrorists or support terrorist activity.

4.7 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. For example, the existing framework might explain the proportion of Prevent referrals now being recorded as involving a vulnerable individual with no extremist ideology or identifiable terrorism risk.

4.8 An additional issue is that the framework unwittingly bestows a status of victimhood on all who come into contact with Prevent, negating individual agency or risk. Some of these individuals harbour profoundly intolerant beliefs and justify violence against innocent people.

4.9 In reflecting on the motivation for framing Prevent in this way, I heard compelling evidence from two counter-extremism experts that this framing has "done much to obscure how people actually come to join terrorist groups. Perhaps most consequentially, it has removed the agency from the individuals who willingly decide to pursue or support violence for political ends and reframed the terrorist as merely vulnerable or manipulated".

4.10 They quoted one academic's contention that Prevent does not construct terrorism as "a form of political activism that sentient people choose to engage in for reasons, however poorly conceived; rather, it's an ideological contagion [...] that afflicts the vulnerable and 'risks' their safety and well-being".

4.11 Shortly prior to completion of this report, the chair of the Manchester Arena Inquiry, Sir John Saunders, also outlined his "concern" around whether framing Prevent around vulnerability was appropriate as he was "not sure people who are liable to be radicalised … are people who you would necessarily identify as being vulnerable".[62]

4.12 Sharing Sir John's concerns, I fear that language that conflates Prevent with other forms of safeguarding risks fail to adequately respond to those individuals who might be becoming radicalised. Such individuals may not present 'vulnerabilities' as commonly understood by many working in the public services under the Prevent duty. Instead, they may be highly rational, calculated and astute.

4.13 It is my belief that references to 'vulnerability' in Prevent should be limited to the genuinely vulnerable, reserved for discussions relating to welfare concerns and circumstances beyond an individual's control which may increase their risk of exploitation (such as young age or acute social, or psychological challenges). Instead, the term 'susceptible' would better describe many of the individuals Prevent should be concerned with as these are predominantly people who have full agency in their decisions.

It is my belief that references to 'vulnerability' in Prevent should be limited to the genuinely vulnerable, reserved for discussions relating to welfare concerns and circumstances beyond an individual's control

Channel

4.14 Prevent's Channel programme adopts a multi-agency approach to identify and provide support to individuals who are at risk of becoming involved in terrorism, assess the nature and extent of that risk, and develop the most appropriate support plan for the individuals concerned. This is in response to Section 36 of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 which sets out the duty on local authorities and partners of local panels to provide support for people susceptible to "being drawn into terrorism". In England and Wales, this duty is met through Channel panels and in Scotland through Prevent Multi-Agency Panels.

4.15 The Channel process is initiated after a referral is made, often by a frontline worker such as a teacher or social worker, where there is a concern that an individual may be

[62] 'Official transcript of the Manchester Arena Inquiry [Day 181]', 8 December 2021, available at: https://files.manchesterarenainquiry.org.uk/live/uploads/2021/12/08183704/MAI-Day-181_Redacted.pdf

susceptible to radicalisation. Between 2014/15 and 2020/21, 2,581 Channel cases were closed and categorised as having no further counter-terrorism concern.

4.16 When an individual is accepted onto Channel and is willing to participate (it is voluntary), the panel has a range of support options. These may include mental health provision or support in finding stable employment, housing, education or training. Channel can provide access to anger management sessions, cognitive behavioural provision, family support and career development.[63] The Channel panel may also seek to challenge the individual's ideology or find healthier ways for them to express or explore their grievances, which can include commissioning an intervention provider.

4.17 Channel may work with families of individuals at risk to provide broader support and reduce susceptibility to terrorism. For example, Channel has been used in the past to provide support to families of those who travelled to Syria to join Islamic State.

4.18 The potential benefits of a referral to Channel are numerous. An individual may be protected from exploitation,[64] committing criminal acts[65] or being killed,[66] their families could be spared from trauma, and communities may be protected from attack.[67]

4.19 During the course of this review, I heard moving evidence of how Prevent interventions have saved lives. It remains the case that 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.

4.20 Successful cases tend to focus on young people who have been provided with Channel-commissioned one-to-one support. This includes cases where, for example, individuals have been dissuaded from travelling to fight for jihadist groups in Syria, or diverted away from anti-Muslim attitudes and the making of homemade explosives. One long-standing senior Prevent lead stated: "I cannot stress enough that many vulnerable people's lives have been positively transformed by Channel support." A former Counter Terrorism Policing lead stated that "multiple interventions" have prevented attacks.

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63 Official transcript of the Manchester Arena Inquiry [Day 164], 20 October 2021, available at: https://files.manchesterarenainquiry.org.uk/live/uploads/2021/10/20195018/MAI-Day-164_Redacted.pdf

64 Risk of exploitation includes both harm committed to the individual (e.g. being exposed to violent extremist propaganda, placed in jeopardy overseas, or subject to physical or sexual abuse) and harm committed by the individual (i.e. becoming perpetrators of the above).

65 Criminality risk spans the vast range of TACT and TACT-related offences.

66 Risk of death includes that caused by suicide, murder in war or (state) targeted killing.

67 Risk to the wider public includes physical, psychological and financial impact of attack on those immediately affected, the wider community and the state.

4.21 It is the need to further strengthen the effective work of Prevent and Channel practitioners that leads me to highlight where I believe improvements must be made within the system.

Prevent's triage approach

4.22 Prevent's current model results in a high volume of referrals being triaged out prior to Channel, classified as requiring no further action (NFA). This is comparable to other safeguarding referral systems.[68]

4.23 Counter Terrorism Police and senior Prevent practitioners informed me that currently few cases reach the stage of a formal Prevent referral without legitimate, serious concern about the welfare of an individual. This is despite negative media stories suggesting otherwise.

4.24 I do believe it would be beneficial for Counter Terrorism Policing to develop their data systems, which are primarily designed for operational purposes, to provide greater transparency and analysis of the referrals designated as NFA for Channel.

4.25 I am, however, highly confident that Prevent's triage structure is a sophisticated model for ensuring individuals can be provided with the right support.

Channel: assessment framework

4.26 Prevent developed a framework for identifying and assessing 'risk factors' (known as the 'ERG22+') within prison and probation settings. It was designed to assess the risk of violent extremism in convicted offenders. The risk factors from the ERG22+ were later transferred into the Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF) for use as part of the Channel process. The VAF is used as a guide to assess an individual's engagement with a group, cause or ideology, intent to cause harm, and capability to cause harm.

4.27 I recognise there is dissatisfaction with the evidence base used by VAF to assess individuals referred to Channel, which is currently classified and subject to critique from

[68] For example, of the 642,980 referrals made about 'children in need' in the social care sector in 2020, only 10% met the threshold of requiring a child protection plan, comparable to the 11% of referrals to Prevent which go on to be supported through Channel. All other referrals were similarly passed on to other safeguarding services or identified as requiring no further action. See: GOV.UK, 'Explore education statistics: Characteristics of children in need statistics 2020', 2020, available at: https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/characteristics-of-children-in-need

academics and Islamist campaign groups,[69] such as CAGE.[70] With the framework being based on such a small sample size of cases, there are difficulties in producing empirically-driven analysis.

4.28 From my observations, I was encouraged by the VAF-guided assessments used at Channel panels and recommend they continue to be used by trained practitioners in the identification and measure of risk. I believe the framework provides a valuable and comprehensive guide for practitioners to navigate difficult decision-making.

4.29 However, in line with the wider recommendation regarding Prevent's vulnerability framework, I suggest that VAF is referred to neutrally as the 'Prevent Assessment Framework' (PAF).

Referral data

4.30 Since 2017, the Home Office has produced annual statistics on individuals supported through Prevent's Channel process.[71]

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[69] For example, see CAGE, 'The 'science' of pre-crime: The secret 'radicalisation' study underpinning PREVENT', 2016, available at: https://cage.ngo/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/CAGE-Science-Pre-Crime-Report.pdf; Augestad Knudsen, 'Measuring radicalisation: risk assessment conceptualisations and practice in England and Wales', Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression, 17 January 2018

[70] Senior CAGE staff have expressed support for violent jihad in specific contexts. For example, director Moazzam Begg has said that the orthodox position of jihad refers to military conflict and that future Muslim generations will be religiously obligated to "rise to the call" [against oppression]. See: 'Former Guantanamo Detainee Moazzam Begg: Jihad Specifically Refers to Military Conflict and Will Remain A Sacred and Pristine Islamic Belief until Judgement Day; Future Generations of Muslims Will Be Religiously Obligated to Rise up', MEMRI, 17 January 2020, available at: https://www.memri.org/tv/former-guantanamo-detainee-moazzam-begg-mb-podcast-jihad-pristine-practice-military-judgement-day; director Asim Qureshi told a 2006 Hizb ut-Tahrir rally that "We know that it is incumbent upon all of us, to support the jihad of our brothers and sisters in these countries when they are facing the oppression of the West." See: Robert Mendick, 'Jihadi John: Activist who praised Mohammed Emwazi as "beautiful" caught on video backing jihad', The Telegraph, 27 February 2015, available at: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/11440808/Jihadi-John-Activist-who-praised-Mohammed-Emwazi-as-beautiful-caught-on-video-backing-jihad.html; In a TRT World interview in 2018, Qureshi appeared to agree with the interviewer's assertion that he supports jihad in Israel and Chechnya although claimed that "every single context has its own dynamics" and he would not encourage young people to perform jihad in the UK. See: CAGE (@UK_CAGE), Twitter, 23 October 2018, available at: https://twitter.com/Uk_cAGE/status/1054747129682509824;

Further, CAGE continues to publish al Qa'ida theologian Anwar al-Awlaki's endorsement of the group on their website, taken from his 2013 interview with CAGE director Moazzam Begg. See: Asim Qureshi, 'Moazzam Begg Interviews Imam Anwar Al Awlaki', CAGE, 28 December 2013, available at: https://www.cage.ngo/moazzam-begg-interviews-imam-anwar-al-awlaki

[71] Referral data from 2015/16 is also publicly available.

4.31 Key figures from the most recent statistics at the time of writing (referrals in the year ending 31 March 2021)[72] are as follows:

- there were 4,915 referrals to Prevent during this period[73]
- the majority of referrals were for Mixed, Unstable or Unclear (MUU) ideology concerns (2,522; 51%), followed by Extreme Right-Wing ideology 25% (1,229), and Islamist related radicalisation 22% (1,064). For the first time, there were more Extreme Right-Wing referrals to Prevent than Islamist referrals
- of the 688 adopted Channel cases, the most common were due to concerns regarding Extreme Right-Wing radicalisation (46%, 317), followed by MUU (30%, 205) and Islamist radicalisation (22%, 154)[74]

4.32 The referral data from the previous year replicates some similar trends.

- The figures for the 12 months prior to 31 March 2020 show MUU account for just over half of referrals 51% (3,203), while Islamist radicalisation referrals made up just less than a quarter of total 24% (1,487), and Extreme Right-Wing referrals sat just beneath that 22% (1,387).
- At Channel, however, the representation of these ideologies changed markedly. For that year, of 697 cases adopted at Channel, MUU made up a relatively small proportion (18%, 127), Islamist-related concerns made up a little under a third of adopted cases (30%, 210), and the largest number of adopted cases involved Extreme Right-Wing radicalisation (43%, 302). It had been in the data published by Prevent for the year concluding March 2019 that for the first time more Extreme Right-Wing cases, 45% (254), had been adopted at Channel than Islamist cases, 37% (210).[75]

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[72] 'Individuals referred to and supported through the Prevent programme, April 2020 to March 2021: Home Office, Individuals referred to and supported through the Prevent Programme, England and Wales, April 2020 to March 2021, available at: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/individuals-referred-to-and-supported-through-the-prevent-programme-april-2020-to-march-2021/individuals-referred-to-and-supported-through-the-prevent-programme-england-and-wales-april-2020-to-march-2021

[73] This is an overall decrease of 22% compared to the previous year – 6,287 in the year ending March 2020. The Home Office stated that this is likely to be driven by the effects of COVID-19 public health restrictions. The Police made the highest number of referrals 36% (1,770), followed by the education sector 25% (1,221). The majority of referrals were for males 88% (4,316), and those aged 15 to 20 (where the age of the individual is known) accounted for the largest proportion – 29% (1,398).

[74] The number of referrals discussed at a Channel panel (1,333) and adopted as a Channel case (688) saw smaller reductions compared with the previous year, decreasing by 7% and 0.6% respectively.

[75] Home Office, 'Individuals referred to and supported through the Prevent programme England and Wales, April 2018 to March 2019', 2019, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/853646/individuals-referred-supported-prevent-programme-apr2018-mar2019-hosb3219.pdf

Referral data: threat disparity

4.33 Referral data shows how referrals for Islamist radicalisation have dramatically reduced, both as absolute numbers, as well as a proportion of annual Prevent referrals.[76] From the earliest available data (2015/16) until the year ending March 2020/21, the proportion of individuals referred for concerns relating to Islamist extremism has fallen by two thirds.

4.34 This points to an increasing disparity between the types of referrals and the UK's current threat picture. A recent independent assessment noted the 'striking' growth of the threat from Islamist terrorism.[77] One senior official told me that Islamism will remain the "enduring" terrorist threat in the UK.

4.35 It could be argued that the Prevent figures are indicative of a growing threat from the Extreme Right-Wing, and that as Prevent handles cases further upstream than Pursue, this would explain the disparity. However, Home Office analysts have cast doubt on the degree to which referrals are an indicator of either current or future threat. Further, Prevent work covers all stages of the radicalisation process, from those who might be radicalised to those who have already committed terrorism offences. As such, it would be expected that Prevent's focus would roughly reflect the threat picture as it is known to exist today.

4.36 I share the view of several respected experts, that the Islamist threat is severely under-represented in Prevent referrals and cases adopted at Channel.[78] One senior national security official told me that Prevent is "out of kilter" with the rest of the national counter-terrorism apparatus, and suggested that there is a need for a "recalibration" across the system.

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[76] To-date the numbers are as follows: 2015/16 = 65% (4,997); 2016/17 = 60% (3,704); 2017/18 = 44% (3,197); 2018/19 = 24% (1,404); 2019/20 = 24% (1,487); 2020/2021 = 22% (1,064).

Accordingly, of those cases adopted at Channel, the proportion of cases involving Islamist radicalisation have decreased considerably. To-date these are as follows: 2015/16 = 69% (262); 2016/17 = 55% (187); 2017/18 = 44% (170); 2018/19 = 37% (209); 2019/20 = 30% (209); 2020/21 = 22% (154).

[77] David Anderson Q.C. 'Attacks in London and Manchester | March-June 2017 | Independent Assessment of MI5 and Police Internal Reviews [Unclassified]', December 2017, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664682/Attacks_in_London_and_Manchester_Open_Report.pdf

[78] Trevor Phillips, Sir John Jenkins, Dr Martyn Frampton, 'On Islamophobia: The Problem of Definition' 2019, pages 42-43

I share the view of several respected experts, that the Islamist threat is severely under-represented in Prevent referrals and cases adopted at Channel.

4.37 My review's evidence-gathering suggests that 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,[79] 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.[80]

4.38 I am confident that 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 be negative and focus upon allegations of inappropriate referrals, which can be portrayed as motivated by anti-Muslim sentiment or racial stereotyping.[81] These issues have almost certainly contributed

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[79] For example, see this poster by CAGE encouraging members of the public to contact their organisation in the event that they have been contacted by someone in relation to Prevent: CAGE, 'Prevent', https://www.cage.ngo/prevent-kyr – see footnote 70 for more information on CAGE.

[80] I note that, in an article titled '9 acts of courage in 2021', Islamist group CAGE claim "A successful young student empowered his parents and turned away a PREVENT Officer who was pressuring him and his family to attend unnecessary 'meetings'. Despite the stress and strain, he engaged with Cage to learn about his rights and pushed back against PREVENT." Naila Ahmed [CAGE Casework Manager], '9 Acts of Courage in 2021', 31 December 2021, available at: https://www.cage.ngo/9-acts-of-courage-in-2021.

[81] Diane Taylor 'Boy, 11, referred to Prevent for wanting to give "alms to the oppressed", The Guardian, 27 June 2021, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jun/27/boy-11-referred-to-prevent-for-wanting-to-give-alms-to-the-oppressed; Ben Quinn, 'Nursery "raised fears of radicalisation over boy's cucumber drawing"', The Guardian, 11 March 2016, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/mar/11/nursery-radicalisation-fears-boys-cucumber-drawing-cooker-bomb; Kathryn Snowden, 'Muslim Boy's "Terrorist House" Spelling Error Leads To Lancashire Police Investigation', Huffington Post, 20 January 2016, available at: https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2016/01/20/muslim-child-terrorist-house-spelling-error_n_9025336.html; Joshua Stein and Mark Townsend, 'Muslim boy, 4, was referred to Prevent over game of Fortnite', The Guardian, 31 January 2021, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jan/31/muslim-boy-4-was-referred-to-prevent-over-game-of-fortnite; Jamie Grierson, 'My son was terrified': how Prevent alienates UK Muslims', The Guardian, 27 January 2019, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/jan/27/prevent-muslim-community-discrimination

to a certain hesitancy, and fears about possible repercussions for reporting Islamist-related concerns. This would echo previous independent reviews which reported a "cultural timidity" among frontline staff in reporting concerns about Islamist extremism.[82]

4.39 Participants of this review's commissioned study on those who had been through Prevent indicated that institutional hesitancy about making a referral was connected to the 'anti-Prevent lobby' and disinformation about the strategy. One individual informed researchers that: "It's hard to be critical because the [Prevent] experience wasn't bad in any way, shape or form." However he felt that his school missed multiple opportunities to refer him as they were "wary" of doing so. This strengthens my concern about the impact myths and misconceptions about Prevent can have on the scheme's successful delivery.

4.40 This comes despite my observations that Prevent and Channel professionals take great care to mitigate the risk of religious prejudice when managing cases of those from a Muslim background.

4.41 It is clear that more needs to be done to reassure individuals who wish to make a referral that doing so is by no means an indicator of ill-intent or prejudice. I have witnessed the extent to which Prevent has provided those referred into the scheme with much-needed support and guidance.

4.42 I am of the view that, rather than being indicative of the emerging threat picture, referral data partially reflects the areas that practitioners and frontline staff think they should be focusing on to demonstrate fairness. The data has become politicised.

4.43 It is also possible that 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.

4.44 While part of the increased concern about the Extreme Right-Wing is justified by the data showing a rise in the Extreme Right-Wing terror threat,[83] I was told by a former counter-terrorism police chief that increased focus on Extreme Right-Wing constituted "a degree

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[82] See Ian Acheson on his 2016 review of Islamist extremism in prisons: Ian Acheson, 'Summary of the main findings of the review of Islamist extremism in prisons, probation and youth justice', Ministry of Justice', August 2016, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/547032/acheson-review-summary-aug-2016.pdf; or Peter Clarke's 2014 report on extremism concerns in Birmingham schools: Peter Clarke, 'Report into allegations concerning Birmingham schools arising from the 'Trojan Horse' letter', July 2014, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/340526/HC_576_accessible_-.pdf

[83] 'CONTEST: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism', HM Government, June 2018, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/716907/140618_CCS207_CCS0218929798-1_CONTEST_3.0_WEB.pdf

of appeasement to maintain some groups' involvement with Prevent". The clear inference here being that a focus on the Extreme Right-Wing, above and beyond the actual threat it posed, was occurring to try and fend off accusations of stigmatising minority communities.

Referral data: 'Mixed, Unstable or Unclear'

4.45 The Home Office states that Mixed, Unstable or Unclear (MUU) "reflects instances where the ideology presented involves a combination of elements from multiple ideologies (mixed), shifts between different ideologies (unstable), or where the individual does not present a coherent ideology yet may still pose a terrorism risk (unclear)."[84]

4.46 In the year ending 31 March 2021, over half of all referrals to Prevent were categorised as MUU.[85] This represents a dramatic increase in a short space of time given that this category was only introduced into Prevent in 2018, and that for the period April 2018 to March 2019 this cohort already accounted for 38% (2,169) of referrals.[86]

4.47 While MUU cases accounted for 51% of those referred to Prevent in the most recent two datasets at the time of writing, these cases constituted only 25% (2019–20) and 31% (2020–21) of those taken to the Channel stage, and that among cases actually adopted at Channel, MUU cases fell to just 18% and 30% respectively.[87]

4.48 While it is not possible to know whether all the decisions made at each of these second and third stages of the referral process were correct, this suggests that the MUU

[84] It is understood that this group can also include individuals who may be thought susceptible to becoming involved in terrorism on account of a sense of duty, or a desire for belonging to a group, as well as those obsessed with massacres or extreme violence without necessarily targeting any particular group. Participants in academic seminars I commissioned questioned the analytical value of this 'miscellaneous' category, claiming that it highlighted a growing inability to explain ideological drivers for violent extremism.

[85] 'Individuals referred to and supported through the Prevent Programme, April 2019 to March 2020', Home Office, 26 November 2020, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/individuals-referred-to-and-supported-through-the-prevent-programme-april-2019-to-march-2020

[86] The increase in MUU referrals as a proportion of the annual total is partly explained by the decline in the absolute number of Islamist referrals. Yet, by any standard, the number of MUU cases being referred is high. See: 'Individuals referred to and supported through the Prevent programme, England and Wales, Home Office, April 2018 to March 2019', 19 December 2019, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/853646/individuals-referred-supported-prevent-programme-apr2018-mar2019-hosb3219.pdf

[87] 'Individuals referred to and supported through the Prevent Programme, April 2019 to March 2020', Home Office, 26 November 2020, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/individuals-referred-to-and-supported-through-the-prevent-programme-april-2019-to-march-2020

category is facilitating large numbers of individuals being unnecessarily referred to Prevent.[88]

4.49 In June 2019, national Prevent leads issued a joint letter to practitioners setting out their position on MUU. It is reasonable to assume that this letter led to increased awareness of the MUU category as an option for Prevent referrals and may have contributed to greater use of the category by practitioners.

4.50 The Prevent leads suggested that the "diversification" in the nature of the terrorist threat raises questions about the risk from individuals with unclear ideological motivations, and that MUU cases can display complex vulnerabilities, including criminality, social isolation, and poor mental health. It was further contended that the definition of terrorism, as outlined by the Terrorism Act 2000, allows for a relatively broad interpretation.

4.51 The great increase in MUU Prevent referrals is not replicated in any other data set, published or otherwise. I am not aware of any recognised terrorist attacks in the UK perpetrated by assailants who could be described as falling within the MUU category.

I am not aware of any recognised terrorist attacks in the UK perpetrated by assailants who could be described as falling within the MUU category.

4.52 I have seen demographic analysis of those referred in the MUU category that indicates that these individuals often have social and behavioural issues, as well as mental health and neurodevelopmental conditions. These cases are unlikely to have ideology as the primary factor driving them towards supporting or engaging in terrorism.

4.53 The MUU category also includes referrals of those viewed as having a 'school massacre fixation'. Yet RICU notes that the Counter Terrorism system would not class a school massacre attack as terrorism, because this phenomenon is not an ideology and is typically motivated by personal grievances rather than a political, religious, or ideological motivation.

4.54 Similarly, it is noticeable that RICU's explanation of the MUU classification makes repeated and extensive reference to the misogynistic Incel online subculture, which is included in the Unclear strand of MUU.

[88] Prevent is, to an extent, designed to conduct a degree of filtering, and the system is – justifiably – anxious at the prospect of 'under referring' and susceptible or radicalised individuals being missed. Yet more work is required to strengthen the quality of referrals and to avoid an excessive burden being placed on counter-terrorism resources.

4.55 According to the Home Office's CONTEST department, an act of terrorism is when violence is used to further the aims of any ideology. However, the country's deputy senior national co-ordinator for counterterrorism policy has said that Incel is not a terrorist ideology. I agree.

4.56 Incel violence against women could well be classified as a form of hate crime. Such individuals may also be driven toward suicide and self-harm due to psychological distress rather than violence against others. Recent recommendations by the Law Commission to protect women (and other minority groups) tackles Incel-related incitement through hate crime legislation,[89] underscoring the position that the Incel phenomenon is not currently a counter-terrorism matter.

4.57 Inevitably then, I am forced to raise the question of whether it makes sense to refer to Prevent individuals who have no clear ideology, given that acts of violence committed by such people would not be regarded as terrorist in nature. Reflecting on Prevent's referral data for the year 2020-21, Home Office analysts cautioned against reading too much into the data showing large numbers of MUU referrals. They pointed out that it could be that practitioners are now classifying as MUU cases that previously would have been identified with other specific ideologies, such as Islamist.

4.58 There are reasons for being concerned that the MUU category can be used as a 'catch-all' category that encompasses an overly broad spectrum of issues, including many different case profiles that share few overlapping characteristics.

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.

4.59 By including MUU within Prevent's remit, a large number of referrals are made of individuals who are of doubtful relevance to the national counter-terrorism strategy. At present, too many individuals who might be more appropriately supported through other channels are instead being referred to Prevent because MUU can be too liberally interpreted and applied. MUU should not be used as an all-encompassing channel for assisting vulnerable individuals who have not sufficiently demonstrated susceptibilities to radicalisation.

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[89] 'Reforms to protect disabled and LGBT+ victims, criminalise extremist misogynist "incel" hate material, and safeguard free speech', The Law Commission, 7 December 2021, available at: https://www.lawcom.gov.uk/reforms-to-protect-disabled-and-lgbt-victims-criminalise-extremist-misogynist-incel-hate-material-and-safeguard-free-speech/

Referral data: low referrals from non-statutory sectors

4.60 The Statutory Prevent Duty applies to most public services and public bodies. However, the Prevent referral system allows anyone to make a referral to Prevent, including members of the public.

4.61 Counter terrorism police and civil society groups working with Prevent have stressed to me the importance of friends and family coming forward about individuals for whom they have a concern. Friends and family are particularly important because of their perceived instinctive ability to spot behavioural change in people close to them.

4.62 Yet, Prevent sees very few referrals from private individuals, either through the 'friends and family' category, or the 'community' category.[90]

4.63 In response to concerns about the low referral rates from the 'friends and family' category, Counter Terrorism Policing launched the 'ACT Early' (Action Counters Terrorism) campaign in November 2020, providing advice and resources for the public in an effort to increase awareness.[91]

4.64 It is too soon to judge the long-term effect of this campaign on Prevent referrals. Prevent figures from April 2020 to March 2021 remained low, but the ACT Early website had only been running for a few months of this period. Counter Terrorism Policing's drive to increase public awareness about how to report radicalisation concerns is encouraging.

4.65 Such initiatives should help to strengthen public trust and confidence in Prevent, and this may well help to further encourage members of the public and those in non-statutory sectors to make referrals where necessary. The Home Office may wish to consider additional initiatives to make it easier for the public to find out how to make Prevent referrals, including developing an accessible GOV.UK resource that outlines existing reporting mechanisms for radicalisation-related concerns. This resource ought to be one

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[90] Referral data from 2015/16 through to the latest figures from 2020/21 illustrate the continuously low number of referrals from these sectors. Published data on the percentage of Prevent referrals from 'Friends and Family' to-date is as follows: 2015/16: 4% (267); 2016/17: 4% (250); 2017/18: 3% (212); 2018/19: 2% (99); 2019/20: 2% (139); 2020/21: 3% (139). The percentage of cases adopted at Channel that came from 'Friends and Family' are as follows: 2015/16: 4% (15); 2016/17: 2% (5); 2017/18: 3% (11); 2018/19: 1% (8); 2019/20: 2%; 2020/21: 3% (23). Published data on the percentage of Prevent referrals from the 'community' to-date is as follows: 2015/16: 5% (398); 2016/17: 4% (226); 2017/18: 4% (292); 2018/19: 2% (92); 2019/20: 2% (101); 2020/21: 2% (121). The percentage of cases adopted at Channel that came from 'Friends and Family' are as follows: 2015/16: 4% (16); 2016/17: 4% (14); 2017/18: 3% (16); 2018/19: 2% (558); 2019/20: 2% (11); 2020/21: 2% (12).

[91] 'Year In Review 2020 | CT Policing Release Act Early Campaign', Counter Terrorism Policing, 9 December 2020, available at: https://www.counterterrorism.police.uk/yir2020actearly/#:~:text=In%20November%202020%2C%20Counter%20Terrorism%20Policing%20launched%20a,know%20may%20be%20at%20risk%20from%20being%20radicalised

that the public can be directed towards through simple online thematic searches much like some existing public health messaging.

4.66 Prevent referral data also includes the referral category 'other', which covers a wide range of non-statutory sectors, with these detailed as; 'employment, military and government (including Home Office Immigration Enforcement and HMRC)'.[92]

4.67 Referrals in this category have remained low. However, there would be value in delineating this category, as employers in the private sector represent quite a different field to state institutions or bodies not currently subject to the duty.

Referral Data Retention

4.68 All referrals to Channel remain on the police's national database, the Prevent Case Management Tracker, for six years.[93] This is in line with other police retention of data.

4.69 This allows patterns to be spotted, such as repeated referrals within and across different agencies which on their own would be assessed as of low risk and would not meet the requirements for Channel, but could be indicative of a larger issue.

4.70 Nonetheless, there is criticism about the retention of data on those who had been referred to Prevent, but had not met the threshold for a Channel referral, and so their case had been closed as a 'No Further Action' (NFA) case. There is understandable unease about the prospect of individuals' data, including that of children, remaining on a police database for so long when no criminal offence or sanction has taken place.[94]

4.71 For the purposes of reassuring the public and increasing confidence in Prevent, I believe a balance should be sought. I suggest NFA cases should be held for a shorter period of three years.

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92 'Individuals referred to and supported through the Prevent programme, England and Wales, April 2020 to March 2021,' Home Office, 18 November 2021, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/individuals-referred-to-and-supported-through-the-prevent-programme-april-2020-to-march-2021/individuals-referred-to-and-supported-through-the-prevent-programme-england-and-wales-april-2020-to-march-2021

93 It is retained for even longer in Scotland – 12 years.

94 Human Rights Watch, 'Preventing education: Human Rights and UK Counter-terrorism Policy in Schools', 13 July 2016, page 47, available at: https://www.rightsandsecurity.org/action/research/entry/prevent-publication

Channel: internal findings

4.72 I observed six Channel panels in England and Wales (across priority and non-priority areas) and two Prevent Multi-Agency Panels in Scotland.

4.73 I was encouraged by the efficient structure of Channel panels I observed, the consideration and time allocated to discussing each case, and the multi-agency partnership working evident in the sessions observed. It was clear that the necessary partners were present to consider the range of vulnerabilities present in each case.

4.74 This included social workers for child and adult services, mental health and other healthcare specialists, Prevent police and probation officers, and local authority Prevent/Channel and Safeguarding leads. I was impressed by instances where a range of additional relevant stakeholders were invited for input on the discussion, such as the assigned intervention provider to the case.

4.75 It was clear that panels deliberate over extremely challenging cases, and take a specific, tailored approach to each case, recognising individuals' often complex psychological issues and personal circumstances. Each possible mitigation was considered for potential negative consequences. Gaps that emerged, or areas where additional expertise was required, were appropriately addressed through the relevant partners for follow-up inquiry. Cases observed had a collegial atmosphere, with partners respectful and encouraging of the various professional contributions to the panel, even where disagreements developed.

4.76 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.

4.77 For example, a volunteer mentor close to an individual who went on to commit an act of terrorism, and who was in Prevent at the time, alleged that Channel representatives managing the case had very little direct contact with the individual of concern. Moreover, the volunteer was rarely asked to participate in meetings and felt their concerns were ignored. They also suggested that the Channel support provided was – in practice – negligible, and risk was overlooked. It is possible that local authority and Prevent practitioners were overwhelmed by caseload but in my view, it is a serious oversight to neglect the participation of those who have a close relationship with the Channel subject.

4.78 Concerns were raised in the initial phase of the review about the size of panels and how well organised they are.

4.79 It was not always apparent that Channel partners had equal access to information, nor clear that everyone present for discussions was required or relevant.

4.80 Coupled with feedback from previous case reviews, I am concerned that the quality of Channel panels diverges across the country, and suggest that these factors are addressed in the Home Office's proposed assessment of Channel's impact and delivery.

Channel: anti-Muslim hatred and the prevalence of cases featuring extreme antisemitism

4.81 I was alarmed at the prevalence of extreme antisemitism in the Channel cases I observed. This issue spanned across the full range of Channel cases we observed regardless of the nature of the ideology, be it Islamist or Extreme Right-Wing, and across a broad range of age groups. This was unsurprising given that hatred of Jews is an issue which in fact unites both Islamists and Extreme Right-Wing, as well as the Extreme Left, in a kind of modern-day Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact.

> **I was alarmed at the prevalence of extreme antisemitism in the Channel cases I observed.**

4.82 Such examples I saw in Channel include:

- individuals expressing the intent to kill, assault or harm Jewish people or a particular Jewish individual
- threats to burn, desecrate or blow up a Synagogue
- the conduct of hostile reconnaissance on local Synagogues
- claiming religious or political justification for the murder of Jewish people
- refusing consent to be situated in a city with Jewish people
- demonstrating an obsession with Jews
- adherence to extreme antisemitic conspiracies

4.83 Other cases included examples of individuals who made an association of British Jews with the actions of the Israeli Government, and the justification of harm towards individuals expressed as 'Zionists' or 'baby killers' without explicit reference to Jewish people.

4.84 Some Channel observations took place during the 2021 period of heightened tensions in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The connection between political developments overseas and its domestic impact remains a consistent concern.

4.85 Over the last decade, Europe has seen waves of Islamist-inspired terrorism against Jewish targets. These include the Toulouse Jewish school shootings (2012), the Belgian Jewish Museum attack (2014), the Paris kosher supermarket siege (2015), shootings

outside the Great Synagogue in Copenhagen (2015), and the Jewish community centre attack in Nice (2015). Domestically, British authorities have disrupted early-stage terrorist plots targeting Jewish areas, including in Birmingham[95] and Manchester.[96]

4.86 In the first six months of 2021, the Community Security Trust Jewish security charity recorded a higher number of antisemitic incidents across the UK than in any previous comparable period.[97] These included "incitement from radical Islamist extremists in the UK and calls from jihadist terrorist groups for Jews to be killed".[98]

4.87 It was shortly before this report was completed that, in January 2022, a British citizen, Faisal Akram, held four Jewish congregants hostage at a synagogue in Texas while calling for the release of an al-Qa'ida affiliated terrorist.

4.88 The recurrence of such severe and explicit anti-Jewish hatred featured within Channel cases is a matter of concern for counter-terrorism policy, as well as for strands of government work tackling racism and hate crime. I suggest that the Home Office should assess the extent to which the prevalence of antisemitism in cases I observed is representative of Channel cases more widely. This work will also help address whether some of these cases would be better categorised as being of hate crime concern, rather than counter-terrorism and subsequently of relevance to Prevent.

4.89 This also has relevance to the challenge around anti-Muslim hatred, which is clearly an animating feature of the modern far right – the terrorist attack near Finsbury Park Mosque in June 2017 being an example of this. I heard testimony about Muslims who were too afraid to leave their homes in the wake of terrorist attacks that occurred in 2017. That anti-Muslim hatred exists in the UK is intolerable.

4.90 As with other forms of extremism, this hatred and prejudice is irrational and illogical. I was told of one individual referred to Channel over far right concerns who refused to even touch a bottle of water offered to him by a Muslim.

4.91 I heard that a perception existed in Muslim communities that Prevent has not properly understood far right extremism and there was an unwillingness to properly deal with this subject. The notion that Prevent does not seek to protect Muslims, just like all other

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95 'The Birmingham couple who put IS at heart of marriage', BBC News, 26 October 2017 available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-41763878

96 'City's Jewish community stands firm after "jihad at home" terror plot', BBC News, 19 July 2012, available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-18909933

97 'Antisemitic Incidents January – June 2021, Community Security Trust, available at: https://cst.org.uk/data/file/f/c/Incidents%20Report%20Jan-Jun%202021.1627901074.pdf

98 'The Month of Hate: Antisemitism & extremism during the Israel-Gaza conflict', Community Security Trust, 2021, available at: https://cst.org.uk/data/file/4/a/The_Month_of_Hate.1626263072.pdf

citizens, from terrorist attacks is highly regrettable. I do not believe that is an accurate assessment of Prevent's work. Nonetheless, it is clearly a keenly felt perception among some. Government should continue to seek to communicate the seriousness with which Prevent treats all forms of extremism and terrorism.

4.92 How best to deal with anti-Muslim hatred is a key challenge for the government. Yet with regards to Prevent, if it is to avoid being overloaded, it must look to deal first and foremost with cases that have a potential terrorism component. Hate crime is a vital area for the government to tackle but Prevent cannot be the primary means of doing so. It is primarily a counter-terrorism tool and should remain so.

