Changing approaches to preventing terrorism

" Confronting non-violent extremism isn't just about changing laws; its about all of us changing our approach" (David Cameron MP, Ninestiles School, Birmingham, 20 July 2015). Critically analyse whether and to what extent local police officers could change their approach

The2011 Government Prevent strategysupports and endorses a new framework to tackle terrorism based upon 3 objectives. ' Prevent' will challenge non-violent extremist ideas where they create an environment conductive to terrorism.[1]This essay will be split into two parts, the first discussing how best local police officers should work with educational institutions to challenge the ideology of extremism (1 st objective), as well as the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism (2 nd objective). These are both discussed within the context of police officer cooperation with educational institutions (Part of the 3 rd objective). The second part of this essay focuses specifically on the importance of local police officers building ' trust with communities, and working in partnership with them.[2]It will be shown how police officers can adapt their approach based on known failures of previous community based schemes. Finally, it is worthy to note ' extremism' is discussed in this essay with the definition given to it in the 2011 Prevent document 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'[3].

Thus, the first paragraph of this essay will show the importance of ' local policeofficers working with educational institutions where there are risks ofradicalisation'[4]. It will be shown why educational institutions are a key focus point inconfronting both non-violent extremism and its by-products. It

is the belief ofthe home office that there is ' evidence to indicate that some extremistorganisations… target specific universities and colleges with higher Islamicattendance with the objective of radicalising and recruiting students'. TheAssociation of Chief Police Officers support the Home Office by stating thosewith extremist views ' who seek to radicalise people, often target students'.[5]Indeed, similar evidencecan be found elsewhere. Following the death of Lee Rigby, the Extremism TaskForce stated that ' extremist preachers use some higher education institutionsas a platform for spreading their message'.[6]Taylor contends thatbetween 2003 and 2006, ' at least 3 Al Qaeda operations involved people who hadbecome involved in extremism while they were at school'.[7]Partly as a result, Section26 of the Counter Terrorism and Security act imposes a duty on all schools tohave due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.[8]As such, it is essentialthat local police officers co-operate with educational facilities to putgreater effort in to the challenging non-violent extremism of the ideology ofterrorism.

Franks contends that if terrorism is to beeffectively countered, then the root causes of violence need to be addressed and thus the key is ' to counter the extremist ideology'.[9]Indeed, the government endorses ' greater effort to respond to ideological challenge of terrorism', the first of three ' Prevent' strategy objectives.[10]The Association of Chief Police Officers clarify the meaning of the 1 st prevent objective ' responding to the ideological challenge of terrorism'. Accordingly, ACPO state that police officers must work in partnership with educational institutions to ' use teaching and learning to help young people to develop the knowledge and skills to

challenge extremist narratives.[11]Credit can be given to many police forces in the establishment of Safer Schools Partnerships (SSPs), in which police officers can ' deliver a range of Prevent activities to engage students around issues of extremism', to triumph western values of democracy and human rights.[12]Furthermore, the ' police may be able to advise' teachers ' giving the confidence to manage debates about contentious issues and help develop pupils critical thinking skills.[13]Combatting the ideology of extremism and terrorism in schools is important, not because there is significant evidence to suggest children are being radicalised as ' there is not', but ' because they can play a vital role in preparing young people to challenge extremism… and rebut those who are apologists [of terrorism]'. [14]Thus, police officers must help educational institutions provide a basis from which those who are most vulnerable can ' condemn wild conspiracy theories, antisemitism and sectarianism.[15]On university campuses, ' the majority of Prevent delivery does not involve external intervention, instead taking the form of university staff and student-union officials implementing existing institutional policies ' informed by the guidance provided'.[16]These policies seek to combat extremist ideology by preventing hate speech, incitement or support for extremist views.[17]Beider states that only 45 and 40 percent of universities and colleges (respectively) are engaged with police officers on Prevent work.[18]It is clear, in conjunction with these higher education authorities, local police officers should increase their engagement in higher education institution's Prevent policies. It is yet to be seen whether the Counter Terrorism and Security Act will, having made the ' Delivery of Prevent a legal requirement', have an effect on the involvement of local police officers in prevent on campuses,[19]

