

Institution: The University of Huddersfield
Unit of Assessment: 25 Education
Title of case study: Improving policy approaches to Prevent (formerly known as Preventing Violent Extremism)
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Research by the University of Huddersfield’s School of Education and Professional Development has played a significant role in influencing changes to ‘Prevent’, a key government educational policy aimed at preventing terrorism. The work of Professor Paul Thomas has reshaped local approaches in Kirklees and Rochdale local authorities and, following national media coverage and oral evidence to a House of Commons Inquiry, has helped influenced policy change at national level. Thomas’ recommendation to focus more on cohesion was largely accepted by the Coalition government in its review of Prevent, as a result of which the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has placed renewed emphasis on the value of cross-community cohesion.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The Prevent policy, a high-profile and well-resourced programme of “hearts and minds” community-based education, was introduced in 2007 and aimed to address the risk of young Muslims being attracted to terrorism and the ideologies supporting it. Charles Farr, Director General of the Home Office’s Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism, subsequently described the programme as targeting “the pool in which terrorists will swim”. However, Prevent’s rapid implementation led to direct interference with existing cohesion policies and posed real issues in terms of approach and organisation for local authority and education partners, many of which immediately recognised the ideological and practical problems the policy created.</p> <p>One such authority was Kirklees Metropolitan Council, which, using Prevent funding, commissioned Professor Paul Thomas (Senior Lecturer 1999-2011, Reader 2011-2013, Professor 2013-) who already had an emerging national reputation (Ref.1) as an analyst of community cohesion, to evaluate its initial year (2007/2008) of Prevent activity. Drawing on qualitative research interviews with policy officers and youth workers, Thomas produced a report designed to inform the council’s future policy. As illustrated by the DCLG’s 2008 report, <i>Prevent Pathfinder Fund: Mapping of Project Activities 2007/08</i>, this research represented virtually the only genuinely independent evaluation of the initial pilot year of Prevent activity in England.</p> <p>Also in 2007/8, along with Dr Pete Sanderson (Head of Department, 2007 onwards), Thomas was commissioned by the Rochdale Pride Partnership (Local Strategic Partnership) to formulate and carry out action research with young people. Prevent was viewed as highly controversial by Muslim communities in Rochdale, and this study, again using Prevent funding, was seen as an “acceptable” way of engaging with the policy agenda. The work involved training youth workers from both the statutory and voluntary/community sectors in research approaches, jointly devising qualitative processes and instruments and implementing those approaches with young people. In July 2008 the resulting rich data (5, 6) relating to how young people of all ethnic backgrounds understood their own “identifications” and those of others, their prejudices and fears and their experiences of segregation and racial/territorial conflict were presented to and accepted by the Rochdale Pride Partnership, which used them to inform future policy approaches to both Prevent and community cohesion.</p> <p>The Impact outlined below has been generated by the following research findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent activity with young people solely concentrated on young Muslims, contradicting the overarching policy priority of community cohesion and the result was a detriment to work towards, and understandings of, community cohesion. • This Prevent focus on young Muslims reinforced rather than challenged the significant ethnic segregation that many young people experience, and the prejudiced and fearful attitudes about ‘others’ that many hold. • Much of this Prevent activity did not focus on issues related to terrorism – instead it consisted of normal youth activities for one community only, funded through anti-terrorism

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policy channels.

- This Muslim- only focus for Prevent provoked resentment from other communities not targeted by the funding, and suspicion from Muslims who were targeted.
- The professional education practitioners asked to operationalise Prevent felt unclear and unprepared in relationship to the role they were being asked to play, and wanted much more training and guidance.

These research findings enabled Thomas to make policy change recommendations to local government funders and to the House of Commons Communities and Local Government Select Committee Inquiry, arguing that Prevent should focus much more on cross-community cohesion approaches, should be dovetailed with wider attempts to encourage political education and democratic engagement amongst young people, and should be supported by more training and guidance for education professionals. Such recommendations have been utilised by the local authorities commissioning research activity, and accepted by the Select Committee Inquiry in its Final Report.

To date, this research has led to a sole-authored Prevent monograph (Bloomsbury Academic, 2012), a section of a further sole-authored monograph (6), several articles in leading journals spanning the disciplines of Politics (2,3), Sociology (5), Social Policy (1) and Youth Issues (4), and a number of contributions to the national and regional media.