The case of Faisal Akram

Malik Faisal Akram, a British citizen, held four Jewish civilians hostage at gunpoint at the Beth Israel synagogue in Colleyville, Texas before being shot and killed by an FBI rescue team. It was described as "an act of terrorism and antisemitism" by the Foreign Secretary.[99]

Akram demanded the release of Aafia Siddiqui, an al-Qa'ida operative jailed for 86 years in the US for attempted murder and assault of US nationals and US officers and employees in Afghanistan.[100] Notably, at her trial, Siddiqui demanded that the jury be "subject to genetic testing" and Jews excluded.[101] Akram encouraged others to wage war on the US and complained about the presence of US troops in Afghanistan.[102]

In a phone call made to his brother during the siege, Akram declared that he wished to "go down as a martyr", had "prayed to Allah for two years for this", and "asked Allah for this death".[103]

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99 'Texas synagogue hostage-taker was known to MI5', BBC News, 18 January 2022, available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-60038207

100 'Aafia Siddiqui Sentenced in Manhattan Federal Court to 86 Years for Attempting to Murder U.S Nationals in Afghanistan and Six Additional Crimes', Federal Bureau of Investigation, September 23 2010, available at: archives.fbi.gov/archives/newyork/press-releases/2010/nyfo092310.htm

101 'Aafia Siddiqui demands no Jewish jurors at attempted murder trial', The Times, 15 January 2020, available at: https://thetimes.co.uk/article/aafia-siddiqui-demands-no-jewish-jurors-at-attempted-murder-trial-mgdmczpxtxp

102 'Exclusive: Texas synagogue terrorist ranted about "f***ing Jews" in last call to family made during siege', Jewish Chronicle, 19 January 2022, available at: https://www.thejc.com/news/world/exclusive-texas-synagogue-terrorist-ranted-about-f-ing-jews-in-last-call-to-family-made-during-siege-2Y5rmNYVAwKPfoV3fMv8i6

103 'Exclusive: Texas synagogue terrorist ranted about "f***ing Jews" in last call to family made during siege', Jewish Chronicle, 19 January 2022, available at: https://www.thejc.com/news/world/exclusive-texas-synagogue-terrorist-ranted-about-f-ing-jews-in-last-call-to-family-made-during-siege-2Y5rmNYVAwKPfoV3fMv8i6

In 2021, Akram had made public threats about killing Jews.[104] He had also previously been jailed for assault, been convicted for harassment and destruction of a property, and was known to deal drugs.[105]

Akram was referred to Prevent on multiple occasions, most recently in 2019. However, he was not considered a serious enough risk to be referred to Channel.[106]

Akram had been banned from a Lancashire magistrate's court for making threatening comments, telling a court usher on 12 September 2001 that he wished the usher had died in the previous day's terrorist attacks in the US.[107]

Channel: wide spectrum of risk – from vulnerability to radicalisation to propensity to attack

4.93 I observed a wide spectrum of risk for Channel panels to consider. This ranged from individuals at risk of exploitation or radicalising influences (what I would describe as passive risk), through to those whose views or activities indicated a propensity towards racial or religious violence (what I would describe as active risk, at a sub-Pursue level). I was encouraged by the ability of panels to manage well the broad spectrum of the caseload they must contend with.

4.94 I am concerned that focus on passive risk referrals may lead to neglecting proportionate focus on active risk referrals. This observation further calls into question whether Prevent's widespread use of the term 'vulnerable' is appropriate to describe all individuals with a proclivity toward terrorism.

4.95 Based on what I witnessed during the review, Islamist referrals tended to be active risk and Extreme Right-Wing referrals were more likely to be passive risk. The Home Office should examine this issue further.

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[104] 'Texas gunman said "I want to kill Jews" last year', The Jewish Chronicle, 20 January 2020, available at: https://www.thejc.com/news/news/texas-gunman-said-i-want-to-kill-jews-last-year-2IfW7joMSKaHnQdiC5oXXq

[105] Keith Griffith and Tom Pyman, 'Texas synagogue terrorist Malik Faisal Akram was "dropped off at Dallas homeless shelter by a man who hugged him": Photo shows attacker days before hostage crisis as FBI probe his possible contacts in the US', Daily Mail, 18 January 2022, available at: https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10415993/Synagogue-terrorist-Malik-Faisal-Akram-dropped-Texas-shelter-man-hugged-him.html

[106] Jonathan Sacerdoti, 'Texas gunman was "referred twice" to the Prevent anti-extremism programme' Jewish Chronicle, 21 January 2022, available at: https://www.thejc.com/news/news/texas-gunman-was-'referred-twice'-to-the-prevent-anti-extremism-programme-7nHvZuxbKWD83E4sGQxCgN

[107] '"Menace" banned by court', Lancashire Telegraph, 22 September 2001, available at: https://www.lancashiretelegraph.co.uk/news/6008324.menace-banned-court/

Channel: prevalence of mental health difficulties

4.96 A significant number of cases referred to Channel involve some element of mental health concern, and/or other complex needs.[108] This includes young people on the autistic spectrum.

4.97 It should be noted throughout my observations that cases of this type were responded to with sufficient expertise from the panel members, and with an awareness of the local child and adult services available for support.

4.98 Under the right circumstances, individuals with psychological or social difficulties may be more susceptible to the influence of extremists and their radicalising messages. The extent and nature of the relationship between mental health difficulties and terrorism is disputed.[109] It is certainly the case that some individuals with diagnosed mental health conditions have presented a broader security concern.[110] However, terrorist groups such as the Provisional Irish Republican Army and al-Qa'ida have purposefully avoided recruiting individuals who presented psychological vulnerabilities.

4.99 Considerations around mental health as a possible causal factor in terrorism may need to give greater recognition to the likelihood that mental health is more relevant to some forms of terrorism than to others. Data exists on both Extreme Right-Wing and Islamist terrorism suggesting that mental health problems may be more common among lone actor (or 'self-initiated') terrorist assailants than among those who act as part of a

[108] For example, evidence from Counter Terrorism Units across the nine regions in England and Wales identified mental health vulnerabilities in approximately 40% of Channel referrals, and in 2016, out of all West Midlands Prevent referrals, 73% were identified as having a health vulnerability which required mental health support from the Vulnerability Support Hub.

[109] For example, see Simon Copeland and Sarah Marsden, 'The Relationship Between Mental Health Problems And Terrorism', Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats, 4 November 2020, available at: https://crestresearch.ac.uk/resources/the-relationship-between-mental-health-problems-and-terrorism/

[110] In recent years, the UK has seen multiple acts of non-terrorism extreme violence related to severe mental health problems, such as the attacks seen in Plymouth in August 2021, Birmingham in September 2020, and Russell Square in August 2016.

network or are directed by a group.[111] Even among the lone actors or the self-initiated, it is still the minority that are believed to suffer from mental health difficulties.[112]

4.100 In my view, those with mental health issues or complex needs are significantly over-represented within Channel.

> **In my view, those with mental health issues or complex needs are significantly over-represented within Channel.**

4.101 I am concerned that Prevent is overly focused on issues such as mental health and social isolation as drivers of radicalisation. This is likely compounded by my observation that practitioners are more comfortable discussing these issues rather than ideology.

Channel: excessive strain

4.102 As I have noted, several government officials and Prevent practitioners suggested the Channel process could be carrying some of the weight for other services which have witnessed increased demand, particularly with regards to mental health support.

4.103 I have seen compelling evidence that vulnerable people, who do not necessarily pose a terrorism risk, are being processed through Prevent to Channel to expedite access to social and mental health resources which may not be as easily available outside of counter-terrorism structures.

4.104 I was informed that frontline staff sometimes refer individuals to Prevent as this guarantees a level of support when mainstream mental health provision might not be secured as quickly, and where the threshold for safeguarding for other vulnerabilities could not be met.

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[111] Emily Corner and Paul Gill, 'Is There a Nexus Between Terrorist Involvement and Mental Health in the Age of the Islamic State?', Combating Terrorism Center At West Point, January 2017, Vol 10, Issue 1, available at: https://ctc.usma.edu/is-there-a-nexus-between-terrorist-involvement-and-mental-health-in-the-age-of-the-islamic-state/; Jeff Gruenewald, Steven Chermak, Joshua D. Freilich, 'Distinguishing "Loner" Attacks from Other Domestic Extremist Violence", Wiley Online Library, 23 July 2013 https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1745-9133.12008

[112] Emily Corner and Paul Gill, 'Is There a Nexus Between Terrorist Involvement and Mental Health in the Age of the Islamic State?', Combating Terrorism Center At West Point, January 2017, Vol 10, Issue 1, available at: https://ctc.usma.edu/is-there-a-nexus-between-terrorist-involvement-and-mental-health-in-the-age-of-the-islamic-state/; Jeff Gruenewald, Steven Chermak, Joshua D. Freilich, 'Distinguishing "Loner" Attacks from Other Domestic Extremist Violence", Wiley Online Library, 23 July 2013 https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1745-9133.12008

4.105 Channel chairs claimed they had exercised caution in closing cases, because of their concern that individuals might not be able to get other types of support elsewhere.

4.106 Local practitioners claimed that there was sometimes a lack of suitable services available, such as ADHD clinics, Asperger's clinics and behavioural clinics, or general support for those with learning difficulties. I was further informed that children with autism were being processed through the Channel system when they ought to have been supported with more appropriately by alternative services.

4.107 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.

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.

4.108 It is my belief that many of those people who are referred to Prevent on account of mental health vulnerabilities would be better supported by more general provision outside of the counter-terrorism system.

4.109 Without an identifiable radicalisation-related risk, it is inappropriate for counter-terrorism resources to be used as a 'safety net' for vulnerable persons.

4.110 However, I would like to stress that Counter Terrorism Policing's ongoing work to incorporate specialist advice and multi-agency support for high-risk cases where radicalisation risk and mental health concern overlap is to be commended.[113]

Channel: Home Office evaluation

4.111 Empirical evidence on the effectiveness of the programme remains limited. There is no published evaluation of Channel (or Prevent more widely), and I found no evidence that a robust evaluation has been carried out, beyond that of internal peer reviews.

[113] In response to the high numbers of Prevent referrals involving mental health challenges, Counter Terrorism Policing initiated pilots of a 'Vulnerability Support Service', to assist police officers in their work identifying vulnerabilities in those being referred. This service involves the co-location of psychologists and police officers, along with other professionals, to improve assessments of vulnerabilities and identification of the most appropriate type of support. This initiative is in the process of being rolled out nationally, starting from a small number of regional hubs.

4.112 I am, however, aware that the Home Office is intending to commission an evaluation to provide "a rigorous and independent assessment of the Channel Programme impacts and delivery". This project is intended to evaluate for whom and under what circumstances Channel works, how its process can be improved, and a cost-benefit analysis of the intervention model. I consider this to be an important piece of work that the government should undertake swiftly.

4.113 I would like the Home Office to undertake strengthened monitoring and assessment of the performance of intervention providers, and consider routine feedback from both Channel panels and the individuals receiving support through Channel.

5. Prevent's third objective: how well does Prevent enable those who have already engaged in terrorism to disengage and rehabilitate?

5.1 Prevent's third and most recently added objective is to assist those who have already engaged in terrorism to disengage from extremist ideology and rehabilitate.[114] Prevent's Desistance and Disengagement Programme (DDP) was established in late 2016[115] and became formalised in the revised CONTEST 2018 strategy.

5.2 DDP is provided to a range of individuals, including offenders released on licence, those under Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures, and those who have returned from overseas conflict zones and those subject to Temporary Exclusion Orders.[116] The scheme seeks to introduce 'protective factors' to support individuals to disengage from terrorism and successfully reintegrate into society.[117] At its inception, DDP covered four individuals; by the end of 2017, the number had increased to 100. At present, DDP supports on average 100 individuals at any one time, of which 80% are on probation.

5.3 At the time of writing, 220 people were in custody or on remand in the UK for terrorism-related offences.[118] Of those in custody, 70% (153) are categorised as Islamist, a further

[114] HM Government, 'CONTEST The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism', June 2018, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/716907/140618_CCS207_CCS0218929798-1_CONTEST_3.0_WEB.pdf

[115] The programme works by providing tailored interventions which support individuals to stop engaging in terrorist-related activity (desist) and to move away from terrorist ideology (disengage).

[116] 'Fact sheet: Desistance and Disengagement Programme', GOV.UK, 5 November 2019, available at: https://homeofficemedia.blog.gov.uk/2019/11/05/fact-sheet-desistance-and-disengagement-programme/

[117] Claire Brader, 'Extremism in prisons: Are UK deradicalisation programmes working', House of Lords Library, 11 June 2020, available at: https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/extremism-in-prisons-are-uk-deradicalisation-programmes-working/

[118] From September 2020 onwards, the Ministry of Justice and Home Office have formally adopted the definition 'Terrorism-Connected Offender'. This definition replaced the previously used definition 'Terrorism-Related Offender' which will no longer be used for the purposes of publishing official statistics for terrorist prisoners. The change in definition between the publication of statistics as of 30 June 2020 and 30 September 2020 caused roughly 10% of prisoners to be removed from the classification at that point. For this reason, figures for September 2020 onwards are not directly comparable with previous years or quarters.

22% (49) are categorised as Extreme Right-Wing and 8% (18) are categorised as holding beliefs related to other ideologies.[119]

5.4 I recognise the constant and difficult challenge of tackling radicalisation within the highly febrile prison estate. It is right and proper for Prevent to extend resources to DDP which justifiably sits within its principal objective. Supporting de-radicalisation efforts is an ethical imperative.

5.5 I am assured that individualised support, from highly skilled and trained intervention providers, offers the best chance of reducing the risk of re-engagement with terrorist activity. However, recruitment for these positions must be rigorous, and support for such intervention providers continually sustained.

5.6 I am concerned that the extent to which ideologically-driven offenders differ from the wider criminal population has yet to be fully and widely recognised. A 'precautionary policy' is advised, to ensure practitioners embed risk of manipulation, or exploitation, within all HMPPS staff and intervention provider support and training.

5.7 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.

5.8 These high-profile acts of terrorism are symptomatic of a more deep-rooted extremism and radicalisation concern within the prison estate. I commend the work of the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, Jonathan Hall KC, who has conducted a forensic assessment of terrorism in prisons, and of Ian Acheson, whose previous investigation into Islamist extremism served to caution against the types of extremist activity we have witnessed in recent years.

Desistance and disengagement: measuring success

5.9 While the success of DDP is ostensibly measured in terms of reducing the risk of re-engagement with TACT-related activity, such a risk can never be fully eliminated. I appreciate concerns about the effectiveness of short-term interventions, particularly

[119] 'Operation of police powers under the Terrorism Act 2000 and subsequent legislation: Arrests, outcomes, and stop and search, Great Britain, quarterly update to June 2021', Home Office, 9 September 2021, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/operation-of-police-powers-under-the-terrorism-act-2000-quarterly-update-to-june-2021/operation-of-police-powers-under-the-terrorism-act-2000-and-subsequent-legislation-arrests-outcomes-and-stop-and-search-great-britain-quarterly-u

following the attack at Fishmongers' Hall where the perpetrator, Usman Khan, had participated in several rehabilitation programmes (see page 70). However, I have also been presented with cases where tailored intervention has provided tangible, positive benefit to an offender's life circumstances.

5.10 For example, an individual who had been referred to DDP at the end of his prison sentence, spoke positively of the programme despite having previously had a negative perception of Prevent. This person described how he built up a relationship with his Counter Terrorism Probation Officer over time. His view was that successful interventions were those managed by people with relevant first-hand experience.

5.11 For any intervention to work, it is clear that the person receiving it must have a willingness to change.

5.12 I sought feedback on the practitioners' risk assessment framework used in the management of extremist offenders. Overall, the guidance was viewed positively within the prison sector, with recognition that the effectiveness of any such framework relies on its administration by trained and experienced practitioners. As outlined earlier in this report, I consider the three main criteria for assessment and the twenty-two listed sub-diagnostic factors reliable indicators of potential terrorism-related risk, and important in assisting staff to make proportionate and justifiable judgements.

5.13 I am, however, concerned about DDP's reliance on an academic advisory board to help 'underpin' its work, and recommend its diversification to increase understanding and experience of ideologically-driven offenders. External consultants must be able to demonstrate prior work on the ideological motivations of terrorism (worldviews, narratives and groups) or have operational expertise of working with extremists.

5.14 This principle should apply across Prevent. Any outputs (training products, assessment frameworks, programmes of work) used to identify or mitigate risk by those who have ideological motivations must be examined by specialists.

5.15 I understand that work is currently underway to further evaluate DDP and the success of rehabilitation programmes. From the evidence provided to my review, I would caution against using terrorist recidivism as a sole measure of success for rehabilitation efforts.

5.16 In July 2020, CTC Sentinel published a study analysing, inter alia, the scale of jihadist-motivated terrorist recidivism in the UK from 1998 to 2015.[120] The authors concluded that, whilst there is a relatively low rate of recidivism for TACT-related offenders, such a measure is an imperfect metric for assessing national security risk and re-engagement

[120] CTC Sentinel, 'The Threat from Europe's Jihadi Prisoners and Prison Leavers', July 2020, Vol 13, Issue 7: https://ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/CTC-SENTINEL-072020.pdf, pages 22-36

with terrorism. 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.

Intervention providers for TACT and TACT-related offenders

5.17 Intervention providers have an important and tough role in assessing and attempting to mitigate the serious risk of TACT and TACT-related offenders.

5.18 A brief, informal conversation held with one highly articulate Islamist-inspired offender in prison demonstrated to me:

- a pronounced antisemitic conspiratorial worldview
- a deep-seated grievance with Western governments and their Arab allies for perceived assaults on Muslim populations and
- a dedication to an Islamic state as a socio-political solution and noble religious ambition

Unpicking such committed ideological beliefs is a formidable task for even the most specialised intervention providers.

5.19 There is further challenge where high-risk offenders refuse state-funded intervention or support.

5.20 The skills required for a provider are difficult to source and I am concerned that recruitment for these positions may pose issues for the Home Office in the future.

5.21 As detailed by one intervention provider in research commissioned for the review, essential qualities for the role include: "Innate rapport-building skills; good communication skills; [a] robust centrist viewpoint; objectiv[ity] and neutrality; [a] strong critical thinker; mentor skills/qualifications; motivational Interview knowledge; behavioural science/non-verbal communication knowledge; [and] a belief in UK democratic process and legal framework…"

5.22 Providers who have previously been involved with extremist activity can be particularly effective in establishing a relationship with the individual referred, providing an authentic voice and demonstrable pathway out of extremism. However, for a myriad of reasons, the utmost caution must be exercised when placing former extremists ('formers') in the particularly sensitive role of an intervention provider.

5.23 Beyond formers, Prevent senior leadership informed me that some intervention providers "may [currently] be extremists" and that, while not "inclined to[ward] terrorism", the "value"

that they can provide and their "credibility" with Prevent referees should be acknowledged.

5.24 I disagree with this approach. Introducing referees to those who hold authoritarian, fascistic or conspiratorial worldviews risks further cementing individuals' current grievances and increasing their susceptibility towards radicalisation and other types of non-terrorist crime in the long-term. I have viewed no evidence to suggest that engagement between extremists who hold violent ambitions, and those that do not, has a pacifying effect on the former.

5.25 I acknowledge that recruitment of intervention providers is a challenging task, especially recruiting intervention providers who have entirely disengaged from extremist ideology. However, I have seen during this review that it is possible.

5.26 From the documents I requested, it is clear that the recruitment process for providers is thorough and robust, requiring several personal written statements and corroboration from multiple parties. A 'precautionary' approach is well-embedded within enrolment.

5.27 I do however recommend an additional layer of due diligence that includes an assessment of social media outputs (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube etc.) and other public platforms to further ensure the authenticity of views presented throughout the recruitment process.

The case of Usman Khan

Usman Khan was sentenced in 2012 to indeterminate detention for public protection with a minimum jail term of eight years, having pleaded guilty to preparing terrorist attacks.

These included planning to set up a terrorist training camp in Pakistan. He was associated with the al-Qa'ida-inspired network which was planning to attack the Houses of Parliament, the US Embassy, synagogues and the London Stock Exchange.

In October 2012, Khan asked to attend a de-radicalisation course, writing from incarceration that he wanted to prove he is "much more mature" and intends to live life "as a good Muslim and also a good citizen of Britain".[121]

The Court of Appeal quashed his sentence in 2013, and replaced it with a 16-year fixed term of which Khan would serve a mandatory eight years in jail.

[121] Tom Harper, Jon Ungoed-Thomas and Caroline Wheeler, 'London Bridge Attack: poster boy for rehabilitation. And killer', The Times, 1 December 2019, available at: https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/london-bridge-attack-poster-boy-for-rehabilitation-and-killer-wx9blb6n6

In custody, Khan was considered a 'high risk' inmate. According to the Fishmongers' Hall Inquest, "[i]ntelligence reports consistently showed him to be a leading extremist figure, involved in bullying, violence, radicalising others and serious disruption".[122]

He associated with convicted terrorists, including later HMP Whitemoor attacker Brusthom Ziamani.[123] He also participated in:

- the Healthy Identity Intervention Programme
- the Prevent Strategy's Desistance and Disengagement Programme – through which he was provided a theological and practical mentor[124]
- Cambridge University's Learning Together programme, from November 2017 – although Khan did no actual work on this scheme

Reports on Khan's behaviour throughout his incarceration varied. Prison imams had stated that his progress exceeded their expectations and he appeared to be positively engaging with staff. However, one prison psychologist expressed concern that Khan is "able to perform in different environments and with different people when he needs to impress".[125] The Extremism Risk Guidelines (ERG 22+) assessment report concluded that his "intent for and engagement with extremism remained strong".[126]

These concerns were echoed in a subsequent probation assessment. In late 2018, Khan expressed intent to commit an attack after release, but this information was not communicated at the time to the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements panel addressing his case.[127]

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[122] HH Judge Lucraft KC, 'Inquests Arising From the Deaths in the Fishmongers' Hall Terror Attack | Regulation 28 Report on Action to Prevent Future Deaths', Judiciary.uk, 3 November 2021, available at: https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Fishmongers-Hall-Inquests-Prevention-of-future-deaths-report-2021-0362_Published-by-Chief-Coroner.pdf

[123] Official transcript of the Fishmongers' Hall Inquests [Day 11, 27 April 2021], available at: https://fishmongershallinquests.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/FHI-Day-11-27-April-2021-FINAL.pdf

[124] 'London Bridge: Usman Khan completed untested rehabilitation scheme', BBC News, 4 December 2019, available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-50653191

[125] Peter Clarke CVO OBE QPM, 'Fishmongers' Hall: A Preventable Tragedy', 28 May 2021, Policy Exchange', available at: https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Fishmongers%E2%80%99-Hall-A-Preventable-Tragedy.pdf

[126] HH Judge Lucraft KC, 'Inquests Arising From The Deaths In The Fishmongers' Hall Terror Attack | Regulation 28 Report on Action to Prevent Future Deaths', Judiciary.UK, 3 November 2021, available at: https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Fishmongers-Hall-Inquests-Prevention-of-future-deaths-report-2021-0362_Published-by-Chief-Coroner.pdf

[127] 'Regulation 28 Report on Action to Prevent Future Deaths – 3 November 2021', available at: https://fishmongershallinquests.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Fishmongers_-Hall-Inquests-PFD-Report-Final.pdf

Khan was released from prison in December 2018, placed under investigation by the security services and West Midlands Police and subject to licence conditions to which he appeared compliant.

He attended a Learning Together event at HMP Whitemoor in June 2019 accompanied by Prevent officers. No suspicious significant activity was noted during this period.

DDP-commissioned mentorship ceased, Khan remained unemployed and reportedly became socially isolated.[128] A visit from two Prevent officers in November 2019 to take photographs of his DVDs and video games raised some concern, due to Khan's upset reaction and apparent belief it was an invasion of privacy.[129]

On 29 November 2019, Khan was permitted to attend a Learning Together anniversary event at Fishmongers' Hall. He was considered to be one of Learning Together's successful cases and was allowed to travel to the event unaccompanied, on public transport.

He arrived with concealed knives and an imitation suicide belt. He murdered the two young charity workers who had worked hardest to help him and injured three others in a stabbing attack.

He was tackled by members of the public, including an ex-offender at the conference. The incident ended on London Bridge where Khan was fatally shot by armed police. A toxicology analysis carried out after his death revealed that he had taken cocaine "relatively shortly" before he mounted his catastrophic attack.[130]

Ideologically driven offenders: optimism bias/deceptive compliance

5.28 In light of Usman Khan's attack, questions remain around whether a precautionary policy is being applied alongside rehabilitative work.

In light of Usman Khan's attack, questions remain around whether a precautionary policy is being applied alongside rehabilitative work.

[128] HH Judge Lucraft KC, 'Inquests Arising From The Deaths In The Fishmongers' Hall Terror Attack | Regulation 28 Report on Action to Prevent Future Deaths', Judiciary.UK, 3 November 2021, available at: https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Fishmongers-Hall-Inquests-Prevention-of-future-deaths-report-2021-0362_Published-by-Chief-Coroner.pdf

[129] Ibid

[130] Ibid

5.29 That is not to say that those convicted of terrorist offences have no prospect of redemption, but that authorities should be more aware of the danger posed by strongly ideologically driven offenders, and how this can differ from other types of offending.[131]

5.30 It is worth, in light of this, highlighting a specific section of the Fishmongers' Hall Inquest, in full:

"In the case of Usman Khan, there are numerous examples of him being dishonest to his probation officers, especially when speaking about his offending behaviour and his time in prison."

"For instance, when speaking about his offending, he claimed on many occasions to have been intending to set up a mosque or a genuine religious school, and on another occasion that he had only intended to have weapons there for self-defence."

"These statements were squarely at odds with the express basis of his guilty pleas. When speaking about his time in prison, he claimed to have stood up to and challenged extremists, when in fact he had remained a leading radicalising influence in the various prisons. The offender manager attached very little weight to these apparent instances of dishonesty, while the CTPO (Counter Terrorism Police Officer) involved in the case suggested in his evidence that they were unimportant. The facts of this case show the value of being alert to instances of significant dishonesty in self-presentation by terrorist offenders. I am aware that similar instances of dishonesty were seen in the case of the Streatham Hill attacker, Sudesh Amman."

"A related concern is that too much weight may be placed by those managing an extremist offender on purely passive 'compliance' (i.e. the person not actually breaching licence conditions or committing criminal offences)."

"The risk posed by such offenders, as recognised explicitly by the prison authorities is that of 'deceptive compliance'. The forensic psychologist who assessed Usman Khan differentiated between an absence of poor behaviour and evidence of positive behaviour. By contrast, those in the NPS (National Probation Service) responsible for managing Usman Khan and those in the Prevent team placed much reliance on Usman Khan's self-presentation and his 'compliance'. This case provides a powerful example of an extremist offender remaining apparently compliant with licence conditions for a year before staging a murderous attack."

Fishmongers' Hall Inquests – Regulation 28 Report on Action To Prevent Future Deaths [83–6]

[131] Simon Cottee, 'Liberal professor's deadly delusions about curing terrorists', Foreign Policy, 4 December 2019, available at: https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/12/04/london-bridge-attack-liberal-professors-deadly-delusions-about-curing-terrorists/

5.31 Of the report's 22 recommendations, the coroner raised the following:

"The facts of this case give rise to concern that probation officers may give insufficient regard to instances of dishonesty in self-presentation by extremist offenders. Consideration should be given to having this aspect of assessment emphasised in training of offender managers."

"Based on the facts of this case, there is cause for concern that probation officers may attach excessive weight in their management of extremist offenders to 'compliance' (i.e. absence of evidence of breach of licence conditions and polite behaviour). Consideration should be given to training and guidance warning offender managers about placing too much reliance on this feature."

5.32 I agree with these recommendations.

5.33 Further, I am aware that a recent policy paper claimed there is growing evidence across Europe that terrorist prisoners are successfully deceiving professionals concerned with their rehabilitation.[132] The authors caution that disguised compliance remains ill-understood, mere participation with therapeutic programmes is too often seen as an indication of progress towards disengagement with terrorist ideologies, and that frontline practitioners are poorly equipped and vulnerable to manipulation.[133]

5.34 Such concerns are echoed in evidence submitted to this review, suggesting that there is an 'optimism bias' towards rehabilitation efforts in the prison estate.

5.35 Disguised compliance does not remain an issue just limited to offenders. The issue was raised during a police and social services review following the attack at Parsons Green perpetrated by a Channel participant.[134]

5.36 I believe that training must be strengthened as to how practitioners can best identify this phenomenon.

Wider Prevent work in prisons and probation

5.37 Key findings from a review into Islamist extremism in prisons, probation and youth justice commissioned by the Secretary of State for Justice in 2015 (henceforth, 'the Acheson

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[132] Ian Acheson and Amanda Paul, 'Hiding in plain sight? Disguised compliance by terrorist offenders', European Policy Centre, Counter Extremism Project, available at: https://www.epc.eu/content/PDF/2021/Disguised_compliance_by_terrorist_offenders.pdf

[133] Ibid

[134] Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament, 'The 2017 Attacks: What needs to change?', 22 November 2018, available at: https://isc.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/20181122_HC1694_The2017Attacks_WhatNeedsToChange_Accessible.pdf

review') indicated that the Islamist threat within the prison estate manifests in the following (non-exhaustive) ways:

- Muslim gang culture and the consequent violence, drug trafficking and criminality inspired or directed by these groups
- TACT offenders advocating support for Islamic State and threats against staff and other prisoners
- charismatic Islamic extremist prisoners acting as self-styled 'emirs' and exerting a controlling and radicalising influence on the wider Muslim prison population
- aggressive encouragement of conversions to Islam
- unsupervised collective worship, sometimes at Friday Prayers including pressure on supervising staff to leave the prayer room
- attempts by Islamic extremist prisoners to engineer segregation by landing, by wing, or even by prison
- attempts to prevent staff searches by claiming dress is religious
- books and educational materials promoting extremist literature available in chaplaincy libraries or held by individual prisoners
- intimidation of prison Imams
- exploitation of staff fears of being labelled racist
- abuse of 'Rule 39' (requiring that a prisoner's correspondence with the courts and their legal adviser may only be opened, stopped or read in specific circumstances)[135]

5.38 Since the Acheson review, there has been a large amount of activity, both in regard to subsequent independent reviews (most recently by Jonathan Hall KC), and MOJ's internal response via their Counter Terrorism 'Step Up' Programme. In a desire to avoid unnecessary duplication, in this short section I will reflect on policy areas specific to Prevent.

5.39 I am conscious that prison officers are attempting to maintain order in an extremely challenging environment, with serious issues involving resources, staffing and staff retention rates. This has a severe knock-on effect for the retention of institutional expertise.[136]

[135] Ian Acheson, 'Summary of the main findings of the review of Islamist extremism in prisons, probation and youth justice', August 2016, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/547032/acheson-review-summary-aug-2016.pdf

[136] Q98 Oral evidence to the Public Accounts Committee, 9 June 2020, available at: https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/593/pdf/

5.40 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.

5.41 I appreciate it is often difficult, particularly in high-pressure circumstances, to distinguish between terrorist-related and other types of criminal activity. This is also the case regarding distinguishing between those who have attached themselves to extremist prisoners for tactical and temporary purposes, and those with strongly held ideological motivations who pose a risk outside of the prison estate.

5.42 I am particularly concerned that offenders who are influential and may be radicalising others can be difficult to identify and might appear cordial and compliant.

5.43 In one recent incident in France, a convicted Islamist extremist who was sentenced to 28 years for the attempted murder of two prison officers claimed that he had manipulated the officers by appearing approachable and "chatty".[137] In December 2021, it was reported that a convicted terrorist in Australia was charged with an Islamic State-inspired assault on an inmate after feigning progress with a prison 'de-radicalisation program'.[138] Here in the UK, following a hearing at the Old Bailey court, media outlets reported that two days prior to the terrorist attack in HMP Whitemoor, a prison psychologist considered awarding one of the assailants with a 'certificate of achievement'[139] (although one was not in fact issued).

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[137] Charles Hymas, 'Islamist terrorists taking psychology courses to convince prison bosses they are deradicalised', The Telegraph, 8 November 2021, available at: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2021/11/08/islamist-terrorists-taking-psychology-courses-convince-prison/

[138] Karen Sweeney, '"Tiny Terrorist" faked making progress in jail's deradicalisation program so she could secretly plan another ISIS-inspired attack behind bars', Daily Mail, 3 December 2021, available at: https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10269919/Tiny-Terrorist-pretended-jails-deradicalisation-program-worked-plan-attack.html

[139] Daniel De Simone, 'Whitemoor prison terrorist attackers "known to be dangerous"', BBC News, 7 October 2020, available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-54457605; Daniel D Simone (@DdesimoneDaniel), Twitter, 22 September 2020, available at: https://twitter.com/DdesimoneDaniel/status/1308437652195155973?s=20; Ian Acheson and Amanda Paul, 'Hiding in plain sight? Disguised compliance by terrorist offenders', European Policy Centre, Counter Extremism Project, available at: https://www.epc.eu/content/PDF/2021/Disguised_compliance_by_terrorist_offenders.pdf

Case Study: HMP Whitemoor attack (2020)

On 9 January 2020, Brusthom Ziamani and Baz Macaulay Hockton attempted to murder a prison officer at HMP Whitemoor.

Both Ziamani and Hockton were inmates. The attack was carefully planned and executed using a number of makeshift weapons constructed from the limited materials available to the two men, including a homemade shank, lumps of twisted metal with fabric-covered grips and two makeshift metal stabbing implements.[140]

The prisoners were found to be motivated by Islamist ideology. They both wore imitation suicide belts and writings supportive of Islamist extremism were recovered from the property of both men.[141] Ziamani carried with him during the attack a handwritten letter setting out his expectation of immediate martyrdom and demonstrating a strong belief in violent jihad.[142]

At the time of the attack, Ziamani was servicing a 19-year sentence for a 2014 plot to behead a soldier, inspired by the 2013 murder of Fusilier Lee Rigby.[143]

Prior to his original sentence, Ziamani had associated with members of proscribed terrorist organisation Al-Muhajiroun.[144] Hockton, who converted to Islam while incarcerated, was serving a 12-year prison term for a stabbing attack.[145]

[140] Martin Evans, 'Two prisoners wearing fake suicide belts stabbed guard in "terrorist attack", court hears', The Telegraph, 22 September 2020, available at: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/09/22/two-prisoners-wearing-fake-suicide-belts-stabbed-guard-terrorist/

[141] 'R V (1) Brusthom Ziamani (2) Baz Macaulay Hockton Sentencing Remarks [In The Central Criminal Court]', Judiciary.UK, 9 October 2020, available at: https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Ziamani-v-Brusthom-sentencing-remarks.pdf

[142] 'HMP Whitemoor inmates "wore fake suicide belts in officer attack", 22 September 2020, BBC News, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cambridgeshire-54251086

[143] 'Whitemoor prison terror attack inmates handed life terms', BBC News, 8 October 2020, available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cambridgeshire-54462241

[144] 'Brusthom Ziamani wanted to "fit in" with extremist group', BBC News, 12 February 2015, available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-31441351

[145] 'Whitemoor prison terror attack inmates handed life terms', BBC News, 8 October 2020, available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cambridgeshire-54462241

Hockton had previously committed a series of unprovoked violence and knife attacks.[146] He is believed to have come 'under the influence' of Ziamani in prison.[147] An intelligence report noted a close association between the pair.[148] In court, Ziamani claimed that he had transcribed extremist material for Hockton.[149]

This incident was the first terrorist attack to occur inside a British jail.[150]

Extremism in prisons: training and support for staff

5.44 In 2020, the Ministry of Justice stated that over 29,000 prison officers had received extremism related training.[151] However, it became clear during the review that this training was frequently cancelled due to staff and resource shortages.

5.45 I was further told that there have been delays to staff beginning Prevent training and to extremist prisoners beginning rehabilitative programmes. These delays are attributed to staffing and resourcing issues and compounded by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

5.46 I received evidence that additional support, such as a further Prison Prevent Lead for each High Security Estate, an embedded Prison Prevent Lead in each Long Term Category B prison, regular mandatory practical and awareness training, and more accessible support for staff when approaching race or religious issues, would demonstrably strengthen the institutional response to radicalisation and terrorism risk.

5.47 A 2020 parliamentary report asserted that: "prisoners and prison staff have been forced to bear the human cost of the maintenance backlogs, lack of capacity and poor-quality services that have been created as a result. Prisoner assaults on staff have increased by 100% between 2015–2019, with one assault now taking place every hour".[152] In such an

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[146] 'Whitemoor prison terrorist attackers "known to be dangerous", BBC News, 7 October 2020, available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-54457605

[147] Ibid

[148] Ibid

[149] Ibid

[150] Ibid

[151] Lizzie Dearden, 'Review of security around terrorist prisoners after first Isis-inspired attack in UK jail', The Independent, 20 October 2020, available at: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/terror-attacks-uk-prisons-isis-hmp-whitemoor-murder-jail-security-b1012846.html

[152] 'Improving the prison estate | Fifteenth Report of Session 2019-21 | House of Commons Public Accounts Committee', Parliament.uk', 7 September 2020, available at: https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/2486/documents/24751/default/

environment, prison officers may not be able to prioritise long-term radicalisation concerns.

