

Report to Neighbourhoods and Communities Select Committee

Date of meeting: 15th March 2016

Subject: Prevent Duty – Home Office Funding

Officer contact for further information: Caroline Wiggins
Community Safety Manager

Committee Secretary: Adrian Hendry



Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That Neighbourhoods and Communities Select Committee receives a report on work undertaken in the district in relation to the Home Office Prevent agenda, which has been funded through a £10,000 grant from the Home Office.

Report:

1. The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 contains a duty on specified authorities to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism - the "Prevent duty", which came into force for local authorities on 1st July 2015.
2. The Prevent duty is a key part of CONTEST, the Government's Counter terrorism Strategy which aims to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. The strategy aims to respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism and those who promote it; prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and work with organisations where there are risks of radicalisation.
3. The current, most significant threat to the UK is from Al Qai'da and associated groups and organisations in Syria and Iraq, including ISIS, as well as terrorists associated with the extreme right. Action by these groups has led to the terrorism threat in the UK currently being the highest it has, since 9/9.
4. In October 2015, the Council received notification from the Home Office, that it would be allocating £10,000 to all local authorities (excluding priority areas) as a one off payment in this financial year only, for the delivery of specific work to support the implementation of the Prevent Duty.
5. All Councils were required to apply for the funding and needed to present a plan on how the money would be spent. The application on behalf of EFDC focussed on two distinct areas of work; the upgrading of the Council's IT systems to prevent misuse of IT for extremist material, and, the provision of a Prevent Education Programme within the district's local secondary schools, for both pupils and teachers.
6. The Council was successful in its application for prevent funding and the Council's ICT Department has undertaken the following work to improve security to IT infrastructure; upgrading of a number of Firewalls to improve protection for ICT connectivity to remote offices and installation of a number of Branch Routers to improve ICT connectivity and security for Home Workers.

7. In regard to Prevent Education work, the Council's Community, Health and Wellbeing Team initially consulted with the secondary schools in the district to ascertain their perceived need for Prevent training for pupils and staff, and found that all schools were very keen to be provided with support.

8. Nationally recognised Training programme '*Me and You Education*' was therefore commissioned to undertake the delivery of in-schools Prevent work and this has been delivered to pupils in years 7 – 13 across three schools, since the beginning of January .

9. The training programme consists of a 50 minute presentation, which covers identity, race, belonging, extremism and terrorism. At the end of the session pupils are asked to complete feedback questionnaires, which are then analysed. The findings from the questionnaires completed so far, identify that the participants:

- 1) Understand how the issue of race can be used to divide people
- 2) Appreciate the dangers of extremist propaganda
- 3) Know about some of the extremist group individuals working in the UK
- 4) Understand how important it is to be comfortable and confident in who they are
- 5) Appreciate how people, who are very different, can work together and work out their differences through conversations, and,
- 6) Are more knowledgeable and have increased understanding and confidence about Extremism.

10. Out of the schools visited, Ongar Academy, which, as Members will be aware is a very new school in the district, opted for a programme of teacher training. Officers from the Council therefore attended a half day training session alongside the teachers, which they found was very useful for building on knowledge about Right Wing and Muslim Extremism; identification of vulnerabilities and how to report concerns.

11. Since the Prevent Education programme started in January, over 2760 young people have attended the training' and a further 4346 pupils will receive the programme across four schools, over the next few weeks.

12. The feedback from the schools so far has been excellent and Chris Seward, Headmaster at Davenant School had the following comments to make to *Me & You Education*, after the training session at Davenant:

"It was an important day for the school as it provided the opportunity for students and staff to reflect on an extremely important, contemporary issue. You presented with authority and sensitivity and, throughout the day, students from across the age groups showed great interest and respect. The conversation has started. Thank you."

13. Following the success of the training programme in the Epping Forest District, other local authorities have also commissioned *Me and You Education* to deliver Prevent work across the respective schools in their areas and the programme is now seen as providing best practice in Prevent Education.

14. It should be noted, that the Prevent training programme has been offered to Epping Forest College, but the offer has recently been declined.

Reason for decision:

This report is for information rather than a decision.

Options considered and rejected:

None

Resource implications:

The majority of the Prevent work has been funded through the Home Office funding.

Legal and Governance Implications:

The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 contains a duty on specified authorities to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism - the "Prevent duty", which came into force for local authorities on 1st July 2015

Safer, Cleaner Greener Implications:

The Work undertaken in relation to Prevent, has a significant relevance on Safety within local communities.

Consultation Undertaken:

Officers have consulted with the Home Office and local schools.

Background Papers:

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management: The provision of Prevent training and enhancement to the Council's ICT security, help to reduce the risk of a terrorist incident in the district and potentially, further afield.

Equality: The Prevent work funded through the Home Office, as stated in this report, aims to help protect vulnerable people from radicalisation.