

Radicalisation and Resilience Case Study

The United Kingdom

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This case study is part of a series of in-depth reports on religiously motivated violent radicalisation - and resilience to it - in 12 countries. The series examines periods in which religious radicalisation and violence has escalated and analyses relevant policy and political discourses surrounding them. While seeking to identify factors that drove radicalisation and violence in each country, the case studies also critically assess programmes of prevention and resilience-building, identifying good practices. This series was produced by GREASE, an EU-funded research project investigating religious diversity, secularism and religiously inspired radicalisation.

Countries covered in this series:

Australia, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Morocco, Russia, Tunisia and the United Kingdom.

<http://grease.eu.eu>



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The EU-Funded GREASE project looks to Asia for insights on governing religious diversity and preventing radicalisation.

Involving researchers from Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Oceania, GREASE is investigating how religious diversity is governed in over 20 countries. Our work focuses on comparing norms, laws and practices that may (or may not) prove useful in preventing religious radicalisation. Our research also sheds light on how different societies cope with the challenge of integrating religious minorities and migrants. The aim is to deepen our understanding of how religious diversity can be governed successfully, with an emphasis on countering radicalisation trends.

While exploring religious governance models in other parts of the world, GREASE also attempts to unravel the European paradox of religious radicalisation despite growing secularisation. We consider the claim that migrant integration in Europe has failed because second generation youth have become marginalised and radicalised, with some turning to jihadist terrorism networks. The researchers aim to deliver innovative academic thinking on secularisation and radicalisation while offering insights for governance of religious diversity.

The project is being coordinated by Professor Anna Triandafyllidou from The European University Institute (EUI) in Italy. Other consortium members include Professor Tariq Modood from The University of Bristol (UK); Dr. H. A. Hellyer from the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) (UK); Dr. Mila Mancheva from The Centre for the Study of Democracy (Bulgaria); Dr. Egdunas Raciunas from Vytautas Magnus University (Lithuania); Mr. Terry Martin from the research communications agency SPIA (Germany); Professor Mehdi Lahlou from Mohammed V University of Rabat (Morocco); Professor Haldun Gulalp of The Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (Turkey); Professor Pradana Boy of Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang (Indonesia); Professor Zawawi Ibrahim of The Strategic Information and Research Development Centre (Malaysia); Professor Gurpreet Mahajan of Jawaharlal Nehru University (India); and Professor Michele Grossman of Deakin University (Melbourne, Australia). GREASE is scheduled for completion in 2022.

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GREASE - Radicalisation, Secularism and the Governance of Religion: Bringing Together European and Asian Perspectives

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Introduction

The UK has a long history of domestic terrorism in relation to Northern Ireland, a history which is also recent, and to a lesser extent ongoing. The issue of religiously-attributed radicalisation which has arisen in the last couple of decades, however, has, as elsewhere on the continent, been focussed on Islam and Muslims. In the 2000s the UK has been one of the most affected countries in Europe for both domestic Islamist violent-extremist incidents as well as numbers of foreign fighters travelling abroad to take part in the conflicts in Iraq and Syria. Yet, domestic concern focussed on Britain's Muslim population also extends further back, notably to the Rushdie Affair in 1989 when issues of multiculturalism and Muslims as a religious 'other' came to the fore.

As well as this focussed attention on Britain's Muslims, the issue of radicalisation has also begun to shift and expand in recent years as forms of right-wing extremism have come to the fore, both in discourse as well as the focus of counter- and de-radicalisation efforts. In this more recent turn, along with the expanding understanding of where the 'threat' is coming from and who the targets of extremist violence are, so too to conception of 'radicalisation' and 'extremism' have also expanded to encompass not just acts but also thoughts and attitudes.

The UK was early in developing a comprehensive strategy in response to violent extremism and has been influential at the regional level - the EU counter-terrorism strategy based around the four pillars of Prevent, Protect, Pursue, Respond, adopted in 2005 under the UK presidency, was influenced by the UK's framework.

In all these ways, the UK has been very much at the forefront of debates around radicalisation and violent extremism in the last couple of decades.

Methodology

This report is based on extensive desk-based research, analysing existing literature and official government policy documents. It also draws on twelve semi-structured qualitative interviews with professionals working in the area. These include civil servants, public sector workers and non-governmental actors (see appendix). These were conducted in January and February 2020.

Conceptualisations of radicalisation

There is little clarity and no complete consensus on a definition of what radicalisation is. Moreover, it has shifted, in some ways expanded and, in other ways narrowed over the last couple of decades. During this time a shift can be seen in government understandings, from an initial focus on terrorist violence, to a concern with 'radicalisation' as the process towards violence, to a greater focus on pre-criminal extremism as beliefs that are associated with the radicalisation process.

Developments in governmental understandings have, nevertheless, shown a continued centrality for ideology. In a well-commented upon speech at the Munich Security Conference in 2011, the then Prime Minister, David Cameron, gave this factor great emphasis as *the* underlying factor that needed addressing:

“It is important to stress that terrorism is not linked exclusively to any one religion or ethnic group... Nevertheless, we should acknowledge that this threat comes in Europe overwhelmingly from young men who follow a completely perverse, warped interpretation of Islam... We have got to get to the root of the problem, and we need to be absolutely clear on where the origins of where these terrorist attacks lie. That is the existence of an ideology, Islamist extremism. We should be equally clear what we mean by this term, and we must distinguish it from Islam... The point is this: the ideology of extremism is the problem; Islam emphatically is not... Even if we sorted out all of the problems that I have mentioned [poverty, grievances over foreign policy], there would still be this terrorism. I believe the root lies in the existence of this extremist ideology...”¹

Notably, from this excerpt there is simultaneously an emphasis on there not being one ideology or one group but at the same time a clear pinpointing of a particular brand of Islamist extremism. This aspect of how radicalisation and extremism have been thought about, rather than formally defined, along with their resulting policy emphases, have caused great controversy and been the subject of sustained criticism from various commentators.

The UK government’s definition of radicalisation or extremism is: “the vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also regard calls for the death of members of our armed forces as extremist.”² This, on the whole, is seen by many commentators and practitioners as vague and not very useful, not least because of criticisms of the vagueness of so-called Fundamental British Values (FBV) themselves. Research in further educational settings (a key area for prevention work) suggests that teachers were confused by the definition and their duty under prevention policies and legislation; they “were aware that they had a serious legal duty but the training had not clarified what the duty was or how to perform the duty to protect students” (Moffat and Gerrard, 2019: 8; see also CCE, 2019).

More recently, there has been a greater emphasis given to ideologies other than Islamist, notably far-right extremism, an emphasis evident in the 2018 iteration of the UK’s counter-terrorism strategy. The strategy document notes a shift in the threat to include Islamist and right-wing groups as well as noting that “the ideologies and narratives perpetuated by Islamist and extreme right-wing groups have at times reinforced and even mutually benefited each other”.

In terms of the relationship between religion and radicalisation, it is at best contentious and a number of interviewees avoided the association altogether. Others, however, sought to contextualise the link, where there might be one, and in a way that is not inconsistent with the reasons that others avoided it. The following quote from a non-governmental sector practitioner helps summarise this perspective: religiously-attributed radicalisation is “when religious belief underpins someone’s or is seen to underpin someone’s motivation to get involved in radical thinking or action” (UKNG6). That is that religion is not equated with radicalisation or seen as somehow special in this

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-speech-at-munich-security-conference>

² See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance/revised-prevent-duty-guidance-for-england-and-wales>

relationship, but religion can be one, among many, frameworks, or 'vehicles' (UKCS1), through which radicalisation might occur, might be justified by the perpetrator, or might be understood by others. Such a use of religion was generally held to be a (illegitimate) distortion or a misconstrual of religious ideas and texts for other purposes (UKCS3, UKCS4).

The centrality of religion to the broader picture was also seen to have waned, not just in understandings of 'radicalisation' but also in relation to the justifying discourses of those who undertake violent extremist acts. A couple of interviewees commented on how, whereas religion was more present in relation to al-Qaeda and the Taliban, when theological debates were more prominent, this has since shifted to socio-political and socio-economic interpretations, "more identity oriented, political stuff, social stuff", some went to Syria "to look bigger and badder [sic]", for example (UKCS1, UKNG7).

Because of the prominence of religiously based justifications, however, there was also a sense in some interviews that engaging theological narratives was important, but that this needed to be done by credible figures with the requisite knowledge and training, and that this was not a role the government should take (UKCS2, UKNG7, UKCS4).

A number of contextual factors can also be pointed to that affect how understandings vary. In part it may reflect a developing context and knowledge. For some it might reflect a difference based on where one works and the contextual experience – one interviewee, for example, pointed to prisons as not necessarily reflecting the changing understanding as a result of who the prisoners are (UKCS1). Another factor for public sector workers might be how often the issue of radicalisation occurs in their sector. In some institutional settings there might be a lack of experiential knowledge based on the low number of cases and as a result people are not sure what to do or who to ask. Geographical location in the country is a further factor here as areas greatly vary in terms of numbers of referrals (UKP1) and Prevent (see below) funding is now distributed based on these figures.

There is a further point that also emerged in several interviews and that is related to how we think about the nature, intention, and targets of violence seen as a result of 'radicalisation' connected to religion. While recent discussions of religiously-attributed violent extremism have revolved around incidents of Islamist extremism and terrorism, and more recently anti-Muslim incidents, interviews also highlighted other forms of violence that do not usually arise in these discussions.

