



Prevent - NEU guidance for members in England & Wales

The purpose of this document is to explain the Prevent duty and its implications for school and college staff. A separate document – Prevent: a challenge to the Government’s narrative – is a critique of Prevent and is intended to supplement this guidance.

What is Prevent?

Prevent is a strategy forming part of the Government’s overall counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST. Part 5 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 gives the Prevent strategy legal status in schools and colleges in England and Wales which are now obliged ‘to have due regard’ to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

What does having ‘due regard’ mean?

Due regard is defined as placing “an appropriate amount of weight on the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism when they consider all the other factors relevant to how they carry out their usual functions”.

Essentially, this is based on the premise that “schools can help protect children from extremism and violent views in the same way they help safeguard children from drugs, gang violence and alcohol”.

What does having due regard mean for schools and colleges?

Having due regard requires educational establishments to:

- actively promote fundamental British values
- demonstrate awareness and understanding of risk to learners in their school/college and their geographical area. Local Safeguarding Children’s Boards (LSCBs) will have carried out risk assessments, taking account of local issues/tensions, local police intelligence and the political context at home and abroad.
- equip staff to identify ‘vulnerable’ learners and to challenge extremist ideas
- act when concerning behaviours are observed – this means using the processes set out in safeguarding policies
- have robust safeguarding policies in place – this does not require schools/colleges to create distinct policies on implementing the Prevent duty
- assist and advise families who raise concerns and point them to the right support
- provide a safe space for debate and help learners to understand how they can influence and participate in decision-making both at school/college level and in a wider arena

- provide secure access online – schools/colleges need to have appropriate filters and monitoring systems, so that no learner can access harmful content via the school or college’s IT systems
- work in partnership with the Local Safeguarding Children’s Board and relevant community organisations.

What are ‘fundamental British values’?

Fundamental British values (FBV) are not defined by legislation but are included in the Government’s definition of ‘extremism’. Extremism is defined 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.”

The Government believes the active promotion of fundamental British values in schools and colleges will “create resilience” to extremism and radicalisation.

The Government expects the promotion of FBV to lead learners to:

- an understanding of how citizens can influence decision-making through the democratic process
- an appreciation that living under the rule of law protects individual citizens and is essential for their wellbeing and safety
- an understanding of the separation of powers between the executive, legislature and judiciary
- an understanding that the freedom to choose and hold other faiths and beliefs is protected in law
- tolerance of different faiths and beliefs
- an understanding of the importance of identifying and combating discrimination.

How will Prevent affect the way I work?

The Prevent duty applies to the governors and/or proprietors of schools and colleges, not to the individuals who work in them. However, school and college staff are likely to be bound by their employment contract to take whatever steps their employer deems necessary to meet the Prevent duty.

School and college staff are advised by government guidance to:

- have awareness of Prevent and “the risks it is intended to address”
- ensure children are taught “in a way that is consistent with the law and our values”
- help to identify and refer to the relevant agencies “children whose behaviour suggests that they are being drawn into terrorism or extremism”.

What are the risk factors educators are expected to look for in individual pupils/students?

The website educateagainsthate.com acts as a government repository for all things Prevent. It advises school and college staff to note the following acts/behaviours in learners and report them:

- express sympathy for extremist ideologies and groups or justifying their actions
- access extremist material online
- possess extremist literature
- are in contact with extremist recruiters
- join or seeking to join extremist organisations
- spend excessive time online or on the phone, and being secretive/reluctant to discuss what they are doing
- change an online identity, including social media name or profile image
- become argumentative and unwilling to listen to other people’s points of view

- refuse to engage with, or becoming abusive to, peers who are different from them, perhaps based on race, religion, gender or sexuality
- are susceptible to conspiracy theories and feelings of persecution
- change friendship groups and appearance
- convert to a new religion
- reject activities previously enjoyed.

How are schools and colleges expected to incorporate Prevent into their existing safeguarding policies?

Statutory guidance says schools and colleges “will need to consider the level of risk to identify the most appropriate referral, which could include Channel or children’s social care, for example.” It also requires these policies to “set out clear protocols for ensuring that any visiting speakers – whether invited by staff or by children themselves – are suitable and appropriately supervised”.

What is Channel?

The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) describes Channel as “a multi-agency approach to identify and provide support to individuals who are at risk of being drawn into terrorist-related activity”.

When your school or college brings a learner to the attention of Channel, an initial assessment of risk will be conducted by the police. The police will consider whether there is evidence of:

- engagement with a group, cause or ideology
- intent to cause harm
- capability to cause harm.

Following investigation and information gathering, the learner will be judged to be:

- vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism and therefore suitable for Channel
- vulnerable in some other way and therefore signposted to other support, or
- not vulnerable.

If assessed as vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism, a panel will:

- meet to confirm the assessment and consider the kinds of support to be offered
- ensure support is provided, and
- ensure a police officer regularly liaises with support providers for updates.

What role, if any, does the local authority play?

The role of the local authority is to establish a Channel panel and to assess, in consultation with schools, colleges and other frontline service providers, the level of risk to children and young people in the area, and what those risks are. The local authority must then produce a local action plan to “identify, prioritise and facilitate delivery of projects, activities or specific interventions to reduce the risk of people being drawn into terrorism....”.

Schools and colleges will be required to adapt their existing safeguarding policies to better reflect the aims of the local action plan.

What should I do next?

If further advice is needed, contact your NEU workplace rep in the first instance.

If there is no NEU rep in your workplace, or the peripatetic nature of your employment makes contact with a workplace rep difficult, contact the NEU Adviceline in England on 0345 811 8111 or NEU Cymru in Wales on 029 2046 5000.

Further contact details may be found at: neu.org.uk/contact-us

Further information

- NEU guidance – Prevent: a challenge to the Government’s narrative, go to: neu.org.uk
- educateagainsthate.com
- Department for Education (DfE) guidance, available at: gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education
Protecting children from radicalisation: the Prevent duty
Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools (2014)
Safeguarding and radicalisation research report (August 2017)
- What the Prevent duty means for schools and colleges in England: An analysis of educationalists’ experiences (July 2017), available at: azizfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/What-the-Prevent-Duty-means-for-schools-and-colleges-in-England.pdf
- Home Office – Prevent Duty Toolkit for Local Authorities and Partner Agencies, available at: gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-toolkit-for-local-authorities-and-partner-agencies
- Keeping children safe online: E-safety policy and guidance for the children’s workforce in Camden, available at: cscb-new.co.uk
- Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) – Prevent toolkit, go to: aelp.org.uk
- Counter-extremism policy: an overview – House of Commons library (June 2017), go to: commonslibrary.parliament.uk

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