Key Principles of Prevent: FAQ

Prevent is about stopping people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. It sits alongside long-established safeguarding duties on professionals to protect people from a range of other harms, such as substance abuse, involvement in gangs, and physical and sexual exploitation. Prevent seeks to intervene early and ensure that people who are susceptible to radicalisation to terrorism are supported as they would be under safeguarding processes. The Key Principles of Prevent have been developed to set out and clarify existing Prevent policy and help people to understand Prevent's core purpose. These FAQs should be read alongside the Key Principles.

1) Why have you brought in the Key Principles now?

In July 2025 Lord Anderson KC, the Interim Independent Prevent Commissioner, noted that 'consistent efforts should be made to improve the quality of referrals and encourage those that are appropriate, including by providing clear and consistent messaging to potential referrers and to Prevent practitioners'[1]. The Home Secretary committed to clarifying Prevent thresholds in guidance by the end of September 2025[2].

2) Is this a change to Prevent?

The Key Principles are not making any changes to Prevent. Instead, they clarify existing policy which has been in place since 2019. The Key Principles aim to:

- make it clear that, where there is a concern that someone may be at risk of radicalisation or involvement in terrorism, they should be referred to Prevent;
- articulate the most important aspects of Prevent which should underpin decision-making;
- highlight that Prevent is the only support option which offers multi-agency radicalisation risk management and support;
- ensure that practitioners understand that Prevent can complement and work in partnership with other safeguarding programmes;
- clarify the roles and responsibilities of frontline professionals and Prevent practitioners in decision-making.

3) Can an individual receive support from Prevent if they do not have clear ideology?

Yes.

[1] Lessons for Prevent (accessible) - GOV.UK – Recommendation 2.
[2] Written statements - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament

As an early intervention programme, Prevent supports people *susceptible* to radicalisation. The Prevent duty guidance highlights that, although ideology can be an important part of the radicalisation process, there may be times when the precise ideological driver is not clear[3].

There is no single pathway to radicalisation. Some individuals seek to support or enact terrorist offences without a clear understanding of the ideology or cause they are supporting. Therefore, individuals whose ideology is unclear, but who demonstrate a susceptibility to radicalisation, should be given the same consideration for support as those with clear and concerning ideological motivations.

Further advice and guidance on the signs of radicalisation are available on ACT Early and GOV.UK[4].

Frontline professionals, when deciding whether to make a referral, should consider whether they believe the person they are concerned about may be on a pathway that could lead to terrorism[5]. It is not necessary to identify ideology or to categorise the concern when making a referral.

Frontline professionals should use the national referral form[6], which includes factors to consider, to articulate their concern and why they think the person **may be susceptible to radicalisation**.

Specialist police officers should use the Prevent Assessment Framework (PAF) to underpin decisions on whether a referral should progress. The PAF considers various factors, including ideology, but no single factor is mandated for a referral to be considered and adopted for Prevent support.

4) Can an individual get support from Prevent if they are fascinated with violence?

Some people who have a fascination with violence could be considered at risk of becoming radicalised and so would be suitable for Prevent.

A fascination with extreme violence, mass casualty attacks or massacre could be an indicator of susceptibility to terrorism, either before an ideology has been adopted or as a co-occurring interest.

If a frontline professional believes someone may be at risk of radicalisation, they should use the national referral form and relevant Prevent training to help articulate and evidence their concerns.

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[3] Prevent duty guidance
[4] ACT Early | Prevent radicalisation; Prevent duty training - GOV.UK
[5] Prevent duty guidance
[6] Referrers in Scotland should refer to Police Scotland for the Scottish National Referral Form.

Where cases do not meet the threshold for Prevent support, but there are concerns about violence fascination or committing a violent offence, local authorities and their partners (including policing) should reassure themselves that they have effective processes in place to make onwards referrals and signpost individuals to other services.

5) Does Prevent deal with 'violence fascinated individuals'? What is the difference between 'fascination with extreme violence and mass casualty attacks'?