This raises a couple of important difficulties. One is that it is necessary to draw a distinction between forms of social conservatism and extremism, where the latter was differentiated by its incitement to or acts of hatred (UKCS2). Another is the need to distinguish between violent 'radicalisation' and 'extremism' and other forms of violence, such as domestic violence. This, however, raises the further issue of what is meant by religiously-attributed violent radicalisation and which forms of violence fall outside its purview. A key difference here lies in whether or not the idea of an in-group - out-group divide is a necessary definitional aspect of violent religiously-attributed radicalisation. This in-group/out-group component reflects a number of theoretical understandings, including the concept paper for this aspect of GREASE, and was one that was also either explicit or implicit in several interviews (UKCS2, UKNG6). Other interviews, however, also attributed in-group violence to religious radicalisation. The example here was in reference to Haredi Jewish communities, where in-group restrictions, violence and

abuse on the basis of a strict religious interpretation and way of life were enforced in preservation from out-groups (UKNG4, UKNG5). Other examples also referenced strong and restrictive patriarchal practices in some Muslim communities. That is, these positions suggest behaviour can be considered 'extreme' when it seeks to infringe the rights of others or tries to control others and that this can be similarly applied to in-group - in-group relations; common examples here were restrictions on women's rights and freedoms (UKCS3). Because of the structurally embedded nature of these forms of abuse and control, linked to a 'radical' religious ideology, for these interviewees, the framework of radicalisation and extremism was one that fitted this situation.

This, however, is contested by others who see it as necessary to distinguish between these different forms of violence on the basis of the in-group – out-group definition. For them, to not do so is to over-reach the definition of radicalisation, which might result in people not getting the right kind of help. On these understandings this would come under other safeguarding issues which need to be carefully separated from 'radicalisation' proper, such as domestic abuse and child abuse.

Vulnerability

If a common factor and a point of consistency other than 'it's complex' can be said to emerge from this, then it is the idea of vulnerability with a subsequent emphasis on resilience and safeguarding. Vulnerability that can mean an individual is susceptible to an ideological framework of these kinds, through which they can "be groomed as to a solution" (UKNG6), "end up in an echo chamber" (UKCS3), which can lead to violence (also Home Office 2018) is a consistent theme in official strategy documents as well as across interviews.

The underlying factors of vulnerability, however, are complex and various and there is no single profile or driving factor. The factors generally held to be contributory, nevertheless, include: income poverty, a lack of opportunities and having no sense of purpose, not feeling listened to, issues of belonging and identity, feelings of disenfranchisement and alienation. Importantly, though, while they are factors, it would be "a push to say these cause it [radicalisation]" (UKNG6).

This, coupled with the extreme difficulty in trying to predict which ideologies will take hold, means that many feel it is necessary to work in general with vulnerable people and focus on safeguarding rather than focussing on one or other type of radicalisation, and why one organisation emphasises an intersectional approach in terms of addressing gangs, youth violence, sexual exploitation, for instance (UKNG7).

Country Background

The UK's recent experience of domestic terrorism goes back to the late 1960s when the conflict over the status of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom, together with its connection to religious community divisions, known as 'the Troubles', began, although this conflict was ethno-national rather than religious. The conflict was formally brought to an end in 1998 with the Good Friday Agreement. Low level attacks have continued, and Northern Ireland remains a significant source of terror activity in the UK. Contemporary violent religiously-attributed radicalisation and extremism has been

associated with Islamist terrorism, and a growing security agenda and securitised forms of governance have concentrated on Muslims.

According to the census and other polls most of the UK population is Christian, although increasingly declares 'no-religion', but the UK is also multi-faith with a number of minority religious groups, including Jews, Muslims, Sikhs and Buddhists. Muslims comfortably form the largest minority religious group at about 6% of the current population. While religion generally enjoys a positive public role, particularly in 3rd sector service provision as part of Britain's 'moderate secularism', beginning with the Rushdie Affair in 1989 the emergence of religious diversity has occurred in a context of growing concern over social and cultural integration of minority communities, with a particular emphasis on the 'otherness' of Muslims. Notably, whereas overall trends of racism and religious discrimination may show decline, the trend for discrimination against Muslims shows the reverse (Modood, 2019b). For religious minorities, educational and labour market patterns are intersectionally complex, but Muslims fare worse on a number of measures in comparison to other religious groups as well as to the national average.

The first major Islamist related attack on UK soil was the bombings on 7th July 2005 (7/7) in London. Four coordinated bombings targeted the transport network - three underground trains and a bus - during rush hour, killing 52 and injuring 784. The attacks were led by Mohammed Siddique Khan, who had trained in Pakistan and stated his allegiance to al-Qaeda in a martyrdom video released shortly afterwards. This attack marked a change in perceptions of terrorism with so-called 'home-grown' terrorism subsequently becoming an increasing issue and focus. As one interviewee put it, 7/7 marked the realisation that, "Oh shit, this isn't al-Qaeda in a cave somewhere, this is kids from Dewsbury!" (UKNG7).

Further high-profile suicide bombing attacks have included attempted bombings, such as in London and Glasgow airport in 2007, and the Manchester Arena suicide bombing in 2017 at the end of an Ariana Grande concert. This attack, which became the deadliest attack since 7/7, killing 23 (including the bomber) and wounding up to 250, was claimed by ISIS.

There have also been increasing low-level attacks. Notable among these was the murder of a British Army soldier in May 2013 by two converts to Islam, who ran him over before attacking him with meat cleavers and knives. Two attacks similar to one another, both involving vehicle ramming on bridges in central London occurred in 2017 and became the first attacks with multiple fatalities since 2005 (see below). More recently there were two further instances of knife attacks. The attacks both took place in London, one on Streatham High Road (on 2nd February 2020) and the other at Fishmonger's Hall just off of London Bridge (on 29th November 2019), and the perpetrators were both people who had been imprisoned on terror offences and released on licence (early release subject to conditions) after they had served half their sentence.

As with other Western European countries, people leaving the UK as foreign fighters in conflicts involving Muslims had occurred earlier, in the 1980s to Afghanistan and 1990s to Bosnia, but came under specific interest as a security concern with people leaving to join the conflicts in Iraq and Syria, to which the UK has been one of the main source countries, around 850 leavers (House of Commons, 2018).

In 2017 the UK reported the highest number of terror-related fatalities, arrests, and foiled, failed and successful attacks of Western European countries and arrests and convictions for terrorism related offences have risen in the last few years (Home Office, 2018). The vast majority of these attacks were in Northern Ireland, although it also reported the highest number of Islamist attacks (Europol, 2018). In Great Britain (excluding Northern Ireland), terrorism-related arrests climbed from 2010 reaching a peak in 2017 of over 450, since when they have fallen – there were 280 arrests in 2019 (House of Commons, 2020).

Drivers of religiously-inspired radicalisation and assessment

Just as there is inconsistency in understanding what radicalisation is, there is also no consistent understanding of how it occurs. There is no one factor or even a combination of factors that can be confidently identified as causing radicalisation; the recognition of complexity and that religion is not a determining or necessary factor form the main points of consistency.

There is then no single profile or driving factor but rather a collection of factors which might, in combination, but by no means necessarily, lead to radicalisation. Official government strategy documents, while highlighting ideology, acknowledge a range of factors that contribute towards an individual being vulnerable to extremist ideologies: “there is no single factor at work” but that “several factors might converge to create the conditions under which radicalisation can occur” through creating ‘ideological openings’ (Home Office 2018, p.23, 32)³.

Radicalisation is a contextual matter, and this means that different pull factors will appeal to different individuals, with religion forming just one such, and even then, it is more complex. In discussing the recruitment tactics of ISIS one interviewee noted how they are very effective and have a range of videos and material with different appeals, covering offers of money, flash cars, women, the promise of paradise and so on (UKNG7). Thus, the framework that will attract different individuals is a contextual matter that combines individual and local struggles with geo-politics, and how geo-political forces permeate local contexts is subject to shifts and changes. The role of ideology in these conceptions remains important, however, even if the range has broadened and it is increasingly seen as a contingent rather than foundational factor. An interesting contrast emerges here between comments by two interviewees (both working in the non-governmental sector). One interviewee commented, “I personally would love to downplay ideology, but I don’t see a better argument” (UKNG3), thereby emphasising this aspect. Another interviewee, the co-founder of an NGO that works with front-line practitioners and young people, also, however, noted an increase in non-ideological radicalisation, where individuals are watching eclectically and focussing more on the violence rather than the ideas behind them (UKNG7), echoing Roy’s (2017) argument about the ‘Islamization of radicalism’.

While some reflected the understanding of radicalisation as a process, a ‘conveyor belt’ as one put it (UKNG1), others questioned this understanding, and the government strategy document CONTEST 2018 also rejects this analogy (Home Office 2018). One

³ Also <https://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/home-affairs/Correspondence-17-19/Radicalisation-the-counter-narrative-and-identifying-the-tipping-point-government-response-Eighth-Report-26-17-Cm-9555.pdf> p.1

interviewee noted that it is not linear or predictable; it might proceed quickly for some, whereas someone else might draw back (UKNG7). For some it might also reflect political differences of emphasis (with those on the left more likely to highlight social structures and those on the right more likely to point to individual and psychological, or more localised factors). Following on from the idea of vulnerability in terms of individual resilience pointed to above, we can also consider how the UK might in some ways be a context of vulnerability, that is, how structural and social factors combine with psychological factors as part of a 'conducive environment' (see Belgium report in this series). Consideration of this also highlights how the way the government has put its understanding into practice is heavily criticised. The following section expands this point in reference to the position of Muslims in Britain.

