

Bracknell Forest Prevent Strategy

2024 - 2027

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1. PREVENT OVERVIEW

The updated and strengthened UK Government CONTEST Strategy was launched in June 2018. The aim of CONTEST is to reduce the risk to the UK and its citizens and interests overseas from terrorism, so that people can go about their lives freely and with confidence.

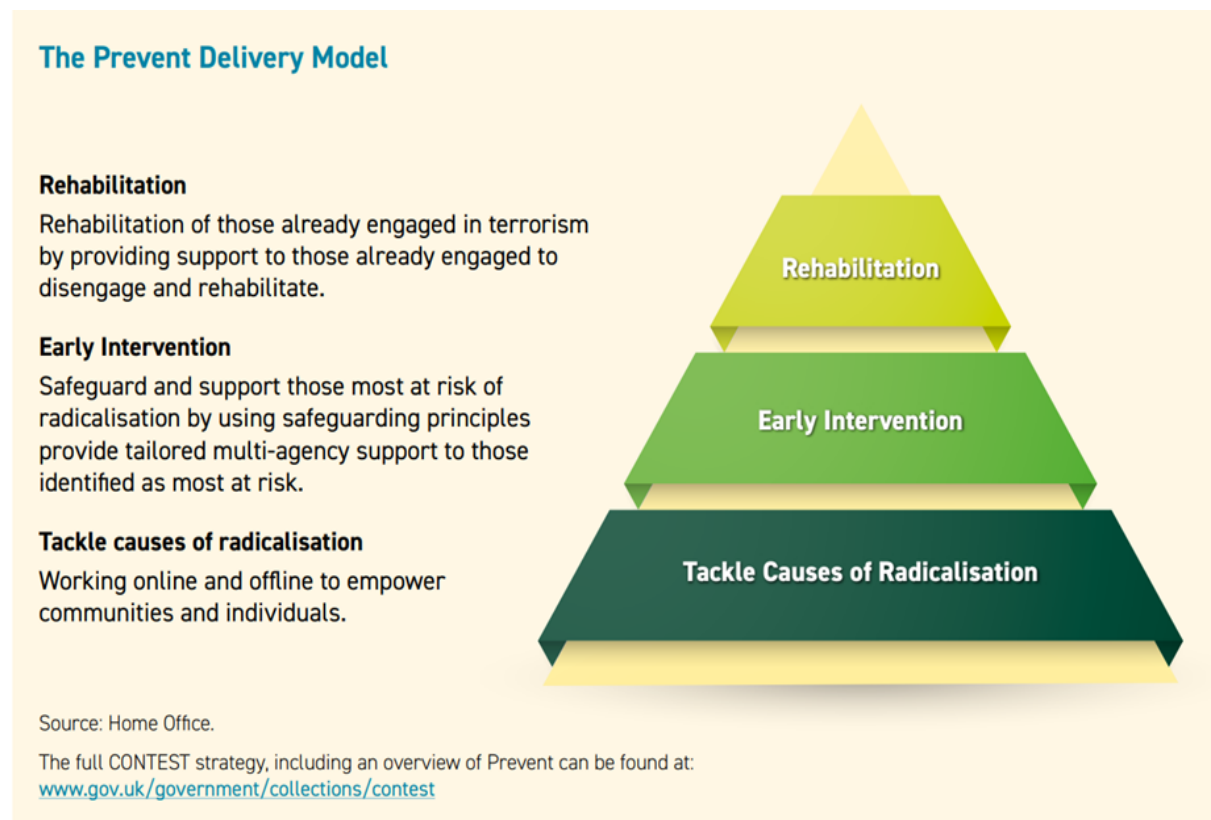
The CONTEST Strategy consists of the following four work strands:

- **Prevent:** to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism
- **Pursue:** to stop terrorist attacks
- **Protect:** to strengthen our protection against a terrorist attack
- **Prepare:** to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack.

Prevent recognises that there is no socio-demographic profile of a terrorist in the UK, and no single pathway or 'conveyor belt' leading to terrorism.

The aim of Prevent is to safeguard and support those vulnerable to radicalisation and to stop them from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. It also includes supporting the rehabilitation and disengagement of those already involved in terrorism.

