

CRIN Briefing

What does the Prevent Review mean for children

The **Child Rights International Network (CRIN)** is a creative human rights organisation focused on children's rights. We challenge the status quo because the norms that dictate children and young people's place in society need radical change. We press for rights – not charity – and campaign for a genuine shift in how governments and societies view and treat under-18s.

On 8 February 2023, the UK government published its long-awaited [review of Prevent](#) ('The Review' or 'Shawcross Review'). [All 34 recommendations](#) that were made in the Review were unanimously accepted by the government. CRIN, alongside a broad range of human rights organisations, have [rejected the findings](#), which we believe double down on the most harmful aspects of the policy. This briefing sets out to explain the changes to be introduced after the review and what they will mean for children.

The context of the Review

The Independent Review of Prevent was originally commissioned by the government in 2019, to examine its operation at the local and national level, the effectiveness of the statutory duty on public services, and how it interacts with other safeguarding strategies.

The UK Government originally appointed Lord Carlisle to carry out the review, but he subsequently stepped down amid [criticism and legal action](#) because he was on the record as being supportive of the Prevent programme and could not fulfil the role in an independent manner. In January 2021, six months after the original deadline to complete and publish the review had passed, the Government appointed William Shawcross to conduct the review. A wide group of organisations boycotted the process in response to this appointment, citing [Shawcross' record of anti-Islam comments](#).

Following 3 years of delays, the Review was finally published in February 2023. The review sets out 34 recommendations for reforming the Prevent policy.

The Review finds that Prevent is "out of kilter" with the rest of counter-extremism efforts in place in the UK. It recommends a greater focus on tackling the ideological aspects of the recruitment and use of children by non-state armed groups, and moving away from considering other factors that mean young people are at risk of recruitment, particularly the idea of "vulnerability". It also finds that "Islamist extremism" has been "misinterpreted, misunderstood or even overlooked" in the implementation of Prevent and prioritises the challenging of 'anti-Prevent' narratives. This analysis informs the recommendations made in the Review.

Terminology

The terminology used in the context of counter-terrorism is controversial. We have [previously highlighted](#) the problems with the language that is used in the context of children and counter-terrorism. Many of the terms used lack clear definition; they are often overly broad, are contested, or applied selectively to certain groups and acts. The Review is no exception to this, and their use of this language lends itself to many of the biases that exist in the arguments made by Shawcross. In light of this, it is essential that these terms should not go unchallenged. Here, we provide a brief overview of the problems with the use of specific terms, and the alternatives we use.

'Terrorism', 'Extremism', and 'Radicalisation'

We have [questioned the definition of the terms “terrorism”, “extremism”, and “radicalisation”](#) in the context of Prevent. The broad definition of “terrorism” in UK law has raised concerns about its impact on freedom of expression. Its use is also potentially discriminatory; evidence suggests that the word “terrorism” is more readily used alongside words which identify Muslims or Islam, rather than other motivations used to categorise violence by non-state armed groups.

“Extremism” and “radicalisation” are also both broadly defined. The Government’s definition of “extremism” relies heavily on the concept “fundamental British values” without clearly defining the term. “Radicalisation” is based on the notion of ideological motivations. In both cases, definitions of these concepts are so vague that individuals can be drawn into the scope of counter-terrorism authorities when they have not committed any offence. This broad discretion also allows for selective application of who might be considered an “extremist”.

We use *the recruitment and use of children by non-state armed groups*, as opposed to words like “terrorist” or “extremist” when talking about children, because this is [recognised internationally](#) as a violation of children’s rights. Similarly, we use the term *atrocities by non-state armed groups* to discuss acts of violence which have occurred since 2001. We also use the term *children accused of/convicted of terrorism offences* to refer to the impact of specific counter-terrorism measures.

“Islamist extremism”

The Review analyses the use of the term “Islamist extremism”, and concludes that its use is appropriate. We do not agree with this. The term “Islamist extremism” is problematic because it fuels negative stereotypes and alienates Muslim communities by conflating aspects of the religion with terrorism, without any clear definitions or parameters. Shawcross’ own definition of “Islamist extremism”, as used in the Review, and his interpretation of the significance of ideology as a motivation for non-violent offences committed on behalf of non-state armed groups, also means that many Muslims can be caught within the scope of what Shawcross might refer to as “Islamist extremism” purely because of their religious beliefs. On this basis, we have avoided using the term. We use quotation marks where its use is unavoidable to accurately reflect the content of the Review.