Vulnerability and Muslims

The particular focus Muslims have occupied in these debates warrants further detail on the picture of how social factors affect Muslims in the UK. The prominence of Muslims in the popular imagination can be traced back to the Rushdie Affair in 1989 (Modood 1990). The protests that followed the publication of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, citing its blasphemy against the Prophet Muhammad, along with the ensuing *fatwa* issued by Ayatollah Khomeini (then leader of Iran) calling for Rushdie's death, announced Muslims and Islam in the public sphere. This was amplified following urban riots in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford in 2001, which stemmed from what a report called communities living 'parallel lives' in segregated societies (Cantle, 2001), and which gave rise to the government's Cohesion agenda, centred around promoting cross-ethnic contact. Notably, the far right, beginning with the BNP under Nick Griffin, also changed their discourse from one of Britain having a race or ethnic minority problem to having a 'Muslim problem' (Modood, 2005). Since 9/11 and 7/7, along with further attacks, this scrutiny has only intensified.

Opinion polls have routinely found that around half of people think that Islam is not compatible with 'British values'⁴, which sits in stark contrast to over 90% of Muslims reporting a strong sense of belonging to Britain (Ipsos Mori, 2018). Notably, 63% of Muslims said they feel more victimised than other religious groups (ibid), something non-Muslims also perceive, with 47% of British adults saying Britain is becoming less tolerant of Muslims and 58% thinking Islamophobia is a real problem in contemporary British society⁵.

Moreover, whereas overall trends of racism and religious discrimination may show decline (Weller et al., 2013), the trend for discrimination against Muslims shows the reverse (Modood, 2019b). Notable is that some forms of discrimination 'spike' following certain events; instances of Islamophobia, for example, increase immediately following reports of terror related attacks, and have done so in the period surrounding the referendum as part of assertive ethno-nationalist discourses. A report from the NGO Tell MAMA (Faith Matters, 2020) found a 692% increase in incidents in the week following the Christchurch attack, also demonstrating the global resonance attacks can have. It is also noteworthy with regard to Muslims that an All Party Parliamentary Group report⁶

⁴ According to yougov polls: <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2016/02/19/tracker-islam-and-british-values>

⁵ <https://www.comresglobal.com/polls/mend-islamophobia-poll-october-2018/>

⁶ <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/599c3d2febbd1a90cffdd8a9/t/5bfd1ea3352f531a6170ceee/1543315109493/Islamophobia+Defined.pdf>

(2018) has recommended the adoption of a definition of Islamophobia as a form of racism (see also Modood 2019a, chps 1 and 4), and while this has been adopted by most major political parties, the Conservative government has rejected the definition as 'unworkable'.

Scholars have pointed to a 'religion penalty' that particularly affects Muslims, who have rates of unemployment at more than double the national average⁷ in addition to lower occupational status in comparison to other religious groups as well as to the national average, something that seems to apply particularly to Muslim women⁸ (Khattab & Modood, 2015; Khattab & Johnston, 2014; Heath & Martin, 2013; Lindley, 2002). There are various and complex reasons for this, including lack of bridging social capital, language limitations, cultural factors, and discrimination. With regard to discrimination, tests where CVs sent in response to job adverts that bear a 'Muslim-sounding' name and an 'English-sounding' name but are otherwise identical, have shown that applicants with Muslim-sounding names are far less likely to be called for interview (Modood, 2019b; BBC, 2017b)⁹.

Muslims have tended to record lower educational attainment levels in comparison to other religious groups, where Hindus and Jews are above the national average (Khattab, 2009). This seems to be changing, nevertheless, with Muslims now performing at the national average (Khattab & Modood, 2018).

For Muslims, the fallout from the Rushdie affair eventually led to the creation of the umbrella organisation the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) in 1997 (McLoughlin, 2005). Since 2005, the government has increasingly recognised as well as had a strong hand in creating a more diversified 'democratic constellation' (Modood, 2013[2007]), including bodies for young people, women, sectarian differences and interests, and those focussed on mosque governance or areas such as education (O'Toole et al., 2013). Representation remains an issue, however, with one local authority Prevent lead talking about internal 'blacklists' of organisations they are unable to work with, and which for them represented a 'reckless' and 'cowardly' lack of engagement on the part of central government (UKCS4).

State and non-state led approaches

Government responses to Islamist extremism have in large part developed from measures taking shape from the 1970s and the conflict in Northern Ireland, although security measures and resources have developed and extended beyond those stemming from this period. This has included the introduction of permanent rather than temporary legislation and a previous distinction between domestic and international terrorism has become less clear-cut (Burke, no date).

The cornerstone of the government's national strategic response is CONTEST, first developed in 2003 prompted by 9/11, and subsequently revised in 2006 following 7/7, and then 2009, 2011 and 2018. It is owned by the Home Office and overseen by the Home Secretary and Prime Minister with a significant role for the Office of Security and

⁷ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmwomeq/89/89.pdf>

⁸ <http://csi.nuff.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/CSI-26-Muslim-employment-1.pdf>; see also footnote 2

⁹ See also <http://csi.nuff.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Are-employers-in-Britain-discriminating-against-ethnic-minorities-final.pdf>

Counter-Terrorism (OSCT), an Office created in 2006 and located within the Home Office.

CONTEST comprises four aspects: *Pursue*, to stop terrorist attacks, *Prevent*, to stop people becoming or supporting terrorists, *Protect*, which largely encompasses the security services working with the private sector to ensure that critical national infrastructure is physically protected and its vulnerability reduced, and *Prepare*, aimed at mitigating the effects and consequences of an attack in its immediate aftermath and being able to return to operating as normal as quickly as possible (Home Office, 2011, 2018).

The number of government agencies, departments and bodies that are part of the counter-terrorism apparatus is large (Burke, no date, lists 36 governmental organisations). The security services, comprising the overseas focussed Secret Intelligence Service (SIS or MI6), the domestic focussed Security Service (MI5) and GCHQ (Government Communications Headquarters) work closely with special police units such as the Metropolitan Police Service's Counter Terrorism Command (CTC or SO15) and nine regional Counter Terrorism Units (CTUs). The Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC), created in 2003, coordinates inter-agency collaboration, including other agencies or departments as needed, such as medical, traffic management and so on. JTAC also sets the threat level (at the time of writing this is 'substantial'¹⁰) and issues warnings and reports. In 2007 the Research, Information, Communications Unit (RICU) was established to help manage the language the government used when communicating about terrorism.

Legislative responses

A series of legislation has been enacted under the aegis of *Pursue*. While not exhaustive, this section outlines some of the most significant Acts and their features.

The Terrorism Act 2000 included some measures of the temporary bills during the Troubles, such as pre-charge arrest and detention, but expanded to include providing or seeking training for terrorism in the UK or overseas and incitement to terrorism. The Anti-Terrorism Crime and Security Act 2001, passed following 9/11, included a provision for the (potentially) indefinite detention without charge of suspected foreign terrorists if it was not possible to deport them. It also included a measure against withholding information, thereby allowing scope to prosecute family members of terrorists, something rarely used in NI.

The Terrorism Act 2006 responded to 7/7 and widened the scope to include early intervention measures such as indirect encouragement or glorification of terrorism (particularly aimed at 'radical preachers'), dissemination of terrorist publications, preparatory acts for terrorism, training for terrorism or attending a place used for training. It also lengthened the pre-charge detention period from 14 to 28 days.

The Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures Act 2011 strengthened measures aimed at those "who pose a real terrorist threat, but whom we cannot prosecute or, in the case of foreign nationals, deport". Measures against suspects include curfews, limits to travel and movement and provisions to monitor these, control of electronic

¹⁰ See <https://www.mi5.gov.uk/threat-levels>

communication devices, limits on financial services access, and limits to freedom of association.

The Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (CTSA) was introduced mainly in response to foreign fighters and includes a variety of travel restriction measures aimed at people both leaving or entering the UK. It also places a legal duty requiring public bodies (such as those involved in education, healthcare and social services), to have “due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism” (Part 5, Chapt. 1, point 26) in carrying out their functions. As such “it has, arguably, become a civic obligation to contribute to, and participate in, the monitoring of others ... In so doing, they may therefore become simultaneously the subjects, objects and tools of anti-terrorism” (Jarvis & Lister, 2013: 661).

The Investigatory Powers Act 2016 focussed on communication monitoring measures, consolidating existing powers to obtain such data and provisions for internet data collection. The Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Act 2019 followed a review in the aftermath of the attacks in 2017 and the attempted killing of Sergei and Yulia Skripal by a nerve agent in March 2018 (with suspected links to the Russian government), as well as the ongoing issue of foreign fighters travelling to Iraq and Syria. It has, amongst other measures, increased border control powers, increased sentences for preparatory acts, introduced the offence of entering or remaining in certain overseas territories, and provided expanded scope for prosecution of viewing rather than just downloading terrorist material.

State power to remove citizenship has also been strengthened. This power had existed since the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act 1914, and used mainly against those engaged in espionage in the Cold War. It had largely lain dormant in the latter half of the 20th century, its last use in 1973 (Choudhury, 2017). The scope of the power has since been extended, as has the Home Secretary’s discretion under the terms of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Acts of 2002 and 2006, the Immigration Act 2014, and the CTSA. It is now applicable to born British citizens, not just naturalized citizens, and is exercisable without the need for a conviction of terrorist offences. Between 2006 and 2015 more than 50 British citizens were stripped of their citizenship, and in 2017 alone reached over 100¹¹. The recent high-profile case of Shamima Begum, who left the UK for Syria whilst still a legal minor, married a fighter and had a child, has brought debates on this into popular consciousness. Most recently, an emergency terror law was approved by MPs in February 2020 to prevent the early release of prisoners convicted of terror offences following the knife attacks in 2020.

