

Preventing Violent Extremism: Training for Frontline Staff in Hackney

A Report of the two-day training event held on Monday 15th and Tuesday 16th February 2010 at City Edge in the London Borough of Hackney.



Preventing Violent Extremism: Training for Frontline Staff

Report of the two-day programme held on Monday 15th and Tuesday 16th February 2010 at City Edge, Hackney by Waterhouse Consulting Group

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Summary

Waterhouse Consulting Group was commissioned in February 2010 by the Hackney Borough Council to deliver training for frontline staff on the Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) agenda.

Waterhouse Consulting Group developed a two-day training programme for frontline staff which was held at City Edge on Monday 15th and Tuesday 16th February 2010. The aims and objectives were to:

- 1) get a better understanding of the Counter Terrorism landscape and share good practice;
- 2) gain an understanding of Britain's Muslim communities;
- 3) understand extremist ideologies and groups operating in the UK and,
- 4) equip staff with tools to:
 - Identify individuals who are vulnerable
 - Identify appropriate interventions to support these individuals

Sixteen frontline staff members attended (please see appendix). The two day programme adopted a blended approach with videos, acting/role plays, discussion groups and workshops in order to be inclusive and to meet the diverse learning needs of the participants. It was delivered by Dr Waqar Azmi OBE (Government's former Chief Diversity Adviser, Chairman of Waterhouse Consulting Group); Fatima Qamar and Sophia Zeschitz.

The two-day training was conducted under Chatham House Rules so all delegates would feel free to express their views and opinions in a safe and confidential environment.

The outcomes of the two-day programme were extremely positive. It not only helped to highlight key issues with the Government's Prevent strategy, but also equipped front line staff to recognise vulnerability factors that extremist ideologies could exploit and the pathway to radicalisation. On an organisational level the training helped to clarify the existing Prevent approach within the Borough of Hackney.

Recommendations

Our key recommendations based on the two-day programme and the views of the delegates are as follows;

- 1) Communication and the exchange of experiences between the agencies should be strengthened in order to achieve a high level of cooperation and awareness of the Prevent approach in Hackney.
- 2) Staff should be provided with clear guidelines on how to deal with vulnerable individuals, ensuring consistency and credibility of approach across Hackney Borough.
- 3) Collaborative work should be encouraged between community representatives and agencies to develop effective support networks within the wider Hackney community by providing:

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- a) volunteering opportunities, and;
 - b) participation in decision making processes
- 4) Procedures implemented that ensure staff are not exposed to criminal prosecution due to legally sensitive information accessed for work purposes.
 - 5) PVE level 4 training for those front line staff who have done levels 2 & 3.
 - 6) PVE Training for wider sections of the community to develop 'Community Champions'; gain greater 'buy-in' and 'demystify' the work that public sector officials are doing.
 - 7)
 - 8) Front line staff require 'Islam Awareness' training to better equip them on this agenda.

Participant's recommendations

Participants felt that this training is critical and would recommend it to their colleagues. More specific needs which were identified included:

- 'Other colleagues working in the area should be provided with this training'.
- There needs to be closer communication between the relevant agencies'.
- 'We need to be clear as to the existence and policies of the referral pathways rather than the Prevent panel'.
- 'We need guidelines as to web use, because gathering information on PVE etc. might expose us to legally sensitive areas'.
- 'We need to build trust amongst the various communities and we need to be sure that the views of community leaders are being represented'.
- 'The Community on a wider scale need to be made aware of and involved in Hackney's Prevent approach'

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1. Introduction

Waterhouse Consulting Group was commissioned in February 2010 by the Hackney Borough Council to deliver training for frontline staff on the Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) agenda.

a. Aim

The aim of the training was:

'To equip staff with the knowledge and skills needed to identify and refer vulnerable individuals and facilitate appropriate interventions.'

b. Objectives

The objectives of the training for frontline staff were to:

- 1) get a better understanding of the Counter Terrorism landscape and share good practice;
- 2) gain an understanding of Britain's Muslim communities;
- 3) understand extremist ideologies and groups operating in the UK and,
- 4) equip staff with tools to:
 - Identify individuals who are vulnerable
 - Identify appropriate interventions to support these individuals

c. Feedback at a glance

93% of delegates stated the training had been 'very useful and beneficial' or 'useful and beneficial', 7% stated the training was 'fairly useful' to their work.

