

16 April 2008

FINAL VERSION

Strategic issues - Preventing Violent Extremism -

Actions Required

1. Office Holders to **note** the contents of this briefing.

Contact Officer: Michael McLean, 0207 664 3023, michael.mclean@lga.gov.uk

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Strategic issues - Preventing Violent Extremism

Summary

This paper is to inform the LGA Office Holders of recent and upcoming Preventing Violent Extremism activities undertaken by the LGA and local authorities. In particular, there are a number of reviews that are expected to take place over the mid-April to September period where careful management will be needed to avoid complications with local elections and the over-burdening of local authorities with information requests and visits.

Background

Local Authorities and the LGA have a vital role in strengthening communities through Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) under the auspices of the PREVENT strand of the Government's counter-terrorism strategy (CONTEST).

Cross-Government responsibility for PREVENT rests with the Home Office and Communities and Local Government with the principal objective; "To prevent people becoming or supporting terrorists or violent extremists".

The PVE agenda is becoming an increasingly important part of the core services delivered by local authorities and will remain a high priority for the foreseeable future.

LGA Stance

The LGA has previously welcomed the Government's change of emphasis to a community-based response to PVE and acknowledgement that an isolated security response is insufficient. LGA agree with this emphasis and encourage local authorities to play a significant role in the PREVENT agenda within their core responsibilities for place-shaping and delivering community leadership.

The Pathfinder Fund DVD¹ quotes Sir Simon Milton stating that 'strengthening Communities is core business' and that 'if we don't play our part, if we assume that it is just something the police can deal with then unfortunately next time they (terrorists) might succeed.'

Issues to note

1. LAA PROCESS

The selection or non-selection of National Indicator 35: *Building resilience to violent extremism* emerged as a contentious issue during LAA negotiations.

The Home Office, via the Office for Security and Counter Terrorism (OSCT), have produced a 'heat map' which identifies 30 areas with a high risk of producing violent extremists and are seeking a good take-up of NI:35 across this group. Around nineteen areas across the country have indicated that they will pick up the indicator in their priority 35 set.

¹ DVD produced for CLG Extremism Conference October 31 2007

The HO believe that local authorities that do not select NI:35 are not prioritising PVE and concluding that little or no PVE work is being undertaken. To persuade local authorities to select NI:35, the HO is applying pressure via the Police, and senior officials during LAA negotiations which has had only limited success.

In contrast, while CLG would prefer more local authorities to select NI:35, CLG seems to be more comfortable with local authorities not selecting NI:35 but would like a higher level of assurance that effective PVE action plans and a commitment to constructive engagement are in place.

Local authorities are reluctant to pick up the indicator because the term "violent extremism" could alienate communities, undermining cohesion work and are extremely cautious about making public statements around PVE. There is also concern about the measurability of the indicator.

2. The Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund

The 2007/8 Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund delivered £6m in funding to around 70 local authorities to work with partners and communities to deliver a community-based response to violent extremism.

Eligibility for the fund was based on concentrations of Muslim population, with 5% and funding was distributed according to an assessment carried out by CLG of the need and ambition of the proposals brought forward. Mean funding was approximately £85k per authority. However, multi-area partnerships were encouraged (and have proved successful) meaning that a number of authorities which fell below the 5% bar were included in Pathfinder work.

For the 2008-2011 Comprehensive Spending Review period, the Government announced that £45m (£12m/£15m/£18m) will be made available to support local delivery. Eligibility and distribution of funding will be based on a ratio according to the overall size of the Muslim population within a local area.

3. CLG Internal Review of Pathfinder Fund Projects 2007-08

CLG are undertaking an internal review of all 70 pathfinder projects that were funded in the 2007-08 financial year. The review has been requested by the Prime Minister's Office and will be a 'light-touch' review consisting of information requests via email, telephone and some visits to local authorities. The report is being conducted in two phases with phase one due to report in June 2008 and phase two is provisionally scheduled to report in September 2008.

4. PREVENT Learning and Development Exercise

As part of a national review of police delivery of the CONTEST strategy, the Audit Commission and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of the Constabulary, with support from CLG and the Home Office, are carrying out a Learning and Development Exercise for PREVENT activities undertaken by 14 local authorities that are in receipt of PVE Pathfinder Fund monies. The Exercise is set to get underway with a pilot of 3 areas in mid-May and scheduled for completion in late-July.

The Exercise aims to identify 'what works, what doesn't and what looks promising' regarding partnership initiatives to tackle PVE, particularly the relationship between local authorities and the Police. Participation is voluntary but the initial approach caused consternation from Chief Executives and the LGA due to the language, methodology and the timing which appeared to be closer to a compulsory inspection than a collaborative project.

