

Frequently asked questions

What is Contest and Contest 2?

Following the 7/7 attacks, the government launched their Contest Strategy (2003, 2009), to deal with the international threat of terrorism. The Contest strategy is divided into four sections, commonly known as the 4P's

- **Prevent**
To reduce the risk of people from becoming terrorists or supporting violent extremists
- **Protect**
To strengthen protection against terror attacks on our communities.
- **Pursue**
To stop terrorists
- **Prepare**
Where an attack cannot be stopped and to mitigate its impact.

Our projects in Reading concentrate on 'prevent' and recognise the threat of extremism from all sections of the community and the need to work with all sections of the community. Islam phobia and extreme right wing political parties are recognised as the obvious threat in Reading.

For further information please visit <http://security.homeoffice.gov.uk/counter-terrorism-strategy/about-the-strategy1/>

What is Prevent?

Prevent is one of the four stands in Contest. It has 5 key strands aimed at addressing these casual factors and in support of the overall aim of stopping people becoming or supporting terrorist or violent extremists:

- Challenging the violent extremist ideology and supporting mainstream voices
- Disrupting those who promote violent extremism and supporting the institutions where they maybe active
- Supporting individuals who are being targeted and recruited to the cause of violent extremism
- Increasing the resilience of communities to violent extremism; and
- Addressing the grievances that ideologues are exploiting

Uniting Reading projects do not focus on the second of these at all. Our work is more focussed around the need to bring together all sections of the community to work on common values of mutual respect and a rejection of the forces of division and hate.

What is NI35?

NI35 is a National Indicator (35) and stands for 'Building Communities Resilient to Violent Extremism' It is intended to measure the progress that local authorities make on the governments prevent strategy. It is one of 198 national indicators introduced by the government in 2008.

The four themes are coupled with a set of descriptions and scores (1-5) against which the LA marks itself:

- Understanding of and engagement with the Muslim community
- Knowledge and understanding of the PVE agenda
- Effective development of an action plan to build the resilience of communities
- Effective oversight and delivery and evaluations of projects and actions.

NI35 will be assessed for all Councils. Reading adopted the indicator as a key indicator in 2007.

Currently Uniting Reading stands at level 2 for all NI35 strands. However we are at level 3 for understanding and engaging with the Muslim community. Uniting Reading aims improve our performance to Level 5 by 2010/11.

What is the school's Toolkit?

The schools toolkit was designed in 2008 by the department for children, schools and families. It seeks to:

- Raise awareness amongst schools of the threat from violent extremism groups and the risks for young people
- Understand what can cause violent extremism, about preventative actions taking place locally and nationally.
- Encourage schools to understand the positive contributions they can make to empowering young people to create communities that are more resilient to extremism, and protecting the well-being of pupils or groups who maybe vulnerable to be drawn into violent extremist activity
- Provide advice on managing risks and responding to incidents locally, nationally or internationally that might have an impact on the schools communities.

As part of Uniting Reading a lead on the School's Toolkit has been appointed and an action plan has been created. In line with the rest of our work, we have developed an all-inclusive approach to the work. This is available on the Reading Borough Council website. Further information on the schools toolkit can be found on <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/violentextremism/toolkitforschools/index.shtml>.

Does Prevent just focus on the Muslim community?

Nationally, the government has consistently emphasised the most significant threat to Britain's security comes from Al-Qaida. This is not the same thing as saying the threat is from the Muslim community. The government's aim is thus to prevent extremism by building communities that feel themselves to be part of British society- not waiting for problems to emerge.

Locally Uniting Reading has adopted an inclusive approach that works with all communities to prevent violent extremism including the far right racist political party activists.

What is the difference between community cohesion and preventing violent extremism?

Building community cohesion is about building better relationships between people of different backgrounds.

PVE was originally a targeted approach at national level. It builds resilience at community level by working to counter the global terrorist ideology. The thinking was that violent extremism can emerge from even the most cohesive communities.

However, in Reading, we have not supported the targeted approach and have worked for a more inclusive and cohesion-based agenda. In recent times, the government has moved more towards our approach.

What is Uniting Reading?

Uniting Reading is the name given to all PVE work done in Reading. The mission statement for Uniting Reading is: “working across all communities to challenge extremist views, support good community relations and, promote awareness and understanding”

Our approach in Reading has been to encourage the community to take the lead. A number of organisations have designed and are running projects which fit the criteria. There is still money available for new ideas.

For more information about Uniting Reading please visit the Reading Borough Council Website, or contact Riti on riti.Vishwakarma@reading.gov.

Why are terms like ‘Radicalisation’ and ‘extremism’ used?

Both terms mean different things to different people, and we try to avoid using these words. However, most people accept the danger of becoming complacent and that doing nothing is not an option. In this respect, local work is largely focussed around the theme of bringing different communities together and where needed, having open and honest exchanges of opinions that might be an obstacle to good relations.

Is PVE being used by elements within the community as a tool to stoke up perceptions of injustice and grievance?

No. Many of the key measures about the well being of different sections of our community show that some communities are disadvantaged. An important aspect of the Uniting Reading work is to understand and try to address grievances and disadvantage.

Are those who oppose Uniting Reading agenda ‘extremist’?

No. There are many legitimate views about the work and the debate is a key part of helping us all move forward together. However, some of the opposition is based on disagreements from the national policy. In Reading we can evidence that we do not discriminate against groups that have rejected the Prevent programme.

How can I get involved?

There are numerous ways to get involved with Uniting Reading, whether that is through the PVE community forum or participating in our projects.

For further information or if you have an idea for a project, please contact Riti Vishwakarma (Uniting Reading Support Worker) at riti.Vishwakarma@reading.gov. Alternatively please visit the Reading Borough Council website