100% of delegates would recommend this training course to their colleagues.

More specifically:

'The PVE Landscape': 93% rated as 'very useful' or 'useful'.

'The Young Person's Landscape': 93% rated as 'very useful' or 'useful'.

'Culture': 73% rated as 'very useful' or 'useful'.

'Radicalisation': 100% rated as 'very useful' or 'useful'.

'Acting Out': 87% rated as 'very useful' or 'useful'.

'Vulnerability Factors': 87% rated as 'very useful' or 'useful'.

'Sharing Good Practice': 81% rated as 'very useful' or 'useful'.

3. Key issues, challenges & priorities

The training provided by Waterhouse Consulting Group equipped all delegates with an understanding of the Prevent agenda, the pathways to radicalisation and vulnerability factors but also, delegates were made aware of the roles and operations of the different agencies involved in the local Prevent strategy. However, with reference to the activities the delegates are involved in, *sharing good practice* provided valuable insights into areas that demand additional attention for the future.

'The PVE Landscape'

Following the introduction to the course, delegates were explained the Government's Preventing Violent Extremism Agenda by refreshing delegates on the Prevent objectives (5+2) and explaining the national, regional and local delivery landscape.

The delegates' understanding of and their confidence in their roles within the PVE Landscape was strengthened, with 93% of the delegates agreeing on the overall usefulness of this aspect of the training and 7% finding this fairly useful.

'Radicalisation'

Following up on a theoretical introduction into extremist ideologies, the delegates identified the signs of radicalisation in a group work session. The findings were presented by a group representative and included:

- preaching of hatred/ violence
- support of specific political parties/groups, i.e. BNP, AQ, IRA
- sudden/extreme change in behaviour (lack of confidence ->too much confidence)
- association with certain groups/peers
- vulnerability (those more vulnerable are at a higher risk of radicalisation)
- use of certain media platforms
- change in appearance
- change of thought (sudden rather than gradual)
- isolation & withdrawal
- identity (feeling the need of 'belonging') -> looking for role models
- sudden gain/sense of knowledge
- becoming more devout
- interest in conspiracy theories

Although delegates acknowledged that the above points may give rise to concern they agreed that apart from the preaching of violence and hatred, only an accumulation of various factors would justify assuming radicalisation is taking place.

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Delegate presenting findings from the group discussions

'Vulnerability factors'

After a brief summary of the previous day's training, the second day began with two role-plays being acted out by members of the Waterhouse Consulting training team. Delegates consisted of a mixture of stakeholders therefore a non-specific role play scenario was used, which delegates used to apply to their own professional settings.

Scene 1: Angry Mentee

A member of staff arrives at a mentee's house for a scheduled mentoring session. On entering the house, she finds that the mentee is alone and looking at disturbing images of the treatment of Muslims in Gaza. The mentee is very angry and frustrated – and begins to aim this anger towards the member of staff, firing a series of questions towards her about what can be done. The mentee hints at taking extreme measures to invoke change, and due to the staff member's inadequacies in dealing with the situation appropriately, there is a breakdown of communication and she is kicked out of the mentee's home.

After each role-play, discussion was opened up to the group about how the member of staff could have behaved and acted differently to ensure successful engagement with the mentee. The member of staff and the mentee remained in character for the purpose of this discussion, and delegates were invited to question each character to gain a further insight into their thinking, to attempt to appease the mentee themselves, and to offer the member of staff advice. Through the delegates' advice, the first scenario served to exemplify approaches to be taken to (re-) engage with the individual, or respectively explain how front line staff from different fields would (have) proceed(-ed) following up on the scenes that has been acted out.

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This provided for the following strategies for the member of staff:

- empathise/connect -> ask questions about the film
- provide support
- be a sounding board -> listen
- don't say you understand
- get person to sit down, calm down
- try to channel her passion towards something else

The input of the front line staff was then used to re-enact the scene, incorporating advice towards a more successful engagement of the member of staff and the mentee.

