

Hampshire Prevent Partnership Board

No Platform for Extremism Policy

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1.0 Introduction

The Hampshire Prevent Partnership Board is committed to ensuring their workforces are competent and confident in carrying out their responsibilities. Much time and energy is devoted to ensuring that employees, members, and communities are confident that their organisation operates in a fair and democratic way, demonstrating through their services the highest standards of equality and social justice.

The use of facilities and resources by groups holding extreme ideological views may pose a threat to this confidence as these groups may seek to create or exploit grievances and community tensions to the detriment of the whole community.

This presents a complex problem for organisations who need to uphold freedom of speech and the values of tolerance and respect whilst retaining the trust of local communities.

This policy recognises that organisations may have their own venue hire and speaker policies which they work to and are appropriate to their own setting. This policy provides the principles which Prevent Partnership Board members may choose to incorporate into their own similar policies, and the Hampshire Prevent Partnership Board recommends that they do this. Each Prevent Partnership Board member is responsible for its own version of this policy.

1.1 Review

This document will be reviewed 12 Months after final agreement (April 2023).

2.0 Policy Aim

The principal aim of this policy is to ensure that organisational resources are not used to express or promote views, policies, or objectives that:

- undermine our statutory responsibilities
- bring the organisation or the Hampshire and IOW Prevent Board into disrepute
- undermine a commitment to working towards creating cohesive communities
- discriminate against, or incite hatred towards, any groups.

3.0 Statutory Requirements

Organised groups, their members and individuals must operate within the law; this section sets out the statutory obligations in relation to this policy specifically the:

3.1 Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 introduced the Public Sector Equality Duty in April

2011 which requires a Public Authority in the exercise of its functions to have due regard to the need to:

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not.

The protected characteristics covered by the duty are:

- Age
- Gender re-assignment
- Sex
- Disability
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Sexual Orientation
- Race
- Religion or belief.

It also applies to marriage and civil partnership, but only in respect of the requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination. The aim of the general duty is to ensure that public authorities and those carrying out a public function consider how they can promote a fairer society and advance equality and good relations between different groups of people.

The Hampshire Prevent Partnership Board is committed to working with national government, statutory and community partners to develop strong, cohesive, and resilient communities. It delivers this commitment through the Council Community Cohesion and Prevent Strategies.

3.2 Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015

This policy complies with the requirements of Section 26 of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (the Act) which places a duty on certain bodies (“specified authorities” listed in Schedule 6 to the Act), in the exercise of its functions to have ‘*due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.*’

The Hampshire Prevent Partnership Board is responsible as a whole for maintaining oversight of all statutory Prevent delivery.

When carrying out the duty, organisations must have regard to the Statutory Guidance (Revised Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales, HMO, 2019) issued under section 29 of the Act. The duty also applies to private and voluntary agencies and

organisations who provide services or, in some cases, exercise local authority functions whether under voluntary delegation arrangements or via the use of statutory intervention powers functions in relation to children and young people. Section E of the Statutory Guidance sets out the statutory expectations regarding the use of resources, as follows:

- “In complying with the duty, we expect local authorities to ensure that publicly owned venues and resources do not provide a platform for extremists and are not used to disseminate extremist views. This includes considering whether IT equipment available to the general public should use filtering solutions that limit access to terrorist and extremist material” (paragraph 45).
- “We expect Local Authorities to ensure that organisations who work with the Local Authority on Prevent are not engaged in any extremist activity or espouse extremist views” (paragraph 46).
- “Where appropriate, we also expect local authorities to take the opportunity when new contracts for the delivery of their services are being made to ensure that the principles of the duty are written into those contracts in a suitable form” (paragraph 47)

There is no legal definition of extremism however the Government have defined extremism as:

“vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. Also included in the Government’s definition of extremism are calls for the death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas.” (Revised Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales, HMO, 2019, Section B, paragraph 7).

Not every part of this definition has to be satisfied for a particular individual or organisation to be regarded as extremist.