5.48 Adequate staffing, subject-matter expertise and resources are integral for this purpose. It requires a high level of institutional intelligence and training in the management and motivations of terrorist prisoners to successfully map prison extremist networks.

Managing the risk: separation centres

5.49 One of the most important changes introduced following the Acheson review was HMPPS' introduction of separate units within the high security estate to segregate influential offenders (who pose a radicalising risk to others) from the wider prisoner population.

5.50 Separation centres can only be used once all other methods to curtail radicalising behaviour have been attempted.

5.51 I am supportive of the use of separation centres where clearly needed, and question as to whether sufficient numbers of those who pose a dangerous radicalisation risk are being housed in such units.

5.52 It is clear that radicalisation within the prison estate by other offenders remains a persistent challenge. The Whitemoor attack, in particular, illustrates the danger influential prisoners such as Brusthom Ziamani can pose. Furthermore, concerns were raised to me about the extremist influence of certain individuals in Belmarsh Prison, suggesting that greater use of separation centres may be required.

It is clear that radicalisation within the prison estate by other offenders remains a persistent challenge.

5.53 I heard evidence from staff that the security services would recommend referrals to separation centres, although intelligence-sharing was impacted by the security protocols in place.

Managing the risk: MAPPA

5.54 Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) are in place for the management of risks posed by TACT and TACT-related offenders.[153] Following the Fishmongers' Hall attack, MAPPA arrangements for individuals of terrorism concern were subject to review

[153] MAPPA also covers violent and sexual offenders living in the community.

by the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation. It is beyond the scope of this review to comment in-depth about these arrangements.

5.55 From a wider Prevent perspective, it is my understanding that local authority Prevent co-ordinators do not always attend MAPPA meetings, including those discussing offenders of terrorism concern due to be released. This, I believe, is a missed opportunity for information sharing between prison, probation, police and local authority Prevent partners during this transition.

5.56 Practitioners who play a key role in delivering Prevent in the community – including the assessment of provincial threats and where to direct resources – ought to be given greater awareness about the activities, networks and licence conditions of high-risk offenders in their locality.

6. Strengthening Prevent

Statutory Prevent Duty

6.1 The Statutory Prevent Duty (henceforth 'the duty') is one of the most important aspects of Prevent. It helps ensure that government departments and public services consider radicalisation as a risk in their existing processes, that they facilitate engagement with partners, and that counter-radicalisation measures are implemented on the ground.

6.2 The duty was made a legal requirement in the 2015 Counter-Terrorism and Security Act. That act mandates that "a specified authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism".[154] These authorities are listed as: local government, criminal justice (such as prison governors), education and childcare (such as school proprietors), health and social care (for example, an NHS trust), and the police.

6.3 During this review, a number of the agencies described the duty as a "valued part of safeguarding" and useful in ensuring authorities take a "proactive" approach. Practitioners across Britain informed me that the duty has been successful in bringing multi-agency partners to work together on Channel cases, and ensuring partners have an awareness of Channel's aims. I was told that prior to being placed on a statutory footing, engagement was "inconsistent and sporadic" but since has driven "a substantial increase in partner engagement and involvement".

6.4 Nevertheless, I have uncovered some inconsistencies in how the duty is upheld at the local level when insufficient resources or personnel are allocated. It also appears to me that certain sectors do more to promote the duty than others.

Monitoring and compliance

6.5 The revised Prevent duty guidance provides an outline for how oversight and inspection is allocated across the various statutory sectors.[155]

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[154] 'Collection | Counter-Terrorism and Security Act', Home Office, 26 November 2014, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/counter-terrorism-and-security-bill

[155] 'Statutory guidance | Revised Prevent duty guidance: for England and Wales', 1 April 2021, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance/revised-prevent-duty-guidance-for-england-and-wales

6.6 For example, under the existing model, local government is monitored and overseen directly by the Home Office, education and childcare sectors are overseen by Ofsted, the police by HM Inspector of Constabulary, and the criminal justice agencies are overseen and monitored internally.

6.7 This sector specific approach to monitoring makes it hard to provide a comprehensive approach to oversight that would be provided by a single body responsible for compliance.[156] None of these bodies is specifically focussed on Prevent, nor can they all always be expected to have necessary levels of expertise in matters of counter-radicalisation.

6.8 I am not reassured that agencies have the resources adequately to ensure proper compliance with the duty alongside the many other functions that they monitor. As I will later outline, there needs to be a simple, realistic, and proportionate means by which compliance can be enforced and upheld, should evidence arise that an institution legally bound by the duty is failing to adhere to the statutory requirements.

6.9 The evidence suggests there is a strong case for extending the Prevent Duty to further public sector organisations. During the course of this review, a number were proposed as fitting subjects. Several Prevent practitioners mentioned Jobcentre Plus, a government agency under the Department for Work and Pensions. It was suggested that job centres are especially likely to engage with individuals who might have increased susceptibility to radicalisation. According to one comprehensive study, 38% of those who committed 'Islamism-related offenses' between 1998 and 2015 were unemployed at the time of their offense or attack.[157] As such individuals may not have any other touchpoint with the state, placing statutory requirements on job centres should ensure that some of these potentially susceptible people do not fall between the gaps.

The evidence suggests there is a strong case for extending the Prevent Duty to further public sector organisations.

[156] Ibid

[157] Hannah Stuart, 'Islamist Terrorism: Analysis of Offences and Attacks in the UK (1998-2015)', available at: http://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Islamist-Terrorism-preview-1.pdf

6.10 The other area where there is a strong case for introducing the Prevent Duty is within UK immigration and asylum. In 2017,[158] 2018,[159] 2020,[160] and 2021[161] Britain suffered Islamist terrorist attacks committed by individuals who had come to this country in recent years and sought or were granted asylum. There is good reason to think that those who have travelled from conflict zones, or from parts of the world where extremist ideologies have a strong presence, are more likely to be susceptible to radicalisation. This can be the case especially if they are deeply disappointed by their reception in the UK. It is important, however, that Prevent in this sector does not only apply to individuals from conflict areas, but that staff are well trained to be aware of radicalisation risks, regardless of where in the world people may come from.

The case of Ahmed Hassan

In 2015, Iraqi national Ahmed Hassan entered the UK illegally via Calais.[162] He falsely claimed to be 16 years old, was treated as an Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child, and taken into the care of social services in Surrey. In 2016, he told Home Office officials that he had spent three months at an Islamic State training camp, being religiously indoctrinated and groomed to kill.[163] Surrey County Council conducted a risk assessment and referred Hassan to Counter Terrorism Policing South England Prevent where he was accepted onto Channel.[164]

[158] 'Parsons Green Tube bombing: Teenager Ahmed Hassan jailed for life', BBC News, 23 March 2018, available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-43519540

[159] 'Westminster car crash driver Salih Khater jailed for life', BBC News, 14 October 2019, available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-50044250

[160] 'Reading stabbings: Man motivated by "religious jihad"', BBC News, 5 January 2021, available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-berkshire-55545669

[161] 'Liverpool bomb: Church not aware of converts abusing asylum system', BBC News, 17 November 2021, available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-59317097

[162] 'The Queen v Ahmed Hassan | Sentencing Remarks of the Hon. Mr Justice Haddon-Cave | In the Central Criminal Court', Judiciary.UK, 23 March 2018, available at: https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/r-vhassan-sentencing.pdf

[163] Ibid

[164] Sir Philip Rutnam KCB [Permanent Secretary], 'Letter to Chair of the Home Affairs Select Committee Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP', Home Office, 18 June 2018, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/717021/Parsons_Green_-_Letter_to_HASC_Chair_from_Home_Office_Permanent_Secretary_.pdf

In his March 2016 asylum application, Hassan stated that Islamic State talked to him about his duty to fight against non-believers and forced him to watch executions. In May 2016, material containing images of burning flames and apparent Arabic writing was discovered in Hassan's bedroom, which was accepted by practitioners as related to daily prayer. In his second asylum interview (June 2016), Hassan claimed his family had been threatened in Iraq and he was exposed to extreme violence.

In August 2016, Hassan was seen by his volunteer mentor receiving a message stating "IS has accepted your donation". He complained to the mentor that Britain was responsible for his father's death and it was his "duty" to hate the country that "continues to bomb my people on a daily basis".[165]

Nine formal Channel panels discussed Hassan's case between June 2016 and September 2017.[166] His risk assessment remained unchanged throughout that period. Hassan was provided with foster care, mental health provision, and began an education programme at college.

Between September 2016 and June 2017, it is understood that:

- Hassan expressed concern that others considered him a terrorist. In response, "supportive activities [were] pursued by way of kickboxing as a diversion activity"
- at his children's home (prior to receiving foster care), staff members saw Hassan watching an Islamic State video and listening to violent nasheeds[167]
- Hassan wrote "I'm really angry with years and years of my people being killed for oil" on a note planner
- Hassan showed signs of frustration, anger and guilt concerning the situation in Syria and family members present there
- a friend of Hassan was killed in Baghdad

Hassan was reported missing from his foster home three times in 2017. These incidents, alongside Hassan's mental health status (PTSD concerns) and stalled asylum status, were later deemed to have been insufficiently addressed by Channel. An intervention provider was not sought, as Channel placed "greater emphasis on other forms of support, including provision of constructive activities".

[165] 'The Queen v Ahmed Hassan | Sentencing Remarks of the Hon. Mr Justice Haddon-Cave | In the Central Criminal Court', Judiciary.UK, 23 March 2018, available at: https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/r-vhassan-sentencing.pdf

[166] Ibid

[167] Ibid

Hassan was regarded as polite, clever, and well-behaved. His positive progress at college (where he received a 'student of the year' award in July 2017)[168] was the main focus of Channel. No violent ideology was confirmed. The final Channel panel took place on 5 September 2017. The panel was in the process of closing Hassan's case.

On 15 September 2017, Hassan left an IED on an eastbound District Line tube that partially detonated at Parsons Green station. 23 people suffered burn injuries, and a further 28 people were injured in the subsequent panicked stampede. Hassan was arrested the following day "shaking, praying and complaining that [his] rucksack should not be placed on the ground because it had the Qur'an in it".[169] He was charged with attempted multiple murder as an act of terrorist motivation. Hassan is believed to have planned his attack from mid-August 2017.

In court, Justice Haddon-Cave concluded that Hassan was driven and motivated by the following: (1) a mind-set of Islamic State extremism, (2) a deep-seated hatred of Britain, (3) a desire for revenge against Britain and America whom he blamed for his father's death in Iraq, and (4) anger at the continued bombing of Iraq by Western Coalition forces. Justice Haddon-Cave concluded there was no evidence Hassan was suffering from a "mental illness or disability" at the time of planning and committing the attack. In March 2018, Hassan was sentenced to life imprisonment with a minimum term of 34 years.[170]

In May 2020, Hassan was accused of assaulting a prison officer in HMP Belmarsh, alongside Manchester Arena terrorist Hashem Abedi and a third inmate, Muhammed Saeed. The officer received a laceration to his scalp and a blow to his ear causing permanent sensory loss. At a court hearing in April 2021, Hassan told the Chief Magistrate "I want you to know that I hate you very much because you are a judge, judging by other than the law of Allah," and: "You will be destined for hellfire unless you repent and submit yourself to the law of Allah."[171] He pleaded not guilty. Hassan and his two co-accused were convicted of attacking the prison officer in February 2022.[172]

[168] Ibid

[169] Ibid

[170] Ibid

[171] 'Manchester Arena bomber's brother calls prison guard "filthy pig"', BBC News, 8 April 2021, available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-56681496

[172] 'Three terrorists convicted of attacking prison officer', Crown Prosecution Service, 22 February 2022, available at: https://www.cps.gov.uk/london-south/news/three-terrorists-convicted-attacking-prison-officer

Updating key principles

6.11 During the course of this review, I also considered ways in which the Prevent duty guidance could be strengthened to be brought into line with the overall ethos of this report's findings.

6.12 When it comes to Prevent delivery, Homeland Security, RICU and CTP should be guided at a strategic leadership level by a Security Threat Check that informs all decision-making around Prevent. The strategic guiding principles should be:

- is this action mindful of the UK's current terrorism and extremism threat picture?
- is this action proportionate when placed against the UK's current terrorism and extremism threat picture?
- is this action likely to reduce the threat of terrorism or terrorist-adjacent narratives?

Prevent work should flow downwards from these principles and I would recommend this is reflected in the Prevent duty guidance.

Sector specific guidance

Further education and higher education

6.13 The 2011 Prevent review concluded that there was "unambiguous evidence" to indicate that extremist organisations target universities and colleges for the purpose of radicalisation and recruitment. The 2011 review identified three cohorts of students who had gone on to commit terrorism offences: those who were committed to terrorism before they began their university courses, those who were radicalised while they studied at university, and those who were attracted to and influenced by extremist ideology while at university and then engaged in terrorism-related activity after they had left.[173]

6.14 I did not see any evidence to suggest that these dangers have diminished. A study from 2017 demonstrated that over a quarter (26%) of those who committed 'Islamism-related offenses' in the UK had some form of higher education (HE).[174] Moreover, the 2011 review pre-dated the rise of Islamic State, which saw clusters of British students who had attended UK HE and/or further education (FE) institutions join the group's self-proclaimed 'Caliphate' in Syria.

[173] 'Prevent Strategy', GOV.UK, June 2011, pages 72-73, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf

[174] Hannah Stuart, 'Islamist Terrorism: Analysis of Offences and Attacks in the UK (1998-2015)', available at: http://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Islamist-Terrorism-preview-1.pdf

6.15 There are several high-profile cases of recent terrorist attacks perpetrated by students or former students in Britain. They include Mohammed Emwazi, who attended the University of Westminster, the Manchester Arena bomber Salman Abedi, who was at the University of Salford, the Streatham attacker Sudesh Amman who attended the College of North West London and the Parsons Green bomber Ahmed Hassan, who enrolled at Brooklands College in Surrey.[175] Manchester Arena bomber Salman Abedi's alma mater, the University of Salford, drew particular criticism from the press as its student union had fervently campaigned to abolish Prevent.[176]

Further education and higher education staff training

6.16 These issues raise concern about the mitigation of radicalisation risk at FE and HE institutions. Regarding Prevent training, duty guidance states that compliance requires institutions to demonstrate that they are "willing to undertake Prevent awareness training and other training that could help the relevant staff prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and challenge extremist ideas which risk drawing people into terrorism".[177]

6.17 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. The DfE suggested it should be for individual HE organisations to create a training plan to identify key and relevant staff groups and appropriate training for different staff cohorts. However, I heard evidence from Universities UK that Prevent training was primarily provided to administrative staff.

6.18 In my view, it should be made clearer that 'relevant' staff covers:

- staff with student-facing responsibilities who undertake existing safeguarding training, including lecturers
- staff authorising on-campus events and conducting due diligence, for them to be able to identify external speaker risk, and the changing methodologies used by extremists to target student audiences

[175] David Connett, 'British student who fled to join Isis dies while in jail in Syria'', The Guardian, 11 July 2020, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/11/british-student-joined-isis-dies-in-jail-in-syria

[176] Eleanor Harding and Katherine Faulkner, 'Students at bomber's university tried to sabotage Prevent anti-terror scheme because it "demonises Muslims"', Daily Mail, 25 May 2017, available at: https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4539656/Bomber-s-university-tried-bar-anti-terror-scheme.html

[177] 'Statutory guidance | Prevent duty guidance : for higher education institutions in England and Wales', GOV.UK, Updated 1 April 2021, available at : https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance/prevent-duty-guidance-for-higher-education-institutions-in-england-and-wales

Higher education: compliance

6.19 Compliance of relevant higher education bodies is monitored by the Office for Students (OfS)[178] and further education and skills providers are monitored by Ofsted.[179] Student unions are charitable bodies and are not subject to the duty.

6.20 I was pleased to see recent qualitative research commissioned by the DfE found positive work in the sector. This includes:

- Prevent referrals are only made where there is clear evidence of a serious concern relating to extremist activity,
- most Prevent leads will collaborate with their FE and HE co-ordinator when deciding whether to make a referral, valuing their advice and guidance,
- providers highlighting the importance of building positive relationships with their local authority and police force who provide "essential contextual information" on local and national Prevent issues

6.21 However, this research did highlight key areas of concern. This included the conclusion that, in particular, HE providers are less likely to identify a radicalisation concern than a wider safeguarding issue, and that some staff held negative perceptions of Prevent – such as that it is divisive, unfairly stigmatises Muslims and is counter-productive – leading to difficulties about sharing radicalisation concerns.

6.22 I believe that these factors are contributing to the strikingly low number of Prevent referrals from HE. For example, between August 2016 and July 2017, 24 cases from

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[178] Prior to this, relevant higher education bodies compliance with the Prevent statutory duty was monitored by the now dissolved Higher Education Funding Council of England.

[179] According to the OfS, to comply with the Prevent Duty, relevant higher education bodies need to:

- assess the risks associated with Prevent and draw up a plan to mitigate these
- have effective welfare support systems, linking to DfE Prevent co-ordinators, local authorities or the police if necessary
- have systems for assessing and mitigating risks around external speakers and events on campus, while maintaining the existing duty to promote freedom of speech
- arrange ongoing Prevent training for relevant staff
- have an IT usage policy, and where appropriate a research policy, which cover the Prevent duty
- engage with students and ensure that students' unions and societies are aware of policies concerning activities on campus. See: Home Office, 'Prevent duty guidance: for higher education institutions in England and Wales', 01 April 2021, available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance/prevent-duty-guidance-for-higher-education-institutions-in-england-and-wales

HE providers were referred to Channel, a number OfS state is "broadly consistent" with the previous years' statistics.[180]

6.23 It should be noted that the OfS have annually reported that, according to their assessment framework, the overwhelming majority of providers are adhering to their statutory obligations. However, evidence provided to me over the course of the review indicated that this might not be the case in practice.

6.24 Testimony submitted to me from an academic at an HE institution suggested that the duty was "not being implemented at all effectively". The respondent said: "[t]he requirement for staff to undergo Prevent training is directly opposed by the academic union, UCU. This opposition has broad support from staff themselves … The result is that the Prevent Duty in universities has only been implemented on paper".

6.25 My call for evidence outlined additional issues related to Prevent in HE. These included 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.

6.26 Many such speakers are relatively unknown, despite having expressed Islamist views.[181] I fear that events advertised with extremists without a public profile are not being subjected to sufficient due diligence checks and risk mitigation by universities.

6.27 Moreover, I heard that third-party resources from political campaign groups had been relied upon in the administration of the duty, such as for training and guidance purposes, and appear to have been used inappropriately.[182]

6.28 I am further concerned that, despite recent improvements to its monitoring framework, the OfS appears to rely principally upon annual reports from HE providers to demonstrate due compliance with Prevent. It would be my strong recommendation that the regulation of the statutory duty within HE places greater weight on independent monitoring and evaluation.

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[180] 'Monitoring of the Prevent duty: 2016-17 progress report and future development' [Reference OfS 2018.27], Office for Students, 11 July 2018, available at: https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/160fe2df-d737-419c-8071-19fa2dab0ee4/ofs2018___27.pdf

[181] Islamist views in this context include speakers who have publicly expressed support for convicted terrorists, supported the establishment of an Islamic caliphate, defended terrorists' use of suicide bombings and promoted violent jihad.

[182] Further, I understand that, alongside concerns of a saturated market of trainers, private/charitable companies have advertised Prevent or Safeguarding training to educational institutions without accreditation.

Higher education: disinformation

6.29 It is clear that anti-Prevent narratives dominate the discourse about Prevent in British universities. As a consequence, I saw evidence that suggested a number of academics who support Prevent and the statutory duty feel unable to express their genuine views.

It is clear that anti-Prevent narratives dominate the discourse about Prevent in British universities.

6.30 Several submissions to my call for evidence raised concern at the extent of disinformation spread at universities. I understand that one campaign to abolish Prevent included a number of activists who exaggerated or misrepresented Prevent cases or advanced false claims about the statutory duty. The campaign also promoted Islamist groups.

6.31 I am particularly concerned that, for both staff and students, widespread and uncontested disinformation at universities:

- fuels fears that the government is targeting minority groups, particularly Muslims
- causes self-censorship amongst minority groups, particularly Muslims
- causes apprehension about making referrals about an individual at risk

Schools

6.32 There are existing requirements placed on schools to "teach a broad and balanced curriculum which promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life".[183] They also have a responsibility to promote community cohesion and the Fundamental British Values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs.

6.33 I found the duty to be well embedded and broadly well understood within this sector, forming an integrated part of safeguarding practices and training. I was encouraged by the ways in which institutions, particularly after the introduction of the duty, absorbed Prevent within existing safeguarding processes and recognised the need to encompass risk of radicalisation alongside forms of exploitation and abuse.

[183] 'Statutory guidance | National curriculum in England: framework for key stages 1 to 4', Department for Education, Updated 2 December 2014, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-framework-for-key-stages-1-to-4/the-national-curriculum-in-england-framework-for-key-stages-1-to-4

6.34 As schools and registered childcare providers look after children, i.e. those considered to have a 'statutory' vulnerability, viewing Prevent through a safeguarding lens is appropriate here.

6.35 I understand the difficulty for frontline staff in identifying radicalisation-related concerns aside from influences and welfare issues that can be particularly pronounced amongst children and young people. However, I saw evidence of good working relationships between schools and Prevent. The DfE's FE/HE leads and Prevent Education Officer network deserve praise for the support given to providers with their delivery of Prevent.

6.36 However, I have seen other evidence suggesting that some frontline staff in schools and colleges require strengthened training on the causes of radicalisation and the ideological nature of terrorism. This issue is particularly relevant following the number of schoolchildren who travelled, or attempted to travel, to Syria to join Islamic State.

6.37 Analysis from the DfE states that in the majority of these cases there was "no prior indication of extremism" yet that also "ideological motivations were important". I am therefore concerned that not all practitioners may be sufficiently adept at recognising how ideological drivers of terrorism present in young people and are missing signs of radicalisation risk.

6.38 Schools, further education and registered childcare providers are not formally monitored for compliance with the duty, which currently falls under the auspices of Ofsted and the DfE who largely take a reactive approach with issues alerted to them.[184] I consider this ambiguity a potential risk for effective Prevent delivery and suggest an independent oversight function to strengthen compliance.

6.39 There is currently no requirement for schools to use the phrase 'Fundamental British Values', and no prescriptive way in which schools must demonstrate their promotion. Some schools choose to teach them, for example, as part of citizenship lessons, and others via extracurricular activities.

6.40 I hosted a round table on this subject with practitioners, policy makers, academics and researchers. There was support for schools promoting Fundamental British Values as a way of cementing a sense of 'belonging' with British society, the opposite of the extremist

[184] I was informed by the DfE that Ofsted do not 'technically' monitor compliance with Prevent, although as part of their safeguarding work check whether "leaders fail to protect learners from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism in accordance with the 'Prevent' duty guidance". The DfE stated that in practice, they are notified by Ofsted where there are FE Providers with concerns around Prevent, and in those cases they notify their FE and HE Prevent co-ordinators to prioritise that setting. However, data on the figures of those such cases are not collected.

notion of feeling 'other'. However there were concerns about linking Fundamental British Values lessons to Prevent, as opposed to a broader citizenship agenda.

6.41 I am very supportive of Fundamental British Values, which are, after all, similar to those of all liberal democracies, and am keen to see their teaching embedded within the school ethos, whether that is via Prevent or another programme without any links to Prevent.

Health

6.42 By the nature of their work, healthcare professionals come into close contact with individuals holding statutory vulnerabilities, including those with mental health difficulties and individuals at risk of abuse. 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.

6.43 Practitioners working on safeguarding within the NHS warned there could be a resistance among healthcare workers to make referrals or share information with Channel, for fear of disclosing confidential information or affecting relationships with patients. I also heard that some confusion exists around patient confidentiality and when it can or should be overruled.

6.44 However, on the overall basis of evidence I have seen, including published research, it appears that Prevent is broadly accepted as part of safeguarding duties in the health sector. For example, the 2019 Prevent Attitudes Survey indicates that 63% of healthcare professionals have a favourable view of Prevent, with 72% viewing the strategy as a safeguarding process against radicalisation.[185]

6.45 The fragmented structure of the healthcare system, with Prevent not applying to GPs, does not help with consistency, but each NHS Trust has its own Prevent lead. At a strategic level, there is good support and guidance available for the duty in healthcare. I was encouraged to see there are regular boards and forums attended by senior staff to ensure that strategic healthcare leaders are aware of the duty and their role.

6.46 One issue to which NHS Prevent must be alert is that of external partnerships with third parties, which has offered a platform to Islamist organisations.

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[185] 'Prevent: Public Knowledge and Interactions | A research report from ICM summarising key findings', ICM Unlimited, August 2019, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/930110/Annex_B_-_Prevent_Survey_findings_report__1_.pdf.

There were, however, issues in the same poll which demonstrated only limited understanding of the Prevent duty, demonstrating the necessity for better training.

6.47 For example, Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND)[186] have used NHS hospitals to publicise their brand, distribute literature and promote their campaigns.[187] MEND have used these platforms to claim that the NHS is one of their partners. The group have been accused by the former National Lead for Counter Terrorism Policing of "fostering grievances and isolation".[188] It is also stridently anti-Prevent.

6.48 The duty applies to the health sector. It is therefore incongruous for the NHS to partner with groups who campaign against Prevent. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities should work with the Health sector on how to manage third party relationships following DLUHC's upcoming strand of work on the issue, which includes

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[186] MEND has a history of partnering with actors of extremism concern. For example, MEND's former Head of Community Engagement Azad Ali lost a libel case against the Daily Mail in the High Court (2010) which had described him as a "hardline Islamic extremist who supports the killing of British and American soldiers in Iraq". Two years prior, Ali had praised Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh and suggested that he should be the leader of a future Islamic caliphate, and written of his admiration for jihadist cleric Anwar al-Awlaki. Ali left MEND to join CAGE in 2017. MEND have defended Ali against accusations of extremism and claim that he has been "repeatedly victimised" by "certain journalists and bloggers. See: 'Judgment of Mr Justice Eady in Ali v Associated Newspapers Ltd', EWHC, 27 January 2010, available at: https://www.casemine.com/judgement/uk/5a8ff72b60d03e7f57ea90f7; Azad Ali, 'Amir al-Mu'mineen', Islamic Forum of Europe, 25 September 2008, available at: http://web.archive.org/web/20081005054141/http://blog.islamicforumeurope.com/?p=89; Azad Ali, 'Ian, the new President and you!', Islamic Forum of Europe, 5 November 2008, available at: http://web.archive.org/web/20110108071214/http://blog.islamicforumeurope.com/2008/11/05/iman-the-new-president-and-you/; MEND, 'A brief response to right-wing media accusations', 3 November 2017, available at: https://www.mend.org.uk/brief-response-right-wing-media-accusations/]

Further, MEND described imam Suliman Gani as a "key member within our South London Working Group" in 2018, and he spoke at their 'Islamophobia Awareness Month' event in November 2020. Gani had previously told a rally for convicted al-Qa'ida terrorist Aafia Siddiqui that support for her was a religious duty. He has also made disparaging comments towards the persecuted Ahmadi Muslim sect, and told worshippers at Tooting Islamic centre to boycott their businesses. See: 'IAM2017 Purley Mosque Open Day', MEND, 25 May 2018, available at: https://www.mend.org.uk/news/iam2017-purley-mosque-open-day/; '#IAM2020 London Launch', MEND, 11 November 2020, available at: https://www.mend.org.uk/iam2020-london-launch/; 'JFAC London Solidarity Rally – Suliman Gani – Aafia Siddiqui Day March 28th 2010', YouTube, 4 April 2010, available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iKf_BvqYcZ0; 'Exclusive: Worshippers told at Tooting Islamic Centre to boycott Ahmadiyya shops', Wimbledon Times, 14 October 2010, available at: https://www.wimbledonguardian.co.uk/news/8451539.worshippers-told-at-tooting-islamic-centre-to-boycott-ahmadiyya-shops/]

As highlighted in footnote 58, MEND's founding CEO Sufyan Ismail has admitted providing support for CAGE.

[187] See for example: 'BLOG: Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust – Causes & Cures Presentation and Exhibition #IAM2021, Islamophobia Awareness Month, 2021, available at: http://web.archive.org/web/20220408102745/https://www.islamophobia-awareness.org/event/blog-sandwell-and-west-birmingham-nhs-trust-causes-cures-presentation-and-exhibition-iam2021/

[188] Policy Exchange, 'The Colin Cramphorn Memorial Lecture by Mark Rowley: Extremism and Terrorism: The need for a whole society response', 26 February 2018, available at: https://policyexchange.org.uk/pxevents/the-colin-cramphorn-memorial-lecture-by-mark-rowley/

guiding principles for external engagement. DHSC have told us that they are aware of this problem. I will return to this subject later on in the report.

Local authorities

6.49 Local authorities are required to establish or use existing multi-agency groups at the local level, work with partners to assess the threat in a particular area, co-ordinate Prevent activities, and have in place arrangements to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding work.[189]

6.50 At present, the Home Office provides additional funding to 42 local authorities to carry out Prevent work. These designated priority areas are where the risk of radicalisation and terrorism is judged to be highest.

6.51 However recent high profile terrorist attacks reveal the reality of individuals who operate across authority boundaries. Cases such as the Streatham High Street attack (February 2020) and the stabbings in Forbury Gardens, Reading (June 2020) involved perpetrators that either resided in, or had spent significant time within, areas which were not designated as priority areas. In addition, 65% of Extreme Right-Wing TACT offenders resided in non-priority funded areas, as did 66% of Extreme Right-Wing Prevent education referrals.

6.52 Non-priority areas are expected to deliver the duty but do not receive funding to do so and support and oversight from Homeland Security Group is limited. In addition to authority funding, the Home Office funds between 70 to 100 CSOs in the designated priority areas. The projects seek to meet any local risks identified by the local authorities and their partner agencies, including Counter Terrorism Policing.

6.53 I was informed about a number of measures that are currently in place to assess whether funding is being used effectively. Performance by local authorities is regularly measured, with these bodies required to report to the Home Office on outcomes from funding. Assessments consider local delivery against a set of key performance indicators which includes risk assessments, the referral process, Channel panels, training, engagement activities, engagement activity, communications, projects, and finance.

Local delivery: concerns

6.54 However in the course of my evidence-gathering, several issues relating to local delivery were raised consistently. The first was a distrust of Prevent nationally. Throughout our engagement, practitioners informed me that communities had trust in Prevent at the local

[189] HM Government, CONTEST The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism, 2018, page 36, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/716907/140618_CCS207_CCS0218929798-1_CONTEST_3.0_WEB.pdf

level but less so on a national scale. In my view, this points towards the misinformation and the damaging promotion of disinformation that exists around Prevent as a whole – and highlights the diligent work of local Prevent leads.

6.55 Moreover, the local delivery of the duty was often hampered by a fear of causing offence. I heard how some practitioners were "unable to express their views openly" regarding Islamism, contributing to a "timidity" in tackling the subject. This was exemplified by an "uncomfortable silence" from much of Prevent in the wake of the teacher Samuel Paty's decapitation in France in 2020 after he had shown his class cartoons of Mohammed.

I agree with this assessment of fear around the free expression of views, and urge strengthened training addresses this concern directly.

6.56 This issue extends beyond Prevent personnel. For example, a security guard who identified Salman Abedi as a suspicious presence at the Manchester Arena in May 2017, shortly before he exploded his rucksack bomb, told the Manchester Arena public inquiry that "I was scared of being wrong and being branded a racist if I got it wrong and would have got into trouble. It made me hesitant."[190] Greater confidence in being able to identify and openly challenge potential Islamist extremists is essential if lives are to be saved, as could have happened at the Manchester Arena.

> **"I was scared of being wrong and being branded a racist if I got it wrong and would have got into trouble. It made me hesitant."**
>
> Security guard, Manchester Arena Inquiry [witness testimony]

6.57 In non-priority areas there was a feeling that a lack of funding was hampering any proactive efforts to identify individuals at risk. In large cities like London, there was a feeling that priority designations were arbitrary, given that people are more prone to work, live and mix across multiple boroughs. This leads me to believe a regionalised Prevent model would allow for a better use of resources.

Local delivery: multi-agency information sharing

6.58 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

[190] 'Security guard avoided Manchester Arena bomber "for fear of being called racist"', The Guardian, 27 October 2020, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/oct/27/security-guard-avoided-manchester-arena-bomber-for-fear-of-being-called-racist

process. Indeed, several professionals highlighted that the duty had been essential in bringing partners to the table where individuals were at-risk.

6.59 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.

6.60 It was clear that the effectiveness of local delivery depended on committed, consistent engagement from all Channel partners, the abilities of individual practitioners, and the broader working relationship between Channel members. The case of the Parsons Green terrorist Ahmed Hassan exemplifies the risks around relevant information not being shared in a case managed by Channel. A review into this incident found "concerning events and behaviour involving AH (such as [him] going missing from home, and ongoing mental health issues) in some instances were not clearly shared."[191] It was subsequently recommended that "relevant mental health practitioners should attend all Channel Panels where mental health concerns have been identified."[192]

Statutory Prevent duty guidance

6.61 The Prevent duty guidance, as well as outlining specific procedures and practices, captures the spirit of Prevent. It is worth restating the duty here: "a specified authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism". The duty guidance might be thought of as serving as a kind of constitution for the Prevent programme as a whole.[193]

6.62 Perceptions of the guidance and support available to public authorities subject to the Prevent duty varies.

6.63 Local authority Prevent coordinators believe that Channel panels have been able to follow the guidance provided and are largely working as envisaged in that guidance. Specific pieces of guidance were also praised by local co-ordinators, with the Prevent

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[191] Sir Philip Rutnam KCB [Permanent Secretary], 'Letter to Chair of the Home Affairs Select Committee Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP', Home Office, 18 June 2018, page 3, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/717021/Parsons_Green_-_Letter_to_HASC_Chair_from_Home_Office_Permanent_Secretary

[192] Sir Philip Rutnam KCB [Permanent Secretary], 'Letter to Chair of the Home Affairs Select Committee Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP', Home Office, 18 June 2018, page 4, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/717021/Parsons_Green_-_Letter_to_HASC_Chair_from_Home_Office_Permanent_Secretary

[193] The National Prevent duty Guidance documents for sectors such as education and Further Education, as well as the main Prevent duty guidance, were rereleased in 2019 and with minor revisions in 2021. Through the call for evidence, it was apparent that there is approval for more recently released guidance, and a sense that there has been a noticeable improvement in both guidance and communication from the Home Office.

duty toolkit and Channel assurance statement highlighted by a co-ordinator as "excellent benchmarking documents". There was also a widespread feeling that guidance and communications from the Home Office had improved "tremendously" in recent years.

6.64 However some Prevent co-ordinators also felt there were limits to the existing guidance, with some warning it was not specific enough to radicalisation, and could apply to safeguarding around other personal issues, such as identity issues or changing friendship groups.[194]

6.65 I saw evidence where guidance was unclear or misguided and heard how it was sometimes misinterpreted. It is not clear under the present system how such misinterpretation of guidance might be identified and corrected, particularly in non-priority local authorities.

6.66 The question of whether there is confidence in the guidance for those running Channel panels is particularly important. For example, I am aware of the complaint that there is a lack of proper guidance on how to interpret whether 'intent' on the part of individuals considered at risk of being drawn into terrorism has been reduced.

6.67 Some of this may come down to inadequate training about how to find, use, and then implement the available guidance. Training and guidance are particularly relevant to one another, and in the case of several public services under the statutory duty, guidance on how training can be accessed appears insufficient.

6.68 It has further been suggested that vague guidance may be causing difficulties with implementing the duty: such as in university settings when decisions are being made about risks from external speakers where there may be complicated concerns about extremism.[195] This may be a product of the fact that there is just one document on certain areas designed to cover different sectors. This led to several submissions in my call for evidence for guidance to be better tailored to relevant sectors.

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[194] For example, see: Mayor of London, 'The London Countering Violent Extremism Programme Report', 2019, page 75, available at: https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/cve_strategy_20_8_19.pdf

[195] House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, 'Radicalisation: the counter-narrative and identifying the tipping point', page 21, available at: https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/commons-committees/home-affairs/Correspondence-17-19/Radicalisation-the-counter-narrative-and-identifying-the-tipping-point-government-response-Eighth-Report-26-17-Cm-9555.pdf; Joint Committee on Human Rights, Freedom of Speech in Universities Fourth Report of Session 2017–19', pages 31-32, available at: https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/jt201719/jtselect/jtrights/589/589.pdf

6.69 A further area of concern is the degree to which those working in sectors subject to the duty may draw on and be influenced by guidance from organisations that do not entirely align with the government's understanding of radicalisation.

6.70 It is my belief that there needs to be a streamlined approach to Prevent guidance. At present, a potentially bewildering amount of Prevent related guidance exists. Much is produced by the government but some is available from third parties.