The dynamics between *Pursue* and *Prevent* are particularly difficult. While it has been argued that the supposed division between them was already a false dichotomy (Sabir, 2017), the latest iteration explicitly identifies the link between *Prevent* and *Pursue* as particularly important (Home Office, 2018: 29). One interviewee, a senior police officer, commented on the sometimes tense but improved relationship between *Pursue* and *Prevent* (UKP1). A reluctance to share sensitive information held by *Pursue* with both those outside the police as well as internally, can present a challenge, especially if the different teams are trying to make a joint decision on how to proceed in a particular case. Furthermore, *Pursue* can have a significant impact on the work of *Prevent*. The tone and

¹¹[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/727961/CCS207_CCS0418538240-1 Transparency Report 2018 Web Accessible.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/727961/CCS207_CCS0418538240-1_Transparency_Report_2018_Web_Accessible.pdf). Accessed 07/08/2019

language used as well as the way operations such as house searches are conducted can mean *Prevent* has to 'pick up the pieces' and engage in careful 'consequence management' with families and communities. Steps to improve communication, however, mean *Prevent* is now higher on the priorities for *Pursue* to think about in terms of the impact of their investigations (UKP1).

Prevent in focus

The *Prevent* strand was identified as the most important strand by the New Labour government in 2007 (DCLG, 2007) and has attracted the most sustained attention, scrutiny and criticism. *Prevent* represents 'soft' measures or the 'hearts and minds' approach to addressing the social, cultural and ideological aspects of (de)radicalization. At the core of *Prevent* is working with civil society and community actors and organisations, seen to have 'insider' knowledge and therefore the social capital to influence people away from extremism. It combined de-radicalisation with community cohesion, and aimed at promoting shared values, challenging extremist ideologies, building leadership within Muslim communities, and strengthening institutions within those communities, all with a particular focus on young people (Thomas, 2009: 284, 2010). The initial conflation of security and community cohesion has cast a long shadow of distrust between many Muslims and the government.

Under the coalition government (2010), and driven by deep budget cuts under austerity as well as a different political and ideological stance, the 2011 iteration of CONTEST marked two shifts: to a 'value for money' approach and the separation between *Prevent* and the Cohesion agenda, thus deemphasising social programmes and community cohesion to focus on 'ideology' and counter-narratives. The continued focus on ideology highlights 'Salafi-Jihadi' groups, which are referred to as an 'inherently' violent hybridic Islamist ideology in the latest version (Home Office, 2018). This focus on ideology and values has been at the expense of the significance of structural factors to do with social inequality and discrimination. This has been a consistent criticism of *Prevent* and was reflected in interviews with civil society actors, who commented on how not enough attention was paid to the lack of opportunities, deprivation, and racism by government policy when it comes to radicalisation (UKNG2).

The identified threat also moved from violent extremism to extremism more generally, thus including *non-violent* extremism (Home Office, 2011; also Mythen et al., 2017). To this end it stated, "some terrorist ideologies draw on and make use of extremist ideas which are espoused and circulated by apparently non-violent organisations, very often operating within the law" (Home Office, 2011: 9, 10). Commentators have generally criticized its near exclusive emphasis on Muslims (Jarvis & Lister, 2013; also Kundnani, 2014; Thomas, 2009, 2010). This is reflected in the funding of *Prevent*, which was initially channelled to city councils according to the size of the Muslim population (first to those at more than 5% and then where this was over 4000 people).

Following the 2011 iteration, and despite the strategy stating that "the Government will not securitise its integration strategy", *Prevent* continues to be criticised for doing exactly this and has been unable to rebuild trust. As one interviewee expressed their scepticism, "they keep saying things and sometimes the right things, but the top down policies and approach isn't changing" (UKNG2). One civil servant also commented on the government approach having been "too lazy, equating becoming more religious with becoming radicalised with Muslims", which has created an unhelpful mind-set (UKCS3).

Another interviewee also pointed to the inconsistency with which the definition is applied to different communities as a result of a variety of factors, including unconscious bias, human error as well as structural factors (UKCS4). While community engagement is felt to be undoubtedly important and is part of the solution, many of the issues arise from the way communities are seen and engaged with; that is, communities should not be targeted as the problem or be regarded as simply the source of the problems.

In contrast, one interviewee from the non-governmental sector commented that, “the fact that *Prevent* has upset a lot of activists is not a bad thing, it’s a good thing. If *Prevent* was warmly welcomed by everyone, we’d have a problem” (UKNG3). While such a position might be justifiably contentious, a more nuanced dynamic emerged in relation to the government’s approach of promoting ‘moderate Islam’ by a different interviewee who was among the most critical of the government’s over-emphasis and scrutiny of Muslims, but who still highlighted the need to address concerns of practices occurring within Muslim communities. They highlighted how a result of the top down approach has been imams ‘white-washing’ Islam for a non-Muslim and largely secular audience and has not actually addressed aspects of what many people believe, which can be harmful, and engaging dialogue and discussion around these beliefs (UKCS4). Interviewees variously highlighted issues such as a lack of women on mosque committees, imams insulated from the wider world, and the idea of “separate worlds rather than synthesis” that can be promoted by popular public opinion or in mosques and madrasas. They also commented that many in government and civil society don’t broach ‘challenging’ subjects such as these enough for fear of causing offence and being accused of racism; or Ministers are “often more concerned with votes and being elected than tackling real issues” (UKCS3, UKNG3).

Programmes separate from *Prevent* have also been developed. The most notable of these is Building a Stronger Britain Together (BSBT), which was launched in 2016 and provides grant funding and support to civil society organisations working in the area.

Other ‘soft’ measures such as public awareness campaigns have also been rolled out. In 2017 a campaign Action Counters Terrorism¹² (ACT) was launched, which encourages the general public to play an active role in looking out for and reporting “any potential suspicious activity or online content they come across and are concerned about”¹³, and includes a free online course¹⁴ for “anyone who wants to become a CT Citizen”¹⁵. This has also been utilised as a training tool for companies and their employees. A second version of this is being released in 2020 to reflect changes in the area. A further recent example is the eight-week Communities Defeat Terrorism cinema advertising campaign launched by Counter Terrorism Policing in early 2019. Short adverts of just under a minute were shown in cinemas and encouraged the general public to spot and report things they saw that ‘don’t feel right’¹⁶.

The Hate Crime Action Plan, first published in 2016, and reviewed in 2018, aims to tackle hate crime and provide security measures, funding for projects, and roundtables for groups who face hate crime, especially Islamophobia and anti-Semitism.

¹² <https://act.campaign.gov.uk/>

¹³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/action-counters-terrorism>

¹⁴ <https://ct.highfieldlearning.com/>

¹⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/act-awareness-elearning>

¹⁶ See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-communities-defeat-terrorism-campaign-launched>. Accessed 22/01/2020

Channel

One of the most significant programmes is *Channel*, which was launched in 2007 in response to 7/7 and designed as an early-intervention de-radicalization programme. It is based on referrals of those deemed to be at risk of radicalization, and might involve a series of social support bodies, governmental and non-governmental, and measures including counselling, education, housing and employment. Initially in 2014, and subsequently under the terms of the CTSA 2015, such referrals, which had previously been voluntary, became a statutory duty for professionals working in local government, education, and health and social care amongst other areas, thus drawing them into active counter-terrorism roles and enforcing government policy and strategy; a process that has been referred to as the 'securitization of social policy' (Ragazzi, 2017; Sabir, 2017). Teachers have reported concerns that this duty has damaged trust and the ability to hold open discussions in classes as students can fear the consequences (Moffat & Gerrard, 2019). This feature of the programme is now also expanding into the private sector with staff at major retailers also receiving training in spotting signs of violent extremism in co-workers (FT, 2019; Home Office 2018).

In 2017/18, there were a total of 7 318 referrals under *Prevent*, overwhelmingly of males (44% for concerns of Islamist extremism and 18% for right wing extremism), representing a 20% increase on the previous year. 394 were supported through *Channel*, a 19% increase (45% for Islamist extremism and 44% for right wing extremism)¹⁷. In the most recent reporting year (April 2018-March 2019), however, referrals decreased by 22% to 5 738¹⁸ (Home Office, 2019). The majority remained male (87%) and under the age of 20 (58%). Although referrals under *Prevent* decreased, *Channel* cases increased. 23% of the total referrals made through *Prevent* were discussed and 10% went on to receive *Channel* support, again an increase on the previous year. 1320 of the cases were discussed at *Channel* panels and 561 cases were taken up. For the first year, right-wing extremism cases formed the majority with 45% (254) of cases, while cases of Islamist radicalisation made up 37% (210). These figures represent an increase in right-wing radicalisation cases of 50% on the previous year, an increase twice that for Islamist radicalisation. The highest number of referrals came from the education sector (33%), followed by the Police (29%) (see Home Office, 2019, for further breakdown).

That the likelihood of a case being adopted through *Channel* has become more balanced between concerns of right-wing radicalisation and Islamist radicalisation might reflect the growth of the former, but it might also reflect the growing awareness of radicalisation as a phenomenon that can have different sources and stem from different societal groups. The need to broaden the focus of the strategy was highlighted by a review which reported in 2011 (Home Office, 2011) and is reflected in how the threat of right-wing radicalisation has become an increasingly prominent feature in political and media discourse, as well as in the *Prevent* documents themselves.