The Prevent Delivery Model below sets out the national approach to tackling the causes and risk factors that can lead to an individual becoming radicalised, support those who are at risk of radicalisation and rehabilitate those who have already engaged with terrorism.



2. DEFINITIONS

The Counter Extremism Strategy (2015) defines **extremism** as “the vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect of different faiths and beliefs. We also regard calls for death of our armed forces as extremist.”

The Prevent Strategy (2011) defines **radicalisation** as “the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism leading to terrorism.”

The Terrorism Act (2000) defines **terrorism** as an action that endangers or causes serious violence to a person/people, causes serious damage to property, or seriously interferes or disrupts an electronic system. The use or threat must be designed to influence the government or to intimidate the public and is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause.

3. THE COUNTER TERRORISM AND SECURITY ACT 2015

On 1 July 2015, the Counter Terrorism and Security Act (CTSA) 2015 became statutory. Section 26 places a statutory Prevent duty on specified authorities in the exercise of their functions, to have ‘**due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism**’. These authorities include schools, colleges, universities, local authorities, health, the police and prisons.

The Prevent Duty currently sets out three key themes for local authorities:

Leadership

For all specified authorities, those in leadership positions are expected to:

- establish or use existing mechanisms for understanding the risk of radicalisation
- ensure staff understand the risk and build the capabilities to deal with it
- communicate and promote the importance of the duty; and
- ensure staff implement the duty effectively

Working in partnership

Local authorities must demonstrate evidence of effective partnership and co-ordination through existing multi-agency forums e.g., Community Safety Partnerships

Capabilities

Frontline staff who engage with the public should understand what radicalisation means and why people may be vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism as a result. They need to be aware of what is meant by the term ‘extremism.’ Staff need to know what measures are available to prevent people from becoming drawn into terrorism. They need to

understand how to obtain support for people who may be being exploited by radicalising influences. Local authorities must ensure they provide appropriate training for staff.

Specific guidance on the Prevent Duty is available at:

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

4. THREAT & RISK

The threat level for the UK is set by the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC). Threat levels are designed to give a broad indication of the likelihood of a terrorist attack. There are five levels:

- **Low** means an attack is unlikely
- **Moderate** means an attack is possible, but not likely
- **Substantial** means an attack is strongly possible
- **Severe** means an attack is highly likely
- **Critical** means an attack is expected imminently

The UK threat level was first published in 2006. In 2019, changes were made to reflect the threat posed by all forms of terrorism, irrespective of ideology. Since 2019, the threat level has fluctuated between severe and substantial. Up to date information on the current threat level can be found at: www.mi5.gov.uk/threat-levels

The CONTEST strategy identifies the following types of terrorism that the UK faces:

- **International:** terrorist organisations operating in Syria and Iraq e.g., Da'esh and Al Qu'ida
- **Extreme Right-Wing:** Organisations with a specific ideology characterised by anti-democratic opposition towards equality
- **Northern Ireland-related:** Politically motivated violence to de-stabilise the democratic process.
- **Other:** small movements in reaction to a single issue, specific incident, or ideology

The UK level of threat is complex and multi-dimensional and ranges from self-initiated terrorism where individuals are intent on carrying out crude attacks to sophisticated networks pursuing ambitious and coordinated plots. The most likely attack methodologies are bladed/blunt force weapons; vehicles; and explosives. However, most of the activity we see is in other forms such as radicalising others, fund raising or preparing acts of terrorism.

Internationally Inspired Terrorism

The UK continues to face an evolving threat from radicalisation, extremism and terrorism. Internationally inspired terrorism (Da'esh, Al Qa'ida, Al Muhajiroun) continues to pose the most significant threat to the UK. Extremist travel remains a potential threat although stricter border controls continue to hamper returnees. However, despite the

reduction in travel to conflict zones to join terrorist organisations operating in Syria and Iraq, travel still poses a potential threat.

Self-Initiated Terrorism

As highlighted by the UK-based terrorist acts in 2017, and the subsequent plots disrupted since the Westminster attack in March 2017, the nature of the threat has now moved to self-initiated terrorism not linked to one specific ideology where vehicles, knives and explosives are used to commit acts of terror within the UK.

With periods of isolation throughout 2021 due to the global pandemic, and the likelihood that more time was spent online, there was the potential for risk to increase.