6.71 Some of this guidance may even run counter to best practice in meeting Prevent's objectives. Prevent partners should be wary that activist groups with agendas that do not always align with those of Prevent will seek to have influence by offering guidance that may look credible and legitimate.

6.72 Prevent duty guidance will need to be revised to reflect any reforms to Prevent that are adopted following this review.

6.73 Following my concerns outlined at the start of this report, it is important that guidance assists those tasked with implementing the duty to understand the specific and unique risks involved with different ideologies, as well as the significance of ideology as a whole in driving terrorism. Compared to earlier Prevent guidance documents, more recent products appear to give less focus to these issues.

Oversight

6.74 Having adequate and professional oversight of Prevent delivery is crucial to help assess and assist Prevent to meet its objectives as outlined in the duty guidance. 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.

6.75 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.

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.

6.76 Currently, oversight of how different Prevent partners are meeting their statutory duty is piecemeal, with different agencies overseen by different bodies that do not always have either sufficient expertise or knowledge of the subject.

6.77 In particular, there is a lack of clarity about what happens where a public body is failing to comply with the duty. In recent years, there have been examples brought to public attention where institutions subject to the duty have appeared to neglect their statutory obligations. This includes instances where schools were found to have introduced pupils to an individual who had been found in a High Court to have espoused extremist Islamic positions, including promoting and encouraging religious violence.[196]

6.78 One body within the government that could have been used to provide better scrutiny of overall Prevent delivery is the Prevent Oversight Board. However, its membership consists of high-level figures, such as those in ministerial and director-level positions, who have many other duties, and the board appears to meet very infrequently.

6.79 In addition there is a Police Prevent Board that is chaired by the National Police Chiefs Council Prevent Lead, as well as a Counter Terrorism Committee chaired by the Metropolitan Police's Head of Specialist Operations. I am aware of similar boards in place in local authorities, such as the London Prevent Board, and the London CONTEST Board.

6.80 Each of these seek to provide oversight. However, the existence of these numerous bodies, all with differing responsibilities, points to the absence of an overarching and comprehensive oversight mechanism.

6.81 It is also not clear that the Prevent Oversight Board within central government has any meaningful overview of these secondary oversight boards and committees. Nor is it apparent what kind of co-ordination and communication takes place between these numerous boards and committees.

6.82 I recommend the government establishes a standards and compliance unit (SCU) to specifically monitor standards and compliance across Prevent.

6.83 The SCU would have the capacity to process specific complaints around Prevent delivery, from both practitioners and the public, and publish its findings. This unit would not adjudicate over Prevent's objectives nor recommend policy – it would determine whether Prevent is being delivered properly within a direction already set by ministers.

[196] 'Extremism in the Community: The case of Shakeel Begg', Centre for the Response to Radicalisation and Terrorism, 2017, pages 14-15, available at: https://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Shakeel-Begg-FINAL-PDF.pdf

6.84 Furthermore, the SCU could be tasked with conducting a comprehensive examination into cases where engagement with Prevent did not stop an individual from committing an act of terrorism.

6.85 In my view, the SCU, which would be answerable to the ministers on the Prevent Oversight Board, would act as a mechanism whereby complaints are considered and mistakes are corrected. It would not interrogate Prevent's underlying principles but ensure that the ethos and objectives of the strategy are being adequately adhered to, and that Prevent is meeting its objectives as outlined in CONTEST and Prevent duty guidance.

Training

6.86 Improvements to training on radicalisation and extremism risk have been consistently recommended in many recent reports.

6.87 These include a 2016 Home Affairs Select Committee report on radicalisation,[197] the review of the 2017 Parsons Green attack,[198] the 2018 Manchester Preventing Hateful Extremism and Promoting Social Cohesion Commission,[199] and a 2019 Intelligence and Security Committee report.[200] Most recently, in 2020, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services called for the NPCC national Prevent lead and the College of Policing to develop a training and awareness package that encompasses continuous professional development for Prevent strategic leads in forces.[201]

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[197] Home Affairs Committee, 'Radicalisation: the counter-narrative', 2016, https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmhaff/135/135.pdf

[198] Sir Philip Rutnam KCB [Permanent Secretary], 'Letter to Chair of the Home Affairs Select Committee Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP', Home Office, 18 June 2018, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/717021/Parsons_Green_-_Letter_to_HASC_Chair_from_Home_Office_Permanent_Secretary_.pdf

[199] 'A Shared Future: A report of the Greater Manchester Prevent Hateful Extremism and Promoting Social Cohesion Commission', 30 July 2018, available at: https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/1170/preventing-hateful-extremism-and-promoting-social-cohesion-report.pdf

[200] Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament, 'The 2017 Attacks: what needs to change?' 22 November 2018, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/776162/HC1694_The2017Attacks_WhatNeedsToChange.pdf

[201] Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services [HMICFRS], pub. 9 March 2020, Page 2-3, 11 'Counter-terrorism policing: An inspection of the police's contribution to the government's Prevent programme' (justiceinspectorates.gov.uk), available at: https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/redacted-counter-terrorism-policing-inspection-police-contribution-government-prevent-programme.pdf

6.88 Quality training is crucial to the effective delivery of Prevent, particularly as radicalisation is a politicised issue and one that can be both challenging and uncomfortable to address.

I too share the concerns that Prevent training requires significant improvement.

6.89 Current training for frontline staff has delivered three key positive impacts: increased knowledge of Prevent, awareness of how the referral system works, and support for the strategy as a whole.

6.90 Nonetheless, I found that to a large extent 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.

Nonetheless, I found that to a large extent Prevent training, in both delivery and content, is insufficient.

Training for frontline staff

6.91 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.

6.92 Introduced in 2016 to cope with demand, the e-learning model has helped improve standardisation and accessibility but, wherever possible, it must be combined with high quality in-person training to improve standards. Throughout the review, I was repeatedly informed that the training is 'too superficial' to help staff understand the nature of radicalisation. This has resulted in a lack of confidence in the ability to recognise extremism-related issues and to make confident referral decisions.

6.93 In schools for example, Ofsted cautioned that there is a lack of appropriate training within Prevent packages on how staff can manage controversial issues, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.[202] Headteachers have stated that better guidance is needed as to when an institutional response is appropriate and when an external intervention is required.

[202] Ofsted highlight that, outside of Prevent training provision, materials have been produced to support teachers on how to address controversial issues in the classroom, such as the resources produced by the Council of Europe.

6.94 Practitioners suggested to me that WRAP is "irrelevant" to local needs, and that training resources – particularly case studies – should be better tailored according to regional threat/risk as well as to recipients' roles.

6.95 It is my understanding that the Home Office is currently refreshing its e-learning and WRAP training offer. However, a much wider reconstruction of training provision is required.

Training – Islamism concerns

6.96 I saw and heard evidence that there is inadequate assurance and ability from frontline practitioners and Home Office officials when it comes to recognising Islamist ideas, narratives and behaviours.

6.97 This is a key area of learning from recent in-depth case reports. Findings from a 2017 serious incident review, for example, highlighted that a piece of intelligence was not considered as Channel practitioners accepted that imagery of an apparent violent Islamist nature was a feature of religious practice.

6.98 Further, senior counter-terrorism leads have emphasised the difficulty of raising Islamist-related extremism when delivering training at the local level, often finding it to be a sensitive issue when raised with partners. Research conducted for Counter Terrorism Policing found that there was a sense across the country that the Islamist risk was being underplayed, and local authority staff were sometimes perceived as being unwilling to address Islamist extremism for fear of being accused of racism or cultural insensitivity. I have also received evidence suggesting that "[m]any practitioners who wish to focus on the principal terror threat to this country [Islamism] find themselves viewed with suspicion even by colleagues". This is an unacceptable state of affairs which I have seen in too many areas.

I have also received evidence suggesting that "[m]any practitioners who wish to focus on the principal terror threat to this country [Islamism] find themselves viewed with suspicion even by colleagues".

Loss of expertise

6.99 One long-standing senior Prevent co-ordinator expressed concern that local practitioners had a "worrying lack of subject matter expertise". This included a lack of understanding of extremist ideologies, geopolitics and local dynamics. Findings from my assessment of Prevent training indicate that frontline staff are not receiving sufficient information about

local and national extremist networks, ideological motivations and recruiter methodologies.

6.100 I fear this issue may be compounded by the high level of turnover among civil service staff tasked with handling counter-terrorism policy. High turnover rates within government are a feature across the system, but this is a contentious and challenging policy area, and the loss of subject specialism poses risks to long-term counter-terrorism delivery. Policy and strategy on tackling radicalisation have rightly developed in part due to 'lessons learned' from implementation, of which institutional memory is critical.

6.101 When recruiting for positions within Prevent, the government should place an understanding of the different types of extremist ideology as a highly desired criterion. Moreover, candidates should be sought who are willing, ready and able to tackle these sets of beliefs head-on.

Deep dive: training for intervention providers

6.102 I sought to examine the training support provided to Prevent's intervention providers. I was granted access to the course slides from training workshops on extremist narratives and ideologies, in addition to the distance learning packs distributed since March 2020 (due to COVID-19 restrictions for in-person provision). All materials had been externally commissioned.[203]

6.103 The need to provide training materials to Prevent's key frontline practitioners consistently and frequently is clear. For example, the distance learning materials were regularly issued several times a month and consisted of multiple types of resources, including intelligence briefings and deep-dive primers. The material was also clear, cogent and effective.

6.104 However, there were wide disparities in the content provided around ideologies. Information on the Extreme Right-Wing, for instance, rightly included networks and media platforms based in the UK. Some of the narratives described as Extreme Right-Wing, nonetheless, included positions held by people across the mainstream political spectrum.

6.105 Conversely, key narratives on Islamist extremism were presented through the prism of proscribed organisations, with material focusing, almost exclusively, on international terrorist groups. This comes despite recognition that Islamist extremists' focus in the UK centres upon a core conspiracy that "the government is pursuing a deliberate policy of attempting to weaken and divide Muslims through direct attacks on a Muslim's

[203] I was informed that the third-party commissioned to develop the resources is no longer able to continue this work, and the training products will be subject to review ahead of a potential retender exercise to source a new training provider.

understanding and practice of their religion". Practitioners must be made fully aware that this central narrative applies to both violent and non-violent Islamist groups and, as such, is not exclusive to the likes of Islamic State.

6.106 The same can be said about several types of extremist methodology described, for these too extend beyond proscribed Islamist groups. For example, the use of emotional appeals, presenting the state's security apparatus (including Prevent) as a vehicle to erode authentic Islam, demonisation of Islamic scholars who receive state funds, and characterising the advancement of secular liberal values as a provocation against Islam. These recruitment techniques are fundamental to the way in which both violent and non-violent Islamist groups attract people to their cause and draw individuals away from liberal, mainstream influences within Muslim communities.

6.107 Distance learning packs appear to show a disparity in approach to different ideologies. This was prominently shown through the 113 resources that had been distributed to practitioners from April 2020 to November 2021. Of those, 79 (70%) related to the Far-Right/Extreme Right-Wing, 28 (25%) related to Islamist Extremism, 4 (3.5%) related to the Incel movement, and 1 (0.9%) related to 'mixed' ideologies.[204]

6.108 The volume of resources devoted to each ideological threat is notably divergent from the UK's current threat assessment. For example, only 25% of training materials related to Islamist extremism over a 19-month period shortly following three Islamist terrorist attacks, Fishmongers' Hall (29 November 2019), Whitemoor (9 January 2020) and Streatham (2 February 2020). That is wholly insufficient.

Moreover, I did not see evidence that training covered prominent aspects of the attacks, such as themes and reactions, such as were developed for other ideological threats.

6.109 There seemed, once again, to be different thresholds set for the types of training on different ideologies. Training on the Incel subculture, for example, covered social media platforms and memes. By contrast, a significant number of training materials on Islamism related to proscribed terrorist groups and their overseas media outlets. I found minimal material on UK-based Islamist groups, influential figures, narratives or methodologies and media platforms. For example, there was very little information on contentious and complex issues, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

6.110 I saw training slides describing the Antifa movement as generally "individuals and groups united by opposition to racism and the far right". I do not consider that to be a politically neutral framing and was persuaded by the Centre for Research and Evidence on

[204] Of the 113 materials, we marked two resources as both Far-Right/Extreme Right-Wing and Islamist-related. One resource we classified as 'Unknown' as it did not clearly sit within any of the aforementioned categories.

Security Threats research that instead described Antifa as being comprised of "anarchists; anarcho-communists; left-libertarians; and radical socialists".[205]

6.111 The issue of disparity in approach goes beyond that delivered to intervention providers, and appears to be both a qualitative and quantitative issue. For example, one Prevent Education Officer course delivered one workshop a week for the three main Prevent referral categories: Islamist, Extreme Right-Wing and Mixed Unstable and Unclear (MUU). The material on Islamist terrorism focused only on Salafi jihadist recruitment for overseas groups, whereas the resources for the MUU workshop focused on Incels, and the third-party material on the Extreme Right-Wing included pro-Brexit and centre right commentators.[206] These are clearly not like-for-like comparisons, are unhelpful, and should not be made.

Training – improvements

6.112 Insufficient training has and will continue to have a direct and adverse effect at all levels of Prevent activity. It is vital that a good level of literacy and understanding of extremist ideology exists across all parts of the system responsible for implementing Prevent. It is particularly crucial that this understanding is right within central government too, so as to inform good practice for local delivery and across those public services obliged to implement the duty.

6.113 It is my recommendation that the Home Office develops a new Prevent training package for government and public sector staff with a particular focus on how to make Prevent-relevant referral decisions, improving understanding of the ideological nature of terrorism, and understanding the grievances exploited by terrorist recruiters and extremists.

6.114 Training for frontline staff should detail how the Prevent triage process functions, explaining how referrals made on account of genuine and evidenced concerns can be quickly assessed and, if not considered needing further action, need be filtered out of the

[205] 'Understanding 21st-Century Militant Anti-Fascism', Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats', 14 April 2021, available at: https://crestresearch.ac.uk/resources/understanding-21st-century-militant-anti-fascism/

[206] The course profiled The Brexit Party, Leave.EU and Turning Point UK under the section titled 'The Populist Radical Right'. In an essay titled 'Brexit, Mainstreaming and the new post-organisation Far Right', it states the following: "Just as in 1978, when Margaret Thatcher's claim that British people feared being "swamped" pulled the rug from under the NF [National Front], the normalisation and mainstreaming of Islamophobia may be undermining support for the organised anti-Muslim far right. Why face all the social consequences of supporting [Stephen Yaxley- Lennon] when one can vote for a Prime Minister that calls Muslim women letterboxes or read columns by Rod Liddle, Melanie Philips and Douglas Murray that spread negative views about Islam and Muslims via the pages of mainstream publications? Maybe one reason the traditional far right is so small right now is because it is simply not needed.": 'State of Hate 2020: Far Right Terror Goes Global', Hope Not Hate, 2020, https://hopenothate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/state-of-hate-2020-final.pdf.

system without fear of repercussions for the individual or institution who made the initial referral.

6.115 For central and local public sector staff working on delivering terrorism and extremism policy, strengthened training is required to better grasp why individuals are drawn to extremist ideologies, the types of narratives radicalisers use to amass support, as well as to increase awareness of active domestic extremist networks that may seek to influence their work.

6.116 There also must be a greater awareness of the extent to which conspiracy theories are central to extremist beliefs. This applies to all forms of extremism. I was alarmed by a 2016 poll by ICM which demonstrated that 37% of the general public polled were "susceptible to conspiracy theories and expressed a belief that these were often grounded in truth."[207] The same poll showed that 31% of British Muslims believed the US government was behind the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and that more British Muslims believed 'Jews' were responsible (7%) than the actual perpetrators: al-Qa'ida (4%).[208]

Dovetail

6.117 Dovetail is a pilot programme introduced in September 2016 across nine areas that moves elements of Channel case management from Counter Terrorism Police to local authority staff.

6.118 Dovetail was piloted to improve local authority understanding of, buy-in, and input to Channel, improve access to local support and interventions, thereby improving consent rates, and free up time for the police to focus on higher risk individuals.

6.119 In the Dovetail pilot, Channel chairs were retained, with local authorities picking up responsibility for gathering information about referred individuals, assessing individuals' level of risk, commissioning support for individuals from approved intervention providers, reviewing progress and risk over time, and administering panels and updating databases.

6.120 The Home Office's evaluation of the Dovetail pilot site outlined a variety of positive outcomes.

6.121 These included improved case and panel management, better multi-agency working, greater use of intervention providers and greater consistency across panels. Local

[207] Martyn Frampton, David Goodhart and Khalid Mahmood MP, 'Unsettled Belonging: A survey of Britain's Muslim communities', Policy Exchange, available at: https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/PEXJ5037_Muslim_Communities_FINAL.pdf

[208] Ibid

authority management was also found to improve Channel attendance from all sectors including the most senior practitioners, driving up the quality of discussion. Case management process was seen to have improved, particularly around consistency in data collection, and the skills of Channel chairs and vice-chairs had been considerably improved.

6.122 Counter Terrorism Policing suggested that the model has allowed for greater co-ordination, information-sharing and collaboration between authorities and counter-terrorism case officers.

6.123 However, it should be noted that 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. While the administrative burden had been eased, police understandably felt that "there was still a need to know the details of cases to manage the CT risk'". Some within the police felt that the counter-terrorism risk was not being properly managed, as information gathered by the local authority was not being shared early enough in the process. 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, particularly around use of the Vulnerability Assessment Framework and the Channel data system.

6.124 Practitioners interviewed for a regional pilot evaluation expressed concern that the counter-terrorism risk was no longer being given priority, and had been overtaken by safeguarding, and that there was less understanding of the counter-terrorism risk at Channel panels to make informed decisions. Some practitioners noted concern that referrals might slip through the net and not be passed onto the police, and some police felt that the Dovetail model frustrated their ability to gather information and interact with individual cases. Information-sharing and issues of trust between partners remain, and the threshold for which a Section 36 decision is taken appears not to be standardised.

6.125 Broadly, I am encouraged by greater collaboration, information-sharing and improvements to Channel case management identified at Dovetail sites. It is positive to see the Home Office trial a new approach to streamline the Channel operational process and respond to concerns of inefficiency. I am assured that local authorities, with sufficient training and support, are equipped to carry out additional responsibilities from the original police-led Channel model. However, I am concerned that Dovetail, by minimising the police's role in Channel case management, risks under-utilising the counter-terrorism police skill set and may cause counter-terrorism blind spots.

6.126 I would, therefore, recommend 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

Regionalisation

6.127 The Home Office has advised that it is changing Prevent's delivery structure towards a regionalised model. The aim is to reduce inconsistencies in delivery across the country. I believe this is the right approach.

6.128 At present, some Prevent co-ordinators have raised concerns that local politicians in certain areas harbour anti-Prevent sentiments which can hamper implementation, and serve as a source of tension. There are also examples of delivery at the local level where, once again, it appears that there is disproportionality in the attention accorded to tackling different extremist ideologies. In one case, a training package used by a local authority included specific focus on the Extreme Right-Wing in a manner not replicated for Islamism, even though this was a location where Islamist terrorism risks were considerable.

6.129 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.

The disparities in local delivery of Prevent in different parts of the country have been described as a "postcode lottery".

6.130 In my view, a new regional structure, with Homeland Security Group-appointed regional advisers, has the potential to ensure Prevent is not hampered by local politicking and to professionalise delivery. A network of Home Office employed regional Prevent advisers, funded from existing Prevent budgets, would help to drive up performance and professionalism and improve compliance with the duty across all local authorities.

6.131 These advisers would be better able to ensure local delivery better corresponded to the threat posed by different ideologies within the area.

6.132 The posts should align geographically with police Counter Terror Unit regions and the Department for Education's network of Prevent Higher and Further Education co-ordinators in England. In places, it may be appropriate to have more than one Prevent adviser in each region, so that a small team of Prevent advisers operates from within the region's counter terrorism unit.

6.133 It is notable that the indicators of risk used by Prevent (such as TACT related arrests, Channel referrals and investigations) are significantly higher within a small group of the 44 Prevent Priority areas. For those local authorities further down the ranking, the levels of risk seem to reduce considerably. It is therefore clear that there are localities where a more intensive level of Prevent resourcing is required. 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. This would be particularly helpful if there was a need to 'surge' resources to react to a rapidly developing threat. The Home Office and Prevent policing should assist with supporting regions to build such surge capacity when there appears to be an increased risk of radicalisation in a particular location.

6.134 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.

6.135 This smaller network of local co-ordinators ought to be overseen by the Home Office's regional advisers.

6.136 Funding released by this process should be reallocated for supporting Prevent work across regions.

Considerations for London

6.137 Plans for a regionalised delivery model will likely need to address specific and unique requirements in London, where there are a high number of priority areas in close proximity to one another and where individuals may be particularly likely to move and interact across priority and non-priority areas within the Greater London area.

6.138 A previous review for the Police and Crime Committee on preventing extremism in London found that London does not have a body to provide central strategic oversight of all the Prevent activities taking place in the city.[209]

6.139 Despite these difficulties, there are other ways in which arrangements in London indicate how a regionalised approach could work well. The London Prevent Board, which was set up in 2011, is reported to have shown some success in bringing some co-ordination at the operational level between London boroughs.[210]

Informal working relationships

6.140 Throughout the review, it has become very clear that informal working relationships between Prevent's partners are crucial in assisting effective Prevent delivery. As radicalisation can be a sensitive and complex matter, I recognise the importance of frontline professionals having a trusted point-of-contact with whom they can discuss concerns in a candid manner.

6.141 More broadly, I am encouraged by Counter Terrorism Policing's newly launched and confidential Prevent advice line,[211] and recommend the government develop further initiatives (such as those available for drug, abuse or mental health concerns) for any member of the public to access 'off-record' support.[212]

6.142 Individuals who spoke highly of such relationships appear to have developed them in an ad-hoc fashion, although often these were local or regional Prevent contacts, which underlines the importance of having Prevent personnel on the ground.

6.143 Prior to making a referral, Prevent rightly encourages frontline staff to discuss concerns with other professionals within their institution or sector, their dedicated safeguarding lead, or Prevent contact. However, it is apparent that frontline staff in non-priority areas may not always have the same opportunities to establish relationships within Prevent's professional network as is the case in priority areas.

6.144 The development of Prevent's new regionalisation model should, in part, address some of these limitations, and provide further reach for Prevent professionals. This should allow greater opportunity for those delivering Prevent to develop trusted points-of-

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[209] Police and Crime Committee, 'Preventing extremism in London', 2015, page 25, available at: https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/preventing_extremism_in_london_report.pdf

[210] Ibid

[211] Action Counters Terrorism, 'Prevent Radicalisation and Extremism by Acting Early', available at: https://actearly.uk/

[212] For example, see the drug support 'Talk to FRANK' initiative: 'Honest information about drugs', talktofrank.com, available at: https://www.talktofrank.com/

contact, with whom they can informally discuss any uncertainties about Prevent implementation, and how to respond to situations that may not be directly addressed within Prevent guidance or training.

Funding model and value for money

6.145 There have been attempts at calculating the economic harm done to the United Kingdom by terrorism.[213] However, the destructive nature of terrorism extends well beyond any economic and financial impact it causes. Along with the devastation that it inflicts on the individuals and families who fall victim to terrorist attacks, terrorism tears at the fabric of society, often causing emotional and family disasters, fear and division. A period of intensive and particularly devastating attacks could eventually damage confidence in our democracy and freedoms. Accordingly, the value of preventing people from being radicalised into terrorism is arguably incalculable. As Prevent is an early intervention scheme, it would never be possible to determine precisely how many attacks Prevent might have averted.

> **…the value of preventing people from being radicalised into terrorism is arguably incalculable.**

6.146 It is also important to consider that Prevent does not simply seek to stop individuals going on to perpetrate acts of terrorism, but also to stop people from being radicalised into supporting terrorism. When it works effectively, Prevent intervenes to walk back those who would otherwise have gone on to draw others into terrorism. Countering the radicalisation of those who themselves could have become radicalisers should have exponential benefits.

6.147 However, to the extent this can be assessed, Prevent must also seek to offer the taxpayer value for money. Since the introduction of the Statutory Prevent Duty in 2015, funding for Prevent has increased annually.[214]

6.148 Many practitioners and CSOs highlighted the impact of annual funding settlements. This short cycle causes difficulties embedding projects into communities, as the emphasis is on short-term impact. Officials described monetary grants being received several months

[213] RAND Corporation, 'The cost of terrorism in Europe', 6 June 2018, available at: https://www.rand.org/randeurope/research/projects/the-cost-of-terrorism-in-europe.html

[214] 2014/15 – £26.7m; 2015/16 – £32.8m; 2016/17 – £37.7m; 2017/18 – £45.5m; 2018/19 – £47.3m; 2019/20 – £48.2m; 2020/21 – £49.1m.

after grant approval, with the Home Office requesting an evaluation of the effectiveness of the programme shortly afterwards. Projects were therefore often under pressure to deliver in a very short period of time, sometimes as little as two months. It is claimed that the uncertainty created by these one-year funding cycles makes it harder to attract and then retain qualified and dedicated staff. Such experience should not be lightly lost. It also requires further expenses in having to train and upskill new staff. Project providers and local authorities cited similar difficulties in attracting staff when the long-term funding is uncertain.

6.149 On the other hand, the annual funding settlement does serve as a mechanism for holding poor performance to account. A new funding model should only reward projects that can demonstrate they have delivered on key Prevent objectives. I recommend that projects which are considered effective should be awarded longer term funding of between two to five years.

6.150 Also problematic is the significant amount of public money that goes to outside consulting firms to assist Prevent's work. Several external commercial partners have been granted budgets running into the millions to do work for Home Office Prevent and RICU.

6.151 I am not satisfied that all of this work offers good value for money. Indeed, in the case of the due diligence services these outside firms provide, some of it is demonstrably ineffective. Regrettably, poor due diligence has sometimes meant taxpayers' money actually being spent in support of those whose views run against Prevent's objectives.

6.152 Measures exist to ensure that funding is used effectively to advance Prevent's objectives, but these measures require improvement. Where there is a failure by initiatives to deliver on meeting Prevent's objectives, funding must be withdrawn.

6.153 There are other parts of Prevent, which although not functioning perfectly, may still be delivering value for money. This is particularly true of the referral process into Channel.

6.154 As I have already outlined, there are clearly large numbers of people being referred to Prevent who do not need to be in the scheme. While the Channel process correctly decides not to take further action in many of these cases, the high number of 'low quality' referrals is an unnecessary drain on resources and may point to problems with training and guidance.

6.155 However, I do recognise the huge value provided to those individuals appropriately supported through Channel, a number of whom, it is reasonable to expect, might well otherwise have gone on to be involved in terrorism.

6.156 The value delivered by turning around even a small number of such individuals is so great, that even with occasional dysfunctionality, the Channel referral process is of great value.

Devolved delivery

Scotland

6.157 Scottish officials consider the threat picture to be different to that in England and Wales, with a smaller Islamist and Extreme Right-Wing threat but higher levels of sectarianism and Northern-Ireland related terrorism threat.[215]

6.158 Prevent sits within Police Scotland's 'Safer Communities'. Responsibility for Prevent is managed by their Safeguarding and Vulnerability team,[216] which is made up of a combined civil servant and police workforce. The team is part of a broader unit that covers faith and belief, asylum and refugee integration, hate crime and counter-extremism. In Scotland, there are no regional or local Prevent co-ordinators based within a local authority. Instead, the Safeguarding and Vulnerability team engages directly with sector leads. While there are Prevent single points-of-contact in various sectors, they are not dedicated solely to Prevent work, they carry out other duties. The responsibility for the Prevent Duty sits with these sector bodies, which provide a delivery plan to the Safeguarding and Vulnerability team, who in turn report to UK and Scottish governance bodies.

6.159 A Scottish CONTEST Board is the most senior governance structure, with further CONTEST delivery groups and Prevent subgroups incorporating those bodies not subject to the Statutory Duty (such as the fire brigade or army). Home Office officials attend governance meetings to ensure alignment with the wider UK.

6.160 The referral process and vulnerability assessment are the same as in England. As with Channel in England and Wales, Scotland holds a multi-agency meeting to discuss cases (the Prevent Multi-Agency Partnership).

6.161 However, Police Scotland do not use the case management system or trackers used in England and Wales, and instead use their National Intelligence Note system. All police data, including cases where no further action is required, are held on the databases for

[215] It is my understanding that Police Scotland have not produced Emerging Threat and Risk Local Profiles (ETRLPs – the equivalent of CTLPs) for at least five years.

[216] The Scottish Justice Ministry has responsibility for the other strands of CONTEST.

12 years. I have noted above that this is considered a useful intelligence tool, but it is also a key criticism from a civil rights perspective.

6.162 As Prevent is part of Scotland's wider communities agenda, there are no directly Prevent-funded civil society projects or programmes that tackle the ideological causes of terrorism.

6.163 Officials claimed that the approach focuses on 'drivers' of radicalisation, which were named as including poverty and mental health. It is understood that some projects are wary of being linked to Prevent and many CSOs are funded from the equality and cohesion budget.

6.164 Prevent does not always sit comfortably within the wider communities and integration agenda as opposed to other strands of CONTEST. Community cohesion initiatives being partially funded with counter-terrorism resources, for example, is potentially counter-productive if it makes communities feel under suspicion and alienated. However, policy must be joined up across government. Therefore, those working on community cohesion must be aware of Prevent's objectives (and vice versa) in order to provide support where appropriate.

6.165 A more cohesive, fair, and liberal society is well worth striving for. However, the revolutionary intent of terrorists, and their hatred of a liberal society, means that even an extremely well-integrated and cohesive society would not be immune from the threat of terrorism.

6.166 Equally, tackling radicalisation through focusing on 'push' factors and a range of social ills is an imperfect model for Prevent delivery, as it inevitably de-emphasises the appeal and attraction of socio-political ideologies.

6.167 I am also concerned about the lack of oversight and support for Prevent delivery in the Scottish education sector. The region does not have a dedicated HE/FE co-ordinator or Prevent education officer. For higher education institutions, there is no equivalent inspectorate to the Office for Students monitoring compliance. This comes despite serious concerns about the invitation of extremist speakers by Scottish university societies.

Scotland: enhanced delivery

6.168 I recommend that the Scottish Government look to restructure Prevent in line with the regionalisation model outlined for the wider UK in this report. This would include a dedicated Prevent lead, HE/FE regional co-ordinator and the commission of Prevent-funded projects that tackle the ideological causes of terrorism, not social cohesion and integration.

6.169 Further, I recommend that Police Scotland develop regular and frequent local Prevent-specific risk assessments, akin to those developed across the UK (CLTPs), to enhance practitioners and officials' understanding of the regional terrorism threat picture.

Wales

6.170 Prevent is co-ordinated by Welsh Counter Terrorism Police, specifically the Welsh Extremism and Counter Terrorism Unit (WECTU). WECTU are responsible for negotiating between the Welsh Government, the local authority, and devolved health and education partners, and provide support to non-Prevent priority areas in wider Wales. Wales has six regional CONTEST Boards run by thematic boards of CONTEST Cymru, covering Prevent activity in all 22 local authorities.

6.171 As in England, if an area is deemed to be a Prevent priority, funding is provided for a Prevent co-ordinator and to procure projects. In Wales, only Cardiff is listed as a Prevent Priority Area.[217] The programme has four key areas: local project work, training, facilitating compliance with the statutory duty and Channel. Prevent reports to the CONTEST board, chaired by the head of Cardiff council, who in turn report to the Community Safety Board, a statutory board which is chaired by the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Cabinet member responsible for community safety. Updates on Prevent activity are provided every six weeks.

Wales: threat picture

6.172 The various programmes delivered by Prevent within Wales are designed to meet the current threat and risk picture. The highest terrorist risk at present is that of Islamist terrorism.

6.173 The Islamic State has had a clear impact in Wales, particularly Cardiff. Several young men left to join the jihadist group in Syria, including one individual later alleged to have appeared in an Islamic State execution video.[218] There had also been an active al-Muhajiroun group in Cardiff during Islamic State's expansion, largely 'outcasts' from the broader Muslim community, who were believed to have influenced the recruitment of some young men who had travelled to Syria to join the terrorist group. Prior to its proscription in the UK, I was told by the Cardiff Prevent team that, "because it was an Islamic State that embraced sharia", there was initial support for the organisation from a small number of Islamic institutions, which diminished after the extreme brutality of the

[217] Home Affairs Committee, Radicalisation: the counter-narrative, 2016, available at: https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmhaff/135/

[218] 'Isis: From Cardiff to the Caliphate', BBC News, 25 January 2021, available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-55796316

group became wider known. The large territorial losses experienced by Islamic State and their consequent reduction in online activity led to a drop in Prevent referrals in Wales.[219]

6.174 I am concerned that the rise of a new Islamist militant group, similar to Islamic State, could attract the same numbers of youth to travel abroad as went to Islamic State. This is a concern I hold for the UK as a whole.

6.175 The next highest risk in Wales is far right activity and narratives, which are said to have evolved in recent years. I was also informed that there had been an increase in COVID-19-related conspiracies and QAnon-related promotional activity in the area, and Channel had recently been reviewing a referral of that type. Staff from the Prevent team noted that 'instigators' in south Wales had often travelled there from other places to commit offences and this required them to maintain relationships with stakeholders from a wider area.

Wales: education sector

6.176 In relation to Prevent delivery in the higher education (HE) sector, I was told institutions worked closely together and shared good practice, and the HE sector works closely with Counter Terrorism Policing Wales and regional co-ordinators.

6.177 During fieldwork in Cardiff, I was encouraged by the positive feedback about the impact of the duty in schools and colleges, particularly with regard to freedom of speech. Primary headteachers said that the training given to teachers had promoted a sense of community cohesion, that Prevent had become "part of the ethos" of what they did as a school and empowered children to confidently raise issues and ask questions.

6.178 I was informed that Prevent workshops in secondary schools had seen a reduction in misconceptions about the strategy, although it depended upon narratives in the media at the time, and that "challenging conversations" were most effectively conducted after staff were trained in facilitating contentious dialogue. Prevent School liaison officers have now become 'Prevent champions', allowing the education sector to become more prominently involved in identifying radicalisation early on.

[219] House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, 'Radicalisation: the counter-narrative and identifying the tipping point', December 2017, page 21, available at: https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/commons-committees/home-affairs/Correspondence-17-19/Radicalisation-the-counter-narrative-and-identifying-the-tipping-point-government-response-Eighth-Report-26-17-Cm-9555.pdf; Joint Committee on Human Rights, 'Freedom of Speech in Universities Fourth Report of Session 2017–19', 21 March 2018, pages 31-32, available at: https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/jt201719/jtselect/jtrights/589/589.pdf

6.179 I was pleased to see safeguarding guidance for the education sector was recently updated and provided a clear overview of Prevent responsibilities and resources available.

6.180 Nonetheless, Wales has been without a HE/FE Prevent co-ordinator for two and a half years because of a Home Office funding issue. This will have diminished the sector's ability to operate effectively.

Wales: disconnect

6.181 Overall, I was encouraged by the effective partnership working evident in Wales. There were, however, reported 'disconnects' between local and CT police, and between the Home Office, Welsh Government, and Welsh local authorities because of the tier system from central government. This impacts flexibility of focus and resources in Wales. Many of the challenges facing Prevent delivery in Wales can be seen elsewhere in the UK. There are also complaints that too much of Prevent's Welsh resources are directed towards Cardiff, the only priority area in the region. I hope that many of these concerns will be addressed in my proposed national reforms.

6.182 During the review it was suggested that Wales may be moving to a public health-orientated approach to preventing radicalisation. In light of my concerns, expressed above and again below, about an excessive focus on vulnerability and insufficient attention paid to individual agency, I do not recommend this approach.

Safeguarding

6.183 Prevent is one of the wider safeguarding duties placed on public authorities.

6.184 Some respondents to my call for evidence highlighted an inherent tension between Prevent's twin objectives of safeguarding vulnerable individuals and ensuring public safety. It was also suggested that perceptions of Prevent as a surveillance mechanism for public protection undermined its credibility as a safeguarding strategy.

6.185 It bears repeating that I am concerned that viewing Prevent as a safeguarding or even child protection issue is an excessively narrow way to view the attempts to stop terrorism. Such a framework assumes that terrorists lack psychological or social support, and can be 'treated' with welfare, clinical or emotional assistance. Further, in my view, there appear to be real questions about the usefulness of thinking that those who become involved in political violence are 'vulnerable' or 'brainwashed'.

It bears repeating that I am concerned that viewing Prevent as a safeguarding or even child protection issue is an excessively narrow way to view the attempts to stop terrorism.

6.186 During the course of the review, I heard evidence about how the safeguarding framework had removed agency from those "who willingly decided to pursue or support violence for political ends" and mistakenly "reframed the terrorist as merely vulnerable or manipulated".

6.187 At the same time, overlap does exist between the risk of radicalisation and other forms of exploitation and Prevent is seen by practitioners at its most successful when embedded with local safeguarding policies and partnerships.

