Appendix

Feedback from Introductory Plenary

Group 1: generally favourable

- There is a possibility of over-reporting – too many cases are now being referred. Maybe as people come to understand the Prevent duty, this will calm down.

- Press reports leave out contexts and don't enlighten or inform. Meanwhile Prevent is being undermined by various groups, such as Mend (Muslim Engagement and Development) and CAGE, to suit their own agendas.

- Is the process counterproductive? Is it capturing the range of organisations that are actually promoting violence and hatred? There are cases where Prevent is ignored (e.g. where there are no large sections of the Muslim population) and this is an issue.

- National security should be within civil society, where safeguarding is part of professional duties.

- There are issues with training and who accredits it (in some cases this is councils, e.g. Tower Hamlets).

Group 2: critical of the strategy

- What we are talking about is perception rather than fact.

- Policy should be based on empirical evidence: where is the evidence-based research for Prevent? What we see are external commentators using pseudo-research to support the assertion that universities, for example, are a hot-bed of radicalisation.

- Why treat extremism differently? Should it not be dealt with under the law, in the same way as safeguarding and welfare? Why aren't the risks that are affecting young people falling under the welfare provisions?

- The state's responsibility is security, but it has been progressively more difficult to provide it, which is why civil society is increasingly called on to cooperate. This leads to more securitisation on the ground and among communities: we need to prevent this.

- How do you identify what are concerns? There are no tell-tale signs of radicalisation; there have been cases where there were no hints whatsoever. Prevent prevents common sense. It should be about what we know about gangs rather than what we know about theology.

- This discussion on theology is key. There is nobody prepared to speak out about their concerns because of fear. There is a lot of anger, alienation and all the things that are being tried to be prevented are in fact happening.

- What are we even looking for anyway? Stopping people from putting bombs on trains, but how do we do this? Unlike the IRA there are no warnings of the attacks beforehand. Suddenly we have young people willing to blow themselves up and we are trying to find a new way of dealing with this. We need to identify earlier on in the chain how someone decides to do this. The IRA and Al-Qaida could be prevented through an intelligence response, but with IS and Daesh we witness open recruitment and recruits being given opportunities to act where they are. The threat of the lone terrorist is increasing and we don't understand it. We have some ideas on how to deal with it, but we are not there yet.

- What are extremism and radicalisation? The terms 'extremist' and 'extremist movement' are too often used.

- Prevent is racist: it focuses on one specific community which has an adverse effect. What do 'non-violent extremism' and 'British values' mean? The discriminatory element of the Prevent duty is overarching; it reminds one of stop and search. There are concerns from a human rights perspective and regarding the whole surveillance aspect of it. It would be interesting to see how the EU Court of Human Rights responds.

- Law must be clear and at this moment in time it is unclear.

- This is part of a bigger issue: it is about respectful free speech. Prevent is stifling debate by dictating who can speak and what can be said. There could be comparative elements with madrasah education in the post-Taliban era: the guidance came from outside and it was mainly about how you reach out and spread. Regarding Prevent here in the UK, how do you get to an open platform for students?

- It is surprising how compliant the university sector has become: it has overreacted, interpreting guidance as law. The Equality Act says freedom of speech and academic freedom should be protected. The core of what is British in the law is robust and strong, so universities should not be following Prevent guidance. The ways in which universities are promoting the Prevent duty go against the equality and diversity duty. This is changing the university as an institution.

- It is discreet authoritarianism, a way in which we impose certainty in an uncertain world. It is creeping across schools and universities: by taking on the whole ideology without challenging it, without stimulating debate, you allow this ideology to take hold.

- There is another element: external bodies are calling out academics and activists, accusing them of undermining the government. We are witnessing personal counter-assassination, so it is a much bigger issue. Anyone who is speaking out suddenly gets shredded to pieces.

- The Prevent duty is making us (i.e. teachers, university professors, doctors, lawyers, etc.) into intelligence experts and what is happening is that ordinary citizens are being turned into intelligence agents without training.

