

## **Getting best value out of the BIS Prevent regional coordinators for HE/ FE**

### **Background**

Metropolitan university in a multi-cultural location had developed a range of processes using the Good Campus Relations guidance as a basis. The university's multi-faith chaplain and student services manager were identified as the best people to coordinate the university's response to preventing violent extremism.

The chaplain was identified as 'Prevent Coordinator' for the institution and the deputy Vice-Chancellor and Director of Student Experience were given overall responsibility.

The university carried out a risk assessment and identified four main risks to the institution:

- Controversial or radicalised speakers pose the current greatest risk. Speakers may engage via student societies, academic invitations, prayer room use and conferences.
- On-line radicalisation is fast becoming the primary source of recruitment in the HE sector.
- 'Off-site' recruitment to established radicalised bodies and groups. Students will rarely be attracted to these groups directly but will be pre-groomed by exposure to the preceding factors mentioned.
- The most significant emerging threat is that of students being radicalised but not displaying any of the identifiers for radicalisation, who then leaving to fight in Jihadist conflicts overseas.

The institution found that there was a lack of support available to assist them in developing a coherent response to these risks. At this point the BIS Regional Prevent Coordinator was appointed and a decision was taken to engage with that individual as quickly as possible. This partnership led to the development of protocol which addressed the institution's specific needs and also provided the template for other universities in the region. In particular the Prevent coordinator's input was sought in relation to the institution's freedom of speech policy and to deliver training. Further details can be found below.

### **Freedom of speech**

The institution worked with the BIS HE Prevent regional coordinator to review and revise the institution's external speaker policy. In particular it was agreed that:

- Any student society wishing to host an event must speak to the relevant Students' Union officer who will then pass the booking on to the university's Prevent coordinator for consultation about the proposed speaker's history.

- The university's prevent coordinator checks all events, seeking advice from police and others where appropriate
- Any contentious issues are referred to the deputy vice-chancellor
- External speaker bookings for conferences, hospitality and academic events are treated in the same way as student society events thus ensuring that the university knows at all times who is on campus and why, in accordance with the various Security Acts.

The joint development of this policy between the BIS Regional Prevent Coordinator and the university positively addressed areas of legality, police cooperation and the key development of the RAG system which provides an accurate police based risk assessment and a 'narrative' to permit universities to base their decisions from an informed position. Without this key development, the policy would not have succeeded.

### **Staff training and awareness-raising**

The BIS Regional Prevent Coordinator was also instrumental in delivering training to a number of university staff. The BIS Regional Prevent Coordinator was able to access key police and specialist staff to facilitate training and provided invaluable guidance on direction, delivery and content. The shared process of educating a multiple disciplinary team in counter-radicalisation on campus benefited both the institution and the wider region as the approach taken was used as a template for other institutions.

Examples of the training delivered to staff include; training on internationalisation, staff attendance at counter-radicalisation conference, bespoke training for members of the disability/ mental health team and international office staff including a briefing with police (further training for counselling and careers staff is also planned).

### **Summary and conclusions**

Engagement with the BIS Prevent Regional Coordinator has meant issues are picked up and addressed more quickly than previously.

Focus on good campus relations agenda has helped engage staff and foster acceptance of procedures. Protocols have been identified as good practice within the wider sector.

Briefings are more effective when task-focused and training is more effective when provided on the understanding of strict confidentiality [to enable full and frank information-sharing].

The improvements in processes would not have been possible without the coordinated working between the university and the BIS Prevent Regional Coordinator.