Safeguarding and Prevent

The [Prevent strategy](#) set out three objectives, the second of which was to identify and support vulnerable people and to intervene to prevent them being drawn into activities linked to atrocities carried out by non-state actors. A central theme within the Review is to move away from the concept of *vulnerability* towards that of *susceptibility* when implementing this objective.

The Review states that there has been too much emphasis on the “safeguarding elements” of Prevent and the importance of “vulnerability” in identifying people at risk of being recruited by non-state armed groups, and proposes narrowing the role of safeguarding within the

Prevent programme. Shawcross argues that viewing Prevent as a safeguarding tool treats “terrorism as a mental illness or a social deficiency that can be placated by social services,” and suggests that to view “welfare, clinical or emotional assistance” is not an appropriate response to people who have been recruited by non-state armed groups.

The Review also concludes that Prevent is “carrying the weight for mental health services” and that people are being referred even where they do not pose a terrorism risk, in order to access the services they need. Although the Review does conclude that children have a “statutory vulnerability”, and that viewing Prevent through a “safeguarding lens is appropriate” in schools, there appears to be no consideration of how the best interests and the welfare of children who are referred to Prevent is accounted for in its operation. Although Shawcross recognises that it can be difficult to distinguish between “radicalisation-related concerns aside from influences and welfare issues that can be particularly pronounced amongst children and young people”, he nonetheless concludes that the delivery of Prevent in schools is sufficient.

Key Recommendations made in the Review

Review Recommendation 2: *“Move away from ‘vulnerability’ language and towards ‘susceptibility’, wherever accurate. The Vulnerability Assessment Framework should become the Prevent Assessment Framework. ‘Vulnerability’ should be reserved for welfare concerns and circumstances beyond an individual’s control.”*

Government response: *The Government committed to replacing the existing “Vulnerability Assessment Framework with a new tool called “the Prevent Assessment Framework” which would limit the use of the term “vulnerable” to discussions relating to welfare concerns and circumstances beyond an individual’s control.*

CRIN’s Perspective

CRIN has [produced extensive research](#) about the problems with associating Prevent with safeguarding, particularly the issues with conflating safeguarding language with increasing security measures. Prevent was originally presented as an essential safeguarding mechanism, which meant that it could be embedded into different public services such as schools, health and social care, local governments and policing. In practice, however, [our research](#) has shown that Prevent is not a form of safeguarding centring the wellbeing of affected children, but instead prioritises policing and intelligence gathering. We are concerned that this recommendation will exacerbate this problem.

The recommendations made in the Review, and the Home Office’s responses, still seem to overlook the fundamental problems with conflating safeguarding and Prevent for children and young people. The Home Office’s plans do not properly address the fact that the Prevent duty does not meet their [own statutory definition of safeguarding](#). Furthermore, the UNCRC requires all public policies affecting children are required to [prioritise their best interests](#). Therefore, Prevent cannot be considered an appropriate method of safeguarding, because its fundamental primary interest is national security, rather than the best interests and welfare of the child. These inconsistencies are not addressed in the Review, nor in the Home Office’s response. Instead, it asserts that the current position of Prevent, as firmly

within safeguarding, is justified, without any consideration of evidence to the contrary that responds to the experiences that young people have had with Prevent.

What Happens Next?

The Home Office is due to introduce a new “Prevent Assessment Framework” to be used as part of case management under Prevent. The Commission for Countering Extremism has been tasked with providing scrutiny and feedback on this process. No deadline has been set for this change to come into force, and it is unclear whether it will involve a consultation process.

Increased focus on “Islamist extremism”

The Review concludes that “Islamist terrorism is currently the largest terrorism threat facing the United Kingdom.” The Review’s analysis of unreleased statistics from Counter Terrorism Policing is used to justify the conclusion that there needs to be a redirection of Prevent resources to tackle “Islamist extremism”, in particular non-violent forms of “extremism”.