Furthermore, there is a realistic possibility that the pandemic may have had an adverse effect on people's mental health due to the impact of living in isolation and not having access to the same level of support previously experienced. This is likely to have increased levels of vulnerability to extremism and terrorism.

Far Right & Extreme Right-Wing Terrorism

The threat posed from the far right and extreme right-wing organisations have also evolved - 2021 has seen an increase in demonstrations, protests and visits recorded across the UK. There are 3 main types:

- **cultural nationalism (CN)** is a belief that 'western culture is under threat from mass migration into Europe and from a lack of integration by certain ethnic and cultural groups. The ideology tends to focus on the rejection of cultural practises such as the wearing of the burka or the perceived rise of the use of Sharia law.
- **white nationalism (WN)** is a belief that mass migration from the 'non-white' world, and demographic change, poses an existential threat to the 'white race' and 'western culture'. It comprises advocates for some sort of white homeland, either through petition of already existing countries, or by the (if necessary, forced) repatriation of ethnic minorities.
- **white supremacism (WS)** is a belief that the 'white race' has certain inalienable physical and mental characteristics that make it superior (with some variation) to other races. often associated with conspiracy theories that explain the decline in 'white' political and social status over the last 100 years. This can also encapsulate a belief in the spiritual supremacy of the 'white race', often describing racial differences in quasi-religious terms (such as 'the Aryan soul').

An up-to-date list of organisations currently proscribed within the UK can be found on the government website at:

[Proscribed terrorist groups or organisations - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/proscribed-groups)

Online radicalisation

Online radicalisation of individuals is used in all forms of extremism and terrorism. Extremists and terrorist organisations can access and disseminate content globally. It is

difficult to police and is therefore a persistent challenge for those working in counter terrorism. 2021/22 saw an increased shift towards the use of encrypted sites and applications to spread propaganda. Whilst the use of mainstream platforms such as Facebook and Twitter still exist, extremist activity continues to shift into more encrypted and private communication channels. Whilst these platforms are legitimate and not indicative of extremist/terrorist activity, lesser-known sites may be less moderated and may allow more radical content and discussion. This could ultimately lead to new threats in the online sphere of social media.

5. GOVERNANCE AND MONITORING

This Strategy has been developed and will be delivered by the Bracknell Forest Prevent Steering Group. The Prevent Steering Group is a multi-agency partnership group comprising representatives from the following agencies.

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Bracknell Forest Council | Lead Member for Culture, Corporate Services and Public Protection |
| | Community Safety |
| | BFC Prevent Lead |
| | Youth Justice Service |
| | Children & Adults Social Care |
| | Community Engagement and Equalities |
| | Bracknell Forest School Safeguarding |
| | Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Board |
| Police | Counter-Terrorism Policing South East |
| | Thames Valley Police Bracknell and Wokingham Local Police Area |
| Health | Bracknell and Ascot Clinical Commissioning Group |
| | Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust |
| Probation | National Probation Service |
| Bracknell and Wokingham College | Prevent/Safeguarding Lead |

Progress against implementation of the action plan will be monitored by the Prevent Steering Group with any issues of concern being escalated to the Bracknell Forest Community Safety Partnership.

The Bracknell Forest Community Safety Partnership provides the direct governance for the Prevent Steering Group. However, Prevent is a safeguarding issue and therefore the Prevent Steering Group also has a line of accountability to the Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Board, allowing those members to have reassurance of the ongoing work as well as being able to input to the further development of the Prevent work.

6. Local Context

Bracknell Forest is one of 6 unitary authorities in Berkshire in the South-East of England and is 28 miles west of London and is part of the Thames Valley Police area. Bracknell Forest is a low demand and low risk area regarding the threat of active terrorism and

continues to be designated as a Tier 3, non-priority area in the latest Counter-Terrorism Local Profile (2022).

The borough is providing accommodation for refugees from many countries. Many individuals remain in temporary bridging accommodation whilst awaiting a permanent living solution. There are potential concerns regarding their vulnerability. There are also likely to be vulnerabilities with refugees who have arrived in Bracknell under the 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme.

Recent terrorist attacks in the last year in the UK, along with the current nature of the threat to the UK, continues to demonstrate that no area is free from the risk of vulnerable people being drawn into terrorism. This sits alongside the increasing threat of vulnerable individuals being influenced via the internet through social media and gaming platforms.

