

PREVENT  
TRAINING  
MATERIALS  
FOR HIGHER  
EDUCATION

# CASE STUDY: UNIVERSITY OF WORCESTER

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## Context

The University of Worcester is a medium-sized university with about 10,500 students and 1,500 staff. It offers foundation, undergraduate and postgraduate taught and research degrees across its five institutes – Education; Health and Society; Humanities and Creative Arts; Science and the Environment; and Sport and Exercise Science – and its Business School. Many of its programmes lead to professionally recognised qualifications.

The university has three campuses within the city of Worcester. It became a university in 2005, and traces its origins to an education college founded in 1946.

## The university's view

Ross Renton, pro-vice-chancellor for students, has overall responsibility for Prevent. The university has grown considerably over recent years, and judgment-based systems that can work well in a smaller university have been replaced by clearer processes which help individuals know what they should do, and be clear for what they are accountable. In Ross Renton's view, "risk arises through our not being aware. The Prevent trigger behaviours are signs that some support is needed; our task is thus to develop a supportive community. A case management approach, with triangulation of observations and a clear escalation procedure where there are real concerns, works well for other student support needs. Prevent fits into this framework."

The university's approach has also been characterised by the involvement of the students' union. The university's plans were endorsed by a students' union council meeting which was reassured by the supportive approach. Ross Renton commented that "we wanted an inclusive approach which increased the likelihood that someone would spot when a student was in difficulties. A structured approach helps to ensure that action is taken. Our culture, which we have tried to protect as the university grows, is that everybody has a responsibility".

## Training

In line with this view, the university decided that its first priority was training for staff who would come into contact with students around campus: cleaning, portering, residential accommodation, security and grounds maintenance staff. Face-to-face, small-group training was arranged and led by Gill Slater, the university's director of personal and organisational development.

The training was based around the Leadership Foundation Module 1 materials, augmented by some materials (including a short film) from the Home Office WRAP training. Gill Slater commented: "The supervisors in this group had been trained using non-higher education-specific materials a few years previously, which had mixed reviews, so it was clear that a more hands-on approach was necessary. The Leadership Foundation materials were thoughtful and engaging, giving room for discovery and discussion, and were a great starting point."

The training was well received. Staff found it thought provoking; the discussion around the case studies meant that the training had relevance. It also gave an opportunity for staff to think through issues they had encountered on campus relating to broader student welfare issues. This helped staff identify specific actions which they could take (and also what they were not expected to do).

Training has also been provided for other staff and students within the university and for the leads for partner colleges. The board of governors has been briefed by its clerk; training has also been provided for the safeguarding group; students studying to become teachers have been briefed using the Home Office WRAP material combined with some aspects of the Leadership Foundation modules. The next challenge is to roll out the training for other university staff. The first step will be training with a small group of academic staff, which will enable an appropriate and tailored presentation to be developed.

## Lessons learned

Ross Renton identified two key lessons for implementing Prevent in a university:

- Be open and transparent about what you're doing and why – involve staff and students in discussion, and work in partnership.
- Make the process your own: fit it with the organisation's culture, make it meaningful in the organisation's environment.

Gill Slater shared the following lessons about training staff in the Prevent duty:

- Find ways to weave Prevent training into work that you are already doing – for instance when recruiting and inducting new staff. This helps staff to see it as distinct, but not as different and special.
- Consider how and whether to mix staff types together for training – think about the culture of the university in doing this.