



**Developing a Prevent Communications Strategy:  
Guidance and Template for Local Authorities**

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## Why communicate about Prevent?

- Prevent is a vital programme that helps protect society from terrorism, by providing support to people vulnerable to radicalisation. Since 2012, over 3,000 people have been helped to move away from radicalisation and violent ideologies through its voluntary support programme, Channel. You can read more about Prevent [here](#).
- Trust from communities and partners is crucial to the successful delivery of Prevent. However, Prevent is often misunderstood and misconstrued, which can negatively impact perceptions of the programme among key stakeholders, and reduce confidence in Prevent.
- There is also low awareness and understanding of the programme among the public. This can mean that individuals who are at risk may not get the help they need. This may be because those who are worried about them do not understand the risks around radicalisation, or perhaps they do not know where to get support or feel uncomfortable engaging with Prevent due to anxieties about the programme.
- Communicating about Prevent is a vital way of building trust in the programme. By increasing transparency, showcasing how Prevent is delivered locally and empowering positive spokespeople to advocate for Prevent, communications can help [improve perceptions of Prevent](#) and the likelihood of people engaging. Communications can also help create meaningful local partnerships between Government, civil society and communities, helping to enhance local delivery and engagement.
- Local Authorities are a key partner in Prevent communications. You are trusted leaders within the community. You understand the local issues affecting your area, the nuances of Prevent delivery and the radicalisation risk you face. This all means you have the expertise and understanding to deliver effective Prevent communications that resonates with your audiences and helps meet your strategic needs.
- This guide contains a suggested template for developing a local, tailored Prevent communications strategy, to help guide your thinking and discussions. While we hope you will find this resource useful, it is not a prescribed format that we expect you to follow. Any strategy you deliver should be adjusted according to your area's capacity and priorities – it could be a longer-term strategy to gradually improve Prevent delivery in your area; alternatively it could be a shorter-term strategic piece of work to address a single issue, such as a recent attack, or increasing referrals around a particular ideology.



## *Types of communications activity*

This diagram isn't exhaustive, but gives examples of some of the different types of communications activity you could be involved in – from liaising with local journalists to help drive positive Prevent reporting and issuing rebuttals, to creating new content such as newsletters and other stakeholder communications, blogs, infographics or posters.





## Developing a communications strategy

If your Local Authority has a communications team with capacity to support Prevent work, they will be best placed to help you in developing a communications strategy tailored to meet your specific objectives, while remaining sensitive and aligned to the local context and other activity across the Local Authority.

The following communications plan template should be a useful way of structuring your activity, either with the support of your communications team or using your own expertise. If you would like further support from the Home Office, please email the Prevent Communities & Engagement team ([PreventCommunications@Homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:PreventCommunications@Homeoffice.gov.uk)) who may be able to provide advice alongside their Home Office strategic communications colleagues.

### Communications plan template

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#### Document overview

You should begin your strategy document with a brief overview of what you will be covering, the purpose of the strategy and what you aim to achieve. An example of wording along these lines is below:

*This document sets out the strategic direction for Prevent communications in [Area] for the period [Date] to [Date]. This strategy will aim to [Your objectives, as set out below] by [Summary of the tactics you will be using].*

#### **Example:**

*This document sets out the strategic direction for communications around reducing childhood obesity in Manchester. The strategy will aim to support the policy objective of halving the number of obese children by 2030, by improving children's diets, highlighting the negative impact of junk food advertising, and getting primary school children to exercise for 20 minutes per day as part of their school day.*

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#### Background

Here you may wish to cover questions such as:

- Why is this strategy required?
- What are the relevant issues to Prevent delivery in the area?
- What barriers do you face that communications should help address – such as low trust or awareness in Prevent, or resistance from certain groups?
- Have you done any communications activity before? If so, what were the strengths and weaknesses? What did you achieve?



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## Objectives

This is where you will outline exactly what you want to achieve through your communications activity. You will want to make sure your objectives are SMART:

**S**pecific  
**M**easurable  
**A**chievable  
**R**elevant  
**T**imebound

More guidance on setting SMART objectives can be found [here](#). Your communications objectives should always be aligned to the wider strategic aims you outlined earlier in the strategy, maintaining a golden thread between this targeted plan and your Local Authority's overall Prevent/Counter-Terrorism activity.

There is no standard set of objectives you should be trying to reach – these will be based on your understanding and experience, as well as any formal insight you can gather.

However, some examples could include improving the Prevent information on your local authority webpage, or developing products or briefings for local organisations. These may feed into wider objectives of, for example, improving Prevent delivery by increasing referrals and awareness among groups such as friends and family.