The Review argues that higher rates of referrals to Prevent for “right wing extremism” are due to fears of accusations of cultural insensitivity, Islamophobia and “anti-Prevent advocacy” for making referrals for “Islamist extremism”. Shawcross argues that in the context of “right-wing extremism”, ideology is accepted as a fundamental aspect of non-violent “extremism” and Prevent is able to engage appropriately with those promoting extreme right-wing narratives. However, he concludes that the “same cannot be said for Prevent’s treatment of non-violent Islamist radicalising influences.” The Review suggests that as a result of the high rates of “right-wing extremism” cases, Prevent is “out of kilter” with the rest of the counter-terrorism apparatus and needs “recalibration.” The Review also makes extensive reference to, and analysis of, previous atrocities in the UK carried out by non-state armed groups, to demonstrate the failures of the current Prevent Programme. None of the scenarios they chose to analyse were motivated by “right-wing extremism.”

Key Recommendations made in the Review

Review Recommendation 12: *“Ensure high level decision-making within Prevent is always informed by proper consideration of the terrorism threat picture. This should ensure that any action taken is proportionate. The Homeland Security Group and Counter Terrorism Policing should be guided at strategic leadership level by a new ‘Security Threat Check’ – a series of principles to be included in Duty Guidance.”*

Review Recommendation 20: *“The Home Office should investigate whether there is an imbalance, or disparity, in thresholds applied to Islamist and Extreme Right-Wing Channel cases, and if so why. Examine whether Islamist referrals tend to be individuals much further along the trajectory towards violence (‘active risk’, at a sub-Pursue level), compared to referrals where individuals present a susceptibility to radicalising influences or extremist exploitation (‘passive risk’).”*

Government Response: *The government acknowledges that “Islamist terrorism” is the primary terrorist threat and not currently reflected in Prevent caseloads. The Government states a desire to ensure that decision-making is always informed by, and proportionate to,*

the “terrorism and extremism threat picture” as well as a keenness to ensure that response to all kinds of threats are proportionate and thresholds are applied equally.

CRIN’s Perspective

We are concerned that increased emphasis on “Islamist extremism” within Prevent will worsen the already disproportionate interference with, and unequal access to, the rights of Muslim children and children of Asian ethnicity in the UK. Focusing on ideology and forms of “non-violent extremism”, especially given the emphasis placed on “Islamist extremism”, is likely to increase a disproportionate interference with the rights to freedom of expression, thought, and religion. This will also be worsened by the vague definitions of “radicalisation” and “extremism”. We do not believe that this refocusing can be justified based on the evidence and analysis of the Prevent Review.

Our own analysis has shown that for children and young people (up to 20 years old), the proportion of initial referrals made under Prevent which are adopted as Channel cases is higher in the context of “right-wing extremism” than “Islamist extremism”. This data demonstrates that for children and young people, a redirection towards “Islamist” ideology cannot be justified on the evidence and poses a high risk of infringement on children’s rights as a result of disproportionate targeting. The Committee on the Rights of the Child, in its [2023 observations on the state of children’s rights in the UK](#), have also raised serious concerns about the disproportionate impact of counter terrorism laws on Muslim children and children of Asian ethnicity on freedom of expression and religion, and have urged the UK to restart the collection and publication of disaggregated data to ensure that any discriminatory or stigmatising impact can be stopped. The Review offers no reflection on this evidence, nor on how it could take steps to stop a discriminatory or disproportionate impact.

What Happens Next?

The Home Office has committed to introducing a Security Threat Check process which will be used as a metric with the aim of ensuring that Prevent is informed by, and proportionate to, the terrorism and “extremism threat picture”. It will be informed by data from Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre, Counter Terrorism Policing, Home Office analysts, the Commission on Countering Extremism, the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, and counter-terrorism local profiles. The new Security Threat Check process is planned to be outlined in the updated Prevent Duty guidance. There currently is no deadline for these resources.

The Home Office has also commissioned an independent outcome evaluation of Channel focused on ideological motivations at each stage of Channel procedures, and how the application of this standard might vary across ideologies. This will inform implementation strategies for Channel, including new training and guidance. There is no deadline for either the independent outcome evaluation, nor the revised implementation strategy.

Data Protection and Privacy

The Review recognises the lack of transparency around the use of personal data and consent procedures for data sharing between agencies, and that this was discouraging

people from engaging with Prevent. The Review recommends changing the rules around retaining personal data. In particular, that referral data can be removed after three years, instead of six. Beyond this, there is no other information about how to ensure that data privacy, transfer and consent to processes is to be managed.