¹⁷

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/763254/individuals-referred-supported-prevent-programme-apr2017-mar2018-hosb3118.pdf. Accessed 08/08/2019

¹⁸ Of which 5 531 were unique referrals, 189 being referred twice and 9 three times. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/individuals-referred-to-and-supported-through-the-prevent-programme-april-2018-to-march-2019>. Last accessed 22/01/2020

Where Channel was discussed by interviewees, views were mixed. For one, it was a good example of a well-functioning programme (UKNG3), for another the panels lacked representation of people from different backgrounds (UKCS4), while their improvement was noted by another (UKP1). In terms of improvement, this was in large part because of the developing knowledge of the issue of radicalisation resulting in more 'quality' referrals; that is, referrals more likely to be appropriate to the programme, and which might account for the rise in referrals being taken up by Channel. A few people, for example, commented on how there had been an early spike in reporting following the CTSA 2015, when people were a bit panicked and ignorant about what they were reporting, but that subsequently training had improved and practitioners were more confident in what shouldn't be referred and in dealing with some issues themselves. This is also reflected in a comment from an interviewee who noted that they used to get schools saying they don't need CVE training because they "haven't got any Muslim kids" but that this kind of response seems to have gone now (UKNG7). A further interesting point also emerged in relation to the commonly held view amongst interviewees that radicalisation is but one instance of safeguarding. In an interview with a senior counter-terrorism police officer, they related how the threshold for Prevent intervention is lower in relation to other forms of safeguarding (UKP1). A further complication is a result of the duty (of CTSA 2015) being one that is general for public bodies. As one interviewee commented in relation to educational institutions, for instance, safeguarding leads in schools generally have the broadest experience plus relevant contacts and so for these leads the duty slips in more naturally (see, for example, Moffat and Gerrard, 2019: 12). In HE, by contrast, it's not always so clear what safeguarding means in this regard as students are adults.

State and civil society: operational issues and approaches

Criticisms of the government's approach include heavy-handedness, concerns over an over-emphasis and focus on Muslim communities, a lack of policies addressing social issues of discrimination and inequality, and an overly securitised approach. These have had the effect of breaking down trust not only between some local communities and central government but have also negatively impacted the relationship between front line practitioners and the communities they work in (UKCS3). At least one aspect of this heavy-handedness is seen to be a result of being unprepared; the government in the initial instance, for example, "ran out like a bit of a bull in a China shop, went to first brown faces they could find, who took loads of money, but weren't necessarily representative" (UKCS3). The general approach was characterised by one civil servant as "it's like there's a hole in the bucket, let's stick a plaster on it, and it's cheapo Wilko¹⁹ plasters too". It was felt the government needed to engage with diverse people and listen to voices that aren't the normal voices (UKCS3).

For local organisations as well as local Prevent leads of different stripes, there is a sense that the approach is "too London-dominated", as one interviewee put it, and that there is a need for greater flexibility and consultation with regions and cities (UKNG1, UKNG6, UKCS). Interviews highlighted how the process had become more centralised in recent years and that this created problems and disjuncture between national and local levels when it comes to the design and implementation of programmes. The current arrangement between central and local government was characterised as "much more

¹⁹ A reference to the Wilko chain of shops known for selling a wide range of household goods at low prices.

like a direct contractual arrangement” rather than the previous approach of “here’s some money for this issue (anti-social behaviour for example) off you go” (UKCS1). Central government, it was felt by some, had tried to keep too tight a grip on an area that is so reliant on local, community level delivery, which “is slightly absurd and probably not helped creativity and innovation in this space” (UKCS1). Prevent leads and community coordinators, for instance, highlighted how official government training had certainly improved but remained too ‘scripted’ and rigid (UKNG1); or as another interviewee put it, Home Office training is often “a whole load of crap” on the bases that it lacks nuance and does not reflect what is happening in communities (UKCS4) or meet sector/institution specific needs. There was also the perception that as a result of this, local authorities will always be judged by and led by central government and while on the ground they can be better (more considerate and compassionate, for instance), “there is always that steer” (UKNG6, UKNG2).

A further problem that arises in relation to the way funding is structured is that the process of applying can be slow and time and energy intensive which, especially if it is not approved, can make it difficult for coordinators working directly with communities (UKCS1). A more general criticism related to this is that the area is one that is constantly changing and that central government is simply too slow to respond to changing threats and as such policy often lags behind, and is a key reason for the need to have better engagement and communication between central and local government along with cities and communities (UKCS2).

Some, including the most critical of government approaches, said that from a community perspective radicalisation is an issue, although not necessarily the most important. Parents can feel nervous about it but authorities do not understand how young people (who travel as foreign fighters) can get to that point from community perspectives (UKNG2). That is, they focus on the ‘what’ of the action rather than addressing social issues for why a young person in [name of city] feels a connection to ISIS rather than to [name of city] (UKNG2). A further problem here is that community voices are “not heard above the din” and do not get credit for good work they are doing (UKCS1).

At a narrative level, a lack of inclusiveness was highlighted. One interviewee, for instance, commented on how “we’ve never really got our head around BME [Black and Minority Ethnic] being British, this is always missing in narratives over British identity”, the result of this being that even when there might be good intentions, a “line of stigmatisation always [casts] a shadow” (UKNG6). Another interviewee talked about being asked to sign a form stating adherence to Fundamental British Values as part of a project funding bid with a local authority and how this condition represented an example of, “it’s community engagement by name” and is still underpinned by policies which see you as ‘other’ (UKNG2). The problem highlighted here is that it is looked at as “here’s wider society and here’s the side issue related to diversity rather than seeing society as diverse as the starting point” (UKNG6). ‘Fundamental British Values’ was also an area of ‘confusion’ in this regard with “a lack of shared ownership” meaning “they are nothing if we don’t all share them” (UKCS1).

Following the discussion so far, there can be a pervasive feeling that there is a high level of inconsistency between state-led and civil society led understandings and approaches or between central and local authorities. Yet, what also emerges is the need to not overstate a ‘state’-‘civil society’ or national-local dichotomy, there is considerable variation not just between but within these spheres and other factors that cut across them.

Another interviewee also pointed to what they referred to as ‘grievance narratives’ emerging from different sides and pointing the finger at different ‘other’ groups in society (UKCS2).

Prevent has produced an at times ‘bewildering variety’ of projects, some government-led but mostly led by NGO and community initiatives²⁰ and there has also been a variety of ways in which such programmes have been implemented at local levels as community organisations have flexibly interpreted and applied the *Prevent* strategy (O’Toole et al. 2012, 2013, 2016)²¹. This has also served to highlight differences between Muslim communities (Griffith-Dickson et al., 2014).

Civil society organisations have greatly varied in their response to the *Prevent* framework and availability of funding under it. Some have outright refused to take any funding that comes under *Prevent*, and there have been instances and debates of whether otherwise well-regarded events should be boycotted if they have received *Prevent* money²². From this perspective *Prevent* is seen as a ‘toxic’ brand and irrecoverable. While none of the people interviewed believed *Prevent* is or has ever been without flaws (some serious), the more generous in this regard saw pre-2011 *Prevent* as “well-intentioned but misguided” and that improvements in how the programme operates have been made (UKCS1, UKNG1). At issue here is the idea of *Prevent* as a safeguarding tool. One person commented, “you’d make a safeguarding referral in relation to abuse etc., so why not radicalisation?” and that “a *Prevent* referral is no more and no less than another safeguarding referral” (UKP1).

One problem from the perspective of several interviewees was that as result of earlier failures, including those not directly related to *Prevent* such as Project Champion²³ in Birmingham, which saw more than 200 CCTV cameras installed in Muslim majority areas under terrorism funding, levels of damage and mistrust persisted that distorted the more neutral intentions of *Prevent*. Although even here it should be noted that responses to Project Champion from Muslims themselves varied²⁴. Directly relating to the operation of the *Prevent* strategy, one interviewee remarked that having a long-term state-led strategy that is able to respond to a quickly changing area is difficult and that there have clearly been mistakes made. Amongst these was that before it was shrouded by too much secrecy and mystery and lacked transparency about how it worked. This helped create mistrust and suspicion, which played into fears about securitisation (UKCS1).

A recent report, nevertheless, found that most people, including Muslims, did not know what *Prevent* was and, in principle, were in favour of a programme such as *Prevent* (Clements et al., 2020). Indeed, this was echoed by one interviewee, who I spoke to the day after the report had been released and said that parts of it resonated with their experience. They commented “out there everyone’s getting on with their lives” and that the ‘niche bubble’ we’re in [people working in the area] is not necessarily reflected in

²⁰ Through *Prevent* 203 community based projects were delivered in 2018/19, see <https://homeofficemedia.blog.gov.uk/2019/11/05/factsheet-prevent-and-channel/>

²¹ Also, see contributions in <https://discoversociety.org/2019/09/04/focus-an-independent-review-of-the-prevent-strategy/> for commentary on *Prevent* and its developments.

²² See, for example, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/jun/24/bradford-literary-festival-counter-extremism-funding-boycott>

²³ See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-birmingham-13331161>

²⁴ See <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/muslims-backed-project-champion-cameras-12263136>

many people's day to day lives (UKNG7). This might suggest that, notwithstanding considerable problems in how *Prevent* has been managed and administered, that a general strategy of this kind is recoverable in so far as and so long as it is made transparent and equitable. A further critique in fact had an underlying positive feature and focussed on how the work done under *Prevent* was communicated. A few interviewees commented that not enough was made of success stories so the coverage can be unbalanced and that improvements in the application of *Prevent*, including a shift away from a focus on Muslims to radicalisation in a more general sense (most notably the increased emphasis on far-right extremism), were not communicated effectively.

One interviewee made the argument that "government funding is tax payers' money, as citizens they should take the money" (UKCS2). Another interviewee commented that "the Home Office owns this space, it's their domain – you can't really operate in it without interacting with them" but that they "don't let anybody mess with their content" in order to maintain the integrity of the organisation and the work they do (UKNG7). Indeed, the same person also commented that any oversight on the part of the funder was extremely minimal; that Local Authorities (LAs) for instance, "never check content", and that it's a greyer and more pragmatic area than many acknowledge or will seriously discuss. Several interviewees, including from NGOs, the police and civil servants also raised the question that no credible alternative to *Prevent* had been offered by its detractors, and not to suggest that it should therefore not be criticised, but to highlight the argument that we needed to have better and more open conversations about it.

