

Speech: Safeguarding our young people from becoming radicalised is difficult but vital work: article by Amber Rudd

Stopping people committing appalling acts of terror in the UK is something we should all want. It should go without saying.

Safeguarding our young people from becoming radicalised, either by the extreme right wing or Islamist extremists, should not be a controversial aim.

Yet there are some who actively seek to undermine the Prevent programme without offering any meaningful alternatives.

The truth is, as Commander Dean Haydon of the Metropolitan Police said this week, many of the most vocal opponents do not want Prevent to work in the first place.

They say it is about spying on communities. But asking teachers and others to be alert to signs of radicalisation and refer those who may need help works in a similar way to safeguarding processes designed to protect people from gang activity, drug abuse, and sexual abuse.

Next they claim Prevent stifles free speech. On the contrary, schools and colleges should provide a safe space in which children and young people can understand the risks associated with terrorism and develop the knowledge and skills to be able to challenge extremist arguments. This is what Prevent encourages.

Or they claim Prevent is about targeting Muslims. This is not true; Prevent deals with all forms of extremism. I am the [first Home Secretary to ban an extreme right wing group, National Action, for their links to terrorism](#). Prevent aims to protect all those who are targeted by the terrorist recruiters who seek to weaponise them.

Currently the greatest threat comes from terrorist recruiters inspired by Daesh. Our Prevent programme will necessarily reflect this by prioritising support for vulnerable British Muslims, and working in partnership with civil society groups to tackle this problem.

Some claim they have yet to see evidence of Prevent's success. Say that to the 150 people – including 50 children – it has helped to stop from leaving Britain to fight in Syria and Iraq in 2015. I have spoken to mothers terrified for their children and grateful for the intervention and tireless efforts of Prevent workers. I have travelled the country and seen inspiring examples of grassroots organisations, including British Muslim led organisations, leading the way in countering the risk posed by radicalisation. They do amazing work to protect our society and our country. Over the summer I will continue visiting communities, talking to

organisations, families and individuals to hear their views, understand their concerns and talk about what more we can do to help.

As well as working together with communities, Prevent also involves challenging internet companies to stop their platforms being used to spread terrorist messages and propaganda, which is why [I travelled to Silicon Valley last week to keep up the pressure on the internet giants](#) and make sure they play their part.

So I want to say to these critics, Prevent has made a significant impact in preventing people being drawn into terrorism and it is here to stay. In light of the horrific terror attacks in London and Manchester, we are reviewing all aspects of our counter terrorism strategy to make sure we keep pace with the changing terrorist threat. This will ensure that we are doing everything possible to address the threat from terrorism, including stopping people being radicalised in the first place. Prevent will continue to play a major part in our future counter terrorism approach.

I am happy to engage those with constructive criticisms to make, who want to discuss and debate how the Prevent programme can be improved.

But I am clear that when it comes to keeping our families, communities and country safe, doing nothing is simply not an option.

It is difficult work but it is vital. And nobody should be able to stop it from happening