



**HEDDLU
GOGLEDD CYMRU
NORTH WALES
POLICE**

Response Date: 28/02/2024

2024/142 - Prevent Referrals

In response to your recent request for information regarding;

How many individuals have been referred to Prevent from October 7th 2022- January 7th 2023 because of the conflict in Palestine? Please breakdown by area of concern, such as far-right extremism, Islamic extremism, political extremism, or any other form of extremism. Please may I also have a breakdown of the ages and ethnicities of those who have been referred.

Of those who have been referred to Prevent from October 7th-January 7th, how many referrals have come from schools? Please give a breakdown by type of school, such as "High school"

How many referrals, thus far, have resulted in intervention by a Channel and Prevent Multi-Agency Panel?

Concerns have been raised in relation to disclosing the requested information.

Therefore, Section 31 Law Enforcement and Section 24 National Security is to be considered as part of the Public Interest Test. A Public Interest Test has been carried out to weigh up the reasons for and against disclosure of the information requested, to ensure the release is in the interest of the public as a whole and not just the applicant.

Overall Harm for Sections 31 and 24

Publication of specific Prevent data would provide information to those who seek to challenge the process, which would not be in the public interest. Allegations of 'spying in the community' and 'targeting Muslims' misrepresent and undermine the intention of Prevent programme, which seeks to support those individuals vulnerable to being drawn into violent extremism. Figures on the ethnicity or age of participants may fuel perceived grievances such as the view that young Muslims are being targeted, or that the issue of political extremists (i.e. the far right) are not being tackled. Revealing detailed site-specific statistics could lead to the identification of:

- Individuals referred
- Those who may have referred individuals in confidence
- Local organisations working with the force to protect and safeguard those at risk and
- Ongoing cases which could lead to the withdrawal of individuals from the process and thus threaten the successful conclusion of a case.

This would bring the process into disrepute, destroy trust and damage Prevent at a national level.

Prevent is a multi-agency process which aims to support those who may be vulnerable to being drawn into violent extremism. It works by providing a mechanism for:

- Identifying individuals who may be at risk of and vulnerable to being drawn into violent extremism
- Accessing the nature and extent of the risk
- Where necessary, referring cases to a multi-agency panel which decides on the most appropriate support package to divert and support the individual at risk.

Prevent aims to draw vulnerable individuals away from violent extremism before they become involved in criminal activity. Effective information sharing is crucial in ensuring that delivery partners, such as education, children's services, probation and local public health agencies and local community partners are able to build a comprehensive picture of an individual's vulnerability, and therefore provide the appropriate type and level of support to safeguard the individual at risk. This requires the local community to work in partnership with the police and other agencies and to share information appropriately and responsibly.

The security of the county is of paramount importance and the Police will not divulge any information which would undermine national security or compromise law enforcement. 'Prevent' is part of the wider strand of CONTEST, the Government's counter terrorism strategy, and the information held by the Police in regards to Prevent directly relates to counter-terrorism policing. In addition, any prejudice to counter-terrorism policing directly impacts on the police support and the delivery of CONTEST.

Any detailed breakdown of the agencies, authorities, or partners that made the referrals would lead to these partners disengaging from the referral process, as well as, potentially in some extreme cases, aid the identification of those involved in the referral process itself, or of those referred.

Factors favouring disclosure of information for S31:

There may be a public interest in the release of this information because it may reassure the public that there are effective processes in place to ensure that people showing signs that they intend to use violence or other illegal means are monitored proactively and assessed for the presence of vulnerability. Disclosure of the information would provide reassurance to the public that the Police have in place protocols to deal with these types of incidents and offences. The Home Office regularly publishes national statistics on PREVENT data. It would also reassure the public that the police have protocols in place to protect children from being drawn into violent extremism.

Factors against disclosure of information for S31:

Disclosure of information would mean that law enforcement tactics would be compromised which would hinder the prevention and detection of crime. More crime would be committed because criminals would know which forces are focusing on the Prevent programme. A fear of crime would be realised because if the terrorists identified more vulnerable areas, they could target and exploit these areas and the public would be in fear of more criminal / terrorist activity occurring. There would be an impact on police resources because if the measure used by forces to detect terrorist activities and safeguard children is disclosed, and some areas are deemed to be 'softer' at managing this threat, terrorist cells may target these areas in order to continue their operations and target vulnerable individuals. There could be local implications with wrongful identification of children and families which in turn could lead to further offences being committed in the community.

Factors favouring disclosure of information for Section 24

The public are entitled to know how public funds are spent and by disclosing this information the public would be able to see where public money is being spent and know that forces are doing as much as they can to combat terrorism and radicalisation. Revealing this information would enable the public to have some reassurance that the Government's Counter Terrorism strategy is robust. This is an issue high on the public agenda and therefore the release of this information would contribute to an informed public debate.

Factors against disclosure of information for Section 24

PREVENT only operates in specific locations. Revealing detailed statistics may increase interest in cases which could ultimately lead to the identity of individuals and the organisations we work with, which may assist others intending to counter such work. Identification of those working locally to deliver the aims and objectives of PREVENT could enable those wishing to counter such work to engage in activity to disrupt and jeopardise the successful delivery of ongoing work. This could threaten the successful delivery of PREVENT and the government's counter terrorism strategy and lead to the public being at

increased risk from terrorism. There is also a potential for such data to be used to increase community tensions in an area, which would not be in the public interest.

Any information shared between agencies (intelligence) has the potential to cover all aspects of criminal activity, be it threats to National Security, future planned robberies or intelligence relating to terrorist activity. Disclosure of the information would enable those intent on engaging in terrorist activities to determine on a National level which areas within the UK may be a vulnerable area to target.

Balance test

The security of the country is of paramount importance and the Police service will not divulge information if to do so would place the safety of an individual at risk or undermine National Security. Whilst there is a public interest in the transparency of policing operations, information gathering and in this case providing assurance that the police service is appropriately and effectively safeguarding those who are vulnerable to radicalisation and targeting the cells behind the radicalisation, there is a very strong public interest in safeguarding both national security and the integrity of police investigations and operations in the highly sensitive area of terrorism.

As much as there is public interest in knowing that policing activity is appropriate and balanced in matters of national security this will only be overridden in exceptional circumstances. Whilst there is a strong public interest in the transparency of policing programmes and in this case, providing assurance that the police service and other stakeholders are appropriately and effectively engaging with one another, combating the threat posed by individuals with the intent to use violence and other illegal means, there is a very strong public interest in safeguarding both national security and the integrity of the stakeholders within the programme.

The Police will not divulge information if it is likely that it will compromise the work of the Police Service or place members of the public at risk. It is known that terrorist cells will try to radicalise people and children, to indoctrinate them with their ideology in order to encourage them to commit acts of terror. Disclosure of the requested information would highlight which forces may have individuals who are more susceptible to radicalisation and how each force tackles this within their communities. This will adversely affect the Police's ability to detect this type of crime as it may alter the behaviours of those preying on vulnerable individuals. This in itself could put the individual's life at risk along with that of National Security. It is therefore our belief that the balance test lies in favour of not disclosing the information.

Therefore, in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this letter acts as a Refusal Notice under section 17 (1) of the legislation.

THIS INFORMATION HAS BEEN PROVIDED IN RESPONSE TO A REQUEST
UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000, AND IS CORRECT AS AT 26/02/2024