



Department
for Education

Department for Education
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To Directors of Children's Services
in local authorities in England, and
all Regional School
Commissioners

Dear Colleague

SAFEGUARDING PUPILS FROM EXTREMISM AND RADICALISATION

In response to recommendations in the Peter Clarke report on schools in Birmingham, the Department for Education (DfE) has recently increased its capacity and expertise in counter-extremism, through an expansion of its Due Diligence and Counter Extremism Group (DDCEG), of which I have been appointed the Director.

I am writing to draw your attention to some of the support available to schools to help them safeguard pupils from the risks of extremism and radicalisation. These risks have been brought into sharp focus by recent reports of school-aged children travelling to Syria. You may be aware that DfE is carrying out a review of schools where we have evidence of links to people who may have travelled to Syria, and I also thought it would be helpful to explain something about the purpose of the review.

Schools have a vital role to play in protecting pupils from the risks of extremism and radicalisation, a role which will be underpinned by the new duty in the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 "to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism", due to come into force on 1 July. Keeping children safe from these risks is a safeguarding matter and should be approached in the same way as safeguarding children from other risks. We nevertheless recognise that schools need advice and support to carry out effective counter-extremism work. In the first instance, schools can seek help from the local authority and the local police. Local authorities are vital to all aspects of Prevent work and it is the role of the Local Safeguarding Children Board to co-ordinate what is done by local agencies for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in their local area. In some priority local authority areas, Home Office fund dedicated Prevent co-ordinators to work with communities and organisations, including schools.

Parents who have concerns about their children may look to schools as a trusted source of advice on how to keep their children safe from these risks. In addition to materials produced by local authorities and the police – such as the new "Prevent Tragedies" online campaign launched by the Police (<http://www.preventtragedies.co.uk/>) - there are online resources produced by civil society groups which provide valuable advice, for example 'Families Matter' (<http://www.familiesmatter.org.uk/>), (run by Families Against Stress and Trauma). You may wish to alert schools to these resources.

Schools may also wish to be aware that as part of the increased support that DDCEG is able to provide for schools, we have recently launched a dedicated telephone helpline (020 7340 7264) to enable school staff and governors to raise concerns relating to extremism directly and in confidence. We would encourage staff and governors with any such concerns to contact us through the helpline. Please note that the helpline is not intended for use emergency situations, such as a child being at immediate risk of harm or a security incident. In these situations normal procedures should be followed. It would be helpful, however, if schools could also report any significant

incidents to the department through the helpline, including where pupils are suspected of travelling to Syria, provided that parents – in the case of incidents involving pupils - and the police, if they are involved, are content.

You may be aware from media reports that the Department is conducting a review of schools where we have evidence of links with people who may have travelled to Syria. The review is designed to learn lessons from schools' experiences, and to gather information that will help government understand better the interaction between experiences at school and vulnerability to extremism and radicalisation – both those factors that may contribute to radicalisation and those that may not. Information from this review will be used to inform future work of the Group in supporting schools who may have concerns about their role in counter extremism, including their ability to tackle the risk of online radicalisation and extremist influences.

The review is an internal piece of work designed to understand both how schools have responded to the decision of one or more of their pupils to travel to Syria and how the DfE can best support and help these schools as they continue to deal with the aftermath of those events. It is not intended for publication. The review is not seeking to commission Ofsted inspections of schools – in line with standard practice, the DfE would only request that Ofsted conduct an inspection in a school where there were specific concerns.

We would welcome your co-operation with this review over the coming months, and your views on any schools which you think would be able to add valuable insights to the work, or who may have concerns in this area. This will allow us to gain further insight into the sorts of help and guidance that schools would find helpful.

I should be grateful if you could disseminate this information locally to people you think may wish to be aware. If you would like to discuss any of the issues raised by this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me on the number above.

I am copying this letter to Prevent leads in relevant areas and Police regional Prevent co-ordinators.

Yours sincerely



ROSEMARY PRATT
DIRECTOR, DUE DILIGENCE AND COUNTER EXTREMISM GROUP