



LGA Conference on Safer Communities
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Prevent and local authorities

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Context: the terrorist threat to the UK

- **The terrorist threat level is ‘severe’** – meaning that an attack in this country is ‘highly likely’.
- **But the threats we face have changed:**
 - Daesh is much larger and better resourced than AQ and is trying to create and establish a state;
 - unlike AQ, Daesh is also trying to radicalise large numbers of people here and in other western countries and has attracted far more foreign fighters and supporters;
 - its social media propaganda is intense.
- Foreign fighters and supporters are encouraged either to travel or to conduct simple but effective terrorist attacks here.

Syrian travellers and returnees

- **800+ people of security interest have travelled to Syria/Iraq** since the conflict began; about 50% have returned. Many other have travelled for a range of reasons
- **High proportion of all early travellers were motivated by humanitarian** not extremist issues
- **Greater proportion of all later travellers intend to join Daesh;** fewer are returning
- Greater proportion of later travellers are **women and children;** **average age has decreased**
- **Greater proportion of later travellers are being stopped before departure.**

Our response: Prevent

- **Daesh makes Prevent more important**
- The aim of Prevent is to *stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism*” by: countering ideology and propaganda; supporting people at risk of radicalisation (Channel); and working with key institutions.
- **Prevent is intended to pre-empt criminal activity** – to protect and not to criminalise communities
- **Prevent is prioritised according to risk** – the greatest risk of radicalisation is currently from Daesh but extreme right wing organisations is also within the scope of the programme
- **Prevent is not concerned with matters of faith** but issues of ideology and radicalisation

Prevent duty

- The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 **places a duty** on specified authorities to ‘have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism’.
- The **duty does not itself change the nature of our Prevent work** – the strategy (2011) still stands and currently remains the basis for our work.
- **Five key themes** throughout the guidance which apply across all sectors: **understand risks; ensure effective leadership; use the Prevent partnerships; develop capability/ knowledge;** and establish appropriate **information sharing** arrangements.
- **Effect of the duty** has been: an increase in Prevent activity, notably in education and with Channel referrals, and to make application of Prevent more consistent

Prevent duty: what it means for you

- Local authorities and **Prevent coordinators continue to be vital for Prevent work.**
- **More even balance** between the work of policing and contributions from other statutory partners.
- **Local authorities are best placed to identify community based organisations who can deliver Prevent**
- **Local authorities will be directly involved in the growing volume of casework in and outside of Channel**, notably with families and children; legal issues – role of Family Courts – still to be clarified
- The duty will require more training and familiarisation across all partners.

Prevent: key issues

- We want to increase the number of **community based organisations** to support and deliver a range of Prevent initiatives. Keen to expand into existing third sector organisations
- We are expanding **Channel** - now a mandatory requirement; referrals and current casework have increased sharply (notably from education); want to refer more people with links to Syria to the programme
- We are facing growing numbers of people who need **safeguarding** outside of Channel for radicalisation reasons: new legal issues emerging
- We are increasing work with **social media providers** to remove Daesh online propaganda in line with T's and C's. We are producing more guidance about on line propaganda and **sponsoring more effective online community based rebuttal of Daesh ideology**

Countering extremism

- In October, the Government published a **new Counter Extremism strategy....**
- **Prevent is one part of the strategy.** But the strategy deals with harms other than terrorism which are caused by extremism – eg hate crime (including Islamophobia). Emphasises that extremism is important not only because it can legitimise and encourage terrorism.
- Strategy proposes stronger work to promote British values **and to build community cohesion:** both are important for Prevent but cannot be done from a counter terrorist team.
- Coordination between Prevent and wider counter extremism work will be essential...

Conclusions

- Daesh is not more of the same: it brings a **different kind of threat**.
- **Daesh makes Prevent increasingly important.**
- **The duty is part of our renewed response to the changing threat.**
- It is based on the existing Prevent strategy and **many organisations are already meeting its requirements.**
- Local authorities have been for many years, and will continue to be, **a key part of our response to the terrorist threat.**