6.188 I heard from practitioners who felt it was right that Prevent was tied into overall safeguarding training, and that Prevent recognised the vulnerability of an individual could make him/her susceptible to radicalisation, or other forms of grooming or exploitation.

6.189 Yet Prevent should be considered only in part as a safeguarding strategy. Attempts by police and practitioners to characterise it exclusively as such to obtain more buy-in locally cannot be allowed to distract from the need to implement other parts of the strategy, including tackling the ideological causes of terrorism.

6.190 Prevent has been successfully integrated into schools, fitting in with considerations around broader frameworks of safeguarding of children, serious violence, sexual exploitation or mental health. Radicalisation concerns were noted by practitioners as much rarer than protecting children from other forms of harm.

6.191 Prevent in the NHS is managed by a National Safeguarding Team, who consider it along with other risks, such as domestic violence or exploitation.

6.192 Clearly, the vast majority of people with mental health issues are not going to pose a terrorism risk. However, if those with mental health issues are being significantly over-represented in Prevent referrals it suggests that professionals skilled at spotting certain vulnerabilities are referring people to Prevent unnecessarily, most likely in the MUU category.

6.193 I did find examples of good connections with mental health safeguarding at the local level, and Channel chairs are keen that appropriate mental health representatives should have a greater advisory role at panels. However, as outlined elsewhere in this report, I am wary about the trajectory of Channel to analyse and triage vulnerable persons with

mental health difficulties. But at the same time there are of course cases where the expertise of mental health practitioners is justifiably sought.

6.194 Practitioners informed me that once a case had progressed to Channel the individual referred was more likely to receive an appropriate level of support, with partners from mental health involved and a better level of safeguarding offered. In this way, Prevent can provide assistance that may not have always been immediately forthcoming, or can in some cases put pressure on other services to expedite the support received.

6.195 Questions were also raised as to whether Prevent is missing the identification of adults who are prone to radicalisation because existing safeguarding thresholds and statutory services make it easier to identify children. I agree with this assessment, and hope that my proposals around the recalibration of Prevent and a revision of training provision will improve this situation.

Interaction with counter-extremism

6.196 Various groups and individuals in this country do not plot acts of terrorism but do propagate within-the-law extremist ideologies which help create an atmosphere conducive to terrorism.

6.197 Not all those who hold extreme views go on to commit acts of terrorism and some authorities are reluctant to blur the lines between counter-terrorism and counter-extremism.

6.198 In 2015, the government published its first ever Counter-Extremism Strategy. My review's evidence gathering found that Prevent's interaction with the Counter-Extremism Strategy was inconsistent, with alignment in some areas and not others.

6.199 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.

6.200 However, it is undeniable that extremism and terrorism do have significant overlap and that an effective approach to countering extremism will help ensure an effective approach to countering terrorism.

6.201 As highlighted by one official, while only a small number of individuals who hold extremist beliefs will take part in violent direct action, "others may fund such actions and/or contribute [to] the cultural toxicity that acts as a petri dish for such actions."

6.202 Similarly, one academic warned: "[T]he UK needs to take non-violent extremism much more seriously, because it provides a hospitable environment for violent extremism. The problem here is much greater than the government appears to recognise, and it is likely to overwhelm Prevent." I agree.

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6.203 It follows, therefore, that the government should place a high priority on work around counter-extremism and ensure that Prevent is active in this area, as it already is with Extreme Right-Wing non-violent extremism.

6.204 Prevent is also being undermined locally by the mainstreaming of extremist groups and/or divisive activist groups hostile to its mission. I viewed worrying evidence that local authorities and the police engage with, and are advised by, groups and individuals that are not engaged with by central government because of their extremist ties. Part of this may be down to insufficient due diligence taking place.

6.205 One area of concern was with the police, whose operational independence allows them freedom to engage far more widely than the government would choose to. I believe that elements of the police's engagement strategy lends legitimacy to actors of extremist concern.

6.206 For example, Counter Terrorism Policing recently described the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) as one of their advisory network's "trusted partners" and senior officers have appeared with MCB representatives at events. Yet the MCB is subject to a "no-engagement" policy by ministers because of unresolved extremism concerns.[220]

[220] This government policy began in 2009 after the then-Deputy Secretary General Daud Abdullah of the MCB signed a declaration ("The Istanbul Declaration") that the government said "calls for violence against [British] troops and Jewish communities": 'Government suspends links with Muslim Council of Britain over Gaza', The Guardian, 23 March 2009, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2009/mar/23/muslim-council-britain-gaza.

6.207 As recently as November 2020, the Metropolitan Police branch in Lewisham have promoted Imam Shakeel Begg as part of their interfaith engagement work.[221] In 2016, Begg was found to be "an extremist Islamic speaker who espouses extremist Islamic positions" in the High Court.[222] Lewisham Police provided testimony to assist Begg's case, highlighting his 'principled' stance against Prevent.[223]

The declaration condemned the Palestinian Authority for "[giving] up the choice of jihad…as an effective means in defeating the occupation" and the Arab peace initiative for "aim[ing] to criminalize the Resistance". It affirmed "the obligation of the Islamic Nation" to deal "only" with Hamas and lauded Hamas' maintenance of the "Resistance against the Jewish Zionist occupation". It affirmed "the obligation of the Islamic Nation to open the crossings…so that they are able to live and perform the jihad in the way of Allah Almighty" and the "obligation of the Islamic Nation to regard the sending of foreign warships into Muslim waters, claiming to control the borders and prevent the smuggling of arms to Gaza, as a declaration of war, a new occupation, sinful aggression, and a clear violation of the sovereignty of the Nation." It added that "This must be rejected and fought by all means and ways." Full text can be found here: 'The Jihadist "Istanbul Declaration" and the Gaza Flotilla', The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center', 7 July 2010, available at: terrorism-info.org.il/en/19100/

In 2017, the Home Secretary Sajid Javid told the BBC that the Government continue to hold the policy of non-engagement with the MCB, adding that "we don't deal with it because too many of their members have had favourable comments on extremists and that's not acceptable": 'Sajid Javid in Muslim Council of Britain spat over Islamophobia claims', Sky News, 3 June 2018, available at: https://news.sky.com/story/sajid-javid-in-muslim-council-of-britain-spat-over-islamophobia-claims-11393750

In 2021, the Government repeated their policy of non-engagement with the MCB after a senior government minister met with the group (see footnote 58) To date, the MCB has never renounced the Istanbul Declaration. On their website, the organisation states that the former Deputy Secretary General signed the document "in a personal capacity" and that the MCB has always "been a strong proponent of Muslims serving in our armed forces": 'FAQs', The Muslim Council of Britain, available at: https://mcb.org.uk/about/faqs

In May 2020, a senior MCB figure appeared to downplay and distort the significance of the Istanbul Declaration, describing it as a statement affirming "the right to self-defence if foreign forces enter Palestinian territorial waters.": Miqdaad Versi (@miqdaad), Twitter, 13 May 2020, available at: https://twitter.com/miqdaad/status/1260539584171118592?s=20

221 Lewisham MPS (@MPSLewisham), 10 November 2020, available at: https://twitter.com/MPSLewisham/status/1326132356290387968

222 The Hon. Mr Justice Haddon-Cave, 'Approved Judgement', Shakeel Begg v British Broadcasting Corporation, EWHC, 28 October 2016, available at: https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/shakeel-begg-v-bbc-judgment-final-20161028.pdf

223 Ibid

6.208 MEND, which has a well-established track record of working alongside extremists and campaigning against Prevent,[224] lists the police as a "delivery partner".[225] The group has also provided "Islamophobia training" to local police.[226]

6.209 I consider it inappropriate, and counterproductive for national and local police authorities to engage in activity that affords credibility to actors of extremist concern.

6.210 I extend this principle to police associations. The National Association of Muslim Police (NAMP) and its affiliates, for example, have promoted several individuals and organisations with disturbing views or affiliations.[227]

6.211 NAMP has listed the MCB as an external partner.[228] As previously mentioned, the MCB is subject to a 'no-engagement' policy by ministers due to unresolved extremism concerns (see footnote 220).

6.212 In November 2014 NAMP co-hosted a conference with MEND on Islamophobia, held at City of London police station.[229] The panellists included representatives of the police and the Crown Prosecution Service alongside individuals who have expressed extreme and intolerant views.[230]

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[224] See footnote 186 for more information on MEND.

[225] 'COVID-19 MEND Activity Report', available at: https://www.mend.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/MEND-COVID-Activity-Report-2020_low-res.pdf

[226] 'MEND Preston: Importance of Police Engagement', MEND, August 2020, available at: https://www.mend.org.uk/mend-preston-importance-of-police-engagement/; 'Preston Police: Islamophobia Training', MEND, 15 February 2021, available at: https://www.mend.org.uk/preston-police-islamophobia-training/ – For more information on MEND, see footnote 186.

[227] There is a historic concern with NAMP, based on a submission to the 2009/10 parliamentary committee on preventing violent extremism, which appeared sympathetic to British Islamist campaigns and policy positions. 'Preventing Violent Extremism | Sixth Report of Session 2009-10', House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee, available at: https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmcomloc/65/65.pdf; 'Memorandum from NAMP (National Association of Muslim police), Parliament.UK, November 2009, available at: https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmcomloc/memo/previoex/m7102.htm

[228] 'National Association of Muslim Police | About our organisation', available at: https://web.archive.org/web/20201124123955/http://www.namp.org.uk/?page_id=1113

[229] MEND Facebook, 25 November 2014, available at: https://www.facebook.com/mendcommunity/photos/a.1518502608413904/1518503545080477

[230] For example, in October 2014 at the Zakariyya mosque in Bolton, MEND's founding CEO Sufyan Ismail – a speaker at the NAMP/MEND event only a month later – made several disturbing claims, including that of an alleged 300 year old Israeli lobby in Parliament: 'Fighting Hatred Together or Setting Communities Apart', Community Security Trust, 15 April 2015, available at: https://cst.org.uk/news/blog/2015/04/15/fighting-hatred-together-or-setting-communities-apart

6.213 NAMP's London branch has praised[231] an individual[232] who has previously supported the founder and leaders of Hamas.[233] Further, Finsbury Park Mosque (of which this individual is the chair of trustees), had until recently a named member of Hamas' politburo[234] serving as a trustee, although the mosque deny having known of this connection.[235] NAMP's London branch has also shared 5Pillars articles online.[236] This is a website that on other occasions has espoused Islamist views.[237] NAMP London has referred to

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In 2013, Shaykh Shams Ad Duha – a speaker at the NAMP/MEND event – described homosexuality as a "vice among vices" as reported by The Telegraph. In response to a question about whether infidels should be killed, Ad Duha responded by saying that 'there is no yes or no answer". See: Camilla Tominey, 'Madrassa ousted from secondary school following lesson telling Muslim girls to have children, not careers', The Telegraph, 13 February 2019, available at: https://web.archive.org/web/20190213222818/https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/02/13/madrassa-ousted-secondary-school-following-lesson-telling-muslim/; 'Banking Restrictions on Extremism-Linked Muslim Groups', Centre for the Response to Radicalisation and Terrorism (briefing), 17 November 2014, available at: https://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Banking-Restrictions-on-Extremism-Linked-Muslim-Groups.pdf

231 MPS-Association of Muslim Police (@AMP_MPS), Twitter, 17 May 2019, available at: https://twitter.com/AMP_MPS/status/1129498483340320768; Finsbury Park Mosque Facebook, 18 May 2019, available at: https://www.facebook.com/176146012559350/photos/a.244488482391769/1358550760985530/?type=3&theater

232 NAMP's London branch tweeted "Amp Chair at Finsbury Park Mosque for the Iftar Interfaith event. Fantastic work by Mohammed Kozbar and Mosque committee [sic] in bringing the community together. Thank you for inviting me to address the wonderful guests." See: MPS-Association of Muslim Police (@AMP_MPS), 17 May 2019, available at: https://twitter.com/AMP_MPS/status/1129498069110841346. The reference here is in relation to the tweet about Kozbar, and not to the accompanying photographs featuring other individuals.

233 'Mohammed Kozbar at the grave of Hamas leader Ahmed Yassin', Harry's Place, 12 May 2018, available at: http://hurryupharry.net/2018/05/13/mohammed-kozbar-of-the-finsbury-park-mosque-and-lawfare-silencing/mohammed-kozbar-at-the-grave-of-hamas-leader-ahmed-yassin/; 'UK pro-Palestinian activist deported from Israel', BBC News, 13 March 2017, available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-39253243

234 'Photos: A delegation headed by Abu Marzouq concludes a visit to Russia', Hamas.ps, 21 September 2017, available at: https://web.archive.org/web/20190510055317/http://hamas.ps/ar/post/7941

235 David Brown, Catherine Philip and Richard Spencer, 'Finsbury mosque leader Mohammed Sawalha part of Hamas politburo', The Times, 7 November 2017, available at: https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/finsbury-mosque-leader-mohammed-sawalha-part-of-hamas-politburo-0cdn3gs80; David Brown, 'Hamas leader quits Finsbury Park mosque board after watchdog inquiry, 11 January 2019, available at: https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/hamas-leader-mohammed-sawalha-quits-finsbury-park-mosque-board-after-watchdog-inquiry-wj5qvdzmc

236 5Pillars (@5Pillarsuk), Twitter, 5 February 2019, available at: https://twitter.com/5Pillarsuk/status/1092723551109632000/retweets; 5Pillars (@5Pillarsuk), Twitter, 13 June 2018, available at: https://twitter.com/5Pillarsuk/status/1006916734501163010/retweets

237 One example of Islamist content produced by 5Pillars includes a video condemning liberal Muslim activists, claiming that they wish to "Delegitimise the concept of a Caliphate", "Erase the concept of physical Jihad", "Invalidate the Islamic penal code", and "Downplay the concept of Ummah in favour of national identity". See: 5Pillars, 'What do "Muslim reformers" want to change about Islam?', YouTube, 17 November 2017, available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nw0E-gRkKbE

MEND (see footnote 186) as a "partner"[238] and its chair spoke at a MEND event in 2018.[239]

6.214 The founding chair[240] of NAMP's West Midlands branch has shared conspiracy theories about the origins of al-Qa'ida and Islamic State,[241] and promoted content which called for the destruction of Israel and described Jews as "filth".[242] He also shared a video of a talk given by a cleric who has previously praised Hamas[243] and a post from ex-Guantanamo Bay detainee Moazzam Begg, now of CAGE.[244] Begg's post criticised Muslim leaders who develop community outreach projects, claiming that, by doing so, they are "adopt[ing] the language of the oppressors".[245]

6.215 I was disturbed to learn that this individual has worked with government departments on counter-terrorism and security policy.[246] In 2020, he authored a paper for NAMP advising

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[238] MPS – Association of Muslim Police (@AMP_MPS), Twitter, 26 June 2018, available at: https://twitter.com/AMP_MPS/status/1011699995769270272; MPS – Association of Muslim Police (@AMP_MPS), Twitter, 26 June 2018, available at: https://twitter.com/AMP_MPS/status/1011744154651676672

[239] 'Parliamentarians celebrate launch of report exploring and defining Islamophobia', MEND, 27 June 2018, available at: https://www.mend.org.uk/parliamentarians-celebrate-launch-report-exploring-defining-islamophobia

[240] 'Muslim police association launched in Midlands', Asian Image, 24 January 2008, available at: https://www.asianimage.co.uk/news/1993121.muslim-police-association-launched-in-midlands

[241] Rizwan Mustafa, Facebook, 15 June 2017, available at: https://www.facebook.com/rizwan.mustafa.1610/posts/1909228295995822; Dr. Rizwan Mustafa, 'Terrorism, Counter Terrorism & Da'esh', LinkedIn, 8 May 2017, available at: https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/terrorism-counter-daesh-rizwan-mustafa

[242] Screenshot of this individual's Facebook post, 19 July 2014. The post shares a video that contains the following call: "Where is the Caliph of the Muslims? Don't you care that the Jews are defiling the place of the Prophet's nocturnal journey with their filth? The Jews are the most hostile people towards the believers."

[243] Video of aforementioned cleric, Zahir Mahmood, praising Hamas can be found here: Habibi, 'Zahir Mahmood – "Hamas are freedom fighters", YouTube, 19 October 2011, available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t4jW5ytB1Lo

[244] Screenshot of this individual's Facebook post, 31 December 2017.

[245] Moazzam Begg criticises "scholars and leaders who bow down to and allow the internalisation of anti-Muslim hatred and adopt the language of the oppressors and set up community outreach projects because we're getting a bad press – instigated by those very people who demonise Islam to begin with."

[246] Screenshot of this individual standing outside of Number 10 alongside the caption 'A great day today spent with colleagues at the Ministry of Defence and then a passing visit to Downing Street. Talking terrorism, counter-terrorism and security. KhalMarina.com #counterterrorism #terrorism #ministryofdefence #DowningStreet @DefenceHQ', 1 May 2019. Further screenshot from the National Prevent Co-ordinator thanking the aforementioned individual for a meeting about his research, adding 'I'm committed to developing our teams through research to shape their continuous development as Prevent professionals', 20 May 2019. See also: 'Dr Rizwan Mustafa', Khal Marina, available at: https://www.khalmarina.com/dr-rizwan-mustafa

Counter Terrorism Policing to drop the terms 'Islamism' and 'jihadism', which was later discussed at a meeting attended by senior policing figures.[247]

6.216 Unsurprisingly then, I heard concerns raised around whether those working in Prevent have sufficient knowledge of extremism. Some alleged that not enough Prevent practitioners understood the ideology that drove various forms of extremism, and how some authorities were not aware that they were engaging with, or being advised by, those in extremist groups that operate legally.

6.217 I understand the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) is considering work on how it engages across communities, which is welcome. I am told this work will include guiding principles for engagement. I would encourage the government to consider whether those who spread disinformation about Prevent, and those who discourage others from making referrals to Prevent, should be considered appropriate partners for Prevent. I do not believe they are.

6.218 There is a role for DLUHC in considering how government should engage with communities. Improving the government approach to engaging with communities is vital, as engagement (alongside receiving funding) is a key way in which extremist groups seek to 'mainstream' their ideas.

6.219 I found examples of inconsistency across Prevent delivery around extremist ideology.

6.220 Some Channel panels may consider taking up a case where an individual is interested in extremism, and extremist activity, but is not being radicalised into terrorism. Whereas a panel in another area of the country may make an alternative decision and not take on a case with the same considerations.

6.221 Similarly, following a marked increase in recorded hate crimes (39,130 in 2013, up to 105,090 by 2020),[248] Channel chairs have noted this had led to an increase in Channel case load, without direct evidence that those referred are being radicalised or on a path towards terrorism.

6.222 Throughout our evidence gathering, views as to whether hate crime should enter the Prevent space were mixed.

6.223 Some felt this area should be separate from the counter-terrorism infrastructure and was better placed within community cohesion work. Others saw hate crime either as on a

[247] Dominic Kennedy, 'Police may drop "Islamist" term when describing terror attacks', The Times, July 20 2020, available at: https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/police-may-drop-term-islamist-when-describing-terror-attacks-7pjsf8pn7

[248] House of Commons Library, 'Hate Crime Statistics: Briefing Paper Number 8537', 2020, page 3

continuum to extremism, and a potential path to future radicalisation for some individuals,[249] or that it was right that Prevent moved more towards a cohesion and integration agenda, as local authorities became more involved.

6.224 While each case will be assessed on its merits, the overall direction of travel for Prevent should be to focus on its counter-terrorism mission. An emphasis on hate crime, as vital as that is for society to tackle, risks distracting from Prevent's core purpose.

6.225 During this review's evidence gathering period, the Home Office undertook a restructuring which saw the Homeland Security Group take on the Counter-Extremism Directorate. This move of counter-extremism into the Homeland Security Group, which deals with terrorism and organised crime, draws extremism into closer alignment with Prevent work. The restructuring saw the Extremism Disruption Unit brought into Prevent.

6.226 Provided it is suitably forward-leaning and adopts a wide enough threshold to capture key extremist groups and individuals, the Extremism Disruptions Unit should serve as a key part of the response of tackling extremists below the terrorism threshold.

6.227 I am aware that when local authorities take on this work they could face 'substantial legal or reputational risk' and so require further support and guidance from government on disruptions work.

Perceptions of Prevent

6.228 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.[250]

6.229 The Prevent Attitudes Survey, conducted in July 2019, showed that among the public who had a favourable opinion there were several reasons for having done so: including

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[249] 'Operating with Impunity | Hateful extremism: The need for a legal framework', Summary Version, The Commission for Countering Extremism, 24 February 2021, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/963157/CCE_Operating_with_Impunity_Summary.pdf

[250] For example, see: Mubaraz Ahmed, Sam Alvis, 'Past, Prevent, and Future: Improving Prevent for a New Generation', page 16, available at: https://institute.global/sites/default/files/2020-09/Tony%20Blair%20Institute%2C%20Past%2C%20Prevent%20and%20Future%20FINAL.pdf; 'Listening to British Muslims: policing, extremism and Prevent', Crest Advisory, 2020, available at: https://b9cf6cd4-6aad-4419-a368-724e7d1352b9.usrfiles.com/ugd/b9cf6c_d12a4911772d4e04a683b69561c86501.pdf;

ICM Unlimited, 'Prevent: Public Knowledge and Interactions: A research report from ICM summarising key findings', August 2019, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/930110/Annex_B_-_Prevent_Survey_findings_report__1_.pdf

the strategy's safeguarding function (51%), early intervention capability (46%) and positive effect on public safety (44%).

6.230 Data on support for the principle of targeting particular communities or groups according to risk is mixed. Over a third (36%) of British Muslims polled by Crest in a 2020 poll said they supported the principle of Prevent being focussed in large part on Muslims communities due to the threat of Islamist terrorism, while a further 38% said that while they also supported this principle, they had some concerns about it. One in eight (13%) said they did not support this approach. Of those who expressed concerns, the most commonly expressed was "people associate Islam with terrorism" (59%), followed by "it means all Muslims are treated as suspects" (53%) and "it is unfair on innocent Muslims" (52%). These concerns were broadly shared by the general public.

6.231 Evidence suggests that greater understanding or proximity to the strategy engenders greater support for the programme, both in principle and in practice. The Prevent Attitudes Survey conducted in July 2019, for example, showed a majority of the public polled, (58%) reported a positive view of Prevent, compared to 8% who viewed it unfavourably.[251]

6.232 The analysis showed that a greater understanding of Prevent is likely to lead to increased levels of support. Respondents were asked how much they knew about Prevent, with the results showing that four in five (80%) of the general public who reported knowing the strategy 'very well' had a favourable opinion of it.[252] This research does not negate the concerns raised by those who have an in-depth knowledge of Prevent, but it does suggest that those with limited knowledge of the policy are more likely to perceive it negatively. The government should consider this an important finding when it considers how best to build trust in Prevent.

6.233 As I have noted, Prevent has been the subject of vociferous criticism.

6.234 In the course of this review, I heard from many higher education professionals who felt that the Prevent Duty was stifling open discussion, particularly for Muslim students. Examples cited included lecturers avoiding certain topics of discussion for fear of needing to make a referral, and a reduced level of trust between students and staff.

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[251] 'Prevent: Public Knowledge and Interactions: A research report from ICM summarising key findings', August 2019, paragraph 3.2, available at: https://www.icmunlimited.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Prevent-Survey_Summary-of-findings-FINAL.pdf

[252] 'Prevent: Public Knowledge and Interactions: A research report from ICM summarising key findings', August 2019, paragraph 11, available at: https://www.icmunlimited.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Prevent-Survey_Summary-of-findings-FINAL.pdf

6.235 One common misconception about the statutory duty is that it applies to individuals, as opposed to the specified authorities outlined in the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015.[253] This leads to fears that, for example, individual teachers and healthcare workers have 'a duty to report' and will be sanctioned if they fail to do so.

6.236 One respondent stated that allegations that Prevent stifles freedom of expression form a significant element of extremist narratives about the strategy.

6.237 A small number of education institutions appear to have cited Prevent to censor individuals who have raised unorthodox, contentious or unpopular opinions. It is important to state that doing so is completely unacceptable and in direct contravention of duty guidance. In the future, such concerns ought to be independently assessed, on a case-by-case basis, by the compliance unit proposed in this review.

6.238 Another repeated criticism was of the programme's lack of transparency around data use. Respondents suggested that this lack of transparency resulted in individuals who would otherwise benefit being less likely to agree to participate in Channel. There were also concerns around how personal data was used and shared with other agencies, particularly as individuals unaware of being referred to Prevent cannot consent to their personal data being used or shared.

6.239 A number of submissions to my call for evidence outlined concerns that Prevent was discriminatory and leading to unfair targeting of certain ethnic or religious communities. This was also highlighted as a major theme throughout evidence gathering and engagement sessions, with respondents noting that historic delivery of the programme

[253] However individual teachers have a duty to report safeguarding concerns as set out in statutory 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' guidance. See: GOV.UK, 'Keeping children safe in education', 26 March 2015 [last updated: 1 September 2022], available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2

had led to a perception that it unfairly targeted Muslims. To some extent this criticism has been acknowledged by Prevent itself, most notably in the 2011 Strategy.[254]

6.240 Several respondents raised a supposed conflation between safeguarding and state securitisation, including the appropriate role of the police in Prevent and Channel. Some suggested that Channel is not really voluntary: there is a perception that individuals get referred to police and social services if they do not consent and that as a scheme to prevent terrorism, referees are themselves 'criminalised'. This, in turn, was making some communities reluctant to engage.

6.241 Some respondents even raised the perception of Prevent as 'spying' with a sense that funding for community resilience and engagement activities sometimes sat awkwardly with the more targeted referral system, and contributed to perceptions Prevent was about surveillance.

6.242 But there is a conflict of views. At one end of the spectrum, I heard 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. These voices were especially prominent in the wake of the murder of Sir David Amess MP in October 2021, after it was reported in the media that the perpetrator had previously been referred to Prevent in 2014.[255]

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[254] HM Government, 'Prevent Strategy 2011', pages 7, 40 and 43, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf – These claims were given extra weight by a 2017 admission of discrimination made by Bedfordshire Council after settling a judicial review claim. This occurred after two young brothers were interviewed by police officers after one had told his teacher that they had been bought a toy gun as a present. The visit was not in a Prevent capacity, and no further action was taken. However, the claim was brought on several grounds including that the council's Prevent duty policy was unlawful "because it lacked detail and required action to be taken in too wide a range of circumstances". As a result of the case, the local education authority changed its guidance removing the mandatory requirement to refer all concerns over radicalisation to police, rather requiring staff to exercise professional judgement and consider other options. 'Council settles judicial review over "unlawful" application of Prevent strategy', Local Government Lawyer, 1 February 2017, available at: https://www.localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/child-protection/392-children-protection-news/33219-council-settles-judicial-review-over-unlawful-application-of-prevent-strategy; Esther Addley and Alexandra Topping, 'Council admits racially discriminating against two boys over Prevent toy gun referral', The Guardian, 27 January 2017, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/jan/27/bedfordshire-local-education-authority-admits-racial-discrimination-brothers-toy-gun-school-police

[255] Vikram Dodd and Dan Sabbagh, 'David Amess killing: suspect referred to Channel counter-terror scheme in 2014', The Guardian, 19 October 2021, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/oct/19/david-amess-killing-suspect-referred-to-channel-counter-terror-scheme-in-2014. This came in the context of other terrorist offenders who had previously been involved with Prevent or DDP prior to carrying out attacks, such as those in Parsons Green in 2017 and Fishmongers Hall in 2019.

6.243 One article described Prevent as "a national security strategy with a parish hall mentality", being run at the whims "of local authorities with wildly varying political complexions, resources, expertise and appetite when it comes to dealing with the threat of violent extremism."[256]

6.244 Another called Prevent "a vast sprawling blancmange of a programme" and a "great bureaucracy of lost purpose" that had "lost the desire or direction to keep its eye on the goal of tackling Islamist extremism".[257]

6.245 Concerns of Prevent being poor value for money are not new. This sense of lost purpose contributed to a 2009 think tank report, based upon a series of freedom of information requests (FOIs), that criticised Prevent for providing grants to initiatives including a cricket club, a 'multi-cultural food festival', a rap workshop, and a 'prophetic medicine' session.[258]

6.246 The sentiment was echoed in a newspaper article that described Prevent as a "cash cow which any enterprising Muslim group could tap into". It warned "if you privileged the Muslim community it would not be long before other faith groups would notice and get aggrieved themselves.'[259]

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[256] Ian Acheson, 'Stopping terrorists starts with Prevent – but an overhaul is badly needed', CapX, 19 October 2021, available at: https://capx.co/stopping-terrorists-starts-with-prevent-but-an-overhaul-is-badly-needed/

[257] Douglas Murray, 'Britain's fatal unwillingness to confront Islamic extremism', The Spectator, 23 October 2021, available at: https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/britains-fatal-unwillingness-to-confront-islamic-extremism

[258] 'Council Spending Uncovered II | No.5: The Prevent Strategy', The Taxpayers' Alliance, 8 September 2009, available at: https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/taxpayersalliance/pages/5596/attachments/original/1438000210/Prevent.pdf?1438000210: It should be noted that while sports activities continues to be a running theme across several Prevent-funded CSOs, Prevent no longer funds the other listed initiatives.

[259] Douglas Murray, 'The Prevent strategy: a textbook example of how to alienate just about everybody', The Telegraph, 31 March 2010, available at: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/7540456/The-Prevent-strategy-a-textbook-example-of-how-to-alienate-just-about-everybody.html

The case of Harbi Ali

On October 15, 2021, Ali Harbi Ali brutally stabbed the Conservative MP, Sir David Amess, to death in a church where the MP was conducting his constituency surgery in Southend-on-Sea. He then waited for the arrival of the police hoping, he claimed later, to be shot and become a "martyr".[260] Ali was instead arrested by two police officers and lived to be tried in court. This enabled the authorities to trace the development of this terrorist and the state's failures to detect him.

Ali's parents moved to the UK from Somalia in the 1990s. Ali grew up in Croydon, South London, and attended the local Church of England primary school.[261] At his secondary school in Purley, South London, Ali was considered a good pupil and planned to study medicine.[262]

Between 2014 and 2016, however, Ali began to study Islamic State propaganda online.[263] In 2014, whilst at secondary school, Ali was referred to Prevent. Ali described his experience with Prevent in the following way: "I just knew to nod my head and say yes and they would leave me alone afterwards and they did."[264]

[260] Courts and Tribunals Judiciary, 'R v Ali Sentencing Remarks', 13 April 2022, available at: https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/R-v-Ali-sentencing-remarks-130422.pdf#:~:text=ALI%20HARBI%20ALI%20SENTENCING%20REMARKS%20The%20Defendant%2C%20who,on%20overwhelming%20evidence%2C%20of%20two%20grave%20crimes%2C%20namely%3A

[261] Martin Evans, Coin Freeman and Izzy Lyons, 'Father of alleged jihadi suspected of killing Sir David Amess had himself faced Islamist threats', The Telegraph, 18 October 2021, available at: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2021/10/17/father-alleged-jihadi-suspected-killing-sir-david-amess-had

[262] Jamie Grierson, 'Ali Harbi Ali: an academic high-flyer who fell into extremism', The Guardian, 11 April 2022, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/apr/11/ali-harbi-ali-an-academic-high-flyer-who-fell-into-extremism-david-amess

[263] Courts and Tribunals Judiciary, 'R v Ali Sentencing Remarks', 13 April 2022, available at: https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/R-v-Ali-sentencing-remarks-130422.pdf#:~:text=ALI%20HARBI%20ALI%20SENTENCING%20REMARKS%20The%20Defendant%2C%20who,on%20overwhelming%20evidence%2C%20of%20two%20grave%20crimes%2C%20namely%3A

[264] Izzy Lyons, Camilla Turner and Claudia Rowan, 'Prevent is "failing", say terror experts after murderer Ali Harbi Ali deceived officials', The Telegraph, 11 April 2022, available at: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2022/04/11/prevent-failing-say-terror-experts-murderer-ali-harbi-ali-deceived/

Ali stated in court that his initial intent was to travel to Syria in 2015 to join the Islamic State's 'caliphate', which had been declared a year previously. However, his inability to do so meant that he instead chose to target an MP who voted for airstrikes against Islamic State in September 2014. He considered a variety of MPs, carrying out reconnaissance on cabinet minister Michael Gove's home eight times.[265] He ultimately settled upon Sir David Amess. Ali cited Sir David's membership in the Conservative Friends of Israel group as a "big problem" for him.[266] It was an attack he had planned for over two years.[267]

Ali said he hoped that his murder of Sir David sent "a message to his colleagues" – i.e. fellow Members of Parliament – to "cease hostilities with Muslims". He showed no remorse for the killing of Sir David at his trial, saying "If I thought I did anything wrong, I wouldn't have done it".[268] Ali considered his attack an act of revenge on behalf of the Islamic State.[269] He was sentenced to life in prison.

It is clearly difficult for Prevent practitioners to always know which of those referred into the programme are likely to become most dangerous. However, Ali's was not the only example in recent history of a terrorist act committed by someone who had previous contact with Prevent. That underlines the argument made in this review that to prevent such horrors, better training of practitioners is required, and its most effective programmes need appropriate resources.

The campaign against Prevent

6.247 From early in Prevent's history, there has been a concerted campaign to undermine it. I have seen evidence of how this campaign has systematically used disinformation to play

[265] Courts and Tribunals Judiciary, 'R v Ali Sentencing Remarks', 13 April 2022, available at: https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/R-v-Ali-sentencing-remarks-130422.pdf#:~:text=ALI%20HARBI%20ALI%20SENTENCING%20REMARKS%20The%20Defendant%2C%20who,on%20overwhelming%20evidence%2C%20of%20two%20grave%20crimes%2C%20namely%3A

[266] 'Sir David Amess: Man found guilty of murdering MP', BBC News, 11 April 2022, available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-essex-61026210

[267] Courts and Tribunals Judiciary, 'R v Ali Sentencing Remarks', 13 April 2022, available at: https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/R-v-Ali-sentencing-remarks-130422.pdf#:~:text=ALI%20HARBI%20ALI%20SENTENCING%20REMARKS%20The%20Defendant%2C%20who,on%20overwhelming%20evidence%2C%20of%20two%20grave%20crimes%2C%20namely%3A

[268] BBC News, 'Sir David Amess: Terror suspect tells court he killed MP over Syria vote', available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-essex-60996062

[269] Courts and Tribunals Judiciary, 'R v Ali Sentencing Remarks', 13 April 2022, available at: https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/R-v-Ali-sentencing-remarks-130422.pdf#:~:text=ALI%20HARBI%20ALI%20SENTENCING%20REMARKS%20The%20Defendant%2C%20who,on%20overwhelming%20evidence%2C%20of%20two%20grave%20crimes%2C%20namely%3A

on sensitivities within minority communities and sentiments in parts of the political spectrum to mobilise opposition to the scheme.

From early in Prevent's history, there has been a concerted campaign to undermine it.

6.248 The most extreme elements in this campaign portray Prevent as authoritarian and as a thinly veiled means of persecuting Muslims. In its most perverse form, the arguments of the anti-Prevent campaign have claimed that Prevent and the UK's counter-terrorism apparatus is responsible for alienating and pushing individuals toward terrorism.[270]

6.249 Those behind this campaign rarely explain what they would put in place of Prevent, and at times their spokespeople have seemed to underplay the seriousness of terrorism and extremism.

6.250 The campaign against Prevent has included some civil liberties groups and activists who seemingly, as a matter of principle, oppose a state-run scheme to counter specific ideas, attitudes, and non-criminal behaviours, no matter how light touch the scheme's methods.

6.251 Alongside civil liberties opposition to Prevent, there has been a much louder and more concerted campaign by a movement of organisations, some of which have Islamist connections. Although this movement has also couched some of its opposition in the language of civil liberties, its campaign against Prevent is observably different.[271] It has been particularly damaging because of the way in which it has focussed much of its effort within British Muslim communities.[272] This involves discouraging some in those communities from engaging or working with Prevent, while also stirring up a sense of grievance and mistrust towards wider British society, non-Muslims, as well as against those Muslims who do engage with Prevent and counter-extremism.

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[270] CAGE, 'Jihadi John: "Radicalised" by Britain', 26 February 2015, available at: www.cageuk.org/press-release/jihadi-john-radicalised-britain; The Muslim Council of Britain, 'The Impact of Prevent on Muslim Communities', February 2016, available at: http://archive.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/MCB-CT-Briefing2.pdf

[271] 'Extreme Prejudice', The Times, 3 June 2017, available at: https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/extreme-prejudice-5zwrjxhw3

[272] As noted elsewhere in the review, demonisation of Prevent is recognised to be used strategically by Islamist groups for the purposes of fomenting grievances against the State. See section titled 'Deep Dive: Training for Intervention Providers' on page 102.

6.252 I have seen no equivalent campaign against Prevent, either in scale or impact, from activists on the Extreme Right.

6.253 Furthermore, certain elements of the campaign against Prevent appear to have additional motivations. In the very worst cases, some proponents of this campaign, such as CAGE, have excused and legitimised violence by Islamist terrorists.[273] Certain Islamist activists within the anti-Prevent campaign may disavow violence, yet promote the narratives and sentiments of violent extremists.