3. References to the research

1. Thomas, P. (2007) 'Moving on from Anti-Racism: Youth Worker's understandings of Community Cohesion', *Journal of Social Policy*, (IF 1.113, Public Administration 10/45) 36:3, pp. 435-455. 20 citations (Google Scholar).
<http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?aid=1036228>
2. Thomas, P. (2009) 'Between Two Stools? The Government's Preventing Violent Extremism Agenda', *The Political Quarterly Journal*, 80:2, pp.282-291. 14 citations (Google Scholar).
<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-923X.2009.01985.x/abstract>
3. Thomas, P. (2010) 'Failed and Friendless – the Government's Preventing Violent Extremism Agenda', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, (IF .0767, 55/149 Political Science) Vol. 12:3, pp. 442-458. 21 citations (Google Scholar).
<http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/bpl/bjpi/2010/00000012/00000003/art00007>
4. Thomas, P and Henri, T. (2011) 'Changing Directions? Young people and Effective Work Against Racism', *Journal of Youth Studies*, (IF 1.379), 14:1, pp.77-90. 2 citations (Google Scholar).
<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13676261.2010.506526>
5. Thomas, P, and Sanderson, P (2011): Unwilling Citizens: Muslim Young People and National Identity, *Sociology*, (IF 1.352, 29/138 in Sociology), 45:6, pp. 1028-1044. 5 citations (Google Scholar).
<http://soc.sagepub.com/content/45/6/1028>
6. Thomas, P. (2011) *Youth, Multiculturalism and Community Cohesion*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. Shortlisted for the British Sociological Association's 2012 Phillip Abrams Memorial Prize, and positively reviewed in leading journals, such as '*Sociological Review*' (5 year IF:1.184).
<http://www.palgrave.com/products/title.aspx?PID=407816>

Grants: Rochdale-based Prevent research was funded by the **Rochdale Pride Partnership** to the amount of £13,000 in 2007/8; Kirklees-based Prevent research was funded by **Kirklees MC** to the amount of £1,500 in 2007/8. In both cases, Professor Paul Thomas was PI.

Local Government Yorkshire and Humber (2009-2010): Evaluation of Community Cohesion and Prevent Strategies in Kirklees and Bradford (Regional Improvement and Effectiveness Pilot): qualitative evaluation with strategic leaders, front-line workers and community members. Professor Thomas's role: CI, involving data analysis, writing up, presenting findings and liaising with local government funders: £19,800. (PI: Dr. Surya Monro, HHS)

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Youth Justice Board/Home Office (2009-2011) – Evaluation of Initial Prevent Activity by Youth Offending Teams (led by Applied Criminology Centre, HHS). Professor Thomas's role was Literature Review and writing: £147,000.

Kirklees and Calderdale Councils (2013 – on-going) – 'Understanding perceptions of community relations'. Mixed methods investigation of attitudes to ethnic diversity and public protest in mainly white communities. Professor Thomas's role: Joint PI. £20,000 (Kirklees) £10,000 (Calderdale).

4. Details of the impact

The Prevent policy represents a crucial element of the government's response to the threat of Islamist terrorism. As such, it is vital that its conception and implementation are as effective as possible. Thomas's research has played a major role in highlighting significant flaws and helping to reshape Prevent on both local and national levels.

The conclusions and associated recommendations of the Rochdale study were presented to the Rochdale Pride Partnership in July 2008 and subsequently used by Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council Youth Service and other key local agencies to orientate their Prevent and cohesion activity with young people. This included the council's Youth Strategy and 2008-2011 Prevent programme. This shift was supported by a number of local and regional briefings on the key findings and insights for 100 key professionals, including youth workers, teachers, police officers and other professionals concerned with implementing Prevent approaches and promoting community cohesion (Source 1).

Through its 'Gold' multi-agency coordination structure, which provides strategic direction and overview and has senior representation from all statutory stakeholders, Kirklees Metropolitan Council used Thomas's qualitative evaluation of its first year of Prevent activity as part of its planning for the subsequent 2008-2011 tranche of government funding for Prevent (2).

The key findings were also shared with Prevent co-ordinators and elected members of local authorities from across the Yorkshire and the Humber Government Office region at a seminar held in Leeds in July 2008 (3).

The findings from both studies and the subsequent theoretical analysis formed the basis for an evidence submission to the Committees and Local Government Select Committee Inquiry into Prevent in 2009-2010. A written submission by Thomas highlighted the conclusions and the recommendations regarding policy modification, leading to an invitation to give oral evidence to the Committee at the House of Commons in December 2009.