Bracknell Forest is in the least deprived 10% of local authorities in England and has a population of 124,608 which has increased by 10% in the last 10 years. Bracknell Forest's population profile is similar to England's with a median age of 39 years. The proportion of working-aged adults in Bracknell Forest is slightly higher than England's profile with notably higher proportions of 35 to 54-year-olds. People aged 65 and over make-up 15% of Bracknell Forest's population, compared to 18% nationally (Office for National Statistics, 2023).

In 2021, nearly 78% of Bracknell Forest's population were from a white British background. 14% of Bracknell Forest's population were from ethnic minority groups (excluding white minorities), compared to 19% in England. A further 8% of both Bracknell Forest and England's population were from a white non-British background. People from an Asian background made up 7% of Bracknell Forest's total population and were the largest ethnic minority group. All ethnic groups increased in number and proportion in Bracknell Forest over the last decade, apart from the white British group that reduced by over 7 percentage points.

Bracknell Forest has 31 primary phase schools, 6 secondary schools, 1 SEND (special educational needs and disability) and 1 Pupil Referral Unit. Overall, results are consistently in line with or above the national averages.

Mental health problems affect around one in four people in any given year. They range from common problems, such as depression and anxiety, to rarer and more severe disorders such as psychosis. 13% of Bracknell Forest's population aged 16 and over are estimated to have a common mental disorder, compared to national (17%) and regional (15%) prevalence rates.

On 31 January 2023, 0.7% of people in Bracknell Forest were recorded as having a serious mental health disorder on their GP Record. This is over 750 adults. 12.4% of people in Bracknell Forest were recorded as having depression on their GP record. This is approximately 13,600 adults. Estimated prevalence in children (2022): Nationally, 18% of children aged 7 to 16 and 22% of those aged 17 to 24 are estimated to have a probable mental health disorder.

Hate Crime

The definition of what constitutes a hate crime in England and Wales was agreed in 2017 by the police service, Crown Prosecution Service, prison service and other agencies

Hate crime in England and Wales is defined as, 'any criminal offence which is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice towards someone based on a personal characteristic'.

There are five centrally monitored strands of hate crime:

- Race or ethnicity
- religion or beliefs
- sexual orientation
- disability
- trans gender identity

The Community Safety Service at BFC continues to monitor and review all hate crime weekly. TVP review all incidents, occurrences, and crime with a hate crime marker at the Daily Management Meeting for identification of trends, repeat victims/perpetrators, hot spots and the appropriateness of their response.

There is no change in the Bracknell Forest current hate crime landscape. Almost all of reported hate crime is a characteristic of a different incident, i.e., on-going neighbour dispute, family dispute or other crime/disorder and falls into the crime type of Public Order Offence.

Like other areas across the Thames Valley and the UK, Bracknell Forest has seen a rise in incidents, where a hate crime flag has identified as a factor of an occurrence/crime. Whilst a proportion of this increase can legitimately be attributed to better recording of hate crime and/or due to increased confidence in reporting, more monitoring must be done to fully understand our local picture.

There is currently no evidence, data or anecdotal, to suggest that any community or group within Bracknell Forest is overtly targeted because of who they are or represent.

More information can be found at:

<https://www.berkshirepublichealth.co.uk/jsna/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Bracknell-Forest-People-and-Place-Summary-February-2023.pdf>

<https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-02/community-analysis-2022.pdf>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2021-to-2022/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2021-to-2022>

7. Local Profile

The local profile is informed from a number of sources that provide a summary of Counter Terrorism concerns which provide an outline of the key threats, risks and vulnerabilities within Thames Valley between January and December. This focuses on individual districts where isolated or emerging incidents of note have occurred but allows local authorities to view their individual threats and risk areas in relation to bordering areas, providing context, and encouraging information sharing across the force and the region.

National Threat Level

The national threat level is currently at Substantial (meaning an attack is likely) and has been since the 9th of February 2022. It is assessed that an attack would most likely be conducted by a self-initiated terrorist acting independently of, but possibly inspired by, established terrorist groups or organisations.

