

# **Preventing Violent Extremism**

A Strategy for Delivery



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## Introduction

**We have faced a sustained threat from terrorists over many years. Our society has responded resolutely, with courage and a determination that terrorism will not undermine the values that we all share. Terrorists and their supporters remain no more than a tiny minority in this country.**

**The most severe terrorist threat currently comes from individuals and groups who distort Islam to attempt to justify murder and their attacks on our shared values. There are other extremists trying to sow division in this country, against whom the Government is also taking action, for example by tackling the hateful views and actions of extreme right-wing groups. But the most severe threat comes from those who hijack the peaceful religion of Islam as a basis for their attacks. The Prevent strategy sets out how we are addressing this threat to improve the security of the UK in the long term.**

**We have a diverse society within which people have the freedom to form and embrace their own identity. Violent extremists promote a simplistic and intentionally divisive view of the world. They promulgate the view that Islam and the West are incompatible, that people should no longer be able to define themselves as British and Muslim. The Government rejects that view unequivocally. All but a tiny minority of the Muslim community reject that view unequivocally.**

**Our work to stop people becoming or supporting violent extremists has made good progress so far but there is much more we need to do. We are building on the work that local communities, institutions and organisations are already taking forward. To be successful we need to undermine the extremist ideology, strengthen our institutions, support individuals who are at risk of radicalisation, help our communities resist violent extremism and address the grievances on which extremists prey.**

**This requires work internationally, nationally and locally. Local partners, particularly police and local authorities, have a critically important role to play across the spread of the strategy objectives.**

**This short booklet aims to explain our work to counter violent extremism for all those who are actively interested in this endeavour, from those working in our communities to resist the messages of extremists to members of the public who understand the importance of facing this challenge together. Detailed guidance to support those working on the delivery of this agenda has been published in the *Guide for Local Partners*.**

## **Undermine extremist ideology and support mainstream voices**

Violent extremists distort Islam in an attempt to justify their actions. We will facilitate debate and amplify mainstream voices against them. Government can help credible individuals to speak out. It can promote discussion and recognise and support people and organisations who speak authoritatively about Islam. Muslim faith institutions are central to this, and as Government we know we must strike the right balance between support and intervention, to respect the boundaries between faith institutions and the state.

We are clear that it is not the role of Government to seek to change any religion. However, where theology is being distorted to justify violent extremist rhetoric or activity and threaten both Muslims and non-Muslims, Government should reinforce faith understanding and thereby build resilience. We will facilitate debate to expose the paucity of the extremist message. We are clear, however, that these initiatives must be community-based and community-led.

### **Some of the key activities to support mainstream voices include:**

- Supporting the Radical Middle Way project and similar initiatives to bring together authoritative voices to speak to communities in the UK and around the world.
- Supporting the establishment of a board of leading Muslim scholars to help articulate an understanding of Islam in Britain.
- Creating national and regional young persons' forums to provoke debate and contribute to policy development.
- Promoting through our higher education network the UK as a standard setter for Islamic studies outside the Islamic world.
- Supporting the development and dissemination of materials to increase uptake of citizenship education in mosque schools.

### **To be successful we need to ensure that:**

- The voices of violent extremists do not go unchallenged.
- People are able to access a wider range of alternative, authoritative views about Islam and participate in debate.
- Communities have an increased range of tools and support to help them in rejecting violent extremism.
- Mainstream voices overseas are amplified to resonate with counterparts in the UK.

## **Disrupt those who promote violent extremism, and strengthen vulnerable institutions**

Violent extremists recruit people by isolating them from their communities. Radicalisation towards active support for violent extremism is most likely to occur where extremists can act uncontested, away from mainstream voices and competing ideas. This can apply both to physical places – prisons, universities, mosques – and to virtual spaces on the internet.

We will bring together a co-ordinated effort to stop promoters of violent extremism from operating unchallenged.

We have had some success using law enforcement authorities to prosecute some of those who promote violent extremism, and that remains an important part of our strategy. But this is not a problem that can be solved simply by resorting to arrest and prosecution; we must make organisations more resistant to those who promote violent extremism.

### **Some of the key activities to disrupt radicalisers and strengthen our institutions are:**

- Increasing support to Muslim chaplains and staff working in prisons to reduce the risk of radicalisation of offenders.
- Working with service providers and software publishers to reduce access to extremist material on the internet.
- Preventing extremist radicalisers based overseas from coming to the UK.
- Creating resilient communities on campuses through close work with higher and further education providers and student groups.
- Developing a framework of standards and a recruitment process for imams in public service.
- Supporting the work of the Charity Commission's Faith and Social Cohesion Unit to improve governance standards in faith institutions.

### **To be successful we need to ensure that:**

- Organisations such as prisons, colleges and universities are better placed to resist the influence of violent extremists.
- Violent extremists find it more difficult to promulgate their messages over the internet.
- Communities and those in positions of authority, including parents, have the tools to filter access to radicalising material on the internet.

## **Support individuals who are vulnerable to recruitment by violent extremists**

Identifying and supporting individuals who are at risk cannot be achieved solely by central government. The vast majority of successful interventions to support this objective will be local, delivered by people thoroughly rooted in their communities with the knowledge, credibility and resources to identify and assist vulnerable individuals. Government can support the activities of local communities, and especially young people, in tackling violent extremism.

