



**7 Longdon Drive, Four Oaks, Sutton Coldfield.  
B74 4RF, England**

Your Reference  
Our Reference  
Contact

Prevent Duty  
Prevent Response – AFSA – Jan 2015 Consultation  
Yasmin Bukhari, General Secretary, AFSA

**Date** 29<sup>th</sup> January 2015

Dear Sir/Madam

## **Response from Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA)** *Prevent* duty guidance: a consultation

The Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) would like to thank you for the opportunity to feedback about the above consultation. The fire service is at the centre of community engagement and can be a strong conduit for producing and sharing soft intelligence as part of the prevent strategy.

As an organisation, we are not listed as one of the organisations which this duty would be applied to. With this in mind, there are some questions which we have felt unable to answer.

To aid you in your collection of feedback, we have separated our response out under the appropriate question numbers (as outlined in the document). Should you require any clarification about any element of our response, please contact Yasmin Bukhari, General Secretary, Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) on [afsafsr@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:afsafsr@yahoo.co.uk)

### **1. Are there other general points that should be addressed in this guidance?**

We support the 'risk based' approach outlined in the document, as this is the same approach many Fire Services adopt. At the same time we feel that the above approach should be underpinned by continued investment in community partnerships including synergy with wider social policy aimed at addressing the root causes of violent extremism. In all these areas, it is critically important that Government strategy reflects a genuine commitment to fundamental rights and freedoms – values which necessarily underpin the democratic way of life.

We believe implementing Prevent through community partnerships provides a means of promoting shared values across diverse sectors of society. This discussion is much needed and human rights represent a key area in which commonality between diverse groups can be found.

We would therefore recommend strengthening policies on safeguarding and appropriate referrals via the Channel process. For example at Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service, and many other Fire and Rescue, Services community safety staff have had training delivered by the Police using the Home Office WRAP training package.

In addition due consideration should be also made involving staff who may feel that such activity necessarily conflicts with their primary professional obligations and responsibilities.

## **6. What other partners should local authorities be working with?**

We believe that Fire and Rescue Authorities should be listed as organisations that have a key role to play in the implementation of the Duty. This is due to our community safety activity to deliver home safety messages and intervention on a daily basis with some of most vulnerable communities and individuals in society. This experience has highlighted the importance of sharing and developing organisational knowledge of risk factors in partnership with both public and community organisations.

Similarly working in partnership allows appropriate sharing of information in terms of mental health issues, distress anxiety and isolation. . Furthermore an understanding of how ideologies, radicalisation pathways and situational or locational factors manifest themselves in a local context.

In addition work around Prevent should also reflect youth engagement and neighbourhood support initiatives to foster good relations through cross community work by counteracting the growth in Islamophobia. We believe the emergence of Health and Well Being boards presents an excellent collaborative way forward.

In addition we believe that raising awareness of the importance of human rights protections is a matter firmly within the local authorities remit and a responsibility that we would urge local authorities to work closely with partners such as the British Institute of Human Rights and Liberty. A poll commissioned by Liberty found that 96% of the public think that it is important that there is a law that protects rights and freedoms in Britain; this figure has remained consistently high in repeated polls over the past two years. Poling has also revealed consistent and overwhelming support for the individual rights protected by the Human Rights Act, such as the right to privacy, the right to freedom of thought conscience and religion and the right to freedom of expression.<sup>1</sup> We do understand the qualifying element of these rights.

## **7. Do you think these monitoring and enforcement arrangements are sufficient? If not, what arrangements would you like to see?**

The approach outlined in the document, in relation, to monitoring and enforcement arrangements seems proportionate and sufficient to the Duty. However, a reflection of these could be useful in a year or so to ensure that the arrangements are fit for purpose. At the same time it has to be stated that the impact of *Prevent* on trust and confidence in local communities has emerged, one of the most frequently reiterated concerns focuses on a lack of operational transparency. Therefore to ensure community engagement activities are undertaken within the spirit of trust we would supports Liberty's call for better safeguards for the use of targeted surveillance under the *Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000*.<sup>2</sup> This in turn will help rebuild trust amongst certain sections of the Muslim communities who have expressed feeling alienated by an intrusive, discriminatory and ultimately counterproductive approach to tackling extremism and wider social cohesion.

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the Committee on Communities and Local Government. See, in particular the evidence of the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> See Liberty's 2009 response to a Home Office consultation on the reform of RIPA at:<http://www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk/pdfs/policy09/liberty-s-response-to-the-ripaconsultation.pdf>

In addition we would therefore recommend consideration of human rights and equalities implications of the duty is assessed. In addition to advances in transparency there is a real and immediate need for increased accountability to affected communities.

**23. Are there other areas of activity, or examples of good practice, that should be covered for prisons and probation providers?**

AFSA believes that prisons and probation service, providers through education, have an important role to play in promoting inclusivity, educating, and challenging extreme views which may lead to acts of violence. To this end we would encourage the public sector infrastructure to focus on promoting the human rights values of free speech, equal treatment, and freedom of religion and belief.. This would therefore require robust information, guidance and training given to workers who have direct community engagement roles. Furthermore we would encourage collaborative multi-agency working.

**25. Are there other areas of activity, or examples of good practice, that should be included for the police?**

Again we would advocate the need to promote and advance human rights values as the same shared values which must shape and influence community engagement and social policy aimed at tackling violent extremism. In addition recognition of key historical lessons from 'stop and search' and the potential for unconscious bias in influencing decision making.

In terms of other observations, AFSA would like to note that we feel we have an important role to play in supporting the 'Prevent Agenda'. Therefore we intend to focus on the Prevent Agenda as a key theme at our Annual AGM & Development Day – 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2015.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to respond to this consultation.

Yours sincerely,

Mehrban Sadiq  
**AFSA Interim Chair**



## The Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA)

### Our organisation

The Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) is a consultative body that works with the national Fire and Rescue Service, and supporting agencies, to assist them in the achievement of their equality and diversity commitments to communities, staff, service users and partners.

In the last eight years AFSA has grown from a London based staff support group to an inclusive national association that provides support to Asian and non Asian individuals; all sharing the same core values.

### Our aims

AFSA has adopted the Core Values of the Fire and Rescue Service, which are:

- Service to the community
- People
- Diversity
- Improvement

We are committed to making these values a real and considered part of our development and progress. We will work with our stakeholders to ensure that our action plans and initiatives have real purpose, are outcome focused and meet the tenets of the Core Values.

### Membership

Membership is open to all employees of the Fire and Rescue Service in the form of Corporate Membership, Individual Membership and Associate Membership for non-Fire and Rescue Service employees. The Association is inclusive to **All**.