Thomas's oral and written evidence was reproduced in the Committee's report of March 2010, which accepted and supported the call for much greater emphasis on community cohesion and cross-community contact within policy approaches to preventing violent extremism. Aspects of Thomas's evidence were quoted and supported by the Committee's report on pages 18 (paragraph 41), 37 (paragraph 92), 45 (paragraph 116) and 59 (paragraph 158). The Committee's conclusions included that "much greater training and support for front-line workers such as council staff, police, teachers and youth workers should be provided" (page 49, paragraph 129) and that "funding for cohesion work in all communities should be increased" (page 62, paragraph 170) (4). Many of the Committee's recommendations were subsequently enacted by the Coalition government in its re-launch of the Prevent strategy in June 2011, with the DCLG removed from Prevent activity and tasked with focusing solely on promoting community cohesion (5).

The research findings also contributed to and informed the evaluation of Prevent activity by Youth Offending Teams nationally. The University of Huddersfield's Applied Criminology Centre carried out this research from 2008 to 2011 for the Youth Justice Board, with Thomas participating in the literature review and analysis process. The key findings of the evaluation were also highlighted and accepted by the government when Prevent was re-launched in 2011 (page 91, paragraphs 182, 183 and 186)(5), with the review observing: "Many of the problems identified by the University

of Huddersfield could have been overcome with greater clarity from the outset.”

In addition, Thomas collaborated with colleagues from the University of Huddersfield’s School of Human and Health Sciences to evaluate progress by two West Yorkshire local authorities around community cohesion and Prevent. The findings were presented to representatives of regional local authorities and police services at a seminar in December 2010 (6). This research relationship with regional policy-makers and practitioners has continued with Thomas and colleagues being commissioned in 2013 by two West Yorkshire local authorities to devise field research approaches to investigate feelings and dispositions within marginalised, mainly white communities, including the degree of sympathy for the positions and actions of extreme groups like the English Defence League. This data will be utilised to inform community-based policy and practice responses going forward.

Continuing to raise wider awareness of the key issues, Thomas also made a number of media appearances to discuss his research and its implications. He was quoted by the *Financial Times Magazine* in February 2010 (7) and the *Financial Times* in March 2011(8) and was also interviewed on BBC Radio 4’s *Analysis* in March 2011(9) and live on BBC2 TV’s ‘Newsnight’ in May 2011 (10). All these media appearances have contributed to greater public understanding both of the Prevent/Cohesion policy operations and controversies themselves, and so to greater public understanding of academic research. In October 2013 Thomas shared his research findings and analysis with elected members and educationalists at a conference staged at the Welsh Assembly, Cardiff, and with international academic colleagues at a seminar staged at Sciences Po, Paris.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. Factual statement from: Dave Baker, Senior Youth Officer, Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council (Contact 1)
2. Factual statement from: Andrew Pennington, then-Assistant Director for Commissioning, Kirklees Metropolitan Council (Contact 2): Can be confirmed by: Michael Greene, Head of Safe and Cohesive Communities, Kirklees MC (Contact 3)
3. *Evaluation of the ‘Preventing Violent Extremism’ Policy Initiative to Date* – report prepared for Association of West Yorkshire Authorities Community Cohesion Seminar, Leeds, July 2008.
4. *Communities and Local Government Select Committee: Preventing Violent Extremism: Sixth Report of Session 2009/10*, House of Commons (2010)
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmcomloc/65/6502.htm>
5. Her Majesty’s Government (2011): *Prevent Strategy*, London: The Stationary Office
<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/counter-terrorism/prevent/prevent-strategy/prevent-strategy-review?view=Binary>
6. Monro, S, Razaq, U, Thomas, P, and Mycock, A (2010): *Regional Improvement & Efficiency Partnerships (RIEPs): Community Cohesion (PREVENT) Pilot* – report prepared for Local Government Yorkshire and Humber, Huddersfield: University of Huddersfield.
<http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/9219/>
7. *Financial Times* report, ‘Preventing Violent Extremism in Britain’, February 26 2010
http://www.ft.com/cms/s/1e684162-1f94-11df-8975-00144feab49a,Authorised=false.html?_i_location=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ft.com%2Fcms%2Fs%2F0%2F1e684162-1f94-11df-8975-00144feab49a.html&_i_referer=http%3A%2F%2Fsearch.ft.com%2Fsearch%3FqueryText%3Dpreventing%2Bviolent%2Bextremism%2Bin%2BBritain#axzz2AhCpIYzw
8. *Financial Times* report, ‘May revisits policy on extremism’, June 8 2011.
9. BBC Radio 4, *Analysis*, ‘Muscular Liberalism’, March 14 2011
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006r4vz/broadcasts/2011/03>
10. BBC 2 TV *Newsnight*, 26th May 2011, ‘The Oldham Riots: Ten Years on’
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/newsnight/9497066.stm>
<https://www.hud.ac.uk/news/allstories/paulonnewsnight.php>