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## Audiences

Your audience is the group(s) you are trying to reach and influence through your communications activity. Audiences can include anything from internal and external stakeholders (such as local authorities and Elected Members) to members of the public.

The audience you are communicating with will depend on the objectives you set for your plan. For example, if you want to increase local buy-in to Prevent, you may want to consider:

- *Civil Society Organisations* – do you want to shift the perspective of critical groups, so that they are more favourable towards Prevent? Or perhaps you want to encourage local partners to act as vocal advocates for Prevent, by encouraging them to be spokespeople and share Prevent information through their channels?
- *Local influencers* – examples could include Elected Members, faith or community leaders, the media or academics based in your area. Again, you will want to consider what you want to achieve through this group.
- *The wider community* – does your local community have a low awareness and understanding of Prevent? If so, you may wish to consider targeting your communications activity towards this group. You may also wish to segment this audience further, for example by focussing on friends and family.



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When determining your audience(s), you should consider their specific requirements and characteristics. This will enable you to create effective key messages that resonate and deliver them successfully. For example, you should make sure that your content is accessible (consider literacy levels and language, as well as practical things, such as whether your audience uses the internet or might prefer information in a leaflet).

The Government Communications Service (GCS) [Campaign page](#) has lots of information and guidance on identifying audiences and aligning your communications to their needs.

**Example:**

*For the childhood obesity example above, your audiences could include parents of young children, the advertising and junk food industry, and teachers or school leaders. You would need to consider the different messages you would disseminate to each of these groups – for example, for parents, it would be about protecting their children from obesity; for advertisers and junk food companies, it would be about limiting the damage they could be causing.*

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## Strategy

This is where you set out the detail of your communications strategy and outline the specific activity you will be pursuing. Here, you should bear in mind the key messages that you are trying to get across, the audiences you are speaking to and how the tactics you choose reflect these.

Objective	Tactics	Metrics
<i>Here you should break down the specific objectives you identified above and map out the tactics you will be using you meet each one.</i>	<p><i>This could include ideas for blogs, social media posts, newsletters, posters and fliers, surveys, media outreach or more.</i></p> <p><i>You should also consider questions such as:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>What channels will you use (newsletters, your webpage, social media)?</i></li> <li><i>How can you engage partners to support this work and deliver your activity – for example, how can you work with your Local Authority press team, if you have one? Can you secure case studies from local project providers?</i></li> <li><i>Do your tactics align with your budget, if you have one? How can you make sure they are as low-cost as possible?</i></li> </ul>	<i>Which measures will you use to evaluate each part of your strategy?</i>



**Example:**

*To continue with the childhood obesity example, could you create a campaign aimed at increasing exercise? How would you engage teachers to get them on board with this? It could include things such as presenting in schools, distributing leaflets and running Q&As on social media. You could also engage parents in the forums they use, such as mumsnet, or by creating content for magazines or newspapers they read.*

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## Evaluation

Regular evaluation is a crucial part of developing a communications strategy. It ensures that the work you are doing is appropriate and effective, and enables you to identify opportunities for improvement.

The success of your strategy should be assessed directly against the SMART objectives you identified, measuring how effective your communications activity has been in achieving these aims and delivering impact.

The way you measure success will be dependent on the tactics and objectives you have set, and the objectives you are trying to reach, but some useful tools can include surveys, evaluation of media coverage, stakeholder relationships and so forth. Evaluation can be a mix of qualitative and quantitative measures.

If you would like further guidance on evaluation, the GCS [‘Evaluation Framework 2.0’](#) provides some useful tips and structure.

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## Opportunities and risks

When developing your strategy you should consider any upcoming milestones or events that may be useful ‘hooks’ for communications. Linking your communications with specific events can mean your audience is more receptive and your communications has a bigger impact. For example, are there any upcoming awareness days, anniversaries, or publications that are relevant to Prevent?

Including a breakdown of potential risks shows that you are aware of the wider environment that may impact your strategy. Risks could include staff capacity issues, budgetary changes or broader political issues, such as upcoming elections.

Where applicable, you should detail how you will try to overcome or negate these – could you work together with partners to amplify your messaging through their channels (e.g. their newsletters or social media feeds), if you do not have capacity? If you are expecting some negative campaigning, can you prepare stakeholders with messages and briefings to counteract its impact?

**Example:**

*If your strategy was around reducing childhood obesity, you could consider increasing your activity during any healthy eating awareness months, or around the September return to school period.*



## Timescales and next steps

You may wish to finish your strategy with an overview of timescales and next steps. For example, if you are breaking your activity down into quarterly deliverables, what will you have achieved and by when?

## Tips and further resources

The below resources are a useful guide as to the type of Prevent content that can be developed, such as handbooks for stakeholders, podcasts, videos, and media case studies. You may find it useful to reference them when developing your own strategy.

