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## **Briefing Paper: Safeguarding Students, Prevent Duty & Dispelling Myths**

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**This briefing note is relevant to any Governor, Clerk or Senior Manager.**

The current safeguarding system was designed to respond to problems rather than preventing them.

Although FE Institutions understand and are delivering on their duties, they are increasingly being forced to respond to events that may be taking place both nationally and abroad, and managing the impact that this can have on their learners.

FE Institutions are ideally placed to explore controversial issues - equipping learners with the knowledge, skills and critical thinking to challenge and debate in an informed way, and at the same time promote community cohesion and engage with, rather than marginalise extreme political views. Those FE Institutions who think they are at less risk need to understand the implications of extremism and ensure they comply with the Duty - they need to be able to manage risk as part of their overall safeguarding policies, balance freedom of speech, lawful academic activities and combating terrorism.

**Information taken from 'Prevent duty guidance: a consultation - December 2014' : Section 75:** *There is an important role for further education institutions, including sixth form colleges, in helping prevent people being drawn into terrorism, which includes not just violent extremism but also non-violent extremism, which can create an atmosphere conducive to terrorism and can popularise views which terrorists exploit. It is a condition of funding that all further education providers must comply with relevant legislation and any statutory responsibilities associated with the delivery of education and safeguarding of learners.*

The further education institutions covered by the duty include:

- FE institutions on the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) register – there are approximately 950 FE Institutions and independent providers and sub-contractors who receive more than £100,000 of SFA funding via lead providers.
- Private FE institutions – which have at least 250 students.

To comply with this Duty, further education institutions will have to have to:

- Work in **partnership** with, and actively engage with Governors, Principals, managers and leaders, (from community or mosques etc), and other partners including the police, local support agencies, Prevent, college staff and liaison officers. They will need to make sure that all have undertaken

appropriate training or development and share information across relevant curriculum areas.

- Have clear and visible policies in place for both staff and learners with regard to **risk assessment**. This should also include policies for events that may take place by staff, students, visitors, external bodies and community organisations. They will also need to be aware of places or areas of learning, where learners/staff may be in contact with, or possibly get involved with terrorism.
- Have sufficient support available for **welfare and pastoral care** according to the individual requirements of each institution. There will also have to be clear guidance and policies available to all on the use of prayer rooms and other faith-related facilities, and any issues that may occur from the use of these facilities.
- Have policies in place for the use of **information technology** on the premises and for the use of research in curriculum areas.

Not complying with the Duty may result in contracts being terminated, restructuring and a change in governance and leadership

On a practical level, clearer guidance needs to be filtered to staff at all levels, about how to deal with:

- Inappropriate material and behaviours
- Disclosures by learners about their exposure to extremist actions, views or materials
- Accessing extremist material on line
- Parental or peer concerns
- Intolerance of difference
- Anti-Western or Anti-British views
- The impact on the student and the FE Institution

Since September 2014 Ofsted risk-based inspectors have increased their focus on fundamental British Values and preventing extremism.

So what are British Values and how are they been interpreted and acknowledged within communities?

Working with the community will need to be a vital approach to understanding perceptions, interpretations and even understanding the levels of acceptance of

these values. In the past the myths and misconceptions about faiths and cultures have been exaggerated due to the lack of engagement and communication between institutes and the communities. The understanding or misunderstanding of 'British Values' can be managed through open and direct dialogue with the communities in which colleges are based – preventing resistance and myths.

***"British Values** – Fundamental British values are about democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs"*

### **Dispelling the Myths**

There is a real need to understand the culture and faith of students in FE Institutions, in order to appreciate different values and beliefs. Culture, religion and political beliefs help to shape our expectations and interactions with others. Misunderstandings can arise when there is a discourse between the expected norms of an FE Institution and that of learners and other communities.

Promoting cultural norms and Institutional values and embracing the notion of British values, will dispel myths, clarify agendas' and instigate a joint approach to tackling and preventing extremism within FE Institutions.