UCL PREVENT NETWORK MEETING  
Thursday 19 March 2015  
Room 333 Rockefeller Building  

MINUTES

Present: Andy Saffery (AS) (Convenor), Kati Kaarlehto (KK), Alex Daybank (AD), Mitesh Vagadia (MV), Mark West (MW), Charlotte Ballinger (CB), Ruth Siddall (RS), Louise Howitt (LH), Hajera Begum (HB), Bridget Kenyon (BK), Barry Keane (BAK), Julie Long (JL), David Walmsley (DW), Edward Payne (EP)

Apologies: Lina Kamenova (LK), Ollie Curran (OC), Denise Long (DL)

Introductions and Background

The proposed membership of the UCL Prevent Network (UCLPN) was as set at Appendix UCLPN 1.

1. The Prevent strategy originated as part of the UK’s anti-terrorism strategy (CONTEST) and was explicitly changed in 2011 to deal with all forms of terrorism, including both ‘violent and ‘non-violent’ extremism, with the aim of reducing the threat to the UK from terrorism by preventing people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.

2. Section 26 of Counter Terrorism and Security Act (CTSA) 2015, which would take effect from 1 July 2015, sought to place a statutory duty on specified authorities, including Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), in the exercise of their functions to have “due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism”.

3. The Guidance note suggested that the Duty provided for a risk-based and proportionate approach and was not intended to confer new functions on HEIs i.e. that ‘due regard’ implied appropriate amount of weight ..... when carrying out normal functions’.

4. The compliance aspect to the Guidance would be measured by an institution’s ability to demonstrate both an awareness and an understanding of the risk of radicalisation and to give due consideration to that risk. This would be undertaken thematically through: leadership; working in partnership; and appropriate capabilities:
a. Leadership – to establish or use existing mechanisms for understanding risk of radicalisation; ensure staff understand the risk and build in capabilities; communicate and promote the importance of the duty; ensure staff implement the duty

b. Partnerships – to demonstrate evidence of productive cooperation such as active engagement of senior management with other partners including the Police and BIS regional officers; and to seek to engage and consult with students on plans for implementation of the duty

c. Capabilities – to train staff (i) to understand radicalisation, extremism and its relationship with terrorism and the consequences of it; (ii) to know what measures are available. Information Sharing – on the principles of necessity and proportionality; consent; power to share; and DPA and Common Law Duty of Confidentiality

5. The ‘Duty’ to comply would also involve maintaining appropriate records to demonstrate compliance and there would be centralised monitoring by a Government agency.

6. Sector-specific guidance to HEIs focussed on staff training, IT policies and student welfare support.

7. HEIs were invited to respond to the Duty Guidance as part of a consultation process in the Autumn 2014 and UCL’s and UCLU’s combined response was as set out Appendix UCLPN 2.

8. The consultation process highlighted a number of significant sector-wide concerns, not least the potential (or perceived potential) for undermining and HEIs relationship with its students, particularly in those areas where they were most vulnerable; issues over trust and engagement; freedom of speech; and how the Guidance was to be referenced with other primary legislation e.g. the Equalities Act 2010 and HE Act 2004. UCLPN also agreed clarity would be required in terms of policies and procedures needed to demonstrate compliance; how to develop partnership and internal sharing mechanisms; managing welfare and pastoral support; IT policies; and Student Unions.

9. In terms of the proposed aims of UCLPN it was hoped that the Network could (i) serve as an informal body bringing together those units within UCL whose activities would be subject to compliance within the risk-based approach and/or where there would be an expectation to demonstrate compliance; (ii) to consider how those aspects might be covered by existing UCL policies and practices; (iii) were required by legislation; and (iv) to consider the need to
develop a framework for managing risk and provide training.

10. Further to the above, other concerns outlined by UCLPN included the potential for HEIs to been seen to interfere with students’ personal lives; the lack of any reference to academic research in the field of extremism and the implications for ethical approval of such research; and significant issues, both personal and professional, surrounding the reporting of violent and non-violent extremism.

Current UCL Practices and Considerations

1. In terms of current practices it was agreed that there would need to be clear guidance from UCL and/or the HE sector on when/how institutions should be required to share data and that such guidance would need to be compliant with existing data protection, etc. legislation.

2. UCL had existing policies on the management of meetings/external bookings and student events were overseen by UCLU. It was noted that UCLU operated a Free Speech panel who made decisions on whether an external speaker would be eligible to present at UCL and it was agreed that this might be something for UCL to consider, notwithstanding any data protection implications. UCL’s own policies for room bookings were lacking compared to those operated by UCLU and there wasn’t currently a process at all for checking external speakers. In this context it was suggested that a review of UCL’s existing policies might be timely and that such an approach might also clarify the current process/checks involved when a member of staff makes a room-booking.

3. Concerns were also raised relating to research and ethics and it was suggested that it would be helpful for the Doctoral School and Ethics Committee to be asked to consider their current policies in the context of the Duty.

4. Although it would be timely to review UCL’s relevant IT policies the Network agreed UCL policies already of a very high standard. UCL did not and would not monitor student search activities and internet activity records were only retained for a period of two weeks.

5. In terms of welfare and chaplaincy arrangements it was agreed that the Duty could be a useful prompt for ensuring a clarity of purpose and sufficient resources in these areas. For example, LSE had dedicated areas for faiths whilst UCL’s new student centre proposed just the one quiet contemplation room to be used by all and that, as with the existing, limited provision, this could lead to the possibility that the room could become reflective of one
particular set of values, as opposed to being inclusive for all.

6. Finally, any approach adopted by the HE sector to comply with the Duty would need to recognise that ‘safeguarding’ and trust were of primary importance in terms of the relationship between an HEI and its student body, even more so when dealing with vulnerable individuals.

Training

1. It was reported that Camden provided some training which might be useful. In addition, AS asked if UCLPN might find it helpful for the London Prevent Co-ordinator to attend a future meeting. In the context of training it was agreed an informal discussion could be beneficial, although any training would need to be tailored to UCL’s needs/practices and take account of all forms of extremism. There was also a concern among members of the network that the current Prevent training offered by local Prevent Liaison teams was racialised and islamophobic and that it would be imperative that any training sought/provided must be balanced.

Institutional Prevent Action Plan Template 2014-15

2. A draft Institutional Action Plan had been circulated to UCLPN at Appendix UCLPN 3. It was reported that the Plan had been developed by the London HE Prevent Network but could be a useful model on which to develop a risk-led approach to ensuring compliance with the Duty. As such it was very much a work in-progress and each member of UCLPN would be asked individually to give consideration to populating the action plan further.

3. Within the Action Plan template it would be helpful to include the following:

- awareness of risk
- partnerships
- engagement with students
- information sharing
- record keeping
- resource(s)

Future Meetings

1. AS stated that he would look to arrange the next meeting for the summer and that he would also liaise with the London HE Prevent Co-ordinator with a view to her attending a meeting in the near future.
Andy Saffery
Deputy Registrar