Thesecond imperative duty of local police officers involved in Prevent-delivery istraining educational institution's staff in identifying extremism. Thiscorresponds with the second aim of prevent; to ' prevent people from being drawninto terrorism and ensure they are given appropriate advice and support.[20]Sutton comments on therole of local police officers, placing value on ' table top exercises witheducational institutions' that ' have students and staff role-play potentialscenarios to develop an ability to detect extremist views'.[21]Credit can be given topolice forces as there is evidence to show they provide the means for localofficers to engage in such exercises. ' Operation Graduate' and ' OperationBatchelor', developed by the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC), ' assistpolice officers… to create debate between students about the issues whichrelate to prevent, such as identifying extremist views.[22]Moving on, Sutton alsoadvocates the development of referral mechanisms for vulnerable students.[23]For example, ' some areasmay again find that SSPs can help with the early identification and thereforesupport pupils vulnerable to the messages of extremism'.[24]For example, both Leedsand Bradford ' Safer School Partnership Guidance Documents' state that pupilsmost at risk of radicalisation are supported through early intervention, allowing ' radical messages to be challenged and rejected by the schoolcommunity'. [25]Support programmes such as ' Channel' are only to be referred to if there isvery clear evidence that the pupil is being radicalised and there is no moreproportionate means of dealing with the issues, such as SSPs. Finally, havingshown the importance of the joint police and educational institution role inpreventing pupils from being lured into terrorist activity by non-violent extremism, it cannot be ignored that police officers could seek to be more

proactive intheir approach to initiating exercises with educational institutions. Indeed, the government express concern in the prevent strategy review that ' themajority of schools, or 70 percent, felt they needed more training andinformation to build effective resilience to radicalisation'. [26]Similarly, only 26 percent of schools surveyed had used the police to provide information and supportabout Prevent'.[27]

Thesecond part of this essay will show the importance of local police officersseeking to build trust with communities, and the importance of working inpartnership with them.[28]Community orientatedapproaches seek the involvement, support and trust of men and women from localcommunities in the ' formulation, implementation and evaluation ofcounter-terrorism measures to increase their effectiveness'. It will first beshown that a community based approach must be adapted to avoid previousfailures. Briggs (et. al) contend that building meaningful relations withMuslim communities will require police forces listen to, and take, all theirgrievances seriously.[29]Significance for thispoint can be found in a report by the ' Organisation for Security and Co-operationin Europe' which found that these grievances, either real or perceived, oftenform ' the reasons why people radicalise to violence'.[30]Thus, community'sengagement can be diminished by failing to engage people on a diverse range ofissues such as poverty or discrimination. Therefore, police officers should notlimit their focus to extremism and terrorism[31]. Furthermore, theOrganisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe commissioned a report in2014 concluded that there is a risk of stigmatising particular communities by consideringonly Islam in anti-terrorism efforts, thus preventing effective

community trustand partnerships.[32]Indeed, a motion passedat the April 2015 NUS conference pledged to oppose Prevent delivery on campusdeeming it as ' part of an attempt to attack Muslim people.[33]Likewise, in a speechgiven by the vice president of Student Affairs at the Federation of StudentIslamic Societies, it was stated that Prevent itself is a racist andislamophobia agenda.[34]Ansari and Kara also level, albeit biased, criticism at Ian Blair for introducing a proposal that wouldhave seen ' places of worship closed… if [Imans] failed to take steps to stopcertain extremist behaviour occurring'.[35]Significance for thepoint is found in the fact Britain was being ' subjected to a relentless bombingcampaign by the IRA, with no similar proposal for the closure of catholicchurches which may have equally failed to prevent extremism and terrorism.[36]Thus, local policeofficers should avoid focusing solely on engagement with Islamic communities; ' thiskind of practice does not promote local community engagement; it reinforces theperception that the police are unfairly targeting Islam' and thus have ' anegative impact on the police reputation in the eyes of many Muslim communities'.[37]

Thesuccess of police and community trust and relationships is based on the premisethat people being drawn into radicalisation can be identified by members oftheir own community, and thus reported to the police and provided with therelevant support or de-radicalisation. Indeed, Andrew Ibrahim's planned terrorattack was prevented ' after members of the Muslim community, who had attendedan awareness workshop on prevent, raised concerns about him to the police.[38]Conversely, Taimoural-Abdaly successfully carried out a suicide attack abroad, despite the fact' he had

been challenged by mosque leaders in the united kingdom who did notconsider it appropriate to refer him to the police'.[39]These cases indicate thescope for positive interaction between local police officers and communities, and the potential consequences should the community based approach fail. It followsthat police officers should adapt their approach to maximise theirunderstanding of communities as a basis to better engage and co-operate withthem. As such, Police leaders should ensure that police officers working incommunities are assigned for a long-enough period to allow them to develop asophisticated understanding of these communities'. [40]

To conclude, it has been shown that local officersmust ensure they approach both the ' ideological challenge of extremism andterrorism', as well as ' prevent people from being drawn into terrorism', withemphasis on educational institutions where the risk of radicalisation is at itshighest. It has also been shown how local police officersmust adapt their approach to building trust and relationships with communities.

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