

educate.against.
~~hate~~

Prevent mythbusting

Myth 1: The Prevent duty is placing a greater burden on teachers.

Fact

Schools have always had an important role to play in protecting children from a wide range of risks, and have been doing so successfully for years. Protecting children from the threats posed by extremism and terrorism is no different and the Prevent duty should be seen as part of schools' and childcare providers' wider safeguarding duties. Good schools will already have been safeguarding children from extremism and teaching fundamental British values long before the duty came into force.

Myth 2: The Prevent duty requires teachers to spy on pupils and stunts debate.

Fact

The Prevent duty is not about requiring teachers to spy on pupils or to carry out unnecessary intrusion into family life. Prevent safeguards people who are vulnerable to radicalisation in a similar way to safeguarding processes designed to protect people from gangs, drug abuse, and physical and sexual abuse. Prevent deals with all forms of extremism, and is about ensuring that teachers know how to keep children safe by identifying behaviours of concern and knowing how to refer pupils who may be at risk of radicalisation for appropriate support.

The Prevent duty should not stop pupils discussing controversial issues. On the contrary, it recognises that schools provide a safe space in which children and young people can debate ideas and discuss controversial issues. Promoting debates and discussions will help students understand the risks associated with terrorism and foster the knowledge and skills needed to challenge extremist arguments.

Many teachers engage in conversations and debate around extremism and intolerance often using some of the resources on Educate Against Hate.

Myth 3: Schools are not confident in implementing the Prevent duty.

Fact

The Teachers' Voice survey carried out in November 2016 by the National Foundation for Educational Research shows that the vast majority of schools are confident in implementing the duty.

Building on the very strong results from the Nov/Dec 2015 survey — where 83% of school leaders said they were “very confident” or “fairly confident” in implementing the Prevent duty only four months after the duty came into force — it is encouraging that there has been significant improvement in the confidence of classroom teachers in implementing the duty: 71% of classroom teachers who were surveyed said they were very or fairly confident — an increase of 19 percentage points compared to the Nov/Dec 2015 survey.

Myth 4: There is no support available for schools to implement the Prevent duty.

Fact

To increase confidence of schools and childcare providers to implement the Prevent duty the Department for Education published advice on the Prevent duty.

The Educate Against Hate website also provides a wide range of information, materials and practical advice to parents, teachers and school leaders, including on how to protect children from extremism and radicalisation. This includes DfE funded guidance and resources packs — ‘The Deliberative Classroom’ — produced by the Association of Citizenship Teaching foundation (ACT) to help teachers lead knowledge-based debates on topics relating to extremism, fundamental British values and contemporary political and social issues.

Additionally, the website provides information about relevant training, including a Prevent E-learning tool developed by Home Office, which is aimed at those with responsibilities under the Prevent duty, particularly front line staff in schools and colleges. There has been a significant increase in the number of face-to-face Prevent training sessions delivered in schools since the Prevent duty came into force. Such training helps front line staff to recognise the signs of radicalisation and explains what steps to take, including, where appropriate, how to make a referral to Channel.

There are also a range of Prevent supported projects that schools benefit from which help students build their critical thinking skills so that they are more resilient to extremism.

Myth 5: The Prevent duty leads to schools overreacting.

Fact

We trust teachers and other staff to exercise their professional judgment about whether a referral is appropriate, as they do for all other safeguarding risks. Staff will be motivated by a desire to keep children safe. We know from local agencies that some negative news stories around Prevent have not given a complete and accurate account of events. Prevent is playing a key role in identifying children at risk of radicalisation and supporting schools to intervene.

Myth 6: The Prevent duty means that teachers must report concerns about radicalisation to the police and are committing an offence if they don't.

Fact

Advice and guidance on the Prevent duty is clear that if teachers have concerns about pupils they should follow normal safeguarding procedures and act proportionately. There are no mandatory reporting requirements under the duty.

Myth 7: The Prevent duty stunts freedom of speech in colleges because students are afraid of expressing their beliefs.

Fact

Prevent does not inhibit free speech — the statutory guidance specifically reminds providers of their duty to ensure freedom of speech. Colleges face the same requirement as always: to balance free speech with the safety and security of their staff and students. Prevent does not affect laws against hate speech and colleges' duties to enforce them.

We recognise that further education providers have an important role to play in promoting debate and discussion around the sensitive issues of radicalisation and extremism, and challenging views which are incompatible with our shared values.

Myth 8: Prevent is unnecessary. Teaching professionals already have a duty to safeguard and this is more than sufficient to tackle concerns around radicalisation.

Fact

The Prevent duty has raised awareness and understanding of radicalisation as a safeguarding risk, how to identify children at risk, and where to go for support, including training, advice, and resources. The introduction of the duty has been accompanied by a substantial increase in the training and resources provided to schools around this relatively new area of safeguarding. Consequently, schools are more confident in dealing with the risk of radicalisation as part of their broader safeguarding responsibilities.

Useful web links

Educate Against Hate: www.educateagainsthate.com

Prevent for Further Education and Training: <http://www.preventforfeandtraining.org.uk/>

Practical advice on the Prevent duty for schools: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protecting-children-from-radicalisation-the-prevent-duty>

Statutory Prevent duty guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance>

Statutory safeguarding guidance for schools and colleges, Keeping Children Safe in Education: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/447595/KCSIE_July_2015.pdf