Evaluation report on the ACT Building Resilience Project

FULL REPORT

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Evaluation methodology

Ten schools joined the project and nine were able to complete their activities within the time-scale. Information for the evaluation was collected in the following ways:

- One of the evaluators attended the project meetings with teachers at the beginning and towards the end of the project.
- Teachers completed a questionnaire in each of these meetings to assess the kinds of concerns they had about this project.
- Students were asked to complete a questionnaire at the beginning and end of the project to enable us to assess the impact of the project and how the students had experienced the lessons. These questionnaires were administered by the teachers and posted to the evaluators. In total we were able to match up 232 'before' and 'after' questionnaires.
- The evaluators also undertook eight school visits during which lessons were observed, the lead teachers were interviewed, student focus groups were organised and, several members of senior management were interviewed, including two head teachers.

Key messages from the teachers' perspective

Key issues from teacher evaluations

1. Teachers were generally happy they could undertake the project and by the end they were even more confident overall.

2. The main area of concern related to supporting other colleagues, especially non-specialists. This continued to be the main concern by the end of the project.

3. Responding to this area of concern took considerable time and effort, especially to support non-specialist colleagues.

4. Schools planned to continue the work, and in most cases were planning to spend more time on the lessons and in several cases to roll out similar work to more year groups.

5. One of the main issues mentioned by teachers at the end of the project was how important it was that students have opportunities to engage in such discussions.

6. Although few teachers identify subject knowledge as a major concern, most of the lead teachers reported having to undertake additional research to build their own subject knowledge as part of their planning and teaching.

Some common issues in teachers' planning

1. All of the teachers had a clear idea of the distinctive contribution of the curriculum projects and how this complemented or improved upon the safeguarding response to Prevent.

2. The schemes of work included learning intentions which focused on subject knowledge (definitions of key terms and an understanding of core concepts such as rights, freedom and democracy) as well as critical media literacy skills and an understanding of political action for change. These lessons were not *primarily* concerned with attitude change, although teachers often assumed this could be an outcome.

3. Several of the teachers planned a variety of case studies, so that the concrete examples could be compared to elicit more abstract and evaluative discussions. These case studies were also provided to ensure students understood terrorism and extremism beyond the narrow focus on 'Islamic' terrorism.

4. Most of the teachers took some aspect of the local context as the starting point for their schemes of work. This included responding to students' questions, aiming to tackle areas of ignorance, