

CONTEST: the UK's counter-terrorism strategy

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What I will cover this evening



- What the CONTEST strategy is
- What PREVENT is and how it works
- How you, as members of the community, can assist counter-terrorism efforts by flagging concerns about someone you think may be susceptible to radicalisation
- What else you can do to support tackling extremism
- Where you can get further information
- Opportunity for questions

CONTEST Strategy

Aim: to reduce the risk of **terrorism** so that people can go about their lives freely and with confidence

PREVENT

- To stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism

PURSUE

- To stop terrorist attacks happening in this country or against UK interests overseas

PROTECT

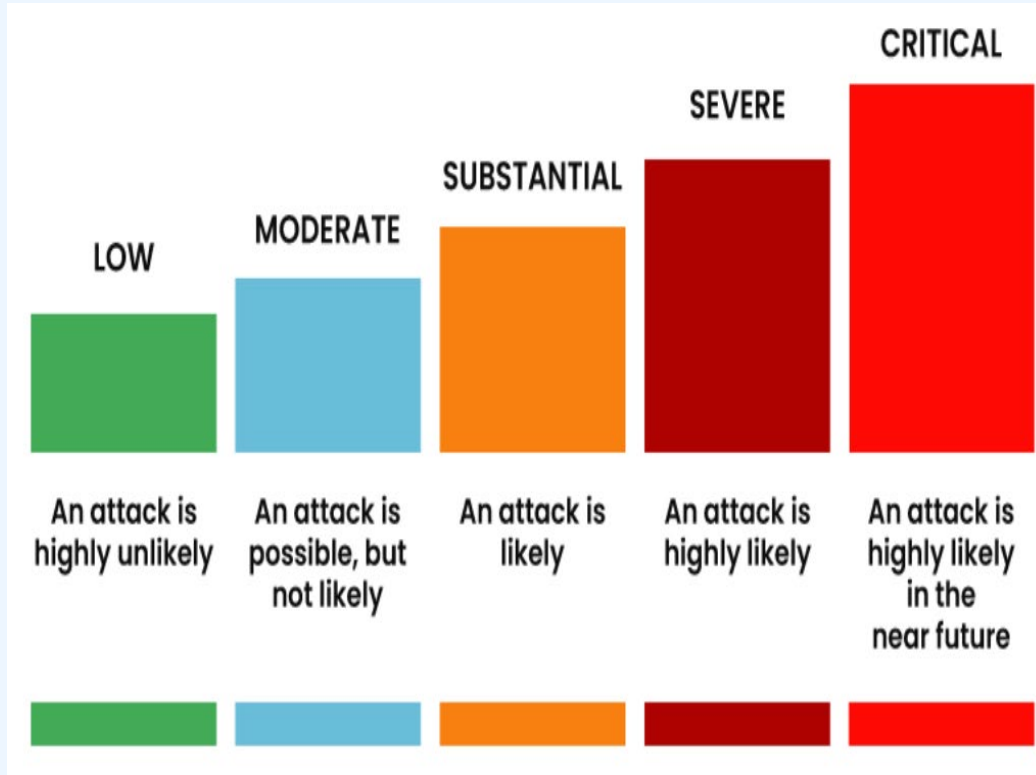
- To strengthen our protection against a terrorist attack

PREPARE

- To mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack

Source: Home Office

UK National Threat Level



- Currently at SEVERE (since 30 April 2026)
- Previously SUBSTANTIAL (from 9 February 2022)
- Last at CRITICAL following two specific incidents back in 2017

Source: protectuk.police.uk

Source: mi5.gov.uk



Prevent

The aim of Prevent is to stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.

Three objectives:

- Tackling the ideological causes of terrorism
- Intervening early to support people susceptible to radicalisation
- Enabling people who have already engaged in terrorism to disengage and rehabilitate

Source: Prevent Duty guidance: Guidance for specified authorities in England & Wales (2023)

Radicalisation



“the process of a person legitimising support for, or use of, terrorist violence”

Source: Prevent Duty guidance: Guidance for specified authorities in England & Wales (2023)



Ideological drivers

- Islamist extremism
- Extreme right wing
- Left wing, anarchist and single-issue extremism (LASI)
- Emerging ideologies – incel, fascination with extreme violence and mass casualty attacks

... an increasingly confused and blurred ideological picture, often blended with personal grievance narratives and emerging subcultures

Early intervention and support

- Identification of individuals who are susceptible to radicalisation
- Risk is assessed by police and partners
- Bespoke intervention plan managed via multi-agency **Channel Panel**
- Focus is on safeguarding and diversion
- Support is provided with consent – Prevent is not a punishment
- Referrals accepted from anyone – professionals and the general public!



Signs, behaviours, indicators



- Being influenced or controlled by a group
- Being drawn into to strong principles and ideologies held by others
- Ignoring or demonising viewpoints that contradict their own
- Expressing themselves in an 'us' vs 'them' manner
- Feeling under threat
- A belief in conspiracy theories and distrust of mainstream media
- A sense of injustice or grievance and looking to blame others for this
- Justifying the use of violence or expressing a desire for revenge
- Changing their circle of friends
- Becoming socially withdrawn, spending a lot of time online or being secretive about who they are talking to
- Losing interest in activities they once enjoyed
- A need for identity, meaning and belonging
- A desire for status, or for excitement and adventure
- Being at a time of transition in life, or having experienced life challenges

Source: ActEarly.uk, Home Office



Information

- For information and advice on spotting the signs and what to do – visit the Act Early website
<https://actearly.uk/>
- Can also call the ACT Early public support line on 0800 011 3764
- To make a referral – visit the Cambridgeshire Constabulary website
<https://www.cambs.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/t/prevent/prevent/>

Reporting extremist on-line content



- You can also help tackle radicalisation by anonymously reporting online content which promotes extremism or terrorism
- Report online via www.gov.uk/report-terrorism