

'Prevent'

A Guide for Clubs & Societies

As many of you will already be aware NUSU has, over recent years, done various training and guidance on 'Prevent'. This followed the passing in law by government of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, which outlined a number of measures aimed at tackling extremism and radicalisation of people in the UK. Whilst this is a contentious issue to many students, and indeed the National Union of Students (NUS) has ran a campaign against the government's 'Prevent Agenda', there are a few things we need to draw to your attention.

We are looking at 'Prevent' as part of our overall safeguarding agenda; it sits alongside duty of care, health and safety, our commitment to equality and inclusivity, and just looking after yourself and your friends. Some of the Officers and staff at the Students' Union have been on 'Prevent' training, and what was very clear is that we are not here to monitor or pursue potential terrorists. It is all about being aware that some people, especially vulnerable people, can be targeted by extremists for radicalisation, and that unchallenged extreme views could lead vulnerable people into being radicalised. Believe it or not people whose views are becoming more extreme are often very overt in letting others know, so it is not unusual for others to question behaviour or views that are becoming more shall we say 'irate' or 'outside the norm'.

NUSU already have a robust external speaker policy (on which we have issued separate guidance), and this has operated quite harmoniously alongside our commitment to Freedom of Speech for several years now with no issues, so you will see no change in that policy.

However, the University now has a nominated point of contact (the Head of the Wellbeing Service on ext 85870) who any member of staff, or student, can speak to if they have any concerns about other students, staff or groups. All information is confidential, and making an observation or comment is unlikely to mean that police and helicopters are going to swoop in! All information is assessed and passed on to relevant authorities if it is felt necessary. If you feel uncomfortable contacting the University directly or have any questions you can contact our NUSU Activities Officer, on 01912393964, in the first instance.

We'd like to stress here that we don't want students to 'go out looking'! It is much more about being aware and speaking up if you have concerns. We are also aware that some of the NUS concerns are about victimisation and we have to be considerate in the manner concerns could manifest themselves. We will deal with such issues if or when they arise.

For further information, the full government guidance to HEIs can be viewed here: *Prevent Duty Guidance: for higher education institutions in England and Wales.*



You will note on the last page there is specific reference to Students' Unions. It draws attention to the fact that as a charity we are required to adhere to the law. It also highlights that one of the key worries seems to be around extremist views being aired without challenge or balanced debate.

NUS are challenging the Prevent agenda and they are not alone in questioning how the agenda is being implemented in some areas (as oppose to the principle of keeping students safe on our campuses). A link to press coverage of their campaign is here: http://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/sep/02/nus-fights-back-against-governments-chilling-counter-radicalisation-strategy?CMP=tw_t_gu

Notwithstanding their campaign, NUS have issued guidance to Students' Unions about their Prevent Duty: *Prevent Duty - NUS Guidance for Students' Unions*



Our message is: look after yourself, look after your friends, speak up if you have concerns, adhere to the external speaker policy, and if holding meetings or discussions ensure that there is a balanced and healthy debate where possible.