- Are we criminalising dissent?

- We need to discuss the causes of extremism, especially when speaking of Islamic extremism; it is incredibly important to distinguish between necessary causes and sufficient causes. These issues are nuanced and complicated, so it is difficult to apply broad brushes.

- There is a 'right to debate' and many universities are preventing this (mainly through issues of identity politics, of who can and can't participate). We should provide a contested platform.

- There is an issue of funding and organisations that receive government money. Plus a perception issue of what Prevent is: a snoopers' charter, labelling Muslims as a problem, and a freedom of speech issue (telling on people and stopping people from doing things because 'as a Muslim you don't share the same British values'). So many organisations won't support bodies that are collaborating with Prevent, which are also being attacked for receiving Prevent funding.

- There is a lack of religious literacy and this is why it is easy to make such wide assumptions (what is conservative, what is extreme). The language we use is often incorrect and it comes from a lack of religious literacy. Nobody has the tools to understand the world we are being asked to police.

- There is a case for greater evidence-based reasoning, which young people can then take away from the classroom and use to decide what explanations of the world they want to take on.

- There is a difference between guidance and legislation – is it the interpretation of guidance rather than the guidance itself that is stifling debate?

Group 4: don't know

No feedback as all their points were covered by the previous groups.

Additional interventions

- Young people want a space where they can make sense of a damaged world. Schools should be that space, but Prevent is negatively affecting that vital process.

- We are not having new conversations, this debate is not ahistorical. This is what a diversity debate should be about.

- This religious illiteracy is widespread and exists on all sides: it is both political and cultural.

Feedback from Final Plenary

Breakout group recommendations

The breakout groups discussed some of the questions that had come up:

1) What has been your experience of the Prevent duty?

2) How and in what ways has the Prevent duty changed the interaction of service provider and client in each case?

3) Is the onus on public bodies to prevent radicalisation justifiable and/or realistic?

4) Do you think public bodies actually have a duty to prevent radicalisation? If so, are there better ways to achieve this goal?

5) How would you address the problem of radicalisation?

6. Do you feel there are myths and misconceptions peddled in the reporting of the Prevent duty, by either local or national media? If so, how could the government and other statutory agencies dispel these, and work to rebuild the trust of ordinary citizens?

Feedback

- It must be recognised that Prevent sits in a context where there is a mix of communities that see the world in a very different way (e.g. views on foreign policy) and live within society in a very different way. If Prevent does not acknowledge this multicultural context, it is sowing the seeds of its own destruction.

- It is important not to paint a picture of a 'nation within the nation' (as Trevor Phillips has done in some TV programmes and articles) and not to forget the diversity *within* each minority group.

- Someone other than the government should take ownership of Prevent.

- Over half of the population goes to university and these issues need to be aired properly, not suppressed.

- There is toxicity in Prevent and it is polluting the whole programme; there needs to be rebranding.

- The idea that, by the fact of being British and holding British citizenship, you uphold British values is problematic.

- There is an elasticity of language and concept: Nelson Mandela, the suffragettes and Alan Turing were label as radicals and extremists. What are British values anyway? They were put in place by radicals, but they are not ahistorical either: they are tied to intervention, colonialism and imperialism.

- We should move away from the language of radicalisation (the process of being drawn into terrorism) and deradicalisation. This causes confusion.

- Terminology is a huge issue and government could learn from history about the role the state plays. The Prevent duty does not fit with what young people understand by freedom and there is a trust deficit in government.

- We must encourage strong deliberative action.

- There are ethnic penalties in every line of trading, so it is blind to think that Prevent isn't highly racialised (we are using proxies, but we are still describing very racialised concepts).

- We don't know what draws people to terrorism. **Home Office response**: We do have a pretty good understanding of it.

- A lot of views are impervious to reason! So debating isn't going to always be successful.