

Sam Andrews  
By email only

**Information Governance**

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28 March 2019

Dear Mr Andrews

**FOI Review: 15280097 Prevent delivery plan**

I am writing to let you know that Joytun Akther, Senior information Governance and Complaints Officer, has completed the review of your Freedom of Information (FOI) request.

Your initial request dated 15 February 2019 was:

*Please release:*

- All Prevent delivery plans from 2011 to the current date
- Any and all evaluation or scrutiny documents related to Prevent
- A list of funded organisations or projects, and the funding amount given, from 2011 to present.

The Council initially responded on 11 March, providing you redacted copies of Prevent delivery plans from 2012 to 2018, and details of where to access the publically available scrutiny documents. However, with regards to Prevent funding information, you were issued a refusal notice citing:

1. Section 24(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) where release of the information would make the UK or its citizens more vulnerable to a national security threat.
2. Section 31(1)(a) of the FOIA, where release of the information would, or would be likely to prejudice the prevention or detection of crime.

You then requested a review on 13 March 2019 as follows:

*Many of the programmes that are funded by Prevent are public in their acknowledgement of their receiving that funding. Many of those projects funded are also not of a sensitive nature. Prevent does not deal with criminal cases, and so releasing this information would not impede any national security investigations or operations. Recent research has also found that most persons are now supportive of Prevent as a safeguarding policy, and the recent acceptance of a public review has found that those who are suspicious of Prevent are so because of a lack of transparency.*

Having reviewed this matter the Council's findings are as follows:

The Council holds the information requested but for the reasons set out below, it considers that the exemptions 24(1) and 31(1)(a) apply to the information and that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing this information.

Information about the organisations that have received funding in a particular geographic area is highly sensitive and releasing this information into the public domain may allow third parties to compare the activity levels of the Prevent programme in different parts of the UK. This subsequently has the potential to seriously undermine the objectives of the Prevent project, which is a crucial element of the Government's strategy to counter terrorist and extremist activity in the UK 'at source'. It may also discourage organisations from bidding for Prevent funding in the future, which in turn could result less incentives being available, so less individuals would be engaging with programmes which would have a direct impact on national security and law enforcement.

Section 24 and 31 are qualified exemptions, which means that in deciding whether or not to withhold information, the Council is required to take account of the public interest, and to consider whether the public interest in disclosing the information outweighs the public interest in not disclosing the information.

#### **Public Interest in favour of disclosure**

There is increasing concern regarding threats to communities and national security within the UK and it could be argued that disclosure of information regarding the actions being taken to counter this threat would provide some assurance that the local authority is taking steps to protect the community. The Council advocates openness and transparency, especially in relation to the work public monies are being spent on and the organisations concerned, where this would be in the public interest.

There may be a public interest in the release of this information because it may reassure the public that there are effective processes in place to address people's vulnerability to radicalisation. Disclosure of the information would provide reassurance to the public that the Council has projects in place to protect children from being drawn into violent extremism. This is an issue which is high on the public agenda and therefore the disclosure of this information would contribute to an informed public debate.

#### **Public Interest in favour of withholding**

In balancing the public interest in disclosing or withholding the information requested, the Council considers that the security of the country is of paramount importance, and there is a consequent strong public interest in maintaining the safety of individuals at risk and not undermining national security.

Due to the risk that may be presented to individuals working in Prevent funded projects, the Council must have due regard to releasing information that may identify staff members working in the agenda and to whom we have a duty of care. If staff working in prevent are identified and intimidated, this may well undermine the Council's efforts to combat crime, prevention of terrorism and safeguard individuals.

Whilst there is a public interest in openness and transparency, the Council considers that this is far outweighed by the need to safeguard the integrity to work with other agencies to protect the security of the nation, and effectively safeguard those who are vulnerable to radicalisation. The Council will not disclose information if it is likely that it will compromise its work or place members of the public at risk.

Prevent aims to prevent individuals being drawn into terrorism, and therefore criminality. If information about radicalisation is released it is likely that any individuals receiving support through Prevent would perceive their trust has been compromised through a reduction in the confidentiality associated with the process, impacting in their engagement in the process. Disengagement would threaten the successful delivery of this programme and therefore the prevention of crime.

The Council is satisfied that the exemptions in Sections 24(1) and 31(1)(a) have been correctly applied. We have determined that safeguarding law enforcement is of paramount importance and that in all circumstances of the case it is our opinion that the public interest clearly favours the non-disclosure of information.

However, whilst the Council cannot release specific information identifying those receiving funding, we can release the nature of the projects and their focus. Our funded projects include the following broad themes:

- Work to promote critical thinking and debate on extremism, terrorism and hate crime with young people.
- Work with young people which cuts across methods of grooming for gang purposes and radicalisation.
- Outreach work with young people.
- Projects working with women and girls.
- Projects working with young people on the dangers of radicalisation and exploitation through social media.

If you are still dissatisfied with the Council's response after the internal review you have a right of appeal to the Information Commissioner at:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF  
Telephone: 01625 545 700  
[www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk)

Further information about the operation of the act is available from the council's website [www.towerhamlets.gov.uk](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk) and the information leaflet in public reception areas in Council Buildings.

Yours sincerely



Ruth Dowden  
Head of Information Governance

