**Prevent - Background**

Scotland and the rest of the UK face threats from an increasingly complex range of violent extremist and terrorist ideologies, groups and individuals.

The UK Counter-Terrorism (CONTEST) Strategy has been developed to tackle such threats. Prevent is one of four strands included within the CONTEST Strategy, which are described as:

* **Pursue**: to stop terrorist attacks;
* **Prevent**: to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism;
* **Protect**: to strengthen our protection against a terrorist attack; and
* **Prepare**: to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack.

Section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 places a duty on certain bodies to have, in the exercise of their functions, **“due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism”.** Scottish Local Authorities, Independent Schools and Colleges are among those listed under Schedule 6 of the Act. In addition, there is a duty placed on Local Authorities that requires them to chair and manage ‘Prevent Professional Concerns Case Conferences’ for individuals referred under the provisions of the Act..

Statutory guidance for specified Scottish authorities can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance>.

The Prevent Strategy seeks to tackle all forms of terrorist and violent extremist ideology including International Terrorism, Northern Irish Related Terrorism and Domestic Extremism (including Extreme Right and Left Wing, Anti-Semitism, and other forms like animal rights groups which endorse the use of violence). What these ideologies have in common is a belief in the use of extreme violence and terror to achieve their aims, which are often political.

The primary focus of our approach is intervening before a person engages in criminal behaviour. That is why Prevent activity is referred to as existing in ‘pre criminal space’. Education, community engagement, health and social care, communication and partnership work between different agencies are all crucial in effective operation of the Prevent Strategy.

Prevent is about safeguarding people from being drawn into terrorism and ensuring that they are given appropriate advice and support. Educational establishments have a duty to prevent learners from being drawn towards terrorism and to respond quickly and effectively to support those who may be at risk of radicalisation.

Delivery of this strand of safeguarding work is coordinated at a national level by the Scottish Government and Police Scotland working in conjunction with national organisations, local partners and communities.

A key part of the Prevent is to raise awareness of the causal factors and signs of vulnerability to radicalisation and possible involvement in, or support for, terrorism. Once these are identified, the aim is to intervene at the earliest possible stage, and proactively support individuals or groups to prevent them from becoming or supporting terrorists.

There is no single or simple way of identifying who is likely to be at risk of radicalisation, of being persuaded that violent extremism is acceptable. Factors that may have a bearing on someone becoming vulnerable may include: peer pressure, influence from other people or via the internet, bullying, crime against them or their involvement in crime, anti-social behaviour, family tensions, race or hate crime, lack of self-esteem or identity and personal or political grievances. The key is to ready to support those who may be at risk, before they become involved in criminal actions or plans.

Risks to young people from being drawn into terrorism or violent extremism are often multidimensional and can be sustained or episodic. Local Authorities would therefore be expected to demonstrate an awareness of the Prevent strategy in their work to implement the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) approach.

Many elements of the Curriculum for Excellence are also relevant to the Prevent duty. For example, Curriculum for Excellence highlights the importance of active global citizenship and engaging young people in a healthy, democratic society, which are relevant to stopping people becoming involved in, or supporting, terrorism.