6.254 The Islamist campaign against Prevent started relatively early in the scheme's development. In 2008, the revolutionary Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir published a report framing the strategy as an attempt by the state to gain "control over the Muslim community in Britain", to bring about a "reformation of Islam", and to "ban Islamic ideas".[274] These lines of argument have set the tone for much of the campaign against Prevent ever since.

6.255 It is clear to me that some opposition to Prevent is driven by the recognition that a successful counter-radicalisation strategy threatens the influence and recruitment capabilities of such activist groups. There are also those who may not themselves be extremists, but who nonetheless maintain links and sympathies with Islamists. They perhaps see encouraging mistrust of Prevent as a way to secure influence and standing within parts of their communities, presenting themselves as defenders of British Muslims.

6.256 I heard time and again that this was an issue that needed to be gripped. A senior figure within counter-extremism expressed their opinion that some of these arguments against Prevent were "malicious" and "not made in good faith". It appears to me that campaign groups have often relied on a small number of ultimately debunked stories to encourage misperceptions of the scheme.[275]

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[273] For example, CAGE director Adnan Siddiqui told the Home Affairs Select Committee in 2015 that suicide bombings are "a price worth paying" when asked about an al-Qa'ida affiliate truck bombing in Syria. See: Commission for Countering Extremism, 'Challenging Hateful Extremism', October 2019, page 44, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/874101/200320_Challenging_Hateful_Extremism.pdf; Laura Hughes, The Telegraph, 'Cage: In some cases suicide bombings are 'a price worth paying'', available at: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/12001952/Cage-In-some-cases-suicide-bombings-are-a-price-worth-paying.html

[274] Hizb ut-Tahrir, 'The British Government's "Preventing Violent Extremism" & "Community Cohesion" Agenda', July 2008, available at: http://www.hizb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2008/07/htb_pve_2008.pdf

[275] Rupert Sutton, 'Myths and Misunderstandings: Understanding Opposition to the Prevent Strategy', Henry Jackson Society, 5 October 2016, available at: https://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Myths-and-Misunderstandings-PREVENT-Report-Final-29.09.2016.pdf

It appears to me that campaign groups have often relied on a small number of ultimately debunked stories to encourage misperceptions of the scheme.

6.257 One example would be a 2016 story that was reported widely across the media as a schoolboy being referred to Prevent and subsequently being interrogated by counter-terrorism officers for wearing a 'Free Palestine' badge.[276] Yet the school vehemently denied this, outlining they "were not concerned about the nature of the badges and wristbands" and that "at no point was the student told not to talk about Palestine in school".[277]

6.258 At the time of writing, MEND was still citing this case on their website as an example of "schools excluding students and calling police for supporting Palestine".[278]

6.259 One Prevent co-ordinator told this review that Prevent's effectiveness would likely have been improved "if it were not for the many anti-Prevent stories that have been promoted by those opposed to the strategy who often accuse Prevent of creating a climate of fear and targeting certain communities".

6.260 Academic research found that some Muslim students feel they must self-censor their discussions and alter their behaviours to avoid becoming the object of suspicion, due to what I judge to be largely false perceptions around Prevent statutory requirements in universities.[279] This is another reason why the falsehoods around Prevent must be effectively countered.

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[276] 'Police quiz teen over Palestine badge', The Times, February 14 2016, available at: https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/police-quiz-teen-over-palestine-badge-9zq9jh7zzrl

[277] 'Challney Boys denies claims student was referred to Prevent for wearing "Free Palestine" badge', Luton Today', 17 February 2016, available at: https://www.lutontoday.co.uk/education/challney-boys-denies-claims-student-was-referred-prevent-wearing-free-palestine-badge-1267066; David Toube, 'Did police really quiz this student over a 'free Palestine' badge?', July 7 2020, available at: https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/was-this-student-really-visited-by-police-for-wearing-a-free-palestine-badge-

[278] 'Schools excluding students and calling police for supporting Palestine', MEND, 25 June 2021, available at: https://www.mend.org.uk/schools-excluding-students-and-calling-police-for-supporting-palestine-2

[279] Matthew Guest, Alison Scott-Baumann, Sariya Cheruvallil-Contractor, Shuruq Naguib, Alisha Phoenix, Yenn Lee, Tarek Al Baghal, 'Islam and Muslims on UK University Campuses: Perceptions and Challenges', July 2020, page 6

6.261 I also heard that a number of anti-Prevent activists were closely interlinked and certain organisations did not want Prevent to succeed. CAGE and MEND were specifically cited on multiple occasions.[280] These same groups were described in the Commission for Countering Extremism's 2019 report as "abus[ing] and intimidate[ing] Muslims who work to counter Islamist extremism".[281] During the review the commission warned that the

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Prevent has been challenged in the courts on the basis that its application stifles freedom of speech. Salman Butt brought a judicial review against the Home Secretary in 2018, claiming that the Prevent guidance for universities went too far in advising institutions not to allow events to go ahead where the risk of radicalisation could not be eliminated. On 8 March 2019, the Court of Appeal dismissed all but one of the grounds raised by Dr Butt. Paragraph 11 of the Higher Education Prevent duty guidance was deemed unlawful as it was concluded the Home Secretary, when promulgating the guidance, had failed to comply with her duty under the Counter Terrorism and Security Act to have 'particular regard' to ensure freedom of speech. See Damien Gayle, 'UK's Prevent guidance to universities unlawful, court rules', The Guardian, 8 March 2019, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/mar/08/uks-prevent-guidance-to-universities-unlawful-court-rules

[280] In his book, Radicals (at times critical of Prevent), Jamie Bartlett observed that "Prevent has inadvertently allowed groups like CAGE, supported by a mixture of real and exaggerated stories, to position themselves as some kind of authentic voice of Muslim communities". Jamie Bartlett, 'Radicals: Outsiders changing the world', 2017.

[281] Commission for Countering Extremism, 'Challenging Hateful Extremism', October 2019, page 41, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/874101/200320_Challenging_Hateful_Extremism.pdf

That report cites the following accompanying material: "For example, in a tweet of 12 June 2019 CAGE labelled an activist of Somali heritage a "native informant" for saying that she was bored of non-Muslim women in the West defending the Burqa." (accessed 5 September 2019). See: CAGE (@UK_CAGE), Twitter, available at: https://twitter.com/UK_CAGE/status/1138865147102015489

In a tweet of 3 September 2017, CAGE called Faith Matters, which was founded by a Muslim and co-ordinates TellMAMA, a representative of the "native informant" industry (accessed: 5 September). See: CAGE (@UK_CAGE), Twitter, available at: https://twitter.com/UK_CAGE/status/904369173274513413

In a reply to a tweet of 15 May 2019, CAGE called the chair of the Islam and Liberty network a "native informant" for criticising the APPG on British Muslims' definition of Islamophobia (accessed: 5 September 2019). See: CAGE (@UK_CAGE), Twitter, available at: https://twitter.com/UK_CAGE/status/1129110317416558592

CAGE replied to a tweet on 20 October 2018, calling then Home Secretary, Sajid Javid, a "Poor uncle Tom" (accessed: 5 September 2019). See: CAGE (@UK_CAGE), Twitter, available at: https://twitter.com/UK_CAGE/status/1053706236020121600

In a Dispatches documentary from March 2018, it was reported that a member of MEND's staff called Sara Khan, Lead Commissioner for Countering Extremism, an "oreo". See: Channel 4, 'Dispatches: Who speaks for the Muslim community?', aired on 26 March 2018

MEND issued a rebuttal document in which they say that the speaker "accepts that the wording she used was wrong", before repeating "concerns" about PREVENT and the commissioner. See: MEND, 'Channel 4 Dispatches asks: "Who speaks for British Muslims?" MEND responds: Muslims speak for themselves', 27 March 2018, (accessed: 18 September 2019), available at: https://www.mend.org.uk/news/channel-4-dispatches-asks-speaks-british-muslims-mend-responds-muslims-speak/

arguments of groups such as CAGE, which portray Prevent as belonging to a "worldview that inevitably pitted Islam against the West", are "dangerous, insidious and conspiratorial, and those who propagate them should be challenged, exposed and held to account". I agree.

6.262 The Islamist campaign against Prevent has an international dimension, with campaigners from the UK joining with activists from overseas to denounce counter-terrorism policies in Western countries.[282] It is clear this internationalised campaign has seated its attack on Prevent and counter-terrorism policy within the charge of Islamophobia.[283]

6.263 The narrative portraying Prevent and wider counter-extremism efforts as Islamophobic is a powerful and damaging one. It is a narrative echoed frequently by elements of academia.[284] I observed that it even seems to have been internalised by elements of government, with bad-faith Islamist grievance narratives sometimes taken at face value.

6.264 Government officials need to be better informed about the anti-Prevent network to avoid legitimising drivers of the campaign. This points to the importance of offices such as RICU and Homeland Security Analysis and Insight including monitoring and briefings on the more extreme elements within the anti-Prevent campaign.[285]

On 24 March 2015, the official MEND account called "Muslim groups" that journalist Andrew Gilligan had not "attacked… sell-outs and Uncle Toms". See: MEND Community (@mendcommunity), Twitter, available at: https://twitter.com/mendcommunity/status/580484732338757632

In an open letter on the appointment of Amber Rudd MP as Home Secretary in 2017, MEND CEO Sufyan Ismail urged her to "Deal with legitimate Muslim organisations, not government stooges". See: Sufyan Ismail, 'Dear Amber Rudd: Here are 10 ways you can give Muslims the full protection they deserve', Middle East Eye, 28 June 2017, (accessed: 5 September 2019), available at: https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/dear-amber-rudd-here-are-10-ways-you-can-give-muslims-full-protection-they-deserve

[282] Policy Exchange, 'UK Figures and Islamists Participate in International Conference on Islamophobia and the War on Terror', 2021, available at: https://policyexchange.org.uk/uk-figures-and-islamists-participate-in-international-conference-on-islamophobia-and-the-war-on-terror/

[283] Ibid

[284] Dr. Alexander Melagrou-Hitchens, 'The UK Prevent Strategy: A Literature Review, 2011-2021', Counter Extremism Group, October 2022, available at: https://counterextremism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/UK_Prevent_Strategy_11-21_WEB.pdf

[285] A recent account of the campaign against Prevent by the think tank Policy Exchange describes the shortcomings of official responses and urges the creation of a communications unit to counter disinformation and propaganda against the scheme. Sir John Jenkins, Dr Damon L. Perry, Dr Paul Stott, 'Delegitimising Counter-Terrorism: The Activist Campaign To Demonise Prevent', 2022, available at: https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Delegitimising-Counter-Terrorism.pdf

6.265 In its 2019 manifesto, the government stated it would "ensure that those who work in countering extremism are protected from threats and intimidation".[286] According to the Commission for Countering Extremism, 78% of "counter-extremist campaigners and practitioners…have experienced abuse, harassment or intimidation because of the work that they do".[287]

6.266 I remain alarmed at the extent to which practitioners are routinely subjected to abuse, harassment and intimidation for working with Prevent.[288] I was particularly concerned to learn about Muslim individuals working in Prevent even suffering death threats. Some Muslims supportive of Prevent are also being cowed into silence by this abuse.

I remain alarmed at the extent to which practitioners are routinely subjected to abuse, harassment and intimidation for working with Prevent.

6.267 It is unacceptable to allow Prevent staff to suffer this, and not to counter rigorously those making such attacks. It is my view that Prevent is not doing enough to support these practitioners.

[286] 'Conservative Party Manifesto 2019', The Conservative Party, 2019, available at: https://www.conservatives.com/our-plan/conservative-party-manifesto-2019

[287] Sara Khan has outlined that: "[W]e all understand the anti-Muslim hatred that is perpetuated by those on the political right and the Far Right. As a Muslim woman, I've had my fair share of threats and abuse from those quarters. But I, and many others, have also experienced increasing anti-Muslim hatred from the Left and from fellow Muslims." Sara Khan, 'We Are Still Ignoring Victims Of Anti-Muslim Prejudice', Huffington Post, 3 December 2018, available at: https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/islamophobia-extremism-hate-crime-racism_uk_5c0566e8e4b066b5cfa475a3

[288] Liam Duffy, 'The "No True Muslim" Fallacy: How Muslims are intimidated and marginalised for supporting counter-extremism initiatives', Civitas, October 2019, available at: https://www.civitas.org.uk/publications/the-no-true-muslim-fallacy/

The case of Salman and Hashem Abedi

Neither Salman Abedi, the Manchester Arena bomber, nor his younger brother Hashem, who assisted with the bombing, were ever referred to Prevent. The case of the Abedi brothers is, however, an important one for understanding the challenges with which Prevent must contend. My purpose in outlining the details of this case is not to judge where failings occurred, but rather to point to where Prevent can best focus its attention in the future.

On 22 May 2017, Salman Abedi detonated an explosive device at the Manchester Arena, murdering 22 people and injuring hundreds more. Many of the victims were children and young people. Salman was killed in the blast and his younger brother, then in Libya, is now serving a lengthy prison sentence in Britain for his role in planning the attack.

The background to this attack is long, forcing questions about whether different actions might have been taken by multiple authorities. These stretch back to 1993 when Abedi's parents, associates of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), were granted asylum in this country. They continue up to the night of the bombing, when Salman Abedi was seen praying outside the venue with a large backpack. A security guard thought Abedi looked suspicious, but decided not to act for fear of being branded racist.[289] I have heard such fears expressed often in the course of this review. They can, as in this case, have catastrophic consequences.

From Prevent's perspective, the question of when Salman and Hashem Abedi started to radicalise is key. Information in the public domain suggests that Salman may have started to become more radical in 2013,[290] and that the plot itself began a year in advance, in May 2016.[291] For much of that period Salman was enrolled as a student at the University of Salford. This could have been an opportunity for someone to have observed signs of Salman's radicalisation, and to have made a referral.

[289] 'Security guard avoided Manchester Arena bomber "for fear of being racist"', The Guardian, 27 October 2020, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/oct/27/security-guard-avoided-manchester-arena-bomber-for-fear-of-being-called-racist

[290] 'Manchester Arena Inquiry: Hashem Abedi "more influential" than bomber', BBC News, 9 December 2021, available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-59598271

[291] Philip Willan, 'Manchester terrorist attack was planned via app', The Times, 14 August 2017, available at: https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/manchester-terrorist-attack-was-planned-via-app-ttldgq5wm

No referral was made, and during these years there was intense anti-Prevent activism at the university. In November 2015, the anti-Prevent campaign group MEND held an event there, hosted by the students' union.[292] Months later, in February 2016, the students' union passed a motion boycotting Prevent and committing to educate students about the "dangers" of the scheme.[293] In May of that year Salman dropped out of his course and, with his brother, began to take steps to plan their attack.

The evidence suggests the signs the brothers were becoming radicalised were there to see.

It is alleged that while at college Salman hit a schoolgirl because he considered her skirt immodest.[294] By 2015, both the brothers were said to have become outwardly more religious, changing the way they dressed.[295] Importantly, these changes were accompanied by statements that indicate the transformation was not simply religious, but also ideologically extreme. It is said that Salman had started to make remarks suggesting approval of suicide bombings,[296] and that he had cut himself off from certain friends and family whom he accused of being "kuffar".[297] A mutual friend reported that in 2015 both Salman and Hashem Abedi had indicated sympathy for Islamic State.[298] Such accounts suggest Prevent referrals from friends or family could have been particularly important.

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[292] Tom Wilson, 'Mend: "Islamists Masquerading as Civil Libertarians"', Henry Jackson Society, 2017, available at: http://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/HJS-Mend-Report-2.pdf

[293] 'University of Salford Students' Union | Agenda', 23 February 2016, available at: https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/nusdigital/document/documents/22582/9b862ccc32f3710cc593d39dc79e252c/Senate_Agenda_FEB16.pdf

[294] Chris Osuh, 'The making of a monster: How Manchester boy Salman Abedi became a mass murderer', Manchester Evening News, 19 September 2017, available at: https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/salman-abedi-manchester-arena-bomber-13601393

[295] Counter Extremism Project, 'Hashem Abedi', available at: https://www.counterextremism.com/extremists/hashem-abedi

[296] Robert Mendick, Gordon Rayner, Martin Evans, Hayley Dixon, 'Security services missed five opportunities to stop the Manchester bomber', The Telegraph, 25 May 2017, available at: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/05/24/security-services-missed-five-opportunities-stop-manchester/

[297] Jamie Roberts, 'Manchester: The Night of the Bomb – My search for Salman Abedi', The Times, available at: https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/manchester-the-night-of-thebomb-my-search-for-salman-abedi-x2zdq678f

[298] Counter Extremism Project, 'Hashem Abedi', available at: https://www.counterextremism.com/extremists/hashem-abedi

In the case of the Abedis, however, some immediate family members may have been a large part of the problem. I am aware that the public inquiry has been told that both their father and older brother may have had a radicalising influence on both Hashem and Salman.[299] Their father had returned to Libya in 2011 to fight against Gaddafi's forces with the LIFG, at that time a proscribed organisation.[300] In the following years, all three brothers made journeys to join their father. They spent time with militias and were pictured posing with heavy weaponry. In the summer of 2014, as the situation in Libya became more chaotic, the brothers were rescued with other British nationals by the Royal Navy.[301] Once again, it is reasonable to question why the authorities did not use this moment to examine the brothers' possible radicalisation risks.

The degree to which Islamist activities were a part of the community the brothers grew up in is an important matter. Their father had a prominent position at the mosque the family attended in Manchester and other significant local members of the LIFG also attended the mosque. The mosque was quick to condemn the Arena bombing but it is reported that at least five individuals who visited the mosque either travelled to Syria or have been convicted of terrorism offences.[302] A recording of a sermon delivered there in December 2016 appeared to show support for jihad and the Mujahideen in Syria and Iraq, while taking a critical tone towards those who "stayed behind". The sermon included anti-Western rhetoric, with the Imam claiming that Western countries were helping to kill Muslims. The Imam in question has denied that the comments were about armed jihad.[303]

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[299] 'Manchester Arena Inquiry: Hashem Abedi "more influential" than bomber', BBC News, 9 December 2021, available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-59598271

[300] Nazia Parveen and Chris Stephen, 'Where is the father of the Manchester Arena bomber?', The Guardian, 18 March 2020, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/mar/18/where-is-the-father-of-the-manchester-arena-bomber-ramadan-abedi-hashem; Home Office, 'Proscribed Terrorist Organisations', 20 August 2014, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/354891/ProscribedOrganisationsAug14.pdf

[301] 'Manchester Arena bomber was rescued from Libya by Royal Navy', The Guardian, 31 July 2018, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/jul/31/manchester-arena-bomber-was-rescued-from-libya-by-royal-navy

[302] Jamie Doward, Ian Cobain, Chris Stephen and Ben Quinn, 'How Manchester bomber Salman Abedi was radicalised by his links to Libya', The Guardian, 28 May 2017, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/may/28/salman-abedi-manchester-arena-bomber-radicalisation; 'Manchester mosque sermon "called for armed jihad", say scholars', BBC News, 16 August 2018, available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-44729727

[303] 'Manchester mosque sermon "called for armed jihad", say scholars', BBC News, 16 August 2018, available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-44729727

The radicalisation of the Abedi brothers may also be a reminder for Prevent about how influential in-person networks are, as well as geography, with certain neighbourhoods representing a focal point of extremism. Salman Abedi is reported to have associated with gangs in the Moss Side area of Manchester, the same circles from which a number of Islamic State terrorists had emerged.[304] Abedi is understood to have been acquainted with several individuals from Manchester who travelled to Syria to join Islamic State, most notably the prominent recruiter Raphael Hostey.[305]

Abedi's friendship with Abdalraouf Abdallah, also of Moss Side, may be of particular concern to Prevent. Abdallah had fought as part of the same brigade as Abedi's father in Libya in 2011.[306] Once back in the UK, Abdallah assisted those seeking to travel to Syria to join Islamic State. While Abdallah was serving a prison sentence for these crimes, Salman continued to visit and communicate with him on the secret phone that he had in prison.[307] This continued into early 2017 during the months ahead of the bombing. Abdallah has denied radicalising Abedi, and has described messages between them from 2014 in which they discussed martyrdom as "normal chit-chat".[308] About 1,300 messages passed between them. Considering the nature of Abdallah's convictions, it seems shocking that no attempt was ever made by counter-terrorism authorities to identify who Salman was.

There were other such failures. In September 2015 Salman Abedi's elder brother Ismail was examined when he landed at Heathrow. His phone was found to contain Islamic State propaganda, material celebrating Islamist violence and images of him and his father brandishing automatic weapons. Despite this, Ismail Abedi was allowed on his way and no further enquiries were made.

[304] Nazia Parveen, Steven Morris, Helen Pidd, Josh Halliday and Kate Connolly, 'Salman Abedi had connections to gangs and terrorists in Manchester', The Guardian, 25 May 2017, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/may/25/salman-abedi-had-connections-to-gangs-and-terrorists-in-manchester

[305] Eran Benedek, Neil Simon, 'The 2017 Manchester Bombing and the British-Libyan Jihadi Nexus', Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, May 2020, Vol 13, Issue 5, available at: https://ctc.usma.edu/the-2017-manchester-bombing-and-the-british-libyan-jihadi-nexus/

[306] Daniel De Simone, 'Manchester Arena Inquiry: Arena bomber's father part of militia, terrorist says', BBC News, 25 November 2021, available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-59417720

[307] Daniel De Simone, 'Manchester Arena Inquiry: Prisoner in touch with bomber to be released', BBC News, 26 November 2020, available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-55079754

[308] Daniel De Simone, 'Manchester Arena Inquiry: Arena bomber's father part of militia, terrorist says', BBC News, 25 November 2021, available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-59417720

Under its present configuration, Prevent also seeks to assist those who have already engaged in terrorism. Hashem Abedi may never be released from prison, but the commitment to attempt 'de-radicalisation' still stands. While in HMP Belmarsh, Hashem Abedi appears to have associated with the Parsons Green bomber Ahmed Hassan, and it is alleged that they were involved in an assault on a prison officer in May 2020.[309]

It is understood that Hashem is housed in the separation centre at HMP Frankland.[310] It is reported that Hashem is refusing to co-operate with efforts to persuade him to disengage from extremist ideology. On one occasion he refused to speak with a probation officer or intervention provider, accusing them of being an "enemy of Islam" and an "Islamophobe".[311]

The entire story of the Abedi brothers' conspiracy, the failures of the state, and their ability to commit mass murder is deeply disturbing.

The need to counter anti-Prevent campaigns

6.268 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.

6.269 At present, the Home Office works closely with the DfE and Counter Terrorism Policing with respect to Prevent communications. The Counter Terrorism Communications Forum, led by the Home Office, co-ordinates activity across government and agencies, covering Prevent and the other CONTEST strands. All three are members of the cross-Whitehall Prevent Engagement Group, led by the Home Office's Head of Communities and Engagement.

6.270 Through media monitoring the DfE is routinely made aware when high profile reporting regarding specific Prevent cases arises. In the event of a case of apparent misinformation relating to Prevent, the DfE will engage with its press office and Home Office Prevent communications teams on the story. The Home Office will often own the response, though which department should take the lead will ultimately be determined by the nature of the story. Outside of their departmental communications, the DfE says it encourages frontline Prevent practitioners to rebut misinformation as part of their training

[309] 'Hashem Abedi and Ahmed Hassan to face prison officer assault trial', BBC News, 5 May 2021, available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-56984568

[310] Jake Ryan, 'Exclusive: Inside Britain's first dedicated terrorist prison wing with sound-proofed cells to stop Islamic extremists trying to radicalise inmates on other wings', Daily Mail, 6 February 2022, available at: https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10480629/amp/Inside-Britains-dedicated-terrorist-prison-wing.html

[311] John Simpson, 'Manchester bomber's brother Hashem Abedi still radicalised', The Times, 29 July 2021, available at: https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/manchester-bombers-brother-hashem-abedi-still-radicalised-jmlmk57w9

and equips them with the relevant facts to do so. The department has also developed Prevent 'myth-buster' material in the past.

6.271 To be effective, 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.

6.272 Many of those who engaged with this review felt there needed to be more investment in communication campaigns to support local delivery teams, who often were at the forefront of countering misinformation. It was also felt that clearer messaging in communications campaigns was required. Some practitioners were unsure of whether any macro campaigns existed around the strategy, as opposed to smaller ones focussed on specific issues or narratives, while others noted that the burden on rebutting incorrect narratives fell to local delivery teams, who did not have strategic communications expertise, and did this work in addition to their day jobs.

6.273 There does not appear to be support for local Prevent partners from national teams around whom they should engage or how best to respond to criticism, or a cohesive policy to this effect.

6.274 A review by the Mayor of London's office on countering extremism in London in 2018–2019 also concluded the government needed to be faster and louder in countering inaccurate allegations about Prevent.[312] Counter Terrorism Policing's 2019 internal report on Prevent recommended a "refreshed communications strategy, underpinned by strategic clarity about what Prevent is and is not (and where it sits)". This report argued for a "rapid response unit", for "faster, more agile rebuttal" of online misinformation, and a clearer narrative for practitioners. I agree.

Improving how Prevent responds

6.275 The government needs to devote greater attention to building pride in Prevent, including by providing a more visible defence of both the strategy and its practitioners at all levels of government. There needs to be a proactive communications strategy for promoting supportive information about Prevent and sharing stories and evidence about the constructive influence of Prevent on people's lives and the nation's safety.

6.276 As part of this effort, I believe the government should create a dedicated unit within the Homeland Security Group that is able to develop a co-ordinated response for public

[312] Mayor of London, 'The London Countering Violent Extremism Programme Report', 2019, page 77, available at: https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/cve_strategy_20_8_19.pdf

communications and rapidly, and publicly, rebut misinformation and disinformation stories about Prevent.

6.277 This unit should particularly focus on media and social media communications to ensure that where possible, inaccurate claims and news stories about Prevent do not go unchallenged. This unit should share the positive impact of Prevent work, and tackle extremist anti-Prevent narratives.

6.278 As part of this team's day-to-day work, the unit would also need to co-ordinate with government departments to produce national resources that can be used locally to support CSOs and those delivering Prevent in local communities. This work could further be supported by campaigns and projects supported by RICU.

6.279 I believe this new unit is imperative, not just to maintain confidence in the system but also to support those working within it. The caricature of Prevent as an authoritarian and thinly veiled means of persecuting British Muslims is not only untrue, it is a grotesque insult to all those in the Prevent network doing such diligent work in preventing terrorism. It is also deeply unfair and unsettling to the overwhelming majority of Muslim citizens.

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Present and future threats

6.280 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. With this being the case, it is prudent to judge what possible threats this country will face in the coming years, so that Prevent can be better prepared to face them.

Far right and far left violence

6.281 The threat from the far right will endure and may metastasise. Encouragingly, Prevent pivoted extremely quickly to deal with this threat as it began to emerge, although, as I have noted, care is and will be required to ensure that the response is proportionate.

6.282 During the course of this review, Counter Terrorism Police revealed there had been two Left, Anarchist or Single Issue Terrorism (LASIT) plots foiled since March 2017.[313] One such plot saw an individual claiming to be part of an eco-terror group plant an explosive, which was discovered in January 2018, in Edinburgh.[314] The other occurred after March 2021.[315] It may be proportionate to reassess the resources needed to better understand this threat.

6.283 Prevent should be interested in potential radicalisation connected with the lawbreaking, civil disobedience, and disruptive activities broadly associated with anarchism or causes tied to the Extreme Left. An independent review being undertaken (at the time of writing) by Lord Walney into political violence and disruption is likely to touch upon this subject, as well as that of eco-linked extremism.[316]

Islamism in the UK and overseas

6.284 During this review, it was clear that the intelligence services continue to regard Islamist extremism as the enduring threat this country faces in the future. Islamism remains a multi-generational issue that shows few signs of being solved. The tragic events of the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan serve as a reminder of the difficulties of defeating Islamism overseas, while the October 2021 murder of Sir David Amess MP in Southend demonstrated once more the extreme and unacceptable dangers faced at home.

6.285 One aspect of the Islamist threat that warrants attention is the support network around Hamas, the Islamist terrorist group which controls Gaza and is committed to the destruction of Israel. The open support voiced in the UK for Hamas, including by those in senior political or community roles, is totally unacceptable. I welcome the government's decision to proscribe Hamas in its entirety.

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[313] 'Latest Home Office Statistics Reveal 7 Late-Stage Plots Foiled Since March 2020', Counter Terrorism Policing, 9 December 2021, available at: https://www.counterterrorism.police.uk/latest-home-office-statistics-reveal-7-late-stage-plots-foiled-since-march-2020/

[314] 'Man admits planting a "bomb" in Edinburgh's Princes Street Gardens', BBC News, 19 January 2022, available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife-60059070

[315] Jamie Grierson, 'Three terror plots foiled in Britain during pandemic, say police', The Guardian, 4 March 2021, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/mar/04/three-terror-plots-foiled-in-britain-during-pandemic-say-police

[316] Clea Skopeliti, 'Peer is asked to investigate the activities of extreme right and left', The Guardian, 8 February 2021, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/feb/08/peer-is-asked-to-investigate-the-activities-of-extreme-right-and-left

The open support voiced in the UK for Hamas, including by those in senior political or community roles, is totally unacceptable.

6.286 In order for the proscription to be truly effective, those who fundraise for Hamas or break the law in support of the group's activities must be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. There is no reason why those who support Hamas should be treated any differently to those who support Islamic State, National Action, or other proscribed organisations.

6.287 Going beyond proscription, the government should pay greater attention to the pernicious impact of Hamas's support network in the UK. These companies and charities operate legally. This highlights the importance of arm's length bodies such as the Charity Commission in helping formulate the most effective response.

6.288 Further, where legal claims are brought which touch on areas concerning extremism, it is important that cases are properly defended with the benefit of specialist advice and full resourcing by the government, which ought to include second and third legal opinions. The government's wider agenda (as set out in the Conservative Party's 2019 manifesto) to "combat extremism and do all we can to ensure that extremists never receive public money" must be fully considered.[317]

6.289 The government should consult a wide array of expertise to be as comprehensively equipped as possible regarding the key networks, groups, and individuals who may make legal threats. I am aware that the Commission for Countering Extremism has been tasked to utilise knowledge from additional external sources into helping raise awareness within government around extremism. I regard this as a credible way forward for ensuring the government has sufficient knowledge to tackle such matters in the future.

Pro-Khalistan extremism

6.290 Prevent should also be mindful of pro-Khalistan extremism emerging from the UK's Sikh communities. A false narrative is disseminated by the tiny number of pro-Khalistan groups operating in the UK that the government is colluding with its counterpart in India to persecute Sikhs. Such groups' narratives glorify violence carried out by the pro-Khalistan movement in India. While the current threat is low, praise for violence overseas and a simultaneous belief in a state-led campaign of repression domestically is a potentially toxic combination for the future.

[317] 'Conservative Party Manifesto 2019', The Conservative Party, 2019, available at: https://www.conservatives.com/our-plan/conservative-party-manifesto-2019

Violence and intimidation associated with charges of 'blasphemy'

6.291 An area of particular importance requiring more attention is that of violence associated with accusations of blasphemy and apostasy. It is vital that Prevent proactively seeks to address this ideological threat, given the serious challenge it poses to our national culture of free speech – which must be fiercely protected – as well as to the safety of individuals and the public.

6.292 Muslims have been murdered in the UK by those citing blasphemy or apostasy as justification. In February 2016, Jalal Uddin, an Imam in Rochdale, was murdered by two supporters of Islamic State. Asad Shah, an Ahmadiyya Muslim shopkeeper, was murdered in Glasgow in March 2016 by a Sunni Muslim admirer of an extremist Pakistani cleric who founded an organisation designed to oppose Pakistan ever repealing its blasphemy law.[318] Some Sunni individuals praised the murder on the grounds that Asad Shah had "disrespected Islam".[319]

6.293 In March 2021, a teacher and his family were provided safeguarding support by the police after an incident at a grammar school in Batley, Yorkshire. After the teacher showed his class a cartoon of Mohammed during a lesson on free speech, he was suspended, and protestors gathered outside the school demanding that he be sacked. (See text box below). That a schoolteacher in a liberal democratic society was subject to threats and intimidation due to allegations of blasphemy is thoroughly shameful. The potentially catastrophic consequences of this kind of allegation were demonstrated by the terrorist murder of French schoolteacher Samuel Paty just five months prior to the incident in Batley.

6.294 In July 2021 a woman wearing a T-shirt in support of the Charlie Hebdo magazine was slashed with a knife at Speakers Corner in London.[320]

6.295 The defence of Islam's Prophet were the key motivators of these and other intolerable attacks.

6.296 Britain is not alone in facing problems with blasphemy. The murder Samuel Paty in October 2020, on the grounds of so-called blasphemy, followed on from a terrorist attack at a free speech gathering in Copenhagen in February 2015 and multiple attacks

[318] Sajid Iqbal and Calum McKay 'Asad Shah murder: Killer Tanveer Ahmed releases prison message', BBC News, 31 January 2017, available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-38815366

[319] Jenny Kane, 'Facebook page is set up PRAISING taxi driver who said he killed peace-loving Muslim shopkeeper', Daily Mail, 8 April 2016, available at: https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3529803/Facebook-page-set-PRAISING-Muslim-shopkeeper-Asad-Shah-s-killer-Tanveer-Ahmed.html

[320] 'Speakers' Corner: Woman attacked with knife', BBC News, 25 July 2021, available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-57965251

targeting Charlie Hebdo magazine. These included al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula's January 2015 assault in which two terrorists murdered 12 people and wounded 11 others.[321]

6.297 In summary, to properly understand, identify, and challenge extremist ideology, Prevent must give greater attention to so-called blasphemy narratives, which have a strong sectarian orientation and have consistently been connected to acts of terrorism. When assessing for indications of Islamist extremism and radicalisation, it is essential that officials and practitioners have a good working grasp of this dimension of ideology. Those who legitimise these narratives, and refuse to condemn violence linked to blasphemy, should be regarded by Prevent as part of the problem that the scheme is seeking to counter. Beyond Prevent, it is also clear that the government needs to give more thought to how this threat can be responded to effectively.

6.298 It is common for narratives around blasphemy in the UK to have a connection back to hard-line Pakistani clerics and/or the Khatme Nubuwwat movement, which has a well-established presence in Pakistan. I have similar concerns over how rhetoric from Pakistan is impacting UK Muslim communities when it comes to inflaming anti-India sentiment, particularly around the subject of Kashmir. There is an element of crossover between those who seek to impose limits around blasphemy with those who voice incendiary rhetoric on Kashmir.

6.299 I have seen evidence of UK extremist groups, as well as a Pakistani cleric with a UK following, calling for the use of violence in Kashmir. I have also seen evidence demonstrating that flashpoints related to Kashmir leads to a significant surge in interest from UK Islamists.

6.300 There is no reason to believe this issue will disappear as a grievance that Islamists will seek to exploit in years to come. This has potential relevance to Prevent, as there are examples of those convicted of terrorism offences in the UK who had first fought in Kashmir. This includes those who subsequently joined al-Qa'ida.[322]

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[321] The knife attack on the Charlie Hebdo magazine in September 2020 in fact took place in the location of their former office. The magazine moved out of this location following the 2015 attacks.

[322] For example, Dhiren Barot: Michael Holden, 'Dhiren Barot – the jailed British al Qaeda leader', Reuters, 15 June 2007, available at: https://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-plot-barot-idUSL2864355620070615: Barot was jailed for life in November 2006 on charges of conspiracy to commit murder. This related to terrorist plots targeting the UK and US.

The Batley school protests

It was highlighted to me over the course of the review that the response by the state to the Batley Grammar School incident appeared unco-ordinated, uncertain and timid. One academic lamented that: "The local council appears to back the extremists. The local MP at the time (who has since become the Mayor of West Yorkshire) also appears to take their side. What do we get from the Department of Education, or from the Prime Minister? Nothing. The Muslim deputy leader of Slough Council takes the teacher's side, and another mob turns up to target her. Who takes her side? Nobody, as far as I can tell… The Government does not appear to have a handle on what is going on."

It must be acknowledged that while the local MP issued a statement welcoming the school's apology and "recognition of the offence this has caused", she also highlighted that "no teacher should be facing intimidation or threats".[323]

The DfE similarly condemned such treatment of teachers.[324] However, in its quote to the press, the department emphasised that schools must balance the freedom to allow for controversial discussions with the "need to promote respect and tolerance between people of different faiths and beliefs".[325] This suggests, erroneously in my view, that the teacher in question may have failed to do so.