### **Home Office Resources**

#### Elected Member Handbook

This handbook gives Elected Members an overview of Prevent and how they can be involved as advocates for the programme.

#### Community Events Handbook

The Community Events Handbook walks local authorities through the process of developing a Prevent community engagement event, including setting objectives, practical tips and Q&A.

#### Case Studies

We have a number of case studies from a breadth of ideologies; and Prevent project work, which can be used as resources for your own communications activity, or as examples of best practice. Please get in contact with [PreventCommunications@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:PreventCommunications@homeoffice.gov.uk) for a copy.

### **Websites and publications**

#### GCS Local: Local campaigns and engagement

The Government Communications Service (GCS)' local team is a regionally-based, cross-government campaigns and engagement team. They are able to give advice on developing communications for a local audience, such as case study and content creation, and stakeholder engagement. [GCS Local: Local campaigns and engagement - GCS \(civilservice.gov.uk\)](#)

#### Prevent Factsheet 2021

This Prevent factsheet gives an overview of the programme, the referrals process and how Prevent is delivered locally, as well as key statistics. [FACTSHEET: Prevent and Channel - 2021 - Home Office in the media \(blog.gov.uk\)](#)

#### ACT Early

The police Action Counters Terrorism website provides visitors with information about Prevent and spotting the signs of radicalisation, including a referrals helpline, as well as resources such as videos and case studies. <https://actearly.uk>.

ACT Early also has a practitioners toolkit which is packed full of social media suggestions, posters, videos and more. [Act Early Campaign Partners toolkit](#)





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## Educate Against Hate

Department for Education and Home Office website giving teachers, parents and school leaders practical advice, classroom resources and information on protecting children from radicalisation. <https://educateagainsthate.com/>

## Let's Talk About It

Counter Terrorism Policing website to provide practical help and guidance to the public in order to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. <https://www.ltai.info/>

## Prevent Public Knowledge and Interactions research

In-depth survey findings investigating knowledge and attitudes towards Prevent. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-public-knowledge-and-interactions>

## Prevent Referral Statistics 2020/21

Individuals referred to and supported through the Prevent Programme in England and Wales from April 2020 to March 2021.

[Individuals referred to and supported through the Prevent Programme, April 2020 to March 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-referral-statistics-2020-21)

## Prevent Duty Guidance

Guidance for specified authorities in England and Wales, and Scotland (in a separate document), on the duty in the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

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

## Videos

### *Prevent Videos*

Source: Home Office, August 2020

We have created a brief, five minute 'Introduction to Prevent' video, which explains what the programme is and why it is so important through the voices of those that have come into contact with Prevent. The video can be found online on [YouTube](#), and we are also able to share copies via [Google Drive](#) (this link will take you to the videos).

There are also shorter edits of the Prevent introductory video, focussing on education, healthcare, friends and family and extreme right-wing terrorism. These edits can also be downloaded through [Google Drive](#).

### *ACT Early campaign video*

Source: Counter-Terrorism Policing (CTP), November 2020

A short [video](#) introducing the new ACT Early campaign from CTP, discussing the signs of radicalisation and where to go for help.

### *Bradford College United Values*

Source: Bradford College Facebook, May 2019

Showcasing the [UNITED Values programme](#), through which Prevent is delivered in Bradford College.

### *Channel Panel process*

Source: Home Office, March 2018



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This [video](#) explains how the Channel process works from referral through to support being delivered. Text and interview with Channel Panel chair Karen Samuels (Wolverhampton City Council)

## *Creating the Conversation podcast on Prevent*

Source: Creating the Conversation, December 2020

[Podcast](#) with Prevent Coordinator Sean Arbuthnot (Leicester), discussing the Prevent programme and how to combat radicalisation.

## *Don't get manipulated by the far-right*

Source: Shout Out UK, April 2021

[Animation](#) explaining the risks found online and how extreme right-wing groups use the internet to radicalise people.

## *Odd Arts: The workshop teaching kids about radicalisation*

Source: HuffPost, May 2019

[Speaking to people](#) directly impacted by extremism and radicalisation. Features Odd Arts, a Manchester theatre group performing workshops in schools aiming to increase awareness of how isolation and vulnerability can lead to becoming radicalised.

## *(Re)building post-pandemic societies: youth using sport to prevent and counter violent extremism*

Source: United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), Nov 2020

[Discussion](#) featuring Prevent Coordinator Sean Arbuthnot (Leicester), commemorating the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace and highlighting the role of youth leadership and sport in preventing violent extremism.

## *Safer Devon: Online Radicalisation*

Source: Devon County Council, Nov 2019

Powerful [video](#) helping parents to spot the signs of online radicalisation.