Violent extremists exploit vulnerabilities in individuals to drive a wedge between them and their families and communities. We can support individuals whose lack of effective support networks, poor understanding of their faith and uncertainty about their own identity is exploited by recruiters. We will also support those working with vulnerable individuals across all sectors, for example youth workers and teachers.

### **Some of our key activities to support vulnerable individuals include:**

- Extending the Channel Project, a police-led scheme which diverts people from violent extremism, to more areas across the country.
- Implementing further interventions to support vulnerable offenders in prison and on release through probation staff.
- Integrating work to prevent violent extremism into structures to support vulnerable young people.

### **To be successful we need to ensure that:**

- Fewer individuals are drawn into violent extremism and more actively reject the messages of violent extremists.
- Multi-agency initiatives work closely with community representatives across the UK to identify individuals at risk and to develop interventions to support them.
- The public are more aware of the role that police and other agencies can play in support of vulnerable individuals.

## **Increase the capacity of communities to challenge and resist violent extremists**

Cohesive, empowered and resilient communities are best equipped to confront violent extremists and support the most vulnerable individuals. Violent extremists are able to gain a foothold where they are not effectively challenged.

There is a role for all communities in standing together to challenge violent extremism and to support those who may be targeted by violent extremists. Though the threat is posed by a tiny minority targeting a specific community, the responsibility to show that violent extremism has no place in our society falls to everyone.

This also means working with key groups – particularly Muslim women and young people – so that they can play a greater role in leading the response to violent extremism. Schools, colleges and universities have an important role to play in helping young people to lead this response through education that encourages debate and challenge. Many of our communities also have strong international links due to historic migration, so we will work in partnership with others to improve the resilience of communities, both in the UK and overseas.

Over the last year we have funded over 200 projects in 70 local authority areas as part of the Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund. We have doubled this investment for 2008–09, and we are working hard to learn the lessons from this Pathfinder year to inform our future plans.

### **Some of our key activities to make our communities more resilient include:**

- Improved training for police officers to aid their contact with communities.
- Developing the role for the Muslim Women’s Advisory Group.
- Developing a new qualification in Faith Community Development with the aim of building the general skills, knowledge and expertise of those leading and working with faith communities.
- Providing enhanced funding for local and national projects to tackle violent extremism.
- Hearing directly from young people and allowing them to contribute to policy development through the establishment of a Young Muslims’ Consultative Group.

### **To be successful we need to ensure that:**

- Communities actively challenge and resist violent extremists.
- Countries with strong links to the UK will also implement work to support communities overseas.
- Local partnerships and projects with faith institutions and leaders are strengthened, for example through the Iman Training Review and Theology Board.

## Effectively address grievances

Violent extremists use real and perceived grievances as apparent justification for their actions and beliefs. We are clear that no grievance justifies violence but we must work with others to do more to discuss and debate those grievances, and contest the views of violent extremists.

The UK is already carrying out programmes domestically and internationally to address the underlying socio-economic factors that cause poverty and inequality. These grievances can also fuel discontent around the world. We need to make it clearer what we are doing and how others can get involved to address sources of grievance in constructive ways. Otherwise violent extremists are able to use emotive issues, such as poverty and lack of opportunities around the world, to appeal to vulnerable individuals.

### Some of the key activities to address grievances include:

- Assisting foreign governments to improve education, human rights, and the rule of law in their countries. We will also work with civil society more widely to strengthen public debate on, and participation in, governance.
- Creating safe spaces for debate about grievances across the country, including through regional conferences with young people to debate extremism issues and academic freedom debates in universities.
- Addressing perceived grievances through wider policies to promote equality and tackle racism and bullying.

### To be successful we need to ensure that:

- There are more 'safe spaces' for individuals and groups to discuss and work through difficult and emotive issues.
- There is greater engagement from Government in these discussions, to tackle ill-founded grievances and increase dialogue and understanding around contentious subjects.

## **Developing understanding, analysis and information and improving strategic communications**

Our efforts to counter violent extremism must be underpinned by a strong evidence base. While our understanding of radicalisation and how to counter it is increasing, we recognise that it needs to be more advanced. Government and academic partners will work together to better describe the nature and scale of radicalisation as a problem, to identify vulnerabilities and suggest responses and to help target support where it is most needed.

We will assess the existing body of knowledge to develop a shared understanding of radicalisation and enhance our analytical capacity for Prevent. We will commission new research and share findings with delivery partners to improve interventions to counter violent extremism.

We will also invest in improving our understanding of the diverse Muslim communities in the United Kingdom to ensure that the Government's support is targeted and effective. We will also invest in improving our understanding of what works in building communities' resilience and supporting vulnerable individuals.

How we communicate about issues relating to counterterrorism will be central to our ability to challenge the views that terrorists promote. Terrorist propaganda manipulates theology as well as history and contemporary politics to create a sense of division and to gain support. Violent extremists also exploit grievances which resonate with individuals. This means that communications are of critical importance, to ensure that the way in which we communicate counters, rather than fuels, the terrorist narrative.

