

How can Prevent help you safeguard your pupils?

What does the law say?

The original CONTEST (Counter Extremism Strategy) was developed in 2003 in order to coordinate the pan-governmental response to emerging terrorist threat in the aftermath of the attacks on New York and Washington DC in September 2001.

The aim of the strategy is 'to reduce the risk to the UK and its interests overseas from terrorism, so that people can go about their lives freely and with confidence.'

CONTEST is split into four work streams that are known within the counter-terrorism community as the 'four P's': Prevent, Pursue, Protect and Prepare.

The Prevent duty

The Prevent work stream applies to most education settings – check the Act for the full list.

The aim of the duty is: 'to stop individuals being drawn into terrorism. This includes violent and non-violent extremism which in turn can create an atmosphere conducive to terrorism and can popularise views which terrorism may seek to exploit:

There are three themes impacting on expectations of the education sector:

- effective leadership
- working in partnership
- appropriate capabilities.

What is Radicalisation?

A process by which an individual or group comes to adopt increasingly extreme political, social, or religious ideals and aspirations that reject or undermine the status quo or reject and/ or undermine contemporary ideas and expressions of freedom of choice.

What does this mean for schools?

Looking at the definition of radicalisation, one of the most significant points to note is the phrase 'comes to adopt' as this implies

a change from previous behaviour. Change in behaviour is something that schools can look for and the biggest implication that something, or someone, is encouraging the transition.

Safeguarding students from radicalisation is no different from safeguarding them from other forms of harm. Identifying that something is amiss is the first step, then begins the process of finding out the details.

One form of abuse does not exclude another. When a pupil is vulnerable the unpleasant truth is that there are a number of issues they are vulnerable to and people who will take advantage.

However, school staff are best placed to spot any signs before the situation becomes drastic. Changes in peer group, ideology and behaviour are more obvious to professionals with regular contact with students.

Young people being radicalised are subject to abuse of one form or another.

They are being drawn into an environment which leads them into a single focused mind set and commitment to engage with a set of values and behaviours which are not in their best interest.

Signs to look out for in pupils:

- changing their behaviour or appearance
- adopting styles of clothes associated
- with groups with whom they have had no previous connection – this could be faith or politics based
- becoming isolated from friends, peers or family members
- becoming involved with groups of pupils who have strong ideologies
- viewing websites which contain extremist ideologies or symbols
- attempting to recruit others to an extremist ideology or cause
- vocalizing extremist ideologies, using extremist language
- questioning identity and sense of belonging
- glorifying current terrorist activity seen in the media
- displaying extreme behaviour related to ideology and/or religion
- requesting extended holidays to regions known to be unsafe or places not associated with the family
- possessing or discussing extremist material
- family not being aware of absences from classes.