

CT Talking Points

The *Prevent* Strategy

Wednesday, 8th June 2011



This paper is for Government departments and statutory organisations dealing with counter-terrorism. It is intended to inform you about CT issues that have been covered in the media and to help you to respond to any concerns generated as a result. It is not intended to provide detailed briefing about Government policies, and explaining these issues to the media is the role of relevant departmental press offices.

On 9 November 2010 the Home Secretary announced a review of *Prevent*. Yesterday (7 June 2011), the Home Secretary announced the publication of the new strategy. She said:

“Extremists will always target the vulnerable in a bid to spread their twisted ideologies, but we must tackle them at source and stop people being brainwashed into terrorism.

“Our new *Prevent* strategy will provide a more focused way of countering terrorism, by challenging deluded beliefs and targeting resources at only the most effective programmes.

“We will broaden *Prevent* to include other forms of terrorism and ensure we do not repeat mistakes of the past by stigmatising communities.”

Who carried out the review?

A Home Office team led the review with independent oversight by Lord Carlile of Berriew QC. Lord Carlile has produced his own short paper with his conclusions about the review and strategy process and on *Prevent*.

What did the review conclude about the previous *Prevent* strategy?

The review concluded that although the previous strategy had made important progress in a number of areas, aspects of it were flawed and required further revision.

So what's new?

The strategy has been reviewed and re-focused and there will be significant changes of principle. The strategy will:

- Remain an integral part of the Government's counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST.
- Address all forms of terrorism, including terrorism from the extreme right wing. However, *Prevent* work must be targeted against those forms of terrorism which pose the greatest risk to our national security. Currently, the greatest threat to our national security comes from Al Qa'ida, its affiliates and like-minded groups.
- Tackle non violent (and often legal) held extremist ideologies where they create an environment conducive to terrorism and popularise ideas which are also espoused by terrorist groups. *Prevent* will also continue to intervene with people who are moving beyond extremism and extremist groups towards terrorist related activity. Policy towards extremism in general will be the responsibility of the Department of Communities and Local Government.
- Make a clearer distinction between counter terrorist work and the Government's integration strategy. *Prevent* depends on the success of work on integration and must be carefully and closely coordinated

with it but the two programmes cannot be merged. Failure to draw a distinction between them jeopardises their successful delivery.

- Carefully evaluate progress and performance and in particular how funds are being allocated and spent.
- Ensure that *Prevent* funding is not be provided to extremist organisations who do not support the values of democracy, human rights, the rule of law and mutual respect and tolerance of different faith groups: the review found some evidence that very small percentages of *Prevent* funding had found their way to organisations that were extremist (or more commonly employed people with extremist views).

What are the objectives of the new strategy?

The new strategy is made up of three key objectives which build on key elements of the last *Prevent* programmes. These are:

- To respond to the **ideological challenge** of terrorism and of those extremist views conducive to it. At one end of the spectrum that means taking action against people who have broken the law. It means excluding people who wish to come to this country to promote violence or extremist views. But it also means ensuring that people engaged in radicalisation do not take advantage of public spaces – libraries, education, prisons to name just three - and that their activities are restricted. It will sometimes means public challenge to people who for too long have been able to get away with propaganda activity here.
- To **prevent vulnerable people** from being drawn into terrorism by developing and expanding programmes to identify who they are and then to provide them with support. These programmes are working but we need to do more of them. And they need to be transparent, open and accountable.
- To do much more with the wide range of **sectors and institutions** where the ideology, the ideologues and vulnerable people come together and where there are either risks of radicalisation or opportunities to prevent it – or both. That means education, health, faith, charities, prisons and probation, and of course the particular and vital issue of the internet. The strategy spells out what the Government is planning in each area.

How will you prioritise *Prevent* work?

Local delivery of the strategy will be focused on 25 priority local authority areas. The prioritisation will now be based on specific risk assessments based on input from the security agencies and policing and not on crude demographics. While the 25 priority areas will receive dedicated resource, non-priority areas will continue to be able to draw on significant resource from the wider *Prevent* infrastructure including local and regional *Prevent* police leads, police engagement officers and Channel coordinators.

Isn't *Prevent* just a cover for spying?

It is a guiding principle of *Prevent*, set out very clearly in the strategy, that it is not to be used a cover for spying or for other covert activity. To maintain trust in the integrity of the programme the new strategy recognises that there needs to be both greater transparency in the delivery of *Prevent* work. The Government remains committed to protecting freedom of speech and civil liberties in this country. That commitment informs all Government work and policies.