[323] In full, the statement read as follows: "No teacher should be facing intimidation or threats, there is no excuse for that. The focus must be on the welfare and education of the children at this school. I welcome the school's apology and recognition of the offence this has caused but conversations between the school, parents and local community must proceed in a dignified and respectful matter. Those who seek to fan the flames of this incident will only provoke hate and division in our community and I would encourage all involved to work together and calm the situation." See: Tracy Brabin (@TracyBrabin), Twitter, 26 March 2021, available at: https://twitter.com/TracyBrabin/status/1375418637448777728/photo/1

[324] Lucy Leeson, 'Department for Education issues statement after Batley Grammar School protest', Yorkshire Post, 25 March 2021, available at: https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/education/department-for-education-issues-statement-after-batley-grammar-school-protest-3179228?itm_source=parsely-api

[325] Richard Adams, 'Teacher suspended over use of Charlie Hebdo cartoons', The Guardian, March 2021, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/mar/25/batley-head-apologises-for-teacher-using-charlie-hebdo-cartoons

The deputy leader of Slough Borough Council stated that she was "shocked and saddened" that a teacher was forced into hiding and that she would "welcome" him and his family to Slough. Her action, appallingly, prompted a petition demanding her resignation, accusations of "Islamophobia", protests outside of her council office with placards of her image crossed, and reportedly death threats.[326]

A former senior Prevent practitioner stated that there was a "lack of leadership" in response to the incident in Batley, and that it is crucial for civil society not to accept "the rule of the mob". I agree. Some of the more robust public responses appeared to be left to backbench members of Parliament, highlighting the lack of a co-ordinated and connected stance from senior government.

I am concerned that Prevent and its local partners did not play a vocal role in response to the protests, given the extremist narratives present and the recent murder of Samuel Paty in France. While Home Office Prevent said that they "moved quickly" on the issue, and that there had been "less exploitation of the message than expected", I am not assured that this is the case. In my view, the incident was misinterpreted as a local community challenge, and pacifying the protestors' fury was prioritised over the defence of Fundamental British Values.

The Batley Grammar School incident is precisely the type of challenge where Prevent should institute urgent additional resources – such as the deployment of senior regional co-ordinators and incident-driven counter narratives. Locations where tensions are fomenting, activists of extremist concern are present, and individuals are abruptly thrust into the spotlight, create an atmosphere where political violence can thrive. Non-priority areas may struggle to respond if such an incident arises. The implementation of a regionalisation model for Prevent, accommodating the need for a 'surge capacity' of resources, should alleviate some of this pressure.

Proscriptions and Disruptions

6.301 Proscription is a very useful counter-terrorism tool, allowing police to arrest people involved with or inviting support for dangerous terrorist groups, among other powers. It is a power that is used sparingly and for which the bar is rightly high.

6.302 However, there are challenges posed by groups that currently sit below the proscription threshold, but which are extremist in nature, explicitly hostile to the state, and provide moral support and legitimacy to those who perpetrate violence. For example, certain

[326] Jake Ryan, 'Now protesters picket Muslim council chief who said she would "welcome" the Yorkshire teacher at the centre of the Prophet Mohammed cartoon controversy', Daily Mail, 25 April 2021, available at: https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9508271/Protesters-picket-Muslim-council-chief-said-welcome-Batley-Grammar-School-teacher.html

organisations that operate legally in the UK are listed as terrorist groups by key international allies. Some are even registered charities in the UK.

6.303 While the government policy of Disruptions should in part help meet this challenge, the Home Secretary would be prudent to consider other options in line with those considered by comparable democracies. For example, France has successfully sought the dissolution of groups across the ideological spectrum that openly act or agitate against the values of the Republic.[327] In Germany, authorities can openly monitor and name threats to their constitution. These countries have differing legal frameworks and cultural approaches to dealing with terrorism to the UK. However, I did not see evidence that convinced me that it would be impossible for the UK to apply a similarly ambitious approach, tailored to our own laws and customs, were it deemed necessary.

Financial support for extremists

6.304 Ensuring government departments are conscious about extremism-related risk when administering financial support remains a key challenge. During the course of this review, I learnt that the Islamic Human Rights Commission Trust, which funds the activities of the Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC), recently received £10,000 in public funding as part of government support for local businesses during the pandemic.[328] IHRC is an Islamist group ideologically aligned with the Iranian regime, that has a history of

[327] Dr Damon Perry, 'French Highest Court Confirms Closure of Islamist Groups BarakaCity and CCIF', Policy Exchange, 11 October 2021, available at: https://policyexchange.org.uk/french-highest-court-confirms-closure-of-islamist-groups-barakacity-and-ccif/: President Macron, described Samuel Paty as "a quiet hero", awarded him the Legion d'honneur, and accorded him a state funeral.

[328] Charity Commission for England and Wales, 'Islamic Human Rights Commission Trust: Unaudited Financial Statements for the Year Ended 30 June 2020', 8 April 2021, available at: https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search?p_p_id=uk_gov_ccew_onereg_charitydetails_web_portlet_CharityDetailsPortlet&p_p_lifecycle=2&p_p_state=maximized&p_p_mode=view&p_p_resource_id=%2Faccounts-resource&p_p_cacheability=cacheLevelPage&_uk_gov_ccew_onereg_charitydetails_web_portlet_CharityDetailsPortlet_objectiveId=A11607241&_uk_gov_ccew_onereg_charitydetails_web_portlet_CharityDetailsPortlet_priv_r_p_mvcRenderCommandName=%2Faccounts-and-annual-returns&_uk_gov_ccew_onereg_charitydetails_web_portlet_CharityDetailsPortlet_priv_r_p_organisationNumber=3994176

"extremist links and terrorist sympathies".[329] The government must ensure there are proper procedures in place to prevent the funding, inadvertent or otherwise, of those who have expressed support for – or justified – violent extremist activity.

Ensuring government departments are conscious about extremism-related risk when administering financial support remains a key challenge.

Contested understanding of radicalisation and its causes

6.305 It became clear during this review that within Prevent there is a contested understanding of the term 'radicalisation' itself, as well as the strength of the relationship between extremist ideas and violent action.

6.306 There is a growing belief that radicalisation predominantly takes place solely or predominantly online. This perception may have a valid basis for certain forms of radicalisation (such as Extreme Right-Wing radicalisation), where those becoming radicalised are often lone individuals, and not part of discernible groups with shared spaces within which to operate.[330]

6.307 A report commissioned for the Commission for Countering Extremism in 2019 placed emphasis on the need to look at location when identifying radicalisation risk. In discussing the "social-ecology" of extremism, that report studied the way in which certain streets, neighbourhoods, boroughs, cities, and parts of the prison system can have "extremism-enabling settings".[331] Research investigating UK-based terrorists has also

[329] Several senior figures within IHRC have espoused support for violent jihad, expressed sympathy for convicted terrorists, and advocated for the extraction and eradication of 'Zionists'. Campaigns have supported high-profile associates of a number of terrorist or extremist groups such as al-Qa'ida and the Taliban. By way of example, in their 2017 obituary for "blind sheikh" Omar Abdul Rehman, the mastermind of numerous bomb plots in New York in the early 1990s, IHRC described him as "a rare man of principle…[whose] death will only make him a martyr and more of an inspiration." See: 'Press Release – USA/ Sheikh Omar Abdul Rehman: World has lost a man of principle and unshakeable faith', IHRC, 20 February 2017, available at: https://www.ihrc.org.uk/press-releases/press-release-usa-sheikh-omar-abdul-rehman-world-has-lost-a-man-of-principle-and-unshakeable-faith/. IHRC have also described convicted al-Qa'ida operative Aafia Siddiqui as an "inspiring and intelligent frontrunner [who has been] destroyed at the hands of barabaric [sic] collaborators". See: 'Action Alert: USA – Aafia Siddiqui must be repatriated now', IHRC, 11 September 2013, available at: https://www.ihrc.org.uk/action-alert-usa-aafia-siddiqui-must-be-repatriated-now/

[330] European Policy Brief, 'Dialogue About Radicalisation and Equality: Policy Brief – Drivers of Self-Radicalisation and Digital Sociability', available at: https://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=58630

[331] Noemie Bouhana, 'The Moral Ecology of Extremism: A Systemic Perspective,' UK Commission for Countering Extremism, 2019

demonstrated the significance of geography, with specific localities and neighbourhoods harbouring a concentration of terrorist activity.[332]

6.308 Online radicalisation is currently a popular area of research and discussion, but that should not distract from continuing efforts to understand and counter in-person patterns of traditional influence and radicalisation, which are often more effective than online patterns of radicalisation.

6.309 Ideology does not perpetuate itself in the abstract, nor is it simply conveyed to audiences at random through impersonal online algorithms. Rather, extremist ideologies are advanced by movements and charismatic individuals who find new ways to make these ideas inspiring to those willing to listen to them. Groups and networks, ideologues, recruiters, and radicalisers act as the promoters of extremist discourse, and not only online.

6.310 Prevent must acknowledge the way in which real world relationships, within friendship and family circles, can be crucial in moving some individuals towards radicalisation.[333]

6.311 In recent years, in both Britain and continental Europe, there have been examples of family and friendship groups travelling abroad to join jihadist groups, and in some instances friendship and family networks have served as the basis for terrorism plots. For example, DfE research investigating cases of young people in UK education settings who had travelled or attempted to travel to Syria, found that over half of those included in the study had travelled with either family or friends. This included cases where a sibling or parents had played a radicalising role.

6.312 There is a growing body of research to suggest that 'lone actors', usually considered to be individuals radicalised online and acting independently, often in fact have strong digital networks and communities influencing their activity, and rarely consider themselves to be alone. Prevent should not underestimate the influence of networks and communities, whether these communities are online or face to face.

6.313 There is reason to believe that, under the right circumstances, individuals with psychological or social difficulties may be more susceptible to the influence of extremists

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[332] Nazia Parveen, 'Small part of Manchester that has been home to 16 jihadis', The Guardian, 25 February 2017, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/feb/25/small-part-of-manchester-that-has-been-home-to-16-jihadis; 'How west London became an extremism hotbed', Channel 4, 27 Feb 2015, available at: https://www.channel4.com/news/mohammed-emwazi-how-west-london-became-ripe-with-extremism; Andrew Gilligan and Sian Griffiths, 'Terror map reveals danger of segregation', The Times, 5 March 2017, available at: https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/terror-map-reveals-danger-of-segregation-k33jddhk0

[333] Marc Sageman, 'Understanding Terror Networks', University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004; Marc Sageman, 'Leaderless Jihad', University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008

and their radicalising messages. I note that academic research and Prevent awareness products tend to amplify these factors as causes of radicalisation and practitioners appear more comfortable discussing and tackling these issues.

6.314 It is right for Prevent to consider (statutory and personal) vulnerabilities as 'push factors' that can increase likelihood of individuals being drawn towards extremism. Nonetheless, Prevent must be careful not to move into areas that are beyond its remit. There is the possibility of large numbers of individuals with general non counter-terrorism vulnerabilities and personal difficulties being viewed as – theoretically – at risk of radicalisation, and therefore wrongly classed as suitable for support from Prevent.

7. Conclusion

Prevent is a vital pillar of the United Kingdom's strategy for combatting the threat faced from terrorism.

I have heard first hand, and described above, the devastating impact that terrorism has on its victims and their families, and the divisive effect that it threatens to inflict on our society. Those who are caught up in its sinister ideologies risk destroying their own lives and the lives of those around them. The cost of doing nothing is unacceptably high, and even though no preventative scheme will ever entirely eliminate every threat, there is a moral imperative for us to do what we reasonably can to lessen the danger.

As a country, we should be proud of Prevent and the proportionate and humane response that it represents. It is a careful and patient attempt to persuade individuals away from the ideas and beliefs that fuel violence. It is impossible not to be impressed by those who work on this programme, some of whom face intolerable abuse and intimidation for their efforts.

The government needs to go to greater lengths to demonstrate publicly a sense of pride in Prevent and to be more active in taking on disinformation and demonisation campaigns by bad faith actors at a national level.

However, the evidence shows that improvements are needed. This includes some areas already highlighted in the 2011 Prevent review of Lord Carlile. It is particularly disappointing that mistakes continue to be made around some of the people with whom Prevent engages, despite this being raised as a key area for improvement in that review.

Prevent must set one standard to determine what threats warrant intervention, and apply that same standard consistently in its approach to each ideology. Prevent will not be able to fully meet its objectives if it sets a high bar for when it intervenes to counter one type of extremism, but a lower bar when countering another.

Failure to do this would lead to missed opportunities. It could also mean that people with no relationship to terrorism or extremism become inappropriately subject to scrutiny.

As the 2011 review outlined, Prevent's approach to different ideologies ought to be one in which "none is singled out for special treatment outside the operational demands of current threat levels".

This is the principle on which Prevent should operate.

Those delivering Prevent must have a better understanding of the various ideologies that relate to radicalisation. This should include understanding of the dangers of non-violent extremist ideologies.

An improved understanding of ideological threats includes knowledge about extreme worldviews that legitimise violence, particularly grievance narratives, and the significance of extremist movements in promoting poisonous beliefs and conspiracy theories. In particular, there needs to be greater expertise and knowledge about Islamist extremism, and this should extend beyond the ideologies of overseas jihadist organisations to extremist networks in the UK.

On the Extreme Right-Wing, Prevent training and analysis need to develop a more focused approach, specifically concentrated on those elements of Extreme Right-Wing ideology that are either terrorist in nature, or which encourage support for terrorism.

This enhanced understanding of ideology and radicalisation needs to apply to all levels of Prevent implementation.

A better understanding of extremist ideologies must inform Prevent's decisions about those with whom it partners and funds. This increased expertise needs to guide a robust due diligence process that upholds a principle of consistency and proportionality across ideologies. Prevent should ensure it does not fund or partner with those linked to Islamist extremism, just as it would not work with those associated with the far right.

Prevent should protect public confidence by creating processes for responding robustly to disinformation about the programme.

Prevent should also encourage public trust by improving transparency and establishing better oversight of how Prevent is implemented. It is important that when members of the public, officials, or practitioners have grounds for believing Prevent may have fallen short of its own standards, they know where they can take any formal complaints.

Demonstrating that Prevent has nothing to hide by upholding complaints when they are justified, while also putting on public record when allegations are unfounded, will bolster public trust in the programme.

8. Recommendations

Guiding principles

- **Prevent should go back to first principles** and reassert its overall objective of stopping people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. The strategy rightly sits as a crucial pillar of the UK's counter-terrorism architecture, and its focus should always centre upon protection of the public from those inclined to pose a security threat. A significant proportion of Prevent is safeguarding vulnerable individuals at risk of exploitation or abuse. However, Prevent must not overlook those perpetrating this harm, nor those who pose a terrorism threat of their own agency and ideological fervour. In line with this recalibration, the Prevent Duty ought to be redefined, the statutory guidance updated and Prevent's vulnerability framework tightened.
- Prevent needs to **develop expertise and instil better levels of understanding of extremist ideology and radicalisation** across the system. Improving staff training system-wide, and providing clearer guidance and information to frontline practitioners is integral. This will ensure those delivering Prevent possess the confidence needed to identify extremism, and understand the ideological nature of terrorism.
- Prevent needs to **enhance its approach to delivery**. This should involve restructuring to a regional model, moving away from short term annual funding cycles when projects warrant it, and considering the expansion of the Statutory Prevent Duty to an increased number of public agencies.
- Prevent should **create processes for responding to disinformation** being spread about the scheme. Equally, Prevent should encourage public trust by **improving transparency and establishing better oversight** of how the strategy is implemented. Where members of the public or practitioners have grounds for believing Prevent may have fallen short of its own standards, they must have a place to formally take their complaints. Demonstrating that Prevent has nothing to hide by upholding complaints when they are justified, while also putting on public record when allegations are unfounded, can only enhance public trust in the scheme.

List of recommendations

1. Revise Prevent objective one of three in the duty guidance, and legislation where necessary, to clarify and emphasise the importance of tackling extremist ideology as a terrorism driver. Prevent's first objective should be to '"tackle the ideological causes of terrorism".

2. Move away from 'vulnerability' language and towards 'susceptibility', wherever accurate. The Vulnerability Assessment Framework should become the Prevent Assessment Framework. 'Vulnerability' should be reserved for welfare concerns and circumstances beyond an individual's control.

3. Reset thresholds to ensure proportionality across Prevent workstreams. Prevent must work to one bar across the ideological threats. This should apply to all teams and products, including: national, regional and local delivery, referrals and the Channel process, RICU and Homeland Security Analysis and Insight products, training and Prevent-funded counter-narrative work via civil society organisations, and other funded projects. The bar should not be set so high as to only include concerns related to the most established terrorist organisations, nor so low as to capture mainstream politicians, commentators or publications. Prevent duty guidance should be amended to clarify this new standard.

4. Improve understanding of 'blasphemy' as part of the wider Islamist threat. The Homeland Security Group should conduct research into understanding and countering Islamist violence, incitement and intimidation linked to 'blasphemy'. It should feed a strong pro-free speech narrative into counter-narrative and community project work.

5. Explore the prevalence of antisemitism in Channel cases and whether this is reflected in a breakdown of Channel referrals more widely. Feed these findings into work to disrupt radicalisers and counter extremist narratives. This includes confronting UK extremists supportive of terrorist movements which target Jewish communities (such as Hamas and Hizballah) and addressing the anti-Jewish component of Islamist and Extreme Right-Wing ideology and groups.

6. Revise the Prevent Duty to ensure the scheme meets its revised objectives. Amend the 2015 Counter Terrorism and Security Act to stipulate that relevant agencies must "have due regard to the need to prevent people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism". This alters the current duty to "have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism". Amend duty guidance and CONTEST accordingly.

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. Amend any products, guidance, and training materials to ensure that the use of terminology is consistent across Prevent.

8. Explore extending the Prevent Duty to immigration and asylum (through UK Border Force, Immigration and Protection Directorate) **and to job centres** via the Department for Work and Pensions).

9. Restrict Prevent funding to groups and projects which challenge extremist and terrorist ideology via counter-narratives and activities. Prevent budgets should not be allocated towards general youth work or community initiatives that do not meet these criteria.

10. Ensure Prevent Disruptions takes action to limit the influence of 'chronic' radicalisers and networks which sit below the terrorism threshold. These actors promote narratives legitimising terrorism and terrorists without breaking the law. Low level but influential groups and activities must have appropriate weighting in prioritisation and risk models.

11. Move national Prevent delivery to a regionalised model that has consistent lines with the centre of Prevent in the Home Office. Regional Prevent advisers should sit alongside the same geographic areas as regional counter-terrorism units. Advisers should support, oversee, and guide Prevent delivery within their region and serve as a communication point between central and local government.

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. The Homeland Security Group and Counter Terrorism Policing should be guided at strategic leadership level by a new 'Security Threat Check' – a series of principles to be included in duty guidance.

13. Lengthen the Prevent funding cycle to between two and five years in order to better sustain positive local work. The Homeland Security Group should develop an enhanced evaluation strategy for Prevent-funded projects with a focus on outcomes over activity or outputs.

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. The Scottish Government should provide a dedicated Prevent lead, a HE/FE regional co-ordinator, and Prevent-funded projects for the region. Scottish Police should also prioritise enhancing practitioners' understanding of Scotland's terrorism threat picture via the dissemination of regular local threat assessments (known as 'Emerging Threat and Risk Local Profiles').

15. Develop a plan to improve the quality of referrals around revised core objectives. Referrals should have an identifiable ideological element that is consistent across ideologies. Case management data must record and detail the evidence in each case.

16. Improve Prevent datasets by revising how referrals are categorised. The Homeland Security Group should consider all options, including delineating and/or removing the 'Mixed, Unstable or Unclear' and 'Other' strands, against Prevent objectives. The Homeland Security Group should record and publish sector-specific data about Prevent referrals, such as breakdowns within the education sector.

17. The government should launch new initiatives to encourage referrals from friends, family and community cohorts. This should include developing an accessible GOV.UK resource signposting reporting mechanisms for radicalisation concerns. These resources ought to be easily reachable through simple online thematic searches.

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. This ought to build confidence in making referrals. Scottish Police should consider doing the same with such cases on their national intelligence note system.

19. Streamline the Channel case management process by testing a hybrid model for referrals, risk assessment and information gathering. The Police and local authorities would handle referrals simultaneously. Initial discussions with the referee would be carried out by either of these authorities, while the Police would complete risk assessments and information gathering.

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. Examine whether Islamist referrals tend to be individuals much further along the trajectory towards violence ('active risk', at a sub-Pursue level), compared to referrals where individuals present a susceptibility to radicalising influences or extremist exploitation ('passive risk').

21. Commission for Countering Extremism to review all Prevent advisory boards and panels to ensure membership includes necessary, credible and impartial expertise on extremist ideology. The relevant government minister should sign off all membership and terms of reference. The Commission for Countering Extremism should oversee Prevent products informed by consultation with advisory boards, such as those used to identify and assess risk.

22. Develop a new training and induction package for all government and public sector staff working in counter-extremism and counter-terrorism. Training should focus on improving understanding of the ideological nature of terrorism, including: worldviews, objectives and methodologies of violent and non-violent extremist groups, grievance narratives and issues exploited by terrorist recruiters and extremists.

23. Ensure Prevent training upholds a consistent and proportionate threshold across ideological threats and avoids using double standards. For example, training materials should not focus on violent extremism for one ideology, while focusing on non-violent extremist narratives for another. Non-violent extremism should be included in training as it creates a permissive environment for radicalisation and recruitment into terrorism.

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. Training must clearly specify new Prevent thresholds and the requirement to ensure referrals have an identifiable ideological element and terrorism risk. Thresholds and decision-making must be implemented consistently across all ideological threats. Prevent staff should be informed about how guidance materials disseminated by politicised third parties may have a detrimental influence on Prevent delivery.

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. Training should include engagement process and principles, and a due diligence function to assess risk attached to engagement decisions. As a broader matter of principle, government as a whole must ensure it neither funds, works, or consults with extremism-linked groups or individuals.

26. Professionalise and build in-house expertise in frontline and central Prevent. Prevent must become less reliant on consultancy and public relations firms, and build capacity within RICU and the Homeland Security Group to fulfil some of the most sensitive functions that are outsourced to private companies.

27. Review Prevent-related staffing and training in prisons. Seek to increase expertise and skills with regard to understanding the ideological drivers and theological elements of radicalisation. HMPPS staff must adopt a 'precautionary policy' when assessing the risk of ideologically-driven offenders.

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. Where necessary this should include conducting effective due diligence checks, and guidance on how to balance statutory obligations under the Prevent Duty with the legal requirement to protect freedom of speech.

29. The Home Office should implement a further due diligence procedure around the recruitment of intervention providers. This involves a comprehensive assessment of social media accounts and other public platforms to ensure the authenticity of views presented throughout the recruitment process.

30. Establish a dedicated unit within the Homeland Security Group to rapidly rebut misinformation about Prevent and challenge inaccuracies via traditional and social media. The unit should co-ordinate with government departments to produce national resources for civil society organisations and Prevent delivery partners in local communities. These resources should tackle myths about Prevent and defend the practitioners who help protect communities.

31. RICU should equip Prevent practitioners with better information about extremism-linked campaigns to undermine their work. This should include information about the networks involved and narratives used. Prevent-funded civil society organisations should be supported and encouraged to use this information to publicly challenge those who promote disinformation in an effort to undermine Prevent.

32. Prevent-funded civil society organisations and counter-narrative projects should take on extremism-linked activists who seek to demonise the scheme. Civil society organisations should be ready and able to challenge and expose groups which promote disinformation about Prevent, particularly through media and social media campaigns.

33. Develop specific measures to counter the anti-Prevent campaign at universities. Higher and further education co-ordinators should work closely with institutional safeguarding leads to co-ordinate activities for students and staff which directly take-on and challenge disinformation about Prevent. The Department for Education should develop a network of speakers who are able to speak to students and staff about counter-radicalisation work and its benefits.

34. Create a new standards and compliance unit answerable to ministers on the Prevent oversight board. The purpose of the unit should be to process and investigate complaints from Prevent practitioners and the wider public. Ministers can task the unit to conduct specific investigations and a summary of findings following investigations should be made public. The Home Office should develop proper process and procedure for when agencies, or institutions, consistently fail to adequately uphold the duty.

Annexes

Annex A: Methodological detail

The overarching methodological approach for the review was broken down into four stages behind which sat a broadening and then narrowing of the evidence to help develop, refine and test ideas ahead of the final outcomes and recommendations. This was supported by the development of an overarching question set which broke down the review's terms of reference into a series of diagnostic questions. All the evidence gathered as part of the review was synthesised against this question set.

Phase 1: establishing the landscape

Activity in this phase included gathering existing information about how Prevent is working locally, regionally and nationally including in devolved administrations and other countries. This included:

- induction briefings on aspects of Prevent
- collating and reviewing reports, articles and data from over 650 sources
- observations of Channel panels
- learning from other countries
- commissioned systems mapping of the national Prevent landscape

Phase 2: listening and engagement

This phase focussed on delivering a variety of engagement opportunities to seek views from as wide a range of individuals as possible about Prevent, including:

- a call for evidence which received 439 responses over the two occasions it was opened
- meetings and attendance at forums to hear from individuals, community representatives and groups about their perceptions and experiences of Prevent. This comprised:
    - 55 meetings and engagement events with a total of 476 people between August and December 2019 in phase one of the review
    - 115 meetings and engagement events with over 800 people between February and August 2021 for phase two of the review
    - in-depth 'Prevent in Practice' events in 12 Prevent areas speaking to a range of practitioners involved in Prevent delivery
- commissioned research to understand the experiences of individuals who have had contact with Prevent, including three case studies of individuals referred to Prevent
- three virtual public engagement events

Phase 3: synthesis and debate

Synthesising evidence against the review's question set to identify emerging findings and potential recommendations, including:

- analysis of call for evidence responses
- synthesis of all engagement activity and papers gathered over the course of the review
- a deep dive into published academic literature on the concepts and implementation of Prevent
- seminars, roundtables and debates to explore issues further and test potential findings and recommendations.

Phase 4: reporting and recommendations

The final phase of the review consisted of developing conclusions and recommendations and the drafting and formatting of the report ready for submission to the Home Office.

Evidence gathering

Documentation

The review team gathered and analysed a wide range of evidence on which the report is based, coming to over 650 sources. Sources ranged from internal government official documents, through to academic, think tank and inquiry reports, guidance and training materials, correspondence, evidence from previous reviews, and minutes of meetings, workshops and engagement events held across phase one and two of the review.

Call for evidence

The call for evidence was opened twice, once for each phase of the review. The total number of submissions was 439.

Engagement activity

Over the two phases of the review, a combined number of 170 meetings and engagement events were attended by over 1,200 people. This included meeting a wide range of individuals including community representatives, civil society organisations, local Prevent practitioners, academics, government officials and more.

Engagement Activity – first phase of the review
The team conducted 55 meetings and engagement events with a total of 476 people between August and December 2019, and with a wide range of individuals including, but not limited to: community representatives, civil society organisations, local Prevent practitioners, academics, and government officials. This included six in-depth visits to Prevent areas to speak to a wide range of practitioners involved in local delivery of Prevent.

Engagement activity – second phase of the review

The team conducted 115 meetings and engaged with over 800 people between February and August 2021, recognising that some individuals met the review multiple times. This was made up of:

- three virtual public engagement events
- five 'Prevent in Practice' events, including Leicester, Birmingham, Bradford, Cardiff and Bristol
- attendance at 10 existing public engagement forums in regions around the country, including police counter-terrorism advisory groups, and local Prevent advisory groups
- Two 'thematic roundtables' into extremism and terminology, attended by practitioners, government officials, academics and think tanks

Outside of events and forums listed above, the review sought evidence from:

- 6 academics
- 6 civil society organisations
- 4 community representative events
- 19 counter-terrorism government officials
- 36 other material government officials
- 2 international government officials
- 3 international counter-terrorism specialists
- 45 local government officials (from two large forums)
- 5 councillors and mayors
- 12 counter-terrorism police officers
- 24 local health practitioners
- 4 policy think tanks
- 71 local education practitioners
- 38 local Prevent practitioners
- 4 parliamentarians/peers

External events

The review team also held agenda items at six external events, meeting 134 people, made up of government officials, Prevent practitioners and civil society organisations.

Sessions observed

As part of the evidence gathering process, the review observed academic or think tank webinars, Home Office Prevent conferences for Prevent practitioners, and Channel panels to monitor and understand delivery of Prevent within Channel.

Type of session	Number of sessions attended
Government webinar	5
Channel panels	6
Think tank webinars	2
Academic conferences	1
Academic webinars	3

Annex B: Breakdown of funding for Home Office Prevent units

Unit	2019/20	2020/21
Prevent	£26.3m	£26.7m
RICU	£15.2m	£14.9m
Online policy	£0.6m	£1.2m
JExU	£6.1m	£6.3m
TOTAL	**£48.2m**	**£49.1m**

Annex C: Cases of recent terrorism offenders and Prevent

No.	Case	Status at time of attack	Notes
1	Khalid MASOOD, March 2017 – Westminster Bridge	Not previously known to Pathfinder.	Not on any Prevent programme at time of the attack.
2a	Salman ABEDI, May 2017 – Manchester Arena	Not previously known to Pathfinder.	Not on any Prevent programme at time of the attack.
2b	Hashem ABEDI, May 2017 – Manchester Arena	Not previously known to Pathfinder. He was first referred to Pathfinder on 18 July 2019 due to his index offence.	Not on any Prevent programme at time of the attack. Now on Pathfinder.
3a	Khuram Shezad BUTT, June 2017 – London Bridge	Not previously known to Pathfinder.	Not on any Prevent programme at time of the attack.
3b	Rachid REDOUNE, June 2017 – London Bridge	Not previously known to Pathfinder.	Not on any Prevent programme at time of the attack.
3c	Youssef ZAGHBA, June 2017 – London Bridge	Not previously known to Pathfinder.	Not on any Prevent programme at time of the attack.
4	Darren OSBORNE, June 2017 – Finsbury Park	Not previously known to Pathfinder. He was first referred to Pathfinder on 23 June 2017 due to his index offence.	Not on any Prevent programme at time of the attack. Now on Pathfinder.
5	Ahmed HASSAN, September 2017 – Parsons Green	Not previously known to Pathfinder. He was first referred to Pathfinder on 22 September 2017 due to his index offence.	Not known by JEXU but was an active case on Channel at the time of the attack.

No.	Case	Status at time of attack	Notes
			Now on Pathfinder.
6	Salih KHATER, August 2018 – Westminster	Not previously known to Pathfinder. He was first referred to Pathfinder on 6 September 2018 due to the index offence.	Not on any Prevent programme at time of the attack. Now on Pathfinder.
7	Mahdi MOHAMUD, December 2018 – Manchester Victoria	Not previously known to Pathfinder. He was first referred to Pathfinder on 27 June 2019 due to his index offence.	Not on any Prevent programme at time of the attack. Now on Pathfinder.
8	Vincent FULLER, March 2019 – Stanwell	Not previously known to Pathfinder. He was first referred to Pathfinder on 23 March 2019 due to his index offence.	Not on any Prevent programme at time of the attack. Now on Pathfinder.
9	Usman KHAN, November 2019 – Fishmonger's Hall/London Bridge	Was already a Pathfinder nominal due to his index offence and he was managed at Band 2 nominal until 22 March 2018, when he was re-assessed at Band 3. He was released on licence on 24 December 2018 and was in the community, managed at Band 3 at the time of the attack.	Known to JEXU – on Pathfinder.
10a	Brusthom ZIAMANI, January 2020 – HMP Whitemoor	Was being managed as a Band 2 Pathfinder nominal due to his index offence. His Banding remained the same at the time of the attack.	Known to JEXU – on Pathfinder.
10b	Barry HOCKTON, January 2020 – HMP Whitemoor	Was not a Pathfinder nominal previously. He was adopted for the first time on 28 January 2020 following the attack.	Not on any Prevent programme at time of the attack. Now on Pathfinder.

No.	Case	Status at time of attack	Notes
11	Sudesh Mamoor Faraz AMMAN, February 2020 – Streatham	Was already a Pathfinder nominal due to the index offence and was being managed as a Band 2. He was re-assessed at Band 1 on 16 December 2019, prior to his release on 23 January 2020. He was managed at Band 1 in the community at the time of the attack.	Known to JEXU – on Pathfinder, active DDP case.
12	Khairi SAADALLAH, June 2020 – Reading	Had been a Pathfinder nominal since 16 January 2017. He was last adopted on 7 June 2019 and assessed as a Band 4. On 3 October 2019 he was re-assessed at Band 3. He was made Dormant on 9 October 2019. In line with the Dormant Review process, he was made Dormant on 4 June 2020, prior to his release on 5 June 2020 and this remained his Pathfinder status at the time of the attack.	Known to Prevent (Channel and JEXU) – was on Dormant Review at the time of attack. Referred to Prevent but handled outside of Channel.

A total of 12 attacks have been included in this analysis, involving 16 individuals (3 attacks had multiple perpetrators).[334]

At the time of the attack:

- 11 individuals were not known to any part of Prevent at the time of the attack

Of those who were known:

- 5 individuals were known to Prevent (JEXU and/or Channel) across 5 attacks – these were Reading, Streatham, Parsons Green and Fishmongers Hall, plus one perpetrator in the attack in HMP Whitemoor was known to Prevent
- 4 of the cases were known to JEXU
    - 1 of which also known to Channel (Reading – a Dormant pathfinder case)
- 1 known to Channel only (Parsons Green)

All of those in prison following attacks are now part of Pathfinder.

[334] As Ali Harbi Ali had not been convicted of any crime at the time this analysis was undertaken, he was not included in the dataset. However, he too had been referred to Prevent.

Annex D: History of Prevent

Since its inception in 2003, the Prevent strategy has undergone several updates, with formal revisions in 2006, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2015 and 2018.[335]

Contest 2003

1. The 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the US led to changes in the way the UK sought to mitigate the risk of terrorism. In 2003, the government produced its first official counter-terrorism strategy, known as CONTEST.[336] Previously the government acted without an official strategy and instead set out temporary terrorism provisions in response to specific threats, such as from Northern Ireland-related terrorism, in the Terrorism Act 2000.[337]

2. CONTEST 2003 set out a five-year strategy to reduce the risk from international terrorism (rather than domestic terrorism), in particular that posed by al-Qa'ida. Designed to protect the public from immediate threats to life from terrorism without intruding

[335] Cabinet Office, 'CONTEST 2003: a 5-year UK strategy for countering international terrorism', 1 April 2004, available at: https://www.sacc.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/contest_2003_report_for_release.pdf; HM Government, 'Countering International Terrorism: The United Kingdom's Strategy', July 2006, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/272320/6888.pdf; HM Government, 'Preventing Violent Extremism: A Strategy for Delivery', June 2008, available at: http://lawsdocbox.com/Politics/96465343-Preventing-violent-extremism-a-strategy-for-delivery.html; 'Pursue Prevent Protect Prepare: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering International Terrorism', March 2009, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/228644/7547.pdf; HM Government, 'Prevent Strategy', June 2011, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf; HM Government, 'Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015', 12 February 2015, available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/6/introduction/enacted; HM Government, 'CONTEST The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism', June 2018, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/716907/140618_CCS207_CCS0218929798-1_CONTEST_3.0_WEB.pdf

[336] CONTEST 2003 was published in 2016 in response to a Freedom of Information Act request. See: Cabinet Office, 'CONTEST 2003: a 5-year UK strategy for countering international terrorism', 1 April 2004, available at: https://www.sacc.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/contest_2003_report_for_release.pdf;

[337] The Terrorism Act 2000 superseded the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1989 and was the first general Terrorism Act. It also repealed the Northern Ireland (emergency Provisions) Act 1996 which listed over 70 criminal offences described as terrorist acts. The Terrorism Act 2000 set out new police and investigatory powers and Part VII of the act applies specifically to certain Scheduled offences in Northern Ireland and looks at the powers of stop and search security measures in Northern Ireland.

unnecessarily on the everyday lives of British citizens, CONTEST comprised four work strands: Pursue, Prevent, Protect, and Prepare (see box A),[338] which it retains today.

Box A: The CONTEST Strategy

The CONTEST strategy is the government's counter-terrorism strategy. Its four aims (known as the 'four Ps') are:

- Pursue: to stop terrorist attacks
- Prevent: to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism
- Protect: to strengthen our protection against a terrorist attack
- Prepare: to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack.