Key Recommendations made in the Review

Review Recommendation 18: *“Counter Terrorism Police should investigate removing referral data for cases that did not make it to Channel, categorised as requiring ‘no further action’, after three years instead of the current six. This ought to build confidence in making referrals. Scottish Police should consider doing the same with such cases on their national intelligence note system.”*

Government Response: *The Government have agreed that data retention periods for Prevent referrals should be “thoroughly reviewed”, and have committed to a joint review of the options, considering the associated benefits and risks, to be carried out by Counter Terrorism Policing and the Home Office.*

CRIN’s Perspective

We have [previously reported](#) on the issues with data gathered through Prevent, mainly the lack of clarity and transparency around consent, sharing, and storage. The Review has failed to adequately address the problems we have found in Prevent’s data processes. It remains unclear what kind of data is collected through the Prevent programme, who it is shared with, and the role that consent, and refusal to consent, plays as a legal ground for holding such data.

Despite committing to reduce the time that data is retained to three years for “no further action” cases, this is still too long for cases that have not progressed past the initial referral. Additionally, this commitment is discretionary meaning there is no formal obligation to ensure that cases are removed after this period, and it also does not apply to cases that *are* progressed. The lack of information about other aspects of data protection is also concerning, particularly in light of the Home Office’s responses, which depend on information sharing across counter-terrorism services and referral pathways without any reference to consent procedures or the degree of discretion that is afforded to Government departments in this process. The lack of consideration of the problems with current data protection and consent procedures is deeply concerning for the right to privacy for children and young people, as well as adults.

What Happens Next?

The Home Office has committed to conducting a joint review, along with Counter Terrorism Policing, into data retention options and consider the benefits and risks. There is no deadline specified for this joint review.

Expanding the Scope of the Duty

The Review states that “the evidence suggests that there is a strong case for extending the Prevent duty to further public sector organisations” on the basis that they will be more

frequently in contact with individuals who are more likely to be drawn into “extremism”. Shawcross submits that the Prevent duty is functioning well in schools.

Shawcross proposes an update to the key principles that underpin the operation of the Prevent Duty to bring it in line with the other recommendations in the Review. In its specific analysis of the Prevent Duty in schools, the Review argues there is a lack of understanding around the significance of “ideological factors”, and complexities in distinguishing between “radicalisation-related concerns aside from influences and welfare issues”. The Review concluded that there was a need to strengthen training on the “causes of radicalisation and the ideological nature of terrorism”, and supported the promotion of so-called “Fundamental British Values” through either Prevent or non-Prevent linked programmes in schools. It also concludes that there ought to be improved methods of monitoring and compliance to ensure that Prevent is being effectively implemented in schools.

Key Recommendations made in the Review

Review Recommendation 8: *“Explore extending the Prevent Duty to immigration and asylum (through UK Border Force, Immigration and Protection Directorate) and to job centres (via the Department for Work and Pensions).”*

Review Recommendation 17: *“The government should launch new initiatives to encourage referrals from friends, family and community cohorts. This should include developing an accessible GOV.UK resource signposting reporting mechanisms for radicalisation concerns. These resources ought to be easily reachable through simple online thematic searches.”*

Review Recommendation 27: *“Review Prevent-related staffing and training in prisons. Seek to increase expertise and skills with regard to understanding the ideological drivers and theological elements of radicalisation. HMPPS staff must adopt a ‘precautionary policy’ when assessing the risk of ideologically-driven offenders.”*

Government Response: *The Government chose to emphasise the importance of the work done by organisations working with young people at risk of “radicalisation”, and also agreed with the findings of the Review that the roles of friends and families are significant in implementing Prevent.*

CRIN’s Perspective

We believe that the Review’s analysis of the Prevent duty does not recognise the reality of the impact of Prevent referrals. Our research has found the referral process can have a severe impact on the children affected. Importantly, Prevent [has been shown](#) to undermine relationships of trust between children and public services that are essential to effective safeguarding of children. To extend Prevent to other sectors would only extend the impact and further isolate children who are in touch with those services.

The high levels of monitoring that Prevent entails and how this can lead to rights violations for children, combined with the fact that there is not any significant evidence that it is either necessary or effective in completing its objectives, mean it cannot be concluded that the interference it causes with the rights to freedom of thought, expression and religion, as well as the right to privacy, is justified. However, this analysis is missing from the Review. On this

basis, the proposal to extend the duty is deeply concerning, particularly given that the services proposed to come under the duty work with children in particularly vulnerable situations, such as those who are in the immigration and asylum system.