3.3 Terrorism Act 2000

The Terrorism Act 2000 makes it a criminal offence to:

- (a) Belong, or profess to belong, to a proscribed organisation;
- (b) Invite support for a proscribed organisation (and the support is not, or is not restricted to the provision of money or other property);
- (c) Arrange, manage, or assist in arranging or managing a meeting in the knowledge that the meeting is to:
 - support or further the activities of a proscribed organisation;
 - be addressed by a person who belongs or professes to belong to a proscribed organisation;

- address a meeting if the purpose of the address is to encourage support for, or further the activities of, a proscribed organisation;
- (d) Wear clothing or carry or display articles in a public place in such a way or in such circumstances as to arouse reasonable suspicion that an individual is a member or supporter of the proscribed organisation.

4.0 Freedom of Speech

The right to freedom of expression and the right to peaceful protest are crucial in a democracy, information and ideas help to inform political debate and are essential to public accountability and transparency in Government.

This policy must therefore balance the need to ensure freedom of speech and expression, allowing legitimate groups to access venues and resources regardless of their views or beliefs, with the need to comply with current legislation in relation to Equality and Community Safety.

5.0 Disinformation and Misinformation

Disinformation is the deliberate creation and/or sharing of false information with the intention to deceive and mislead audiences either for the purposes of causing harm, or for political, personal, or financial gain.

Misinformation refers to the inadvertent sharing of false information.

When the information environment is deliberately confused this can:

- threaten public safety;
- fracture community cohesion;
- reduce trust in institutions and the media;
- undermine public acceptance of science's role in informing policy development and implementation;
- damage our economic prosperity and our global influence; and
- undermine the integrity of government, the constitution, and our democratic processes.

Balancing the right of freedom of speech whilst mitigating the spread of disinformation and misinformation is necessary in order to comply with this policy.

6.0 Complying with the Policy

In order to comply with this policy, when an organisation takes a decision to allow the use of their resources to an individual, group or organisation, they must satisfy themselves that the intended use of the resources is not in breach of the aims of this policy. This policy aims to ensure that resources are not used to express or promote

views, policies, or objectives that:

- undermine statutory responsibilities;
- bring the organisation and/ or the Hampshire and IOW Prevent Partnership Board into disrepute;
- undermine our commitment to working towards creating cohesive communities.
- discriminate against, or incite hatred towards, any groups.

Resources include (by way of example):

- Property and land owned in which there is a controlling interest;
- The provision of services, such as IT services (including copying or printing);
- Commissioned services and grants.

Please refer to the points below for guidance on implementing this policy and Section 7 for information on Assessing Policy Breaches.

6.1 Senior Officials and Employees

Employees must comply with the organisation's Code of Conduct in the context of this policy at all times. Organisational policies relating to equality issues must be complied with in addition to the requirements of the law. All members of the local community, customers and other employees have a right to be treated with fairness and equity.

Senior Officials and employees must ensure that they do not at any time engage in any activity that goes against any statutory obligations or organisational policies. Any resources they are given access to or use of must not be allowed to be used to disseminate views and/or provide a platform for individuals or groups to disseminate views which go against the aims of this policy.

6.2 Commissioned Services

Employees who commission or procure services must ensure that where appropriate, the principles of this policy are incorporated into commissioning/tender documentation. A clause incorporating the principles of the Prevent Duty must be written into relevant front-line services contracts and other appropriate contracts in a suitable form.

Where the Service Provider has been contracted to assist in delivering the Government's "Prevent Strategy" an additional warranty that the Service Provider has not and will not at any time engage in any extremist activity or espouse extremist views must be included in the service contract.

6.3 Information Technology

The Internet is a global computer network providing a variety of information and communication facilities, consisting of interconnected networks using standardized communication protocols.

Cyberspace is an interactive domain made up of digital networks that is used to store, modify and communicate information. It includes the internet, but also the other information systems that support our businesses, infrastructure and services. Such as telecommunications networks, computer systems, and embedded processors and controllers.

Increased use of the internet and cyberspace has provided a range of new opportunities and challenges for organisations. It is assumed that relevant organisational policies would be applied alongside this policy.

Where possible filtering systems should be in place for IT equipment available to both staff and the general public that limits access to terrorist and extremist material. Staff and Senior Officials should make themselves aware of the relevant organisational policies in relation to use of IT equipment and the internet.

Balancing freedom of speech is important whilst ensuring that no criminal offences or civil law breaches are committed.

This policy recommends that member organisations are able to demonstrate and provide assurance with regards to the internet and cyberspace.

