

Resisting Prevent: an activist's guide



HAVE YOU BEEN TARGETED BY PREVENT?

Prevent referrals

If you have been approached by a Prevent officer or fear that you face a referral to one based on questions asked by your teacher, lecturer, GP or social worker (or other public sector worker covered by the Prevent duty), you can contact one of the following organisations for advice and support.

Prevent Watch
07938 200 773 / 07950 708 786
contact@preventwatch.org

Islamic Human Rights Commission
020 8904 4222
info@ihrc.org

If you have been targeted because of your environmental activism, Palestinian, Tamil or Kurdish solidarity, opposition to fracking, anti-fascism or campaigning against the arms trade, the Network for Police Monitoring (Netpol) is particularly interested in also hearing your story, although you should speak to one of the organisations above for more specific help. You can contact Netpol initially at **info@netpol.org**

TAKING ACTION AGAINST PREVENT

We know Prevent criminalises dissent by collecting intelligence about the thoughts and beliefs of individuals who are not involved in criminal activity, overwhelmingly targeting British Muslims. It is, at its core, fundamentally racist and Islamophobic.

However, Prevent has already started to extend its surveillance to dissenters and political activists more generally, particularly those engaged in international solidarity activities, opposition to powerful corporate interests or resistance to fascism.

History teaches us that we can resist injustice only by standing together. Organising collectively encourages others to take a stand up against Prevent, both in their communities and at work, in the knowledge that they have friends and allies. This is particularly important for building a wider consensus that rejects Prevent, one that includes people who risk difficulties at work or even losing their job for doing so.

An important element of rejecting Prevent's agenda is removing its 'social licence to operate': by encouraging boycotts where this is possible, by refusing to take funds linked to Prevent and by support for non-cooperation with local Prevent programmes.

Organise locally

From 1st July 2015, all public sector bodies, along with others funded with public money have a new legal duty, “when exercising its functions, to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism”. The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 has also defined extremism in the Prevent strategy as “vocal or active opposition to fundamental British Values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs.”

The Prevent duty covers every local authority, every educational institution and every NHS Trust – and all are struggling to understand how to respond. The managements of these bodies are likely to encourage staff to see Prevent as little more than a positive 'safeguarding' issue unless there is pressure from below. However, having due regard for the 'legal duty' is an obligation for institutions – it does not legally restrict collective opposition to Prevent completely.

Bringing together activists from different sectors provides an opportunity to learn from each other and organise together. As a starting point, consider arranging a **local organising meeting** to map out where implementation of the Prevent duty and opposition to it currently stands, including what pressure has succeeded. You could use the 'Together Against Prevent' principles (see below) as a starting point for discussions and even use the name – Together Against Prevent is a tactic, not a separate campaign or organisation.

Issues for a local organising group or campaign might also want to consider include encouraging and publicising support for organisational boycotts, whistle-blowing and solidarity for individuals referred to Prevent officers and the local Channel programme for expressing political opinions.

Another option is to bring together like-minded activists within individual institutions. On campus, this could include setting up a 'Students Not Suspects' group or an academic 'Educators Not Informants' network

You can find out more about the national 'Students Not Suspects' campaign at studentsnotsuspects.com and about 'Educators Not Informants' at educatorsnotinformants.wordpress.com

NHS staff can find out more about the Docs Not Cops campaign at docsnotcops.co.uk and join its mailing list at docsnotcopsnhsgroup@googlegroups.com

For public sector union branches

Both the UCU and NUT have policies opposing Prevent, while UNISON and the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) has expressed concerns about it.

As a union activist you can:

- Establish branch policy on the Prevent duty, ensuring it reflects your local circumstances as well as the union's national position (if it opposes Prevent or expresses concerns about its impact).
- Make sure members are also aware of your branch's fundamental opposition to the Prevent duty. If you need advice on this contact your regional official.
- Write to your management seeking information on how they intend to implement the

Prevent duty and establish the issue as an item for ongoing consultation and negotiation.

- Review the responses you receive and consider consulting with members and your regional official as to whether you should seek to ballot on non-cooperation or a full a boycott.

Student unions

The NUS' Preventing Prevent handbook has a model motion and a model letter to your institution's Registrar/Chief Operating Officer (or equivalent).

These are available [here](#) [PDF] and you can download the full handbook [here](#) or at www.nusconnect.org.uk/resources/preventing-prevent-handbook

Using Freedom of Information requests to find out more

If your institution's management is obstructive or fails to provide details of plans to implement the Prevent duty, you can make a Freedom of Information request to them. The documents to ask for from your university / council / NHS Trust might include:

- Their policy on the Prevent Duty
- Any risk assessment they have undertaken its implementation
- Their strategy and action plan for implementing and ensuring compliance with the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015
- In the case of universities and FE or HE colleges, documents relating to impact of the Prevent Duty on the institution's freedom of expression policy

You can find guidance on making a Freedom of Information request at www.foiman.com/resources/foiguide1.

The easiest way to make a request is via the 'What Do They Know' website at www.whatdotheyknow.com.

Documenting training on the Prevent Duty

Thousands of public sector workers are undertaking 'Workshops Raising Awareness of Prevent' (WRAP) training sessions with external trainers, or attending internal presentations about the implementation of Prevent within their institutions.

It is worthwhile considering if you can safely record a WRAP training session on your mobile phone or try to photograph individual presentation slides. This is a way of documenting some of the more alarming statements made about the types of potential 'suspects' to look out for and the characteristic behaviours they might display.

You do not necessarily need to publish this information: it is valuable as evidence when challenging institutions about the content of external training or within their implementation plans – particularly if their deny that lurid and discriminatory statements were ever made.

This kind of activity has helped show how trainers have made sweeping and unsupported claims about a range of political activism and how university staff have been warned to watch out for students who are “asking questions about certain topics”.

Sharing information in confidence

If you wish to share any information on Prevent securely and in strictest confidence, Netpol also runs the UK's only end-to-end encrypted whistle-blowing website 'Netpoleaks'. Submissions to it are completely anonymous and you can use this to share your personal experiences.

However, Netpol also welcomes information on the implementation of Prevent, audio recordings of Workshops Raising Awareness of Prevent (WRAP) training sessions and any data documenting the targeting of activists for 'counter-radicalisation' through local Channel interventions.

For more information, see netpol.org/netpoleaks

Sign up to Together Against Prevent

'Together Against Prevent' is a way for organisations to publicly pledge their opposition to the Prevent duty. Already over forty groups have endorsed its four principles, which say:

- We recognise and condemn the damage that Prevent's "spot the potential terrorist" approach has made primarily in stigmatising and criminalising entire Muslim communities, but also to a growing number of political activists and campaigners labelled with ill-defined terms like "non-violent extremist" or "domestic extremist".
- We view Prevent as a policy that is based on insufficient evidence to support the flawed assumption that 'extremist' ideology opposed to subjective 'British values' is the single most important cause of terrorism. We therefore support closer collaboration between different campaigning, religious and community organisations to call on the government to end its Prevent strategy.
- We support and encourage more political debate in schools, colleges and universities and reject attempts to close down and censor dissenting voices. We welcome open discussion with all young people about potentially radical ideas and call on all educational institutions to vigorously defend the right to free academic inquiry on issues considered 'controversial'.
- We pledge to take no Prevent funds and support non-cooperation, wherever possible, with local Prevent programmes.

We encourage organisations to support this statement and to add the 'Together Against Prevent' logo to their website, preferably linking it to a specific new page about the campaign on their site. To sign up, visit togetheragainstoprevent.org/signup



Version 1.0 - July 2016

Produced by Netpol | netpol.org