The Review's finding that the Prevent duty is working well in schools is not supported by evidence. The Committee on the Rights of the Child have also recognised this in their findings on the UK and the counter terrorism strategies, suggesting that discrimination against children caused through counter terrorism laws should be immediately halted through instead providing mandatory training on the prohibition of discrimination and rights to freedom of expression and religion. We are concerned that the introduction of independent monitoring and compliance to evaluate the application of the Prevent duty in schools will further damage the important relationships of trust and mutual respect between staff and students that are essential to effective safeguarding of children.

What Happens Next?

The Home Office has said that the introduction of the Prevent duty to immigration and asylum system and the department for Work and Pensions will come as part of the refresh of the CONTEST strategy.

The Home Office has committed to launching a Prevent Partnership Forum for non-statutory partners. The aim is to strengthen their delivery, provide opportunities to share best practices and build understanding of the threat pictures and radicalisation risks across their sectors. Additionally, the Home Office has said that they will "continue to test and develop" accessible resources for friends and family to provide more information on Prevent, which will complement Counter Terrorism Policing's Act Early Campaign. There is no deadline on when the Partnership Forum, nor the accessible resources, will be launched.

In relation to Prevent in Prison services, the Home Office has committed to producing new guidance for staff which will complement the work of the Independent Reviewer on Counter-Terrorism Legislation. HM Prison and Probation Service is also reviewing the Extremism Guidance tool and how it assesses ideology as a factor. There is no deadline specified for the new guidance for HMP staff or the review of the extremism guidance tool.

Ideological Bars

A central aspect of the Prevent Review is the focus on ideology. The Review finds that the application of the Prevent duty has been too focused on external factors that might cause an individual to engage with "extremism", rather than their ideological motivations. It suggests that radicalisation has been "mischaracterised" as an illness, rather than having an "ideological root in ideas and beliefs." The Review strongly supports the redirection of guidance and training for those under the Prevent duty to look more closely at ideological factors.

Additionally, plans are outlined in the Home Office's response to introduce an "ideological threshold" to be used across all stages of the Prevent process, to make sure responses to referrals are consistent and proportionate across different ideologies. Shawcross envisages that it is not so high as to only include the most "established terrorist organisations," but not

so low as to “capture mainstream politicians.” The Home Office have accepted all the recommendations relating to the threshold, although it is unclear where exactly this ‘bar’ will fall. The government response also commits to introducing and amending the training that is in place to better inform those under the Prevent duty on the “ideological nature of terrorism”.

The Review also recommends amending current “disruption powers” to monitor “potential risks” which fall below the ideological threshold. The Extremism Disruptions Units (‘EDUs’) are designed to disrupt the influence of groups which “promote extremist and radicalising messaging to wider audiences”, and target those who fall below the threshold of committing a “criminal” offence. The Review recognises that the Disruptions Units pose a threat to freedom of expression and thought, and concludes that these concerns can be addressed through providing specific training.

Key Recommendations made in the Review

Review Recommendation 1: *“Revise Prevent objective one of three in the duty guidance, and legislation where necessary, to clarify and emphasise the importance of tackling extremist ideology as a terrorism driver. Prevent’s first objective should be to “tackle the ideological causes of terrorism”.”*

Review Recommendation 3: *“Reset thresholds to ensure proportionality across Prevent workstreams. Prevent must work to one bar across the ideological threats. This should apply to all teams and products, including: national, regional and local delivery, referrals and the Channel process, RICU and Homeland Security Analysis and Insight products, training and Prevent-funded counter-narrative work via civil society organisations, and other funded projects. The bar should not be set so high as to only include concerns related to the most established terrorist organisations, nor so low as to capture mainstream politicians, commentators or publications. Prevent duty guidance should be amended to clarify this new standard.”*

Review Recommendation 10: *“Ensure Prevent disruptions takes action to limit the influence of ‘chronic’ radicalisers and networks which sit below the terrorism threshold. These actors promote narratives legitimising terrorism and terrorists without breaking the law. Low level but influential groups and activities must have appropriate weighting in prioritisation and risk models.”*

Review Recommendation 22: *“Develop a new training and induction package for all government and public sector staff working in counter-extremism and counter-terrorism. Training should focus on improving understanding of the ideological nature of terrorism, including: worldviews, objectives and methodologies of violent and non-violent extremist groups, grievance narratives and issues exploited by terrorist recruiters and extremists.”*

Review Recommendation 23: *“Ensure Prevent training upholds a consistent and proportionate threshold across ideological threats and avoids using double standards. For example, training materials should not focus on violent extremism for one ideology, while focusing on non-violent extremist narratives for another. Non-violent extremism should be included in training as it creates a permissive environment for radicalisation and recruitment into terrorism.”*

Government Response: *The Government accepts and agrees with the Review’s findings that ideology is an essential factor in responses to terrorism, and that the first objective of Prevent should be amended to address this. The Government also agrees with the finding that it is essential to ensure that the same threshold is applied across different ideological backgrounds, and at all stages of the Prevent process.*

CRIN’s Perspective

We are concerned that these recommendations push elements of Prevent even further into the “pre-criminal” space. We have [previously analysed](#) the problems that infringing in the pre-criminal space and securitisation measures have on children’s ability to exercise freedom of speech, expression and religion. In particular, we found that children felt pressure to self-censor out of fear of being referred to Prevent, and that the chilling effect created as a result of the constant monitoring is detrimental to their right to freedom of expression. The conclusions and recommendations from the Prevent Review will exacerbate this.

The Review itself recognises that the use of Extremism Disruption Units poses a threat to these rights. However, the response to this threat is insufficient to protect and ensure that rights are properly implemented. We are concerned that the report is extending a huge amount of power to units “to keep a consistent eye on the activities of ‘lower level’ yet highly influential individuals and groups.” The EDUs appear to be another example of Prevent securitising communities and monitoring legitimate civil society groups, particularly those from within Muslim communities, without regard for how it might impact their lives and their rights. The review does not address how these mechanisms will be held accountable and justify their decisions in who they decide to monitor, and how the data they collect will be used and stored.

What Happens Next?

The Home Office has committed to revising the first objective of Prevent both in the Prevent duty guidance, and in the legislation where necessary, “to clearly specify the need to tackle ideological causes of terrorism.” They intend to update training on ideology for all sectors that are subject to the duty, which will be “drawing on expertise” from the Commission for Countering Extremism, the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, and “wider government counter extremism experts.” They are also seeking to update the referral process, in particular the Prevent assessment framework, addressing the criteria for a case to be considered for Channel with the stated aim of improving consistency across referrals. There is no deadline specified for these targets.

The Government has also committed to producing new training for public sector workers, which will emphasise “the importance of ideology”, “the signs of radicalisation”, and “how to make good-quality and proportionate referrals”. The Commission on Countering Extremism and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities will advise on how the ideology content should be included. Both of these departments are also developing their own training programmes, although no deadline has been set for these revisions.

Perception and Misinformation

Another central aspect to the Review is their analysis of “misinformation”. The Review acknowledges that Prevent has been met with “vociferous criticism.’ Shawcross attempts to rebut the criticisms that have been made that the Prevent duty results in discrimination and unfair targeting of ethnic groups and sanctions for individuals who fail to implement the duty, that it stifles freedom of expression, there is a lack of transparency around uses of data, and that there is a “supposed conflation between safeguarding and state securitisation”.

The Review alleges that these criticisms are being made by civil society organisations with “Islamist connections”, suggesting that these organisations are “discouraging some in those communities from working with Prevent” and that in some contexts the campaign against Prevent has been additionally motivated by seeking to legitimise “violence by Islamist terrorists.” Shawcross accuses many groups of promoting misinformation and disinformation in relation to Prevent, and suggests that there is no similar anti-Prevent campaign being run by Right-wing extremist organisations. The Review argues that some groups are “as a matter of principle, opposed to state-run schemes...no matter how light touch the scheme’s methods.” It concludes that more effort must be made to challenge “misinformation” and the Government must engage a more systematic approach to challenging views that oppose Prevent.

Key Recommendations made in the Review

Review Recommendation 30: *“Establish a dedicated unit within the Homeland Security Group to rapidly rebut misinformation about Prevent and challenge inaccuracies via traditional and social media. The unit should co-ordinate with government departments to produce national resources for civil society organisations and Prevent delivery partners in local communities. These resources should tackle myths about Prevent and defend the practitioners who help protect communities.”*

Review Recommendation 31: *“RICU should equip Prevent practitioners with better information about extremism-linked campaigns to undermine their work. This should include information about the networks involved and narratives used. Prevent-funded civil society organisations should be supported and encouraged to use this information to publicly challenge those who promote disinformation in an effort to undermine Prevent.”*

Review Recommendation 32: *“Prevent-funded civil society organisations and counter-narrative projects should take on extremism-linked activists who seek to demonise the scheme. Civil society organisations should be ready and able to challenge and expose groups which promote disinformation about Prevent, particularly through media and social media campaigns.”*

Recommendation 33: *“Develop specific measures to counter the anti-Prevent campaign at universities. Higher and further education co-ordinators should work closely with institutional safeguarding leads to co-ordinate activities for students and staff which directly take-on and challenge disinformation about Prevent. The Department for Education should develop a network of speakers who are able to speak to students and staff about counter-radicalisation work and its benefits.”*

Government response: *The Home Office agrees with the findings of the Review, and that they must take a more “muscular” approach to “misinformation and disinformation about Prevent.’ Additionally, they want to do more to build confidence in Prevent, by better equipping CSOs, partners and stakeholders to challenge “misinformation”.*

CRIN’s Perspective

Criticism of the Prevent strategy does not amount to “extremism“. Attempts in the Review to conflate criticism of Prevent with a form of “extremism“ are an attempt to silence legitimate, evidence-based criticism of a policy from a broad range of civil society groups with expertise on human rights, safeguarding of children and counter-terrorism law and policy. To do so dismisses the validity of criticisms being made of Prevent, and exemplifies the concerns that have been raised previously - that Prevent will interfere with freedom of speech and expression and create even more pressure to comply with the securitisation and monitoring that Prevent enforces, out of fear of being labelled ‘extremist’ for speaking out against the policy. Furthermore, we believe that the Review unjustifiably singles out Muslim communities and organisations, mischaracterising the nature of criticism of Prevent and further compounding the stigmatisation of communities by the Prevent policy.

What Happens Next?

The Home Office has stated that they plan to “tackle inaccurate claims through a dedicated Prevent communications team.” They also want to “equip” stakeholders and partners, including civil society organisations, to be able to challenge information around Prevent through new resources, developed by the communications team. In particular, the Home Office wants to push civil society organisations to provide further information to be able to challenge ‘misinformation’ around Prevent.

The Home Office will also create a Standards and Compliance Unit which will consider accusations around mishandling of Prevent referrals or cases. RICUs will also analyse the activities of “non-violent extremism“-linked individuals and groups that are “seeking to undermine the work of Prevent.” In addition, the Home Office is considering bringing back the Ministerial Prevent Oversight Board so there is an oversight mechanism for the Standards and Compliance Unit, as well as other aspects of Prevent’s work.

In the context of higher education, the Department for Education and the Home Office will “professionalise” their pool of trusted and supportive partners with positive experiences of Prevent, to be able to challenge ‘misinformation’ about Prevent and support spreading a positive impression of Prevent.

Responses from Other Organisations

- CAGE: [Shawcross’ review of PREVENT exploits Muslim prejudice to expand state powers](#)
- Liberty: [Liberty responds to Shawcross Review of Prevent](#)
- Muslim engagement and development: [MEND’s Response to the Accusations of William Shawcross in the ‘Independent’ Review of Prevent \(Feb 2023\)](#)

- Rannymede Trust: [Rannymede Trust response to the 'Independent Review of Prevent'](#)
- Community Counter to Prevent: [Statement in response to Shawcross Review to Prevent](#)
- Amnesty International: [UK Shawcross review of Prevent is 'deeply prejudiced and has no legitimacy'](#)
- Open Rights Group: [Open Rights Group responds to Shawcross Review of Prevent](#)
- Muslim Council of Britain: [Building Trust into an Effective Counter-Terrorism Strategy](#)

For more information on CRIN's work:

- CRIN, [Who We Are and Our Code](#).
- CRIN's [Work on how measures in the UK violate children's rights in the name of 'fighting terrorism'](#).
- CRIN's [Counter-terrorism issue page](#).