PREVENT ON A PAGE:
WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?

- Prevent is a key strand of the government’s counter terrorism strategy – CONTEST – alongside Pursue, Protect and Prepare.
- Prevent dates from 2003; the revised strategy was published in June 2011.
- The purpose of the strategy is to “prevent people from being drawn into terrorism”.
- The 2011 strategy addresses all forms of terrorism but mentions specifically: international terrorism; Northern Ireland-related terrorism; and extreme right wing-related terrorism as the greatest current threats.
- The 2011 strategy was explicitly changed to include non-violent extremism which “can create an atmosphere conducive to terrorism and can popularise views which terrorists then exploit”.
- Prevent became a statutory duty for seven specified authorities under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015. Higher education was one of the seven authorities (alongside further education, schools, local authorities, health, prisons and probation, the police).
- The government issued general guidance in June 2015, and higher education-specific guidance for England and Wales in September 2015. For higher education the statutory duty has been in force since 18th September 2015. There is separate guidance for Scotland and for further education.
- The duty applies to all providers of higher education, publicly funded and others, with more than 250 students (not including those on distance education courses).
- The legal responsibility for compliance resides with the governing body/proprietor.
- The monitoring authority for relevant higher education bodies (RHEBs) in England (excluding further education colleges which are monitored by Ofsted) is Hefce. (Monitoring responsibility will transfer to the Office for Students from April 2018). Governing bodies/proprietors are required to report annually to provide assurance that the institution “has had due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism”.
- Institutions must maintain a current risk assessment to identify the risks of vulnerable individuals being drawn into terrorism, and an appropriate action and training plan to address and mitigate those risks.
- Policies and procedures must match the expectations in the statutory guidance and must be actively implemented and reviewed appropriately.
- Prevent is essentially about safeguarding, and policies on student and staff welfare should incorporate the duty to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. There should be well-publicised and understood arrangements for staff and students to report concerns and to provide appropriate support to individuals.
- Other policies and procedures should also incorporate the duty – freedom of speech, visiting speakers and external events, use of computers, information sharing, use of faith facilities.
- The Prevent duty should be implemented alongside and with due regard to other statutory duties – on academic freedom, freedom of speech, equality and diversity, data protection and confidentiality.
- Institutions should identify a Prevent Lead, one of whose responsibilities will be to decide when an individual might be referred to Channel, a multi-agency approach to provide support to individuals who are at risk of being drawn into terrorism.