There is variation on the point of central government control too. One local authority community coordinator talked about how they were shocked over how little say central government had over local authorities. They described, for instance, how LA leads might have their own agenda and organisational politics can make it difficult for *Prevent* coordinators. For example, the funding of a particular project can be approved by the Home Office but not locally – in fact they commented that 9 times out of 10 the LA will block it. One reason for this was that the LA is more cautious about offending local communities and did not trust that the coordinator would deliver it properly, even in instances when communities themselves may ask for certain projects and the coordinator is themselves from the community (UKCS4). They also highlighted the example of Waltham Forest, where a local counter-extremism coordinator was dismissed by the local authority following a clash over the LA's support of certain 'suspect' groups and blocking of Ahmadi Muslims from participating in the local faith forum²⁵.

Another interviewee, who runs an NGO and works with several local authorities talked about the at times great variation in working practices. In their experience, not all LAs are "beacons of expertise and efficiency", and again highlighted that there is lots of politics at play which have to be negotiated (UKNG7). Another mentioned how LAs can do random things and make a mess (and highlighted Project Champion as an example of this (UKCS2, UKCS1)).

Criticisms were also raised of civil society organisations, including from those within the sector. Some of these relate to a lack of knowledge and expertise. One interviewee, for

²⁵ See <https://standpointmag.co.uk/issues/july-august-2018/guest-speaker-july-august-2018-charlotte-littlewood-sectarianism/> ; <https://walthamforestecho.co.uk/report-slams-councils-record-on-extremism/> ; <https://www.guardian-series.co.uk/news/17554474.exclusive-report-slams-council-for-appearing-to-have-wilfully-ignored-extremist-activity/>

example, pointed to the variance in quality of civil society organisations and their capacity to address issues in the area and deliver effective programmes (UKCS3, UKNG6). One feature to this end is that many lack the knowledge of how to engage effectively with government departments and institutions and what resources were available to them by doing so (UKCS4, UKCS3, UKCS2, UKNG7), although this is a feature that works both ways (UKCS3). It was felt, therefore, that civil society groups need to learn and get support in strategy, governance, transparency, accountability, and dealing with structures of government and larger institutions.

A further criticism related here is that organisations can respond almost too quickly, without having worked out a coherent strategy or approach (UKCS3) and that a number of organisations are ‘winging it’. Some civil society programmes were thought to be too vague and basic, such as IT literacy classes for Pakistani women, coffee mornings and swimming lessons, although it was also pointed out that these projects can often get funding; as one interviewee commented, “the Home Office funds some bizarre projects”.

Moreover, the approach from civil society organisations is not itself consistent. A further feature relates to too narrow and specialised expertise; that civil society organisations may, for example, address different factors that are seen to be part of the issue, and this might be on the basis of expertise and experience and/or the different understandings they have of what ‘radicalisation’ is (UKNG6, UKCS4). One NGO worker pointed out that organisations have become increasingly single issue so you could get three or four in one community addressing only slightly different things, resulting in duplication, saturation, and fragmentation, which can waste resources (UKNG6). Although not connected to radicalisation, the interviewee related the example of an organisation that showed good practice in developing knowledge and expertise over and against these tendencies. It started out supporting ethnic minority women who had suffered domestic violence but then adapted to women who weren’t ethnic minority but connected through mixed marriages. This was then adapted to men as victims of domestic violence and is now part of a national plan.

Further issues related to duplication and saturation were also exacerbated by the structural features of funding allocation. It was pointed out how small groups are constantly emerging and collapsing, and that bigger more established ones don’t necessarily speak to younger generations, producing a general lack of cross-collaboration. Several interviewees pointed to the competitive funding process as resulting in organisations becoming secretive and protective over their projects and programmes rather than being more open, sharing best practice as well as lessons learned from failures; “it’s a bit like covering your work up to stop people copying [in school]” as one person put it (UKNG7). This, it was pointed out, has a significant effect on the general context and the ability of the sector to develop and improve its working methods and practices. A competitive, politicised area where organisations are competing over money was characterised as at times ‘toxic’ and ‘nasty’, resulting in a lack of strategy on the part of all involved and producing “a scrappy miserable arena” rather than one that is collaborative and linked up. One person also noted how “sometimes funding can confuse relationships” in the nexus between the funder, the organisation, and the people they work with, and that an organisation has to choose and prioritise carefully.

This general environment also means LAs can ask for something new, even though existing projects and programmes might be good and successful and being asked for

again by schools – this being not part of a developed and improving ‘something new’ as part of a longer term strategy but newness for its own sake. One interviewee wryly noted these issues with reference to the administrative burden of this cycle: “I don’t mind filling out forms if it’s gonna feed into learning” (UKNG7).

There was then a distinct lack of long-term strategic thinking, with funding being a year at a time, repeating the cycle an inhibiting more genuine development, one person noting that it was “short term approach after short term approach after short term approach” (UKNG6). A result of this can be that “good work stops and you’re back to square one”, which can have a negative effect on trust and continuity in relationships that take time to develop.

In order to address this general situation, there was a definite sense that emerged from the interviews that two-way lines of communication and feedback between and within different levels (national, local, community) are lacking and necessary.

A reason for this kind of two-way relationship is the need for what one interviewee referred to as “a whole society response” (UKCS2), a sentiment reflected in several interviews. Part of the reason for this is that the government not only can’t but shouldn’t do everything, and thus civil society organisations have a vital role to play, and one that the government needs to support but not control (UKCS4). For instance, LAs play an important role in civil leadership and are responsible for leading the process of civic recovery, psychosocial support, memorials, victim support and so on following any incident. Moreover, it was seen as vitally important they do this as it is a real problem if an LA is seen to be culpable, that is if “the very organisation that should be trying to do work to build or rebuild communities, itself is part of the problem” (UKCS1). NGOs and community organisations “have the disadvantage of resources but advantage of deep engagement and knowledge”, meaning they are uniquely and better placed for deeper and long-term engagement, especially on sensitive and difficult subjects.

Part of this relationship, moreover, was a definite need for greater communication and transparency. Yet, the politicisation of the area and the debates within it presents a considerable challenge. It was characterised alternately as, for example, ‘sensitive’, polarised and suffused with competing ideologies (UKCS2, UKNG7). A senior figure in the police commented how when mistakes are made, which they inevitably are, it is better to be honest and hold your hands up and explain them, an approach which is more often than not appreciated and accepted even when there is anger. A high degree of transparency is fundamental to building and maintaining strong links and trust, which take a long time to develop; trying to cover up mistakes or justify them makes things worse (UKP1).

The need for this was particularly felt in relation to religion, which was felt is not the business of the government, and an area it is very bad at and where it does more harm than good. There is, however, a felt need to encourage and support Muslims to read and interpret scripture in a way in harmony with context, but that if the government takes too strong a lead it can end up too close to government ‘engineering’, and doesn’t work (UKNG3).

A final area that was highlighted was the media. In terms of the mainstream print and online media (major newspapers, for example), it was felt that they were unbalanced and sensationalist in their coverage, and that their influence over what came to form

government priorities was detrimental to long-term social issues being addressed. In terms of social media, it was felt that companies needed to take more responsibility for content that promoted hate and that was used to groom young people.

Crisis case studies

This section develops a more detailed discussion of three attacks involving vehicle ramming that occurred in 2017 in London as they are significant for a few reasons.

The first occurred on the 22nd of March when Khalid Masood, a 52-year-old British convert to Islam, drove a car up onto the pavement on Westminster bridge at high speed, injuring more than 50 people and killing 4. He then ran into New Palace Yard (an open courtyard next to the Palace of Westminster) carrying knives, where he fatally stabbed a police officer. He was shot and killed by armed police officers shortly after. Because of the target, the impact of this attack was one felt nationally rather than locally. It happened in an area characterised by tourism, national politics and business, and its resonance, therefore, was less impactful within the communities in the surrounding area than the London Bridge attack (below) and the Manchester arena bombing (UKCS1). Occurring outside Westminster, the Prime Minister, who was in the House of Commons at the time, was evacuated, whilst the rest of the Members of Parliament present were kept inside for safety and Parliament was suspended. COBRA (the UK government's emergency committee) met following the attack but decided there was no need to raise the threat level, which remained at 'severe'.

Masood, who had a history of violent crime and had been in prison twice, is reported to have said in a text message that he was waging *jihad* in revenge for Western military action in Muslim countries in the Middle East²⁶. In fact, following the attack a fresh debate was sparked about the balance between digital privacy and access to digital communications by the police and security services as the police tried to gain access to the perpetrator's WhatsApp messages as part of their investigation. He had been known to MI5 but only as a peripheral figure²⁷. ISIS released a statement claiming Masood acted as "a soldier of the Islamic State, executing the operation in response to calls to target citizens of coalition nations"²⁸, although no formal links were found by investigating police and both the police and government believe that Masood acted alone. Even absent this link, it was still described and treated by police as an act of Islamist-related terrorism. Following the attack, a number of residences were raided in Birmingham and East London, further arrests were made, and police presence was stepped up in the city.