Source: CONTEST, 2018

3. Prevent was described on a single page of the 2003 CONTEST strategy as "a long term but vital element" to prevent "the next generation of terrorists". The aim was to continue "building enhanced links with the Muslim Council UK [now known as the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB)] and promoting community leadership" and to "address the role of countries at risk of instability in terrorism".[339]

4. The focus on preventative counter-terrorism was limited. The strategy emphasised the need to "do more" in the longer term to both "prevent radicalisation of Muslim youth in the UK" and "help resolve international causes of tension". In April 2005, a Home Affairs Select Committee (HASC) inquiry criticised the government for paying insufficient attention to prevention,[340] and in 2009, the government acknowledged that Prevent had been the "least well developed" strand of CONTEST.[341]

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[338] Cabinet Office, 'CONTEST 2003: a 5-year UK strategy for countering international terrorism', 1 April 2004, available at: https://www.sacc.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/contest_2003_report_for_release.pdf;

[339] British High Commission Ottawa, 'Countering Violent Extremism, The UK Approach', page 11, available at: https://www.tsas.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/TSAS_ SA2017_Farrell_UK-High-Commission.pdf

[340] Home Affairs Committee, 'Terrorism and Community Relations', 22 March 2005, paragraph 175, available at: https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200405/cmselect/cmhaff/165/16510.htm#a41

[341] HM Government, 'Pursue Prevent Protect Prepare: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering International Terrorism', March 2009, paragraph 9.03, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/228644/7547.pdf; Communities and Local Government Committee, 'Preventing Violent Extremism', 2010, paragraph 4, available at: https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmcomloc/65/65.pdf

5. Foreshadowing Prevent's focus on ideological drivers, HASC recommended that a future counter-terrorism strategy "must explicitly and specifically set out how British Muslim leaders will be supported in assisting British Muslims in resisting extremist views".[342]

6. Prevent was not then a public strategy and so reactions to domestic community engagement and leadership work were bound up in responses to the government's wider approach to counter-terrorism. The 2005 HASC inquiry praised government engagement with Muslim communities as having "improved considerably since 9/11", while noting criticism from several Muslim community groups over the impact of counter-terrorism powers.[343]

7. Echoing future criticism of Prevent, the inquiry noted a gap between perception and reality, finding no evidence of discrimination in the application of stop and searches, but recognising that there was a perception that "Muslims are being stigmatised by the operation of the Terrorism Act".[344] It judged that among the reasons for such a perception was ministers' comments being "misquoted and reported out of context" and recommended more be done by government to tackle misinformation around counter-terrorism measures.[345]

CONTEST 2006

8. On 7 July 2005, four British citizens carried out co-ordinated suicide bombings on the London public transport system, killing 52 people. It became apparent that the UK was facing a new type of 'homegrown' terrorist threat from radicalised individuals in the UK inspired or directed by al-Qa'ida. In response, CONTEST was updated and publicly launched in July 2006. Prevent took on increased importance as it sought to "tackl[e] the radicalisation of individuals" in the following three ways, by:
   - tackling disadvantage and supporting reform – addressing structural problems in the UK and overseas that may contribute to radicalisation, such as inequalities and discrimination
   - deterring those who facilitate terrorism and those who encourage others to become terrorists – changing the environment in which the extremists and those radicalising others can operate

[342] Home Affairs Committee, 'Terrorism and Community Relations', 22 March 2005, paragraph 179, available at: https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200405/cmselect/cmhaff/165/16510.htm#a41

[343] Ibid, paragraph 172

[344] Ibid, paragraphs 152-153

[345] Ibid, paragraph 173

- engaging in the battle of ideas – challenging the ideologies that extremists believe can justify the use of violence, primarily by helping Muslims who wish to dispute these ideas to do so[346]

9. The revised strategy acknowledged – for the first time explicitly – that there was a need to work closely with Muslim communities to challenge extremist ideologies as a core component of counter-terrorism work.[347] This approach came out of recommendations from consultations and working groups with 104 Muslim faith and community leaders set up by the Home Office in the aftermath of the 7/7 attacks, known as 'Preventing Extremism Together'.[348] The government noted clear themes among the recommendations, particularly around challenging 'terrorist justifications of violence' and improving Muslim civic engagement and community leadership.[349]

10. CONTEST 2006 provided updates on the three principal Preventing Extremism Together recommendations, namely a national roadshow of Muslim scholars, regional forums bringing Muslim leaders, police and the public sector together to combat Islamophobia, and a Mosques and Imams advisory board to co-ordinate support for mosques.[350]

11. Reactions to Prevent work identified in CONTEST 2006 were split. I heard from academic webinar sessions that while public support for countering violent extremism was strong, some held the perception that Prevent was becoming 'securitised'. One view put forward in 2006 by the left-leaning think tank DEMOS was that the government was right to adopt a community-based approach to counter-terrorism after 7/7, but had done so in a manner that alienated some within Britain's Muslim communities. Engagement was criticised as superficial, failing to tackle 'grievances' (such as the war in Iraq), and

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[346] HM Government, 'Countering International Terrorism: The United Kingdom's Strategy', July 2006, paragraph 6, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/272320/6888.pdf

[347] Ibid, paragraph 6

[348] Preventing Extremism Together, 'working groups August to October 2005', available at: https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100519161311/http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/152164.pdf ; Home Office, 'Preventing Extremism Together – government response', November 2005, available at: https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20100519155438mp_/http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/151978.pdf

[349] Home Office, Preventing Extremism Together: Response to Working Group reports, November 2005, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20100519155438mp_/http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/151978.pdf.

[350] HM Government, 'Countering International Terrorism: The United Kingdom's Strategy', July 2006, page 14, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/272320/6888.pdf;

potentially undermined by ministers' "talking of the need for Muslims to 'get serious' about terrorism".[351]

12. By contrast, right-leaning commentators and politicians argued that that Prevent did not go far enough in tackling Islamist radicalism domestically, in part because the government had for too long tolerated Islamist exiles and former mujahidin promoting Salafi-Jihadi ideas in the UK, provided they did not openly call for violence in the UK itself.[352] The think tank Policy Exchange, for example, criticised Radical Middle Way – the government's flagship Muslim scholars roadshow – for platforming a former spokesperson for the global Islamist movement, the Muslim Brotherhood, among other questionable partners.[353]

13. Foreshadowing future criticism of Prevent, both sides argued that the government's approach prevented difficult yet vital conversations from taking place. For the left, this was broadly the extent to which issues such as the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq had contributed to the terrorist threat. For the right, it was the extent to which Islamist organisations in the UK were mainstreaming Islamism and equivocating on extremism and acts of terrorism.

14. A third group campaigned vociferously against the second strand of Prevent, namely measures designed to deter those who facilitate terrorism. A coalition of civil liberties and Islamist groups campaigned against both the Terrorism Act 2006, which made it an offence to encourage terrorism, and the introduction of exclusion from the UK on the grounds of 'unacceptable behaviours'. For these groups, which included the MCB, the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB) and Hizb ut-Tahrir, it was argued that such measures could wrongly capture "support for armed resistance to the occupation of Palestine or Iraq" or "the aspiration to one Caliphate of Muslim States".[354] Such positions

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[351] Rachel Briggs, Catherine Fiechi, Hannah Lownsbrough, 'Bringing it Home: Community-based approaches to counter-terrorism', Demos, 2006, page 14, available at: http://www.demos.co.uk/files/Bringing%20it%20Home%20-%20web.pdf

[352] See, for example, Michael Gove, 'Celsius 7/7: How the West's policy of appeasement has provoked yet more fundamentalist terror – and what has to be done now', London: Weidenfeld &

Nicolson, 2006; Dean Godson, 'Already hooked on poison', The Times, February 8 2006, available at: https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/already-hooked-on-poison-9f2b0cc926x; Melanie Phillips, 'Londonistan: How Britain is creating a terror state within', London: Gibson Square Books, 2006

[353] Shiraz Maher and Martyn Frampton, 'Choosing our friends wisely Criteria for engagement with Muslim groups', Policy Exchange, 2009, page 32, available at: https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/choosing-our-friends-wisely-mar-09.pdf

[354] Joint Committee On Human Rights, 'Written Evidence – session 2005-06', 28 November 2005, available at: https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/jt200506/jtselect/jtrights/75/75we01.htm

are themselves key tenets of Islamism,[355] and yet the allegation that Prevent targets mainstream Muslim positions continues from such groups today.

15. The Prevent strand of CONTEST 2006 was owned by the Cabinet Office until the Office for Security and Counter Terrorism (OSCT, now the Homeland Security Group) was set up within the Home Office in 2007 to lead the strategy, setting a strategic framework for partner organisations and departments such as the Department Communities and Local Government (DCLG – now DLUHC), the Foreign Office (now the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office), and the police.[356]

16. Much of the work to tackle both disadvantage and extremist ideologies, the first and third strands of Prevent, was delivered by DCLG. Guidance was produced to help partner agencies, including local authorities and the police, to work together on tackling terrorism locally.[357] DLCG understood its role as enabling communities to, in the words of the then Prime Minister Tony Blair, "challenge robustly the ideas of those extremists who seek to undermine our way of life".[358] Funding for local projects came from:
    - the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund – launched in September 2005[359]
    - the Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund – launched in October 2006 to support priority local authorities in developing programmes of activity to tackle violent extremism[360]

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[355] HM Government, 'Muslim Brotherhood Review: Main Findings', December 2015, paragraphs 16 and 23, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/486948/53163_Muslim_Brotherhood_Review_-_PRINT.pdf

[356] Cabinet Office, 'CONTEST 2003: a 5-year UK strategy for countering international terrorism', 1 April 2004, available at: https://www.sacc.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/contest_2003_report_for_release.pdf; Home Affairs Committee, 'Examination of Witnesses: Mr Charles Farr OBE', Q126, available at: https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmhaff/212/09022602.htm

[357] Communities and Local Government, 'Preventing Violent Extremism: Winning Hearts and Minds', April 2007, available at: https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20070506201536mp_/http://www.communities.gov.uk/pub/401/PreventingviolentextremismWinningheartsandminds_id1509401.pdf

[358] Ibid, paragraph 6

[359] Malcolm James, 'Faith, Cohesion and Community Development: An evaluation report from the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund', Community Development Foundation, 2007, page 6, available at: https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/faith-cohesion-and-community-development-an-evaluation-report-from-the-faith-communities-capacity-building-fund
By June 2006, £1.5 million of the £7.7 million total funding had gone to Muslim organisations. See: HM Government, 'Countering International Terrorism: The United Kingdom's Strategy', July 2006, page 11, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/272320/6888.pdf

[360] Communities and Local Government, 'Preventing violent extremism pathfinder fund 2007/08: Case studies', April 2007, page 4, available at: http://tedcantle.co.uk/publications/022%20Preventing%20violent%20extremism%20pathfinder%20fund%20case%20studie.pdf

- the Community Leadership Fund[361] – a central grants fund set up in June 2007 to support local projects tackling extremism and Islamophobia[362]

While project details were not routinely made public, information about PVEPF priority local authorities and case studies was occasionally published.[363]

Prevent 2007 and CONTEST 2009

17. The government introduced a revised Prevent Strategy in October 2007,[364] which it published as a standalone strategy for the first time in June 2008,[365] and reiterated as part of an updated CONTEST in March 2009.[366] The revised Prevent strategy had five main objectives:
    - challenging violent extremist ideology and supporting mainstream voices
    - disrupting those who promote violent extremism and supporting the institutions where they are active
    - supporting individuals who are being targeted and recruited to the cause of violent extremism
    - increasing the resilience of communities to violent extremism
    - addressing the grievances that ideologues are exploiting

[361] Communities and Local Government, 'Preventing Violent Extremism: Community Leadership Fund', June 2007, available at: https://web.archive.org/web/20080729200845/http:/www.communities.gov.uk/documents/corporate/pdf/430934.pdf

[362] HM Government, 'The Prevent Strategy: A Guide for Local Partners in England', June 2008, page 49, available at https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20130321045720/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/Prevent_Strategy.pdf

[363] See, for example, UK Parliament, 'Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund: Volume 488', debated on Monday 2 March 2009, available at: https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2009-03-02/debates/09030213000044/FaithCommunitiesCapacityBuildingFund; Communities and Local Government, 'Preventing violent extremism pathfinder fund 2007/08: Case studies', April 2007, available at: http://tedcantle.co.uk/publications/022%20Preventing%20violent%20extremism%20pathfinder%20fund%20case%20studie.pdf

[364] HM Government, 'Pursue Prevent Protect Prepare: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering International Terrorism', March 2009, paragraph 0.32, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/228644/7547.pdf

[365] HM Government, 'Preventing Violent Extremism: A Strategy for Delivery', June 2008, available at: http://lawsdocbox.com/Politics/96465343-Preventing-violent-extremism-a-strategy-for-delivery.html; House of Commons Library, 'Preventing Violent Extremism', June 2008, page 18, available at: https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN04766/SN04766.pdf

[366] HM Government, 'Pursue Prevent Protect Prepare: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering International Terrorism', March 2009, paragraph 0.32, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/228644/7547.pdf

These were supported by two additional objectives, which focused on improving Prevent-related research and analysis, as well as strategic communications.[367]

18. This iteration of Prevent contained several developments which remain relevant. First, the new strategy introduced a formal safeguarding element in the form of Channel, "a multi-agency approach to support vulnerable individuals" based on a system of referral, assessment and tailored intervention.[368] Channel developed from a two-site pilot in 2007 to 11 sites by 2009. By 2011, the programme covered 75 local authorities and 12 police forces, before being rolled out nationally in 2012 and being placed on a statutory footing in 2015.[369] Today, Channel "forms a key part of Prevent", by offering support to those who present a terrorism 'vulnerability' or 'risk'.[370]

19. Second, the strategy identified the need for the government to communicate its aims more clearly, effectively and consistently.[371] This focus on strategic communications led to the creation in June 2007 of the Research, Information and Communications Unit (RICU),[372] which aimed to improve the ways in which officials both communicate Prevent

[367] HM Government, 'Preventing Violent Extremism: A Strategy for Delivery', June 2008, available at: http://lawsdocbox.com/Politics/96465343-Preventing-violent-extremism-a-strategy-for-delivery.html; HM Government, 'The Prevent Strategy: A Guide for Local Partners in England May 2008', June 2008, pages 6, 41 and 43, available at: https://www.scribd.com/document/370462206/The-Prevent-Strategy-A-Guide-for-Local-Partners-in-England-Stopping-people-becoming-or-supporting-terrorists-and-violent-extremists

[368] HM Government, 'The Prevent Strategy: A Guide for Local Partners in England May 2008', June 2008, page 28, available at: https://www.scribd.com/document/370462206/The-Prevent-Strategy-A-Guide-for-Local-Partners-in-England-Stopping-people-becoming-or-supporting-terrorists-and-violent-extremists

[369] HM Government, 'Pursue Prevent Protect Prepare: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering International Terrorism', March 2009, page 15, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/228644/7547.pdf; HM Government, 'Prevent Review 2011', paragraph 9.8; HM Government, 'Channel: Protecting vulnerable people from being drawn into terrorism: A guide for local partnerships', October 2012, available at: https://sondrio.istruzione.lombardia.gov.it/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/channel_guidan https://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=58630ce.pdf; HM Government, 'Channel Duty Guidance: Protecting people vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism', 2020, paragraphs 1-2, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/964567/6.6271_HO_HMG_Channel_Duty_Guidance_v14_Web.pdf

[370] HM Government, 'Channel Duty Guidance: Protecting people vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism', 2020, paragraphs 11-12, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/964567/6.6271_HO_HMG_Channel_Duty_Guidance_v14_Web.pdf

[371] HM Government, 'The Prevent Strategy: A Guide for Local Partners in England May 2008', June 2008, page 43, available at: https://www.scribd.com/document/370462206/The-Prevent-Strategy-A-Guide-for-Local-Partners-in-England-Stopping-people-becoming-or-supporting-terrorists-and-violent-extremists

[372] HM Government, 'The Prevent Strategy: A Guide for Local Partners in England May 2008', June 2008, pages 44-45, 43, available at: https://www.scribd.com/document/370462206/The-Prevent-Strategy-A-Guide-for-Local-Partners-in-England-Stopping-people-becoming-or-supporting-terrorists-and-violent-extremists

work to the public, in particular Muslim communities, and to develop counter-narratives to more effectively challenge propaganda from al-Qa'ida and associated groups.[373] RICU issued guidance to Prevent partners on "what language is appropriate",[374] suggesting that officials should avoid using language that could be seen as confrontational, such as "war on terror" or "battle of ideas", in favour of talking about shared values.[375] This approach was criticised by some as evidence of 'government propaganda',[376] while a government review in 2008 found that some practitioners felt that it prevented difficult issues from being talked about openly.[377] Echoing current debates regarding the appropriateness of language, the report found that, "sensitivity to language means that not all local public services are fully addressing Prevent in their local plans for fear that using more direct language may exacerbate community tensions".[378]

Both the Channel process and RICU's strategic communications were led by the Office for Security and Counter Terrorism,[379] while work within communities continued to be overseen by DCLG, with local authorities tasked with its delivery.[380]

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[373] Home Affairs Committee, 'Examination of Witnesses: Mr Charles Farr OBE, Qs 127-131', 2009, available at: https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmhaff/212/09022602.htm

[374] Cabinet Office, 'CONTEST 2003: a 5-year UK strategy for countering international terrorism', 1 April 2004, available at: https://www.sacc.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/contest_2003_report_for_release.pdf; Home Affairs Committee, 'Examination of Witnesses: Mr Charles Farr OBE, Q131', 2009, available at: https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmhaff/212/09022602.htm

[375] Travis, Alan, 'Battle against al-Qaida brand highlighted in secret paper', Guardian, 26 August 2008, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/aug/26/alqaida.terrorism

[376] Gordon Corera, 'Don't look now, Britain's real spooks are right behind you', The Times, 2 December 2007, available at: https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/dont-look-now-britains-real-spooks-are-right-behind-you-jvbchtqzhh3

[377] HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and the Audit Commission, 'Preventing Violent Extremism Learning and Development Exercise', October 2008, page 40, available at: https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/media/preventing-violent-extremism-learning-and-development-exercise-20080930.pdf

[378] HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and the Audit Commission, Preventing Violent Extremism Learning and Development Exercise, October 2008, page 41, available at: https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/media/preventing-violent-extremism-learning-and-development-exercise-20080930.pdf

[379] HM Government, 'The Prevent Strategy: A Guide for Local Partners in England May 2008', June 2008, page 44, available at: https://www.scribd.com/document/370462206/The-Prevent-Strategy-A-Guide-for-Local-Partners-in-England-Stopping-people-becoming-or-supporting-terrorists-and-violent-extremists

[380] HM Government, Pursue Prevent Protect Prepare: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering International Terrorism', March 2009, page 15, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/228644/7547.pdf

20. Third, the strategy committed the government, at the national and local level, "to support only those groups that condemn violence and work actively against violent extremism".[381] Local partners were encouraged to work only with "groups who uphold our shared values of tolerance, respect and equality" and to avoid those who "may have aims contrary to [the Prevent] agenda".[382] This development was tested in February 2009 when the then Secretary of State for DCLG, Hazel Blears, cut ties with the MCB after a senior office holder signed a public statement, known as the Istanbul Declaration, which appeared to condone violence against British forces in the event that the UK enforced an arms blockade on Gaza.[383]

21. Fourth, the strategy explicitly acknowledged the importance of tackling not only violent extremism but "views which fall short of supporting violence and are within the law, but which reject and undermine our shared values and jeopardise community cohesion". It was acknowledged that "[s]ome of these views can create a climate in which people may be drawn into violent activity".[384]

22. The revised version of the Prevent strategy was criticised on a variety of fronts. At a Parliamentary debate in the House of Commons on 26 October 2009, some MPs raised concerns around the perception that Prevent was a tool for spying on Muslim communities, about the appropriateness of tackling social issues as part of a counter-terrorism strategy, and about the exclusive focus on terrorists from the Muslim faith. Other members raised concerns that Prevent lacked robust audit and evaluation processes, meaning that the government could neither guarantee that projects were effective nor that funding "is not finding its way into the hands of extremist groups".[385] An independent assessment of Prevent projects, published in December 2008, had

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[381] HM Government, 'The Prevent Strategy: A Guide for Local Partners in England May 2008', June 2008, page 2, available at: https://www.scribd.com/document/370462206/The-Prevent-Strategy-A-Guide-for-Local-Partners-in-England-Stopping-people-becoming-or-supporting-terrorists-and-violent-extremists

[382] HM Government, 'The Prevent Strategy: A Guide for Local Partners in England May 2008', June 2008, page 14, available at: https://www.scribd.com/document/370462206/The-Prevent-Strategy-A-Guide-for-Local-Partners-in-England-Stopping-people-becoming-or-supporting-terrorists-and-violent-extremists

[383] Department for Communities and Local Government, 'Letter from The Rt Hon Hazel Blears MP to Dr Muhammad Abdul Bari, MCB Secretary General', 13 March 2009, available at: https://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Guardian/documents/2009/03/23/blears__letter.pdf

[384] HM Government, 'Pursue Prevent Protect Prepare: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering International Terrorism', March 2009, page 81, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/228644/7547.pdf

[385] UK Parliament, 'Prevent Strategy Hansard: Debated 26 October 2009, vol 498, col 8-10' available at: https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2009-10-26/debates/09102612000037/PreventStrategy

identified evaluation of projects as a weakness among local authorities, with few authorities able to provide evaluation reports.[386]

23. Of continued relevance is the debate on government engagement with Muslim communities. At this time, some Prevent partners – notably within the police – argued that non-violent Islamist or Salafi groups could be 'powerful allies in the fight against al-Qa'ida influence'. Others – including opposition MPs and a former Islamist who is now a radicalisation expert – considered this approach naive and counter-productive.[387] In a February 2011 speech in Munich, then Prime Minister David Cameron described it as "like turning to a right-wing fascist party to fight a violent white supremacist movement".[388]

Prevent 2011

24. The coalition government published a review of the Prevent strategy in 2011.[389] That review, which included a public consultation, found:
    - the line between extremism and terrorism is "often blurred", with terrorists drawing upon ideologies popularised by non-violent yet extreme organisations, some of which routinely create and exploit grievances to reinforce their messages[390]
    - Prevent funding had been wrongly used for community cohesion projects rather than counter-terrorism ones, risking both diverting resources away from Prevent's primary objectives and securitising integration work[391]
    - Funding had been given to local authorities without sufficient guidance or oversight and evaluation of projects was judged to have been poor, meaning money had "been

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[386] Department for Communities and Local Government, 'Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund Mapping of project activities 2007/2008', December 2008, page 9, available at: https://lemosandcrane.co.uk/resources/DCLG-PreventingViolentExtremismPathfinderFund.pdf

[387] Hannah Stuart, 'Counter-Terrorism and Extremism in Great Britain Since 7/7', Counter Extremism Group, July 2020, pages 13-15, available at: https://counterextremism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/0001_CT_CE_since_7_7_05_WEB_1_6.pdf

[388] HM Government, 'PM's speech at Munich Security Conference', 5 February 2011, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-speech-at-munich-security-conference

[389] Lord Carlile provided independent oversight to this Review. See: HM Government, 'Report to the Home Secretary of Independent Oversight of Prevent Review and Strategy', 2011, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97977/lord-carlile-report.pdf

[390] HM Government, 'Prevent Strategy', June 2011, paragraphs 5.34-5.38, 10.158, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf

[391] HM Government, 'Prevent Strategy' June 2011, paragraphs 3.12, 6.27-6.30, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf

wasted" and, in some cases, given to organisations who had supported extremist ideologies[392]

- Prevent was correctly being used flexibly, in some cases, to address the threat from Extreme Right-Wing groups in response to local threat levels and context[393]
- Prevent was regarded by some as a form of spying on Muslim communities. While the review found no evidence of this, it acknowledged that "trust" in Prevent should be improved[394]

The findings led the then Home Secretary, Theresa May, to conclude that the previous strategy had "failed to confront the extremist ideology at the heart of the threat we face".[395]

25. In response, Prevent 2011 broadened its scope to formally include non-violent extremism and placed a renewed emphasis on the importance of ideology.[396] Prevent 2011 made it clear that preventing terrorism requires challenging extremist ideas that are part of a terrorist ideology and "intervening to stop people moving from extremist groups or extremism into terrorist-related activity".[397] This review also explicitly recognised the crossover between ideology and grievance, noting for example that "extremists can play on a sense of grievance to reinforce their messages".[398] As part of a drive to tackle non-

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[392] HM Government, 'Prevent Strategy', June 2011, paragraphs 3.17-3.18, 6.31, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf

[393] HM Government, 'Prevent Strategy', June 2011, paragraphs 6.9-6.11, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf

[394] HM Government, 'Prevent Strategy', June 2011, paragraph 3.15, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf

[395] HM Government, 'Prevent Strategy', June 2011, page 1, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf

[396] Prevent 2011 defined extremism 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, whether in this country or overseas." HM Government, 'Prevent Strategy', June 2011, page 107, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf

[397] HM Government, 'Prevent Strategy', June 2011, paragraph 3.10, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf

[398] HM Government, 'Prevent Strategy', June 2011, paragraph 10.158, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf

violent extremism, the review also explicitly ruled out both working with or funding organisations that do not accept "our values of universal human rights, equality before the law, democracy and full participation in our society" or engaging with "extremists to address the risk of radicalisation".[399]

26. Prevent was updated to formally address all forms of terrorism, including the Extreme Right-Wing,[400] on the condition the allocation of resources remains "proportionate to the threats we face", identified as primarily stemming from Islamist terrorism.[401] Reflecting an emphasis on working more closely with communities, individuals and partner agencies respectively, Prevent's objectives were streamlined to:
    - respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism and the threat 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

    Considering the boldness of the new direction, reactions to Prevent 2011 were, inevitably, once again mixed. Some stakeholders continued to perceive Prevent as a form of spying on Muslim communities,[402] while others who had previously criticised Prevent for co-opting Islamist and Salafi group to tackle radicalisation were heartened by the new more muscular approach.[403]

The Prevent Duty 2015

27. The Prevent strategy was strengthened in 2015, in the context of a growing threat from Islamic State and al-Qa'ida aligned groups as well as the increasing numbers travelling from the UK to Syria and Iraq.

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[399] HM Government, 'Prevent Strategy', June 2011, page 1 and para. 3.17, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf

[400] The strategy does not directly apply to Northern Ireland.

[401] HM Government, 'Prevent Strategy', June 2011, page 23, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf

[402] Police and Crime Committee, 'Preventing extremism in London', 2015, available at: https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/preventing_extremism_in_london_report.pdf

[403] Dean Godson, 'David Cameron and Theresa May are to be congratulated for their strategy on tackling Islamist extremism', Conservative Home, 7 June 2011, available at: https://www.conservativehome.com/platform/2011/06/dean-godson-david-cameron-and-theresa-may-are-to-be-congratulated-for-their-strategy-on-tackling-isl.html

28. The Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (CTSA) created the 'Prevent Duty', meaning that specified authorities must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. Practically, this made the delivery of Prevent and the Channel programme a statutory requirement on public bodies such as local authorities, police, schools and universities. The government issued Prevent duty guidance and Channel duty guidance to enable specified authorities and partners to fulfil their legal requirements, for example through risk assessment, the provision of training, and ensuring their staff know how to obtain support for people at risk of being drawn into terrorism.[404]

29. Several developments followed that are relevant to the Prevent model today.

30. The Counter-Extremism Strategy was introduced in 2015 to tackle all forms of extremism, as extremist ideology was regarded as the 'root cause' of terrorism and other social harms.[405] However, the government was unable to agree on a legal definition of extremism required for the Counter Extremism Bill which proposed new powers to disrupt the activities of extremist individuals or groups.[406] Reporting on the government's delivery of the Counter-Extremism Strategy in 2019, the independent Commissioner for Countering Extremism, Sara Khan, found that there was insufficient clarity between Prevent and the Counter-Extremism Strategy.[407] The impact of the Counter-Extremism Strategy on Prevent is discussed on page 118.

31. In 2016, the Operation Dovetail pilot was launched in nine areas across the country, effectively trialling moving control of Channel from Counter Terrorism Police into local authorities.[408] The pilot was not intended to change the Channel referral system itself but where certain functions of process and delivery are managed. The aim was to encourage closer alignment to the safeguarding responsibilities of local authorities and reduce

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[404] HM Government, 'Prevent duty guidance: Guidance for specified authorities in England and Wales on the duty in the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism', 2015, paragraphs 16, 19 and 20, available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2015/9780111133309/pdfs/ukdsiod_9780111133309_en.pdf

[405] HM Government, 'Counter-Extremism Strategy', 2015, page 5, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/470088/51859_Cm9148_Accessible.pdf

[406] Commission for Countering Extremism, 'Challenging Hateful Extremism', October 2019, page 100, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/874101/200320_Challenging_Hateful_Extremism.pdf

[407] Commission for Countering Extremism, 'Challenging Hateful Extremism', October 2019, page 93, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/874101/200320_Challenging_Hateful_Extremism.pdf

[408] Local Government Association, 'Operation Dovetail update', 19 March 2018, paragraph 5, available at: https://lga.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s16757/Operation%20Dovetail%20update.pdf

reliance upon the police for Prevent delivery.[409] In practice, the police retained the counter-terrorism risk and the local authority owned the safeguarding risk.[410] Since 2019, a second regional version of the Dovetail model has been piloted in the North West of England. Operation Dovetail and its implication for national Prevent delivery is discussed on page 105.

32. In April 2017, the Home Office and Ministry of Justice established the Joint Extremism Unit (JEXU) to be "the strategic centre for all counter terrorism work in prison and probation and have oversight of delivery across the end-to-end offender management process".[411] JEXU was set up to advise prisons in England and Wales on how to manage risk from specific threats, instruct and train prison and probation staff, and provide a range of interventions, from psychological support and mentoring to education provision.[412] Since then, a series of terrorist attacks involving convicted terrorists or violent offenders in England have led to significant debate within the UK on the adequacy of measures designed to tackle radicalisation in prisons and probation.[413] This is discussed on page 65.

33. Responding to calls for greater transparency, Prevent and Channel referral statistics were published for the first time in November 2017 for 2015/16 referrals and are updated annually.[414]

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[409] Local Government Association, 'Operation Dovetail update', 19 March 2018, paragraph 5, available at: https://lga.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s16757/Operation%20Dovetail%20update.pdf

[410] Local Government Association, 'Operation Dovetail update', 19 March 2018, paragraphs 7.1-7.2, available at: https://lga.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s16757/Operation%20Dovetail%20update.pdf

[411] UK Parliament, 'Written questions and answers – Prisons: Radicalisation', Tabled 15 May 2019, available at: https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2019-05-15/254762

[412] HM Inspectorate of Probation, 'Extremism and terrorism', available at: https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/research/the-evidence-base-probation/specific-sub-groups/extremism-and-terrorism/; HM Government, 'CONTEST: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism', June 2018, page 41, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/716907/140618_CCS207_CCS0218929798-1_CONTEST_3.0_WEB.pdf

[413] In November 2019, Usman Khan, a terrorism offender on licence, killed two people in a terrorist attack at Fishmonger's Hall, London. In January 2020, terrorist prisoner Brusthom Ziamani was involved in a non-fatal knife attack on prison guards at HMP Whitemoor. In February 2020, recently-released terrorism offender Sudesh Amman stabbed two civilians in Streatham, London. In June 2020, recently-released violent offender Khairi Saadallah killed three people in a terrorist attack in Reading.

[414] See: HM Government, 'Collection | Individuals referred to and supported through the Prevent Programme', 9 November 2017, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/individuals-referred-to-and-supported-through-the-prevent-programme-statistics

Prevent today

34. The CONTEST strategy was revised in 2018 after five major terrorist attacks in London and Manchester in 2017.

35. The revised objectives of Prevent 2018 were as follows:
    - tackle the causes of radicalisation and respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism
    - safeguard and support those most at risk of radicalisation through early intervention, identifying them and offering support
    - enable those who have already engaged in terrorism to disengage and rehabilitate[415]

36. The 2018 strategy continued to assess the Islamist threat as the most significant. The strategy acknowledged the previously unforeseen establishment of Islamic State's caliphate in Syria and Iraq and the galvanising impact it had on global Islamist terrorism, including its "ability to direct large-scale, mass casualty attacks in Europe".[416] It also noted the threat from Extreme Right-Wing terrorism,[417] following the murder of MP Jo Cox in 2016 and the attack on Finsbury Park Mosque worshippers the following year.

37. CONTEST 2018 discussed the importance of ideology, described as "a broadly consistent set of ideas and narratives", in motivating both terrorist groups and individuals, alongside "social, cultural, material, psychological and other reasons". It explained that Islamic State and al-Qa'ida broadly share Salafi-Jihadism as a common ideology, which includes a commitment to restoring a literalist interpretation of sharia within a caliphate, and a hatred of the West and its allies on the grounds that it suppresses Islam and Muslims globally. Meanwhile, Extreme Right-Wing groups "share the racist view that minority communities are harming the interests of a 'native' population".[418]

38. The 2018 strategy also reflected changes in both the nature of the terrorist threat and independent recommendations for the authorities to best respond. CONTEST 2018

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[415] HM Government, 'CONTEST The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism', June 2018, paragraph 100, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/716907/140618_CCS207_CCS0218929798-1_CONTEST_3.0_WEB.pdf

[416] HM Government, 'CONTEST The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism', June 2018, page 35-37, and 45, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/716907/140618_CCS207_CCS0218929798-1_CONTEST_3.0_WEB.pdf

[417] HM Government, 'CONTEST The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism', June 2018, paragraph 53, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/716907/140618_CCS207_CCS0218929798-1_CONTEST_3.0_WEB.pdf

[418] HM Government, 'CONTEST The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism', June 2018, paragraphs 39-41, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/716907/140618_CCS207_CCS0218929798-1_CONTEST_3.0_WEB.pdf

noted the "diversification" in the nature of the threat, to include simple methods such as vehicle or bladed weapon attacks, and the increased prevalence of "lone actors" across ideologies.[419] It also took account of the various reviews undertaken in response to the 2017 attacks and the recommendations of the overarching MI5 and Counter Terrorism Policing's Operational Improvement Review, overseen by the former Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, Lord Anderson KC. For example, the Operational Improvement Review recommended a strengthening of Prevent's referral system to ensure that suitable candidates are referred and to improve consistency.[420]

39. While the 2018 strategy continued to emphasise working within communities and safeguarding people at risk of becoming terrorists, it now included supporting the rehabilitation and disengagement of those already involved in or convicted of terrorism. This approach was intended to reflect increasing links between Prevent and other strands of CONTEST, notably Pursue, and is delivered through the Desistance and Disengagement Programme (DDP).[421] This programme aims to provide tailored interventions to "support individuals to stop participating in terrorism-related activity (desist) and to move away from terrorist ideology and ways of thinking (disengage)".[422]

40. To deliver these new objectives, Prevent would:
    - focus its activity and resources in those locations where the threat from terrorism and radicalisation is highest
    - expand DDP
    - develop multi-agency pilots to improve understanding of those at risk of involvement in terrorism and enable earlier intervention
    - focus its online activity on preventing the dissemination of terrorist material and building strong counter-terrorist narratives
    - build stronger partnerships with communities, civil society groups, public sector institutions and industry to improve Prevent delivery

[419] HM Government, 'CONTEST The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism', June 2018, paragraphs 42 and 46, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/716907/140618_CCS207_CCS0218929798-1_CONTEST_3.0_WEB.pdf

[420] David Anderson KC, 'Attacks in London and Manchester, Independent Assessment Of MI5 and Police Internal Reviews', December 2017, paragraph 3.47 (d), available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664682/Attacks_in_London_and_Manchester_Open_Report.pdf

[421] HM Government, 'CONTEST The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism', June 2018, paragraphs 129-130, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/716907/140618_CCS207_CCS0218929798-1_CONTEST_3.0_WEB.pdf

[422] Home Office blog, 'Fact sheet: Desistance and Disengagement Programme', 5 November 2019, available at: https://homeofficemedia.blog.gov.uk/2019/11/05/fact-sheet-desistance-and-disengagement-programme

- re-enforce safeguarding at the heart of Prevent[423]

41. The passing of the Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Act (CTBSA) in 2019 provided for two further changes to Prevent. It updated the existing provisions for Channel set out in the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (2015) to allow local authorities (rather than solely the police) to refer individuals to Channel if they have "reasonable grounds to believe that the individual is vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism". This was a consolidation of the approach in the Operation Dovetail Pilot.[424]

42. The CTBSA also placed a duty on the Secretary of State to establish an independent review of Prevent.[425] This revision followed repeated calls for such a review from those who supported the need for the strategy, through to those who wished to see its abolition.[426] In his 2019 report on countering violent extremism, the London Mayor said it was an opportunity to acknowledge both the good work and failings of Prevent and to reset trust in the strategy.[427] In her 2019 report on extremism in England and Wales, the then Independent Commissioner for Countering Extremism, Sara Khan, urged the reviewer to clarify the difference between counter-terrorism and counter-extremism work, in particular with regards to funding civil society organisations.[428] Sharing both views, an independent 2019 report on Prevent commissioned by the police described the review as "an opportunity for a 'reset moment'".

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[423] HM Government, 'CONTEST The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism', June 2018, paragraph 16, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/716907/140618_CCS207_CCS0218929798-1_CONTEST_3.0_WEB.pdf

[424] 'Counter Terrorism and Border Security Act', available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2019/3/section/20

[425] Ibid

[426] Home Affairs Committee, 'Radicalisation: the counter-narrative', 2016, page 36, available at: https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmhaff/135/135.pdf

[427] Mayor of London, 'The London Countering Violent Extremism Programme Report', 2019, page 7, available at: https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/cve_strategy_20_8_19.pdf

[428] Commission for Countering Extremism, 'Challenging Hateful Extremism', October 2019, page 94, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/874101/200320_Challenging_Hateful_Extremism.pdf

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