Key messages from 2022

1. Self-initiated terrorism continues to be deemed the most likely form of terrorist attack in the UK
2. Extreme right-wing terrorism continues to be most concerning for the South-East region, from of all three ideological strands referred to above. Most likely form being via self-initiated terrorist.
3. Extremist Islamist inspired terrorism remains a threat across the South-East region, most likely form being via self-initiated terrorist.
4. The use of the internet in terrorism, specifically in radicalisation, continues to be a key theme within the South-East.
5. Berkshire has been identified as the most vulnerable county within the Thames Valley by way of Prevent cases and hate crime.
6. The high proportion of Prevent cases across Thames Valley were below the age of 30, almost half of which were under the age of 18.

Considerations for prevent action plan and local risk assessments for 2023/2024

1. A significant gap has been identified in referrals from private industry across the South-East. Prevent boards have been encouraged to take a view on this when developing new action plans.
2. Mental health issues and a significantly high proportion of under 18's in Prevent cases have been identified as two key themes across the Thames Valley during 2022.

3. Prevent-related local initiatives would benefit from considering how they reach and address older as well as younger audiences and vulnerable people. Data in the extreme right wing space highlights that while a younger demographic (under 30s) is typically involved in online extremism, the most recent successful extreme right-wing attacks in the UK have been committed by older males.
4. Online activity (use of encrypted apps, and of mainstream as well as fringe sites and forums) remains a consistent feature of Prevent referrals and of general extremist activity across the region.
5. The extreme right-wing space indicates an increasing focus on and targeting of the LGBTQIA community.
6. There is a risk of protest activity targeted at asylum hotels. It is likely that public awareness of housing immigrants in hotels across the country will increase in 2023/24 and onward. As the cost-of-living crisis continues to worsen, it is possible that some of these hotels may experience increased protest activity. Understanding the potential risks through local risk assessment may help manage this effectively.
7. Groups that promote an extremist worldview and/or seek to target and marginalise perceived 'out-groups' can be opportunistic in their appropriation of local and national concerns, using them as a vehicle to promote their own narratives and objectives.
8. Development of cohesion and understanding within all community remains an important part of countering those with destructive and divisive motives.

9. 2023 Action Plan

While Bracknell Forest is assessed as low risk in response to the nature of the terrorism threat to the UK, regionally and local risks identified the following objectives and focus areas set out in the 2023 Action Plan.

These actions will be proportionate to the risk profile while showing how BFC and partners will meet the expected benchmarks for compliance with the Prevent Duty.

Progress against all benchmarks and focus areas will be reviewed at the Prevent Steering Group and updated in response to the annual CTLP and local risk assessment.

Objective 1: Accountability

Benchmark 1 - Risk Assessment

The organisation has a local risk assessment process reviewed against the Counter Terrorism Local Profile

Benchmark 2 - Multi Agency Partnership Board

There is an effective multi-agency partnership board in place to oversee Prevent delivery in the area

Benchmark 3 - Prevent Partnership Plan

The area has an agreed Prevent Partnership Action Plan.

Focus areas: -

- i. Local risk profile, monitoring Prevent referrals, local Hate Crime data, Asylum and refugee trends

Objective 2: Support

Benchmark 4 - Referral Pathway

There is an agreed process in place for the referral of those identified as being at risk of radicalisation.

Benchmark 5 - Channel Panel

There is a Channel Panel in place, meeting monthly, with representation from all relevant sectors.

Benchmark 6 – Prevent problem-solving process

There is a Prevent problem-solving process in place to disrupt radicalising influences.

Benchmark 7 - Training

There is a training programme in place for relevant personnel.

Focus areas: -

- i. Address gaps in referrals from private industry
- ii. Refresh training offer and make mandatory

Objective 3: Communities & Engagement

Benchmark 8 – Venue Hire and IT Policies

There is a venue hire policy in place, to ensure that premises are not used by radicalising influencers, and an effective IT policy in place to prevent the access of extremist materials by users of networks.

Benchmark 9 - Engagement activity

There is engagement with a range of communities and civil society groups, both faith-based and secular, to encourage an open and transparent dialogue on the Prevent Duty.

Benchmark 10 - Communications

There is a communications plan in place to proactively communicate and increase transparency of the reality / impact of Prevent work and support frontline staff and communities to understand what Prevent looks like in practice.

Focus area: -

- i. Engagement and awareness with older age groups, LGTBQIA and other communities.