The second attack occurred on the 3rd of June. This time three people, Khuram Shazad Butt (a British citizen), Rachid Redouane (a failed asylum seeker) and Youssef Zaghba (a Moroccan-Italian dual citizen), drove a van into pedestrians on London Bridge before leaving the van and stabbing people in the surrounding area. In total eight people were killed and forty eight injured. Nearby buildings were evacuated, and tube stations closed. A branch of the special forces (the SAS) were also deployed to the bridge to help police

²⁶ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/last-message-left-by-westminster-attacker-khalid-masood-uncovered-by-security-agencies-a7706561.html>

²⁷ Speech delivered in Parliament the day following the attack by the Prime Minister, Theresa May, <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-03-23/debates/AF8D74DF-85B4-4BE6-9515-4E9A57EB2064/LondonAttacks>

²⁸ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/03/23/london-attack-seven-arrested-police-raid-properties-linked-islamist/>

in the case that further attacks followed. Following the attack, concrete barriers were installed on a number of bridges to strengthen security and the Metropolitan Police issued advice to the public under the slogan 'run, hide, tell' for how to respond if they witnessed an attack taking place.

The three attackers were shot and killed by armed police officers. In a speech the following morning by the Prime Minister (Theresa May), she stressed the ideological aspect of the acts, saying that this attack, along with the earlier Westminster bridge attack and Manchester arena bombing were "bound together by the single evil ideology of Islamic extremism" and that there is "far too much tolerance" of Islamist extremism in Britain²⁹. The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, reported a sharp rise in Islamophobic hate crime following the attacks.

The third attack occurred on the 19th June when Darren Osborne, who lived in Cardiff and had a string of criminal convictions going back more than twenty years, drove a van into pedestrians close to Finsbury Park Mosque in London. Having initially driven to London to attack the opposition leader at the time, Jeremy Corbyn, and London Mayor, Sadiq Khan, but failing to find them at a march, he drove to Finsbury Park as part of Mr Corbyn's constituency. He then targeted a group of Muslims who had been worshipping in the nearby mosque and had stopped to give a man who had collapsed first aid. The attack injured ten and the collapsed man later died of injuries. The imam of the mosque prevented the man from being beaten by the crowd and instead he was kept pinned down until police arrived. The attack was declared a terrorist incident by police and, although initially charged with attempted murder, Osborne was later charged and convicted of attempted-murder and terrorism-related murder and sentenced to life imprisonment. Osborne, who had no affiliations to right-wing extremist groups, was said to have been "rapidly radicalised over the internet by those determined to spread hatred of Muslims" by the sentencing judge³⁰. Osborne was also described as a terrorist attack by the Mayor of London and Prime Minister³¹, and was investigated by counter-terrorism police. As with the previous attacks, police presence was stepped up and mosques were consulted over security needs. It prompted a review of the UK's counter-terrorism strategy and was followed by the establishment of the Commission for Countering Extremism (see below).

The significance of these three attacks lies in a few factors: First, as three instances of vehicle ramming in the same year, they represent an emerging form of attack. In fact, it is a method that became prevalent, becoming the most lethal form of terror attack in the West through the mid to late 2010s, following a spike of its use in the Middle East in the few years prior (Miller and Hayward, 2019). It has been used by a number of different groups or individuals associated with different ideologies and Miller and Hayward, in discussing the rising prevalence of vehicle ramming attacks, subsequently argue for a focus on the *doing* of attacks, that is, on "the terrorist act itself as something with a seductive appeal and force all of its own, as something that travels through our contemporary 'mediascape', to be internalized and imitated by a varied array of subjects who in turn are animated by a diverse set of motivations, psychologies and ideologies" (2019: 3). In this vein, it is significant that the sentencing judge at Osborne's trial

²⁹ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/london-bridge-terror-attack-theresa-may-tolerance-of-extremism-terrorism-islam-a7771836.html>

³⁰ Quoted in <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-42920929>, last accessed 12/05/2020

³¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-statement-following-terror-attack-in-finsbury-park-19-june-2017>

commented that: “Your plan was simple. To copy the method used by some Islamist terrorist and take a vehicle to a densely populated place and wreak as much devastation as possible as well as sowing long-lasting terror among the Muslim population”³². In CONTEST 2018, the government highlighted a shift in the terrorist threat in response to these attacks, with the need for greater focus on ‘lone actors’ influenced by propaganda (usually on social media) and the “highly accessible, simple methodologies” adopted (Home Office 2018, p.17). This updated strategy document was itself based on a review following these attacks and the Manchester Arena bombing. The response highlighted the need for “intervention at an earlier stage in investigations, leading to prosecutions for terrorism offences, backed up by longer prison sentences and stronger management of terrorist offenders after their release” along with enhanced multi-agency cooperation, a renewed focus on online propaganda, and enhancing local, community based support (Home Office 2018, p.27).

Secondly, following the third attack there was also a marked shift in political discourse. Since this attack, recognising and framing attacks against Muslims as instances of terror and extremism, linked to far-right ideologies, has become more common from political leaders and media commentators (even if it is still not as automatic as when a perpetrator is Muslim). The then Prime Minister, Theresa May, was quick to label it a terror attack and “every bit as sickening” as the other attacks that same year (BBC, 2017). As with the previous attacks, Mrs May emphasised that it represented an attack on freedoms and “bonds of citizenship”³³. She went on to say:

“It is a reminder that terrorism, extremism and hatred take many forms; and our determination to tackle them must be the same whoever is responsible. As I said here two weeks ago, there has been far too much tolerance of extremism in our country over many years – and that means extremism of any kind, including Islamophobia. That is why this government will act to stamp out extremist and hateful ideology – both across society and on the internet, so it is denied a safe space to grow.”

This has marked a broadening of understandings of what ‘radicalisation’ and ‘extremism’ are and about the relations between ideas and violent extremist acts. *Prevent* (above), has undergone a ‘sea change’ (UKP1) as it has come to recognise far-right extremism as a threat, one it ‘took its eye off’ (UKCS2) previously as a result of an emphasis on Islamist extremism.

The conceptual broadening in what is considered under ‘radicalisation’ has continued and reflected in a recent report of the Commission for Countering Extremism (CCE). The Commission was established following these attacks as a statutory commission and commissioned academic research papers as well as consulted communities widely across the country. The Commission notes examples of left-wing and Sikh extremism, for example, which share conceptual commonalities, although the current threat posed by these is considerably lower. The CCE (2019) takes a human rights based approach and offers a definition of what it calls *hateful extremism*, which refers to behaviours that can incite and amplify hate, that draw on hateful, hostile or supremacist beliefs directed at an out-group, and that cause harm to individuals, communities or wider society. This

³² See sentencing remarks: <https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/r-v-osborne-sentencing-remarks.pdf>, last accessed 15/05/2020

³³ See footnote 26.

definition reflects the view that there is nothing particular about *religious* extremism and is grounded in a human rights-based approach rather than the more confusing and contentious Fundamental British Values, which also orients it away from a security led approach. The Commission has not been without controversy, mainly around its Lead Commissioner, Sara Khan, who is seen by some as not being sufficiently independent from government, although as a Muslim woman, her appointment has been welcomed by others. A leading academic in the area has (cautiously) welcomed the Commissions initial report as a step in the right direction³⁴.

Thirdly, the third of these attacks is also an example of a terror attack that, although not itself religiously-motivated or -attributed according to the perpetrators motivations, is one that targets a group (in this case Muslims) seen as a cultural and religious 'other'. Related to the above, what would previously have been seen as 'lone wolf' attacks are now more firmly located as part of a 'reservoir' (to borrow a conception that has been made in reference to anti-Semitism in Britain, Gidley et al. 2020) of far right and white supremacist ideas, stereotypes, tropes and narratives. As one interviewee noted, "different extremisms feed off of each other" (UKNG6), and it is notable that Osborne had targeted Muslims outside the mosque in response to the London Bridge attack; he was heard to say, "I'm going to kill all Muslims" and "this is for London Bridge" (Mortimer, 2017). A letter found in the van described Muslims as 'rapists', 'feral' and 'preying on our children'³⁵, in apparent reference to the Rochdale grooming scandal about which he had seen a documentary on TV, and during his trial he said his intention was to "plough through as many of them as possible"³⁶. The most devastating recent example of this kind of attack was the mass shooting in Christchurch, New Zealand, and further high profile attacks have also occurred in Western European countries, one recent example being the mass shooting in Hanau in Germany in February 2020.

Best practices

One of the difficult issues faced is around where the philosophical or theoretical meets the practical when it comes to defining and enforcement. One interviewee commented, for example, that the definition of extremism is contentious, and is invariably always going to be so as it tries to "draw that imperfect line somewhere". Despite the inherent difficulties bridging theory and practice, a number of consistently highlighted features of good programmes can be identified and which revolved around developing a 'genuine pluralism' and being able to disagree better: the importance of creating safe spaces and facilitating dialogue between people with opposed viewpoints, 'putting people in a room together', promoting positive relationships, developing critical thinking skills and the ability to discuss difficult issues (including religion, which many people are 'super uncomfortable' discussing (UKNG7)), and instilling confidence in identity and belonging. Some mentioned using 'formers' for an authentic voice of experience and powerful stories, although drawbacks of this were also pointed to – and it is worth noting that a few well-known 'formers' are controversial within the area.

Tailoring training, workshops or programmes to a specific audience, and even to individuals, was felt to be important; 'not try and get everybody through the same door.'

³⁴ See, Allen, 2019, available at: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/countering-radical-right/hateful-extremism-and-radical-right-we-need-new-definitions/>

³⁵ See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-42910051>, last accessed 15/05/2020

³⁶ Quoted in the sentencing remarks by the judge: <https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/r-v-osborne-sentencing-remarks.pdf>, last accessed 15/05/2020

People need different doorways even to get the same results' (UKNG6). With young people, for whom exploring their identity and various ideas is an inevitable part of growing up, it was felt that safe spaces for discussion, consideration and reflection were essential, where people could express themselves without the risk of being referred for something they might say: 'if you can create a space in which people are comfortable to talk about uncomfortable stuff and that they can be critical and that they can talk about... y'know like, and we've had it before, little Johnny can say "well I would blow people up if they killed my family". And that's a really useful thing for that person to say...'