Scene 2: sudden change

A member of staff walks in on a colleague finishing her prayers. She knows this individual, and works with her closely – she knows that she was not religious before she went on holiday. Before she left for holiday, the colleague enjoyed partying and alcohol and now she has become a Muslim and is praying wearing a head-scarf. The staff member is visibly surprised on seeing the colleague praying and struggles to deal with the situation adequately. The colleague picks up on this and becomes more and more agitated with the treatment and barrage of questions she faces. The staff member seems suspicious of the colleague's sudden change to Islam, particularly considering her previous lifestyle. The scene ends with the colleague walking away from the staff member and mumbling that she hasn't got time for her and needs to attend an Islamic Study Group, the name of which the staff member is unfamiliar with.

The second scene was used for delegates to exemplify certain vulnerability factors. The factors identified were:

- Sudden change, completely different
- Reluctance to look at previous life
- Doesn't want to see old friends
- Who did she meet during her holiday?
- What kind of meeting is it? Is the group referred to mainstream or radical?
- Departure from previous identity

The delegates pointed out that all of these features however, may not be signs of vulnerability but rather just a change in behaviour that in itself does not necessarily give rise to concern. Delegates noticed the difficult position to judge the implications particularly of a 'spiritual journey'. They emphasised the fact that on their own, neither of the above factors would be sufficient to justify concerns but needed to be accompanied by further signs.

The feedback received from 'Acting Out' was extremely positive. 93% of the delegates found the role-plays to be 'very useful', 7% found this 'useful'.

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Next Steps

Delegates were then asked what their ‘next steps’ would be, if they came across in individual they were concerned about. This turned out to be extremely valuable as front line staff from other fields got to know how others would deal with particular situations and also got an insight into the mechanisms and strategies that are in place in other agencies. This highlighted the importance of inter-agency communication and encouraged delegates to seek advice from across the agencies.

Front Line Staff	Next Steps...
Youth Offending Teams	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Prior to meeting the individual, case history would and file would be read. 2) Contact Multi-agency partners to discuss 3) Any other incidents 4) To make aware of the situation occurs 5) To reflect and discuss 6) Contact that local PVE Lead – Nazia Matin
Police	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Calm the situation – offer support afterwards 2) Write an Intent report – which would then be looked at 3) Background check, history or crime? Violence? 4) Link in with Prevent Lead for Hackney - NM
Colleges	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Obtain FULL details of the situation i.e. what was the student watching? 2) If situation is serious –contact Line Manager & discuss. 3) Speak to safeguarding officer, follow safeguarding policy. 4) Look at internal referral systems in place i.e. college base Imam, counseling, youth worker to steer/provide support. 5) Contact Prevent Lead - NM
St. Mungos –Prison Worker	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Obtain full objective details of the situation 2) Impact Assessment 3) Mismanagement Policy
Youth Worker	<p>Look at this case as a whole – key questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Family, stability – is there an underlying reason for the situation? 2) Contact partners to make aware – any other issues 3) Try to engage soon, list risk- inform manager and other agencies resp. for that individual 4) Write in case notes – talk to Prevent Lead - NM
Probation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Record on database 2) Discuss with Line Manager and MAPPA 3) Talk to Police – intelligence 4) Depending no seriousness of situation, contact local authorities / Prevent Lead for Hackney - NM
The Learning Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In schools, safeguarding lead will be contact>headteacher>prevent panel • Make use of close network of professionals – discuss. • Safer schools partnership with Police • Safeguarding and Muslims Independent Advisory Member. • If this goes to the Prevent Panel and make a partnership agreement on how to deal with the situation.

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Delegates discussing good practice

Sharing good practice

Split up in three groups, delegates were provided with an opportunity to share good practice on the local PVE agenda. Delegates were asked to tackle three questions, and were allocated 15 minutes for each:

1. What activities are you engaged in?
2. What currently works and what doesn't?
3. Where do the gaps still exist?

A spokesperson was put forward to share their group's current work on the PVE agenda and their thoughts and ideas on areas requiring further attention and improvement. Responses included:

What activities are you engaged in?