After belated consultation of the LGA and local authorities, concerns over the approach were addressed and it is now more inclusive with opportunities for local authorities to discuss the methodology and findings of the exercise.

The areas invited to participate are:

- Waltham Forest, Birmingham (1), Kirklees (pilot areas)
- Tower Hamlets, Newham, Redbridge
- Manchester, Preston, Birmingham (2)
- Leeds, Bradford, Leicester
- Ealing, Wycombe, Luton

5. Review of PVE Activities by Lord Patel of Bradford

Lord Kamlesh Patel of Bradford has been appointed by the PM as an adviser to Rt Hazel Blears MP. His first task is to undertake an independent review of 22 local authorities to examine how best to ensure effective community engagement on the PVE agenda. Lord Patel intends to hold discussions with policy-makers, local partners, community stakeholders and frontline delivery staff.

The Review has a very tight timeframe with visits planned to 22 local authorities within the next 8 weeks. Paul Coen has written to all 22 authorities encouraging local authorities to assist Lord Patel and has received a number of positive responses. The LGA will also be seeking a meeting with Lord Patel.

The objectives of the Review will be to provide recommendations on the levers, structures and approach by which to ensure:

- effective delivery of the PVE strategy by local authorities and their partners;
- that synergies between the PVE agenda and other policy areas (in particular, community cohesion, race equalities and community empowerment) are fully understood and exploited at national and local levels; and,
- that effective engagement with local communities to improve delivery is realised.

6. LGA PVE Roundtable Meeting

The LGA is hosting a PVE Roundtable on 29 April 2008 to review the progress made and discuss the way forward for local government, the LGA, IDeA and central government on the PREVENT agenda. Leaders and Chief Executives from a small selection of local authorities will be invited to discuss the PVE agenda with Sir Simon Milton, LGA Group Leaders, Paul Coen, and Helen Murray with senior officials from CLG and the Home Office also attending. Rt Hazel Blears MP may also attend.

7. Home Office – OSCT PREVENT DELIVERY PLAN

LGA reviewed the final draft of the PREVENT Delivery plan and commented that with the Plan focuses heavily on Police objectives and the performance management of NI:35 while lacking detailed links to local government, particularly elected members. The Plan makes no references to the tension for local authorities and partners between PVE work and maintaining community cohesion and no recognition that progress on PVE can occur without being performance managed by NI:35.

The PREVENT Delivery Plan is a dense document and will not be made publicly available but a summary version for local authorities is expected to be developed.

The OSCT PREVENT Delivery Plan is provisionally set to be launched at a Basic Command Unit Conference on the 16th of April. The Home Secretary is expected to speak at the launch about the role of police in PREVENT and Hazel Blears is also expected to speak of the need for partnership and the role of local authorities in PREVENT.

8. LGA work in Europe

The LGA is taking a pro-active approach to engaging in the development of the EU's counter-terrorism policy. Strategic EU-level engagement is important to ensure that the local authority role in preventing terrorism is understood and incorporated in EU policies.

UK Rapporteur for the Committee of the Regions Opinion on the EU Policy "Stepping up the fight against terrorism":

In November 2007, the EU adopted a new package of counter-terrorism proposals dealing with the criminalisation of terrorist training, recruitment and public provocation to commit terrorist offences and preventing the use of explosives by terrorists but the proposals fail to recognise the critical role of local and regional authorities in preventing terrorism.

The Committee of the Regions (CoR) is producing a formal Opinion on these proposals to ensure that the local dimension is included. The Rapporteur is Lord Tope, a councillor from the London Borough of Sutton and a member of the Metropolitan Police Authority.

As part of Lord Tope's consultation, the CoR will hold a round-table in April on counter-terrorism and the preventative / responsive role of local and regional authorities. The LGA will also be supporting Lord Tope by organising a consultation workshop to inform the Opinion which will be hosted by Kirklees Council in May. It is anticipated that the Opinion will be adopted at the June 2008 CoR plenary meeting.

The Local Government Chronicle is accompanying Lord Tope to the CoR roundtable in mid-April, with an article expected to be published in the coming weeks about the work undertaken by Lord Tope, and the important role for local government in counter-terrorism issues both domestically and within Europe. Local authorities within the UK lead European local authorities in the level of engagement with central Government on preventing violent extremism.

Other examples of LGA-EU engagement includes:

- Representation at an EU conference on the role of education in preventing violent radicalisation, September 2007
- Establishing contact with the Council of the EU counter-terrorism co-ordinator
- Early input into the Communication on the Prevention of Violent Radicalisation

Contact Officer: Michael McLean
0207 664 3023
michael.mclean@lga.gov.uk