

Promoting fundamental British Values in the Early Years

**A guide to the Prevent duty and meeting the
expectations of the new Common Inspection Framework**

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The Prevent duty



Prevent is part of the UK Government's counter-terrorism strategy. It aims to target the 'extremist ideology at the heart' of terrorism by putting policies and programmes into place that will:

- 'respond to the **ideological challenge** of terrorism and the threat we face from those who promote it
- **prevent people from being drawn into terrorism** and ensure that they are given appropriate advice and support
- work with **sectors and institutions** where there are risks of radicalisation which we need to address.'
(HM Government, 2011, pp.1 & 7)

As part of this aim the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 places a duty on 'specified authorities' in England, Scotland and Wales, including schools, nurseries, pre-schools, childminders and day care providers, **'to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism'**. This is described as the Prevent duty.

According to The Prevent strategy this means protecting children against extremist and violent views in the same way they are safeguarded from any other type of harm.

'The purpose must be to protect children from harm and to ensure that they are taught in a way that is consistent with the law and our values.' (HM Government, 2011, p.69).

There are two main areas of responsibility identified here:

1. Protecting children from harm by assessing and identifying their risk of being drawn into radicalisation.
2. Providing a safe, inclusive learning environment that supports spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the promotion of fundamental British values.

1. Protecting children from harm

The Government states, 'early years providers serve arguably the most vulnerable and impressionable members of society' and 'must take action to protect children from harm and should be alert to harmful behaviour by other adults in the child's life' (HM Government, 2015a, p.10).

To help schools, nurseries and childcare providers understand their responsibilities in terms of protecting children from

Defining ‘fundamental British values’



When the Government first announced its intention to make it a legal requirement that educational establishments actively promote British values, the inclusion of the word ‘British’ caused much controversy. In a letter to the education secretary Children’s Laureate Michael Rosen explains why he finds the inclusion of the word ‘British’ so problematic:

‘Your checklist of British values is: “Democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect, and tolerance of those of different faiths and beliefs.” I can’t attach the adjective “British” to these. In fact, I find it parochial, patronising and arrogant that you think it’s appropriate or right to do so... We use adjectives to describe, modify, define, colour and infuse the noun that follows it. It’s clear... that your government would like us to think that there is indeed something specially British about the items on the checklist.’ (Rosen, 2014)

Rosen takes issue with attaching the word ‘British’ to these particular values in a way that insinuates they are specific to any one nationality. It might also be argued that the use of

the term ‘British values’ is contrary to the values of mutual tolerance and respect because identifying such values as ‘British’ sets them apart from the values of other societies and cultures around the world. The term might be construed as divisive rather than inclusive, ironically undermining the intention to promote community cohesion. Such values are equally applicable to people all over the world and as Goddard (2016) points out, many feel it is more appropriate to consider them as ‘human’ values.

Ofsted inspector Julia Gouldsboro, on the other hand, supports the use of the term ‘British’ and suggests ‘having a more inclusive definition’ of the word. An Irish immigrant, she draws on her own experience of growing up in England while struggling with her twin identity as an Irish national. She suggests societal division is resultant of a lack of ‘sense of belonging’ and ‘generations still growing up with hatred for others because of their ethnicity’:

‘Britain is made up of small individual groups with many various cultures, races and religions, and we need

some umbrella to stand under that gives us an identity together... By British values, we do mean basic human values, but we need these to celebrate and proclaim that our diversity is actually our strongest bond and defines our "Britishness".' (Gouldsboro, 2015, pp.49-50)

The inclusion of the word 'British' has also led to the misconception that promoting British values is about waving Union Jack flags, celebrating the English roast and sharing the stories of Beatrix Potter. Doing so is entirely missing the point. **Promoting British values is not about celebrating stereotypical British traditions and institutions, it is about encouraging the people of Britain to share a set of values that promote tolerance, respect and community cohesion.**

Many of the issues surrounding the term 'British values' and indeed the values identified are subject to debate. However, for the purposes of this book, the term is used throughout to avoid confusion.

British values, human rights and human responsibilities

British early years settings should already be actively promoting the values of democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual tolerance and respect, as these are all represented within the Human Rights Act 1998 and United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) 1989. UNICEF's (2016) child-friendly explanation of the UNCRC mentions the importance of regarding these rights in relation to their associated responsibilities.

Therefore, when thinking about how to define each of the four British values it is helpful to consider how they promote human rights legislation because **introducing British values to young children is just the same as introducing them to their human rights and responsibilities.**

Democracy: A democracy is governed by representatives elected by the people. Ideally, its citizens should have equal rights, be treated fairly and be able to participate in decision making. Children's democratic rights are ratified by the UNCRC. Children have the right to participate in making decisions about things that concern them (article 12), they have the right to information (article 13), and they have a right to education and should be encouraged to strive to meet their full potential (article 28).

The rule of law: This is an understanding that a democratic society can only succeed if citizens abide by the rules. People who live in a law-abiding society are able to distinguish right from wrong and understand the consequences of their actions in terms of how they impact upon other individuals and society as a whole. The UNCRC

stipulates that children have the right to think what they want (article 14) and the right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly (article 15). However, they also have a responsibility to ensure that while enjoying these rights they do not stop others enjoying theirs.