- 'work with police cadets'
- 'development of prevent programme to work in YOIs'
- 'one on one work with young people in the community/prisons'
- 'dealing with personal issues through counselling and advice/group work and debates'
- 'prevent training, planning and conferences'
- "“watch over me”"
- 'DCSF training kit'
- 'Community cohesion projects such as “Multi-faith day”, Football Tournament, “Act Now” ‘

What currently works?

- 'Multi-agency partnership'
- 'Prevent set-up in Hackney'
- 'Muslim community involvement'
- 'Consistency in the local approach to Prevent'
- 'Cadet engagement at Hackney Police Station'

What doesn't work?

- 'Top down approach'
- 'Neglecting other forms of extremism (eg. BNP)'
- 'Communication with workers on the ground'
- 'No multi-faith approach within the Borough'

Where do gaps still exist?

- 'Training on equality and diversity for young people and front line staff'
- 'access to mosques'
- 'PVE Youth Board/ youth representation that gives young people a voice'
- 'Closer communication between the agencies'
- 'Building trust amongst the different communities'
- 'Involvement of community leaders, difficulties in judging if the right people are involved'
- 'Clear policies around referral system'
- 'Insecurity of staff if they might be exposed to criminal prosecution due to information gathering around radicalisation etc.'
- General Islam awareness and myth busting training needed for all staff
- Media Training for Imams – Islamophobia
- Level 4 PVE training for those that attended levels 2 & 3
- Muslims community buy-in, understanding their role within Hackneys Prevent Agenda.

Delegates found the exercise of sharing good practices invaluable. A significant number of delegates commented that it had been the most useful aspect of the training programme. While sharing good practices, a number of delegates expressed their frustration at the lack of opportunities they have to meet with their colleagues across the agencies to share what's working in their area, and to learn from each other. A substantial number of delegates felt it would be hugely beneficial for them to meet and share good practices with each other on a much more regular basis.

Moreover, sharing good practice provided a forum for delegates to express concerns as to the lack of clarity and guidelines when investigating into topics related to violent extremism and radicalisation, as this could lead them into being exposed to criminal prosecution.

Overall, according to our feedback, 81% of delegates found this part of the training 'very useful' or 'useful'. 19% found this fairly useful.

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4. Some participant views/comments

This was an important event for Hackney the outcome of which has been extremely positive. The main aim of the two-day training was to support front line staff in increasing their understanding of Preventing Violent Extremism. This was achieved and delegates became comfortable with the Prevent strategy, understood the radicalisation process and grievances that extremist ideology exploits. Delegates also understood their responsibilities in supporting vulnerable individuals.

By bringing together front line staff from different agencies in Hackney, the training furthermore provided the platform that made delegates aware of their roles within a wider network of the agencies in Hackney. This encouraged inter-agency communication and supported building contact networks amongst the delegates.

The training concluded with extremely positive feedback from the group, with 100% of delegates agreeing they would recommend the training to others:

“Training was very enjoyable, most comprehensive, coherent and professionally delivered”.

“I have learnt a lot about Prevent and the Islamic faith as well as radicalisation and vulnerability factors”

“...key learning point is I can impact the work of PVE within my working role”

“Great insight into what all the other agencies were doing”

“... now much clearer on policy on Prevent and processes, i.e. referral pathways”

5. Recommendations

Key recommendations based on the two-day programme and the views of the delegates are as follows;

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Participant's recommendations

Participants felt that this training is critical and would recommend it to their colleagues. More specific needs which were identified included:

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Appendix I - List of Delegates that attended the training on the 15th and 16TH February 2010

Hackney Borough Council

PVE Coordinator

PVE Worker

Resettlement Worker

Resettlement Worker

Team Manager

Prevent Lead for Hackney

Centre Managers x 2

St. MUNGOS

Prison Muslim Worker x 1

Hackney Community College x 3

Police - Prevent Engagement officers x 2

Learning Trust x 1

Probation – Probation Officer x 1

WATERHOUSE
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