Prevent deals with people who are at risk of being drawn into terrorism. Since 2019, Prevent has had a policy to consider people who may not have a clear ideology. In 2019, a letter was issued jointly by the Home Office and Counter-Terrorism Policing to confirm that people with 'school massacre ideation' or with 'mixed unclear unstable' ideologies, should be considered for Prevent.

In 2021, Prevent disaggregated the category previously known as 'Mixed Unclear Unstable', to distinguish categories better, and created a category called 'school massacre' concerns. In May 2024, this category was updated in our case management system to be 'fascination with extreme violence and mass casualty attacks'. Current debate around 'violence fixated/ fascinated individuals' is focussed on this category and understanding this cohort better.

When further research and guidance is available, this will be circulated as appropriate.

Our advice remains: where there are concerns that someone may be drawn into terrorism, they should be referred to Prevent, even if the ideology is not clear.

6) What about 'violence fascinated individuals' who are not considered suitable for Prevent?

Where there is not a concern that someone may be drawn into terrorism, alternative local support services should be considered. Nine local authority-led pilots are testing the hand-off of referrals deemed not appropriate for Prevent. Early findings from these pilots have identified a small number of relevant cases requiring onward support, with the majority of individuals already known to local services.

Local areas have taken a range of approaches to managing risks associated with VFIs where Prevent support is not appropriate, and we continue to learn from the approaches being tested. Our current advice is that local areas should ensure that they fully consider their local options for referrals for VFIs who are not considered to be at risk of being drawn into terrorism. While we would stress that your existing local statutory responsibilities remain unchanged, we are seeking your assistance to

ensure these referrals are directed on to the most appropriate local services and structures to access existing relevant support and manage any associated risk.

Local authorities and their partners (including Counter Terrorism Policing and Local Policing) should reassure themselves that they have effective processes in place to:

- understand the risks associated with people who may have a fascination with violence but who are not considered at risk of being drawn into terrorism and therefore are not suitable for Prevent;
- signpost individuals to relevant safeguarding services where there are residual vulnerabilities not linked to Counter-Terrorism, (this might be through established local pathways such as MAPPA, MASH, Violence Reduction Units, Early Help, Vanguards etc), and
- notify Local Policing of associated Public Protection risks.

7) Can an individual be supported by Prevent if they have mental ill health?

Mental health issues can co-exist with radicalisation risk and a person's susceptibility to radicalisation may – or may not – be linked to them having underlying vulnerabilities.

Prevent can run alongside mental health support services and is the only multi-agency support option which will assess and manage a person's terrorism risk.

If there is a concern that a person with mental ill-health may be on a pathway that could lead to terrorism they should be referred to Prevent. Radicalisation concerns should not be dismissed because of mental ill-health.

8) Can a person be referred to Prevent if they are neurodivergent?

Neurodivergence and radicalisation risk can co-exist, and neurodivergence should be considered as a contextual factor which may – or may not – affect a person's susceptibility to radicalisation.

Prevent can run alongside neurodiversity support services and is the only multi-agency support option which will assess and manage a person's terrorism risk.

If there is a concern that a person who is neurodivergent may be on a pathway that can lead to terrorism, they should be referred to Prevent.

Radicalisation concerns should not be dismissed because of neurodivergence.

9) Can a person be referred to or supported by Prevent if they are already receiving support from other services, such as safeguarding?

Yes, Prevent sits alongside long-established professional safeguarding duties to protect people from a range of other harms. This means Prevent assessment and interventions can complement support provided by other safeguarding processes.

Prevent offers multi-agency support. Support that is being delivered by other services will be considered during Prevent support planning.

Where it is considered that other services are providing comprehensive support and no additional intervention is required, Prevent should still provide case management with a regular radicalisation risk assessment.

Channel duty guidance and PMAP guidance offer further advice to practitioners on how support plans can be developed and sequenced appropriately.