Individual liberty: This is the freedom to make choices and voice opinions without fear of oppression. It means having freedom of expression in terms of choosing and portraying a personal identity and being able to express a personal point of view, which may be in opposition to others. It means having self-awareness and a positive sense of self. The UNCRC supports children's rights to think and believe what they want and to choose their own religion (article 14). It states education should promote children's individual personalities, talents and abilities and help them develop self-respect in terms of their family and cultural identity (article 29). UNICEF points out that with these rights come a responsibility to treat others with fairness and respect.

Mutual respect and tolerance: This is the expectation that people of different races, with different faiths, from varying cultural backgrounds and with opposing views and beliefs should be able to live and work together in peace. It means helping children learn about similarities and differences between people, teaching them to respect the views and beliefs of others and helping them appreciate why they should not discriminate against anyone on any basis. Again, this is covered in the UNCRC where it states education should promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as teach children to respect their own and other cultures, support sexual equality and demonstrate tolerance for people of different ethnicities and religions (article 29).

Article 4 of the Convention explains, 'States Parties shall undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognised in the present Convention' (UN, 1989). Governments are responsible for ensuring anyone caring for or working with children promotes their human rights. In this case the UK Government is upholding these rights by asking educators to actively promote British values.

Fundamental British values and the EYFS



As well as being integral to human rights law, British values are embedded into UK education legislation. The Prevent duty guidance reiterates the legal responsibility of all schools and nurseries under the Education Act 2002 to **deliver a 'broad and balanced curriculum which promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life'** (HM Government, 2015a, p.10). The guidance also refers to the Education and Inspections Act 2006, which highlights the duty of the school inspectorate to report upon **'the contribution made by the school to community cohesion'**.

Promoting British values is about more than activities and resources. Managers and leaders must ensure British values are promoted through the ethos of the setting and its policies and procedures. Most helpfully, these values **are implicit within the themes and principles of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage.**

A unique child

The EYFS states, 'every child is a unique child who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured' (DfE, 2014a, p.6). The underlying principle here is that individual children should be respected and have access to early years provision that fosters their unique aptitudes and abilities and enables them to thrive and develop. This means planning a curriculum that reflects the diversity of children's interests and experiences and caters for their differing needs. What's more, there is an expectation that all children and their families will be respected and valued and not be discriminated against on any basis.

This means creating a democratic environment where all children are treated fairly and parents are included and involved (democracy); children are respected as individuals and encouraged to express themselves freely (individual liberty); and all children, their parents and families are respected and catered for (mutual respect and tolerance).

Case study: Learning to share

Thomas and Archie (age 4) are playing with a Hot Wheels track. Thomas has built a loop-the-loop and believes only one car is capable of successfully travelling around it without falling off. Archie is playing with that particular car and does not want to let Thomas use it for the same reason. A practitioner approaches and asks if the boys have any ideas how they can make a fair decision as to who can play with the car. Thomas suggests they take turns with the car and each have equal amounts of time to play with it. Archie agrees. The practitioner praises Thomas' good idea and suggests using a five-minute sand timer so they can each see when their time is up.

In this example, the boys were given the chance to make suggestions as to how to solve the problem themselves. Thomas came up with an idea that was fair and the practitioner supported this by suggesting the use of a sand timer, enabling the boys to monitor their own practice of fair and equal treatment independently.

assistant for the day. Throw the slip of paper in the bin and point out it will be someone else's turn tomorrow.

- Send a setting mascot home with a different child each weekend. Again, keep a list and tick off the names. Arrange this list so the children who are last on the register list go first on this list.

Participation

Perhaps the most straightforward way to enable children to actively participate is to ask them what they want to learn and involve them in topic planning. This is already integral to many early years practitioners' practice and recognised as a good example of starting from the child.

Involving children in decision making

Another way to include children in decision making processes, is the creation of a children's council:

- Once every six weeks bring the children together in their key worker groups and show them how to elect a representative for a children's council.
- Bring the council together once a week to consider important issues such as:
 - Suggestions for healthy snack choices
 - Ideas for role play area themes

Case study: Early years democracy

Positive Steps Nursery in Guildford caters for children aged three months to five years and the children are divided into four rooms according to age. One child is chosen to represent each room on a children's council that meets once a week. The council talks about what everyone has been learning and how this can be extended and developed into projects that further extend the children's needs and interests.

The children are encouraged to talk about what they enjoy doing and which aspects of the learning environment they find most stimulating. They are then invited to suggest changes and come up with their own ideas for activities. For example, one pre-school child said she enjoyed collecting objects and would like to go out on walks to collect things. So staff planned some walks off-site and while the children were out they came across a bus stop. This triggered an interest in public transport and eventually led to a project that involved taking rides on the bus and train.

Even babies and very young children participate on the council. They are accompanied to meetings by their key workers, who share observations and talk about the children's interests on their behalf. For example, observations of a baby who particularly enjoyed messy play but also being outside led to staff setting up more messy play in the outdoor area.

This demonstrates how children can be democratically involved in planning and making decisions about their own learning. It is a great example of child-centred practice.

- Play resources that the children would like provided indoors and outside
- Activities the children have enjoyed
- Ideas for extending activities
- Additions or alterations to the setting code

Shared responsibility

Part of being in a democracy means working together to improve outcomes for all. In the early years setting this means helping children to form positive relationships and fostering a collaborative culture where everyone helps each other out. Practitioners should encourage children to respect each other and consider the needs and feelings of others. It is also helpful to mediate when children have disagreements and encourage them to compromise and come up with their own solutions.