

Press release: New Counter-Extremism Taskforce to help tackle extremism behind bars

The specialist taskforce will analyse intelligence compiled by about 100 counter-terrorism experts working across the country to assess the threat posed by radicalisation in prisons.

It will advise prisons in England and Wales on how to deal with specific threats, as well as instruct and train prison and probation staff on how best to deter offenders from being lured into extremism.

The unit – jointly formed between HM Prisons and Probation Service and the Home Office – is being brought forward as part of the Prison Safety and Reform White Paper. It will work closely with the police and other enforcement agencies, and builds on progress already made in addressing extremism.

This includes increased training for prison governors and staff, more resources to identify and remove extremist literature in prisons and holding the most dangerous extremists in specialist units in the high security estate instead of within the general prison population.

Prisons Minister Sam Gyimah said: > > Extremism is a danger to society and a threat to public safety. It is right we come together to bolster our response to the threats posed by radicalisation behind bars, and give our hard-working staff the skills and knowledge they need to keep our prisons and communities safe. > > This new team will lead this strand of important work to help combat and defeat terrorist threats posed by offenders in the prison estate and in the community. By countering the poisonous and repugnant activities of extremists, we will help ensure the safe running of our prisons and keep the public safe. >

The taskforce is being launched on 3 April 2017 and boosts the current team carrying out work in this area. It will be the nerve centre for all counter-terrorism and counter-extremist work across the prison estate and probation service.

Specialist staff will gather and exploit evidence gleaned from frontline staff – work essential to the safe running of prisons and fundamental to public protection.

Experts will also advise on the management of dangerous and high-profile extremist prisoners, and train frontline prison and probation staff so they are equipped to deal with extremist behaviour.

A strategy centre based in London will be supported by specialist regional teams across the country – ensuring resources are focused on addressing the

most serious risks.

The new unit will build on last year's formation of a new directorate for Security, Order and Counter-Terrorism – responsible for monitoring and dealing with this evolving threat.

Governors have also been instructed to ban extremist literature and to remove anyone from communal worship who is promoting anti-British beliefs or other dangerous views.

A new training package to identify, report and combat extremism is being rolled out to all prison officers and new pre-employment vetting checks for chaplains were introduced in February 2017.