

LONDON ASSEMBLY

Preventing extremism

Police and Crime Committee

Background

The Police and Crime Committee will investigate the application of the Government's Prevent Strategy in London. The investigation is timely as Prevent was placed on a statutory footing at the end of March 2015. Prevent could also be subject to change following the General Election.

Prevent is one of four elements of the Government's counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST (the others are Pursue, Protect and Prepare). The Prevent strategy:

- responds to the ideological challenge the UK faces from terrorism and aspects of extremism, and the threat we face from those who promote these views;
- provides practical help to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and ensure they are given appropriate advice and support; and
- works with a wide range of sectors (including education, criminal justice, faith, charities and health) where there are risks of radicalisation.

Operating within Prevent is 'Channel', a multi-agency project to identify and support people who are at risk of

radicalisation across England and Wales. It requires voluntary engagement by the individual referred. Channel interventions can take a variety of forms, including help with access to youth services, education and housing. The police are one of a number of bodies who assist in identifying suitable individuals for referral to Channel. The latest data made available by the Association of Chief Police Officers shows more than 700 people in England and Wales have been referred to Channel between 2006 and 2014.¹

The Prevent Strategy was reviewed in 2011 following criticisms it alienated communities,² was poorly targeted,³ and used to spy on Muslim communities.⁴ It was also suggested it engaged with, and, on occasion, funded extremists.⁵ The review attempted to refocus and redefine the purpose of Prevent. Three main objectives for Prevent were identified:⁶

- Challenging the ideology that supports terrorism and those who promote it;
- Protecting vulnerable people; and
- Supporting sectors and institutions where there are risks of radicalisation.

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The overall funding for Prevent was also reduced as part of the review. The budget for Prevent prior to 2011 was approximately £60 million, but between 2011 and 2015, it has fluctuated between £35 million and £40 million.⁷

Similarly, the areas covered by Prevent have changed. Before 2011, more than 90 areas were identified. Currently, this number is less than half, with the majority of identified areas in London.

The Deputy Mayor for Policing Crime has recently said that a new strategic Board would be set-up to oversee the future work of Prevent and the other elements of the CONTEST Strategy across London.

Purpose of the investigation

The investigation's terms of reference are:

- To examine the impact the new Prevent duty will have for the Met and MOPAC, and its work with partners and community groups; and
- To consider what the objectives and priorities should be for the new strategic board to oversee the work of

Prevent and the other elements of the CONTEST Strategy across London.

Questions for the investigation

In light of these issues, the Committee will seek to answer the following key questions:

- What governance structures are in place in London Boroughs and partner organisations in respect of the Prevent Strategy?
- How do London Boroughs engage with the Met Police and MOPAC in delivering Prevent?
- What will the new statutory Prevent duty mean for London Boroughs and other organisations covered under the duty?
- What the objectives and priorities should be for the London-wide Board to oversee Prevent?

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How the Committee will conduct the investigation

Public meetings

The Committee will hold two meetings in May and June. For the first meeting, we will invite the following guests:

- Prevent co-ordinators from London Boroughs;
- representatives of civil liberties groups;
- relevant academics and/or think-tanks

At the second meeting, we will hear from:

- A lead officer for counter-terrorism in the Met;
- Lord Carlile, former independent reviewer of the Government's Prevent strategy
- The Prevent national coordinator from the Association of Chief Police Officers; and
- the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime.

Site visits

The Committee will consider holding a site visit to Birmingham City Council to see the work it is doing around Prevent with its various partners.

Other public meetings

There may also be an opportunity to hold an additional public meeting with groups involved in delivering Prevent projects.

Literature review

The Committee will make use of existing research into policies aimed at tackling home-grown extremism, including the *Prevent* policy and the wider counter-terrorism strategy. The Committee will seek to avoid duplication by reviewing, and where possible making use of, findings from previous work carried out by the London boroughs into their counter-terror policies.

How to contribute

The Committee welcomes written views and information to inform its review. Submissions should aim to address some or all of the questions listed above. Please send submissions to Matt Bailey at matt.bailey@london.gov.uk

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About the Committee

The Police and Crime Committee examines the work of the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) and reviews the Police and Crime Plan for London. The Committee can also investigate anything which it considers to be of importance to policing and crime reduction in Greater London and make recommendations for improvements.

For further information about the Committee and its work go to <http://www.london.gov.uk/who-runs-london/assembly>

End notes

¹ [ACPO - Channel referral figures 2006-14](#)

² ["The Prevent strategy: a textbook example of how to alienate just about everybody"](#), *Daily Telegraph*, 31 March 2010

³ [Preventing Violent Extremism](#), Communities and Local Government Select Committee (2010) HC 65, para 168

⁴ Kundani, A. *Spooked: How not to prevent violent extremism*, Institute of Race Relations, October 2009

⁵ Maher, S. and Frampton, M. [Choosing our friends wisely: Criteria for engagement with Muslim groups](#), Policy Exchange (2009)

⁶ Home Office, [Prevent Strategy](#), Cm 8092, June 2011, p 7

⁷ [Home Office funding for Prevent 2011-15](#)

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