This policy recognises that some organisations will have robust internet security policies in place in line with requirements set out by their regulators. Organisational policies and requirements by regulators will take precedence over this policy.

6.4 Venues

Before a decision is taken to allow the use of venues to an individual, group or organisation you must ensure that the intended use of the facilities is not in breach of this policy by following the process outlined in Section 6.

If an activity, following an assessment by line management and escalation to the relevant Senior Officer/Department, is considered to breach this policy then you should:

- Refuse the use of the venue and explain to the individual, group or organisation the reasons why you are refusing, including reference to any evidence you have used in reaching your decision.
- Explain to the individual, group or organisation that they can appeal the decision by raising their concerns with the appropriate Senior Officer/department, clearly stating the grounds for their appeal.
- The matter will be considered and the relevant party will be informed of the final decision.

6.5 External Speakers

An “external speaker, guest speaker or visitor” is used to describe any individual or organisation who is not a paid/unpaid employee or senior official and who has been invited to speak at a meeting or attend a conference in a venue or facility. It also includes the main contact from any external venue hire client who is paying to use the venue or facility.

An ‘event’ is any gathering, presentation, visit, activity, or initiative that is being held on an organisations’ premises, an external venue or online or where the organisation is being represented, e.g., exhibition, fair. It includes events where external speakers are streamed live into an event or a pre-recorded film is shown. It also includes activity being held at a venue or facility but organised by external venue hire clients.

All speakers or visitors should be made aware by the person or group arranging the event that they have a responsibility to abide by the law and organisational policies including that they:

- Must not discriminate, advocate or incite hatred, violence or call for the breaking of the law;
- Are not permitted to encourage, glorify, or promote any acts of terrorism including individuals, groups or organisations that support such acts;
- Must not spread hatred and intolerance in the community and thus aid in disrupting social and community harmony;
- Must be mindful of the risk of causing offence to or seek to avoid insulting other faiths or groups, within a framework of positive debate and challenge;
- Are not permitted to raise or gather funds for any external organisation or cause without express permission.

The process in section 6 should be followed to make an assessment. If an external speaker or event following an assessment by the relevant manager, is considered to breach this policy you should refer to section 6.4 in this policy.

7.0 Assessing Policy Breaches

Making an assessment to determine if the aims of this policy have been broken can be a difficult decision therefore staff should follow the processes set out below.

Checks should be managed sensitively and proportionately, in strict accordance with the legal requirements for information sharing amongst statutory partners and data protection principles.

Individuals are also encouraged to speak to their line manager and relevant department for advice and support.

7.1 Assessment Process

The assessment process must be followed to determine if resources can be used by individuals and organisations to ensure compliance with this policy.

Step 1 - Gather Information

- Conduct online checks; use more than one search engine to prevent bias;
- Consult partner organisations for further information if appropriate;
- Gather as much primary source and attributable information as possible;

Step 2 - Assess Information

- Assess credibility of sources and allocate weight accordingly;
- Is there evidence that the speaker or organisation has promoted messages of intolerance and hate towards any groups under the protected characteristics identified within equalities legislation and guidance?
- Identify if the speaker or organisation has been banned elsewhere previously from using public sector resources;
- Has the speaker or organisation attracted controversy in the past?
- Is there a risk that the speaker or event will lead to protests? Is any protest likely to obstruct or prevent access to any public road?
- Consider any risks to cohesion, equality, diversity and inclusion, community safety and the potential for public disorder;
- Will hosting the speaker or event have a significant reputational risk?
- Seek further advice from partner organisations to understand information if necessary;
- Discuss with line manager if in any doubt.

Step 3 - Consult

- Review identified risks to cohesion, equality, diversity and inclusion, community safety and the potential for public disorder;
- Does the speaker belong to, or is inviting support to, or is otherwise furthering the activities of a proscribed organisation under schedule 2 of the Terrorism Act 2000? If so, consider the duty to report that individual to the police;
- Consult partner organisations on any risks identified.

Step 4 – Decision

- If after consultation with a senior official, the organisation is determined to be in breach of this policy then you must refuse access to resources;
- Inform the speaker or organisation of your decision including reference to any evidence you have used in reaching your decision;
- Inform the speaker or organisation that they can appeal the decision;
- Inform wider partners as appropriate of your decision.