Other features of good practice included, being evidence-based, centring communities, co-produced research ('try and get away from doing things *to* people' (UKNG2)).

Descriptive programme examples

- 1) One example of good practice was a programme whose aim was precisely to effect structured and meaningful dialogue. It brought together people with far-right views with 'Islamists' to engage in a structured dialogue, which was facilitated by people with a background and expertise in this kind of conflict management. In a sense this echoes an emphasis on *contact*, which has gained traction since the Community Cohesion agenda beginning in the early 2000s. It also, however, highlights that such contact must be meaningful, thereby reflecting the ambiguity found in empirical academic research into contact theory and suggests that there is need for ongoing hard work in the potential benefits of such contact programmes are to bear long term fruit.
- 2) Helping ethnic minorities to develop a successful business (support, networking, accessing finance and so on) through holding networking events to include ethnic minorities and link up with wider networks.
- 3) A programme with young people focused on creating dialogue to help them challenge authority voices in the community (on various inter-generational issues) in a safe way, looking at language use – but ultimately failed cause couldn't establish shared understanding from differences in opinion of faith around room UKNG4
- 4) In programmes based in dialogue workshops with young people, one practitioner avoids overloaded words like 'racist' as they generate particular reactions that close things down and create blockages. The format is discussion based and unpacks ideas, concepts and meanings.
- 5) A local authority talked about 'trying to deliver Prevent objectives in the context of wider needs' with the example of a parenting programme to help parents have positive relationship with their children that has element of radicalisation but is much wider.
- 6) A programme that works with practitioners emphasises 'contextual safeguarding' training, which doesn't just focus on an individual kid and family (not same as abuse cases) but also looks at the local environment and maps safe places both offline and online (for example, if there are problems with a local park, gangs on the street etc.) It also updates staff on hyper-local information of what's going on in the local area they might need to be aware of and looks at language (slang) too. It also includes how to facilitate difficult discussions.
- 7) A programme that works with young people uses stories and case studies to get them to think and discuss issues. In its case studies of different types of violent individuals tries to get young people to see them as human and think about how their life went that way as a way of helping them connect and understand the

processes at work. It also shows them examples of propaganda to think about how grooming happens, does 'myth busting', and embeds the learning in practical tools if they are concerned with anything. There is also an emphasis on emphasising positives around what they want from life and values.

Evaluation and design

A general consensus was that evaluation and measuring 'success' were difficult, not least because, as one interviewee who works for an NGO described it, even after you've used various pre- and post-evaluation and feedback tools, the "last leap, that you stopped someone going off and doing something, has to be a leap of faith" (UKNG6). This produced a problem of vague and inconsistent self-assessments. A senior local authority figure also commented that you might be able to claim success, but it is largely meaningless as you can't really know, "plus the time you don't succeed, and something happens, will be the determining factor" (UKCS1).

This has been another key issue for *Prevent* and its evaluation has been a controversial issue. In 2019 the government announced plans for an independent review of *Prevent* and issued a call for evidence, beginning in October that year. Controversy over the appointment of Lord Carlile as the Reviewer³⁷, however, resulted in his removal from the post and the Review is currently in something of a hiatus.

In terms of evaluation on the governmental side, "it is very numbers driven" focussed on "bums on seats" (UKNG7, UKNG2). One person who runs an NGO said that LAs usually only ask for generic reporting data such as number of participants and gender breakdown, but no individual level data – "they just literally want numbers". There is though variation in exact requirements between LAs. One LA they work with, for example, requires monthly reporting even if there has been nothing done in a particular month (UKNG7). A senior police officer also expressed reservations about an over-reliance on statistics as unreliable measurements, not least because of spikes and lows in referrals following attacks, certain political incidents, and, given that the majority of referrals come through the education sector, during term time or school holidays. 'Success' measured this way, they therefore said, is "a very thorny issue" (UKP1). They did comment on how using narratives of success such as through case studies can be good but that people who have been through *Prevent* are usually reluctant to tell their stories, in part because of stigmatising consequences, a point similarly made by other interviewees too (UKCS1).

Local approaches were held to be better equipped to evaluate impact effectively (even if this was not always actually realised in practice), where much smaller numbers of people are involved but where programmes lead to real engagement and change over time. The need for tailored and localised engagement was a point frequently made in this regard.

³⁷ Lord Carlile has been an outspoken supporter of *Prevent* and was the independent reviewer of terrorism legislation between 2001 and 2011. On the basis that this meant he could not be independent, Rights Watch UK brought a legal challenge, which was not contested by the government, against his appointment.

NGOs employ a range of evaluation tools in order to measure and develop the impact of their programmes and projects and improve their design. Among methods and factors discussed were:

- being quite tight in terms of the design of the project, having clear aims for outcomes laid out; before and after attitudinal surveys;
- before, during and after evaluation questionnaires of participants' knowledge of the issues being addressed (a couple of people commented how people often over-estimate their knowledge at the beginning and subsequently revise it);
- getting feedback at a greater distance from the project about people having better conversations and how a workshop helped them challenge things, that they 'used knowledge to transform it into action'. One person who runs an NGO commented 'we see success as long term, and we see success as investing in the community' (UKCS2)
- doing a lot of piloting
- adopting an iterative approach to development and improvement
- co-designing with input from facilitators who are delivering the workshops
- paying attention to body language reactions
- tailoring stuff
- constantly update as things change quite quickly (the general environment rather than legal and policy stuff)
- having independent evaluation by a university,
- when delivering to large groups, taking sample focus groups for more detailed discussion
- 'enhanced presence', where, for instance, a facilitator would remain at the school and be available to talk to throughout the day following the session for anyone who wanted to, allowing people having time to digest, and process
- get feedback from teachers, for example, on any changes they see following sessions in behaviour, attitudes etc.

Skills, knowledge, experience

When it comes to skills, knowledge and experience, there was a heavy emphasis on interpersonal, social skills. The ability to build relationships and trust was 'paramount', and to be able to engage people and engage with people through a genuine empathy and inquisitiveness about them and their lives. Here flexibility rather than didacticism was important as different styles work for different audiences or individuals, although for some organisations this was managed through careful matching of facilitators, about whom they are "super, super picky" (UKNG7, UKNG6). As one person said, "you can have someone who knows a case study back to front, maybe they've done academic research on a particular thing, but can they turn it into a story that someone wants to listen to it and learn from it? That's a skill... You can have the best content in the world, the most interesting research, all of that, and it's absolutely completely pointless if you can't get it over to people" (UKNG7).

Being committed to the work and having an interest rather than it just being a job was also felt to be necessary. This is not least because, "it's not easy. It is hard, hard work... you have to have purpose – have to truly, truly be engaged with the communities you work with. And that can be quite tough, even though you've given up everything, people

will question you. But that is okay because you have to bring people with you” (UKNG2, UKNG6).

Knowledge of the issue being presented or discussed was considered important, having a good grasp of ‘verifiable information’ in order to be able to communicate and discuss issues that was led by facts rather than opinion. The importance of long, experiential knowledge was also highlighted – one senior local authority figure said that it was “the longest it’s taken to get my head around a job” given the levels of nuance and complexity (UKCS1).

A point highlighted by several ethnic minority interviewees, whether civil servants or working for NGOs, was that it is an error to just assume that because someone is from an ethnic minority, they can do it better. One person for example talked about how “there’s a concern in terms of a perception of ethnic diversity expertise based on being ethnic minority” and that while you do need to have cultural understanding, you also need to understand the issue, have the skills, knowledge, and expertise, and that profile hiring can be detrimental. Having a range of backgrounds amongst the staff was highlighted as important, but they, for example, also went on to talk about how people who had been hired on profile rather than on their skills, training (in facilitating for example), knowledge and experience could have a detrimental effect on the quality of the programme (UKNG6, UKCS3).

Concluding remarks

The threat and challenge posed by ‘radicalisation’ and ‘extremism’ has expanded in two senses. It is no longer focussed on a particular group whether as perpetrators or targets and the purview of the concept of ‘radicalisation’ and when intervention is required to address it has come to encompass both acts and thoughts and attitudes. Alongside this expansion, however, calls have also emerged for its narrowing based around concerns that it is increasingly encompasses too much within its remit. This might be because it is seen to conflate separate issues (such as domestic abuse) and therefore fail to address the issue at hand, meaning that violent-radicalisation and extremism needs to be carefully distinguished from other forms of violence. There are concerns that it might also have a negative effect on open and democratic dialogue. Understandings and responses to religiously-attributed radicalisation remain often deeply divisive for some. For others some clarity is beginning to emerge. Nevertheless, a key issue remains the inconsistency in how groups are categorised in processes of governance have been highlighted in contrasting ‘extremisms’, such as right-wing and Islamist (Allen et al., 2019).

Appendix: Interviews

Code	Position descriptor
UKCS1	Senior Local Authority Manager
UKNG1	Community Prevent lead, immigration lawyer, local mosque council member
UKCS2	Senior person working in counter-extremism with the Home Office
UKCS3	Civil servant – policy advisor
UKNG2	Director of race equalities NGO
UKCS4	Local authority Prevent lead
UKNG3	Think tank
UKP1	Senior figure in CT in the police
UKNG4	Jewish CE organisation affiliate
UKNG5	Chair of Jewish CE organisation
UKNG6	NGO CE and resilience project worker
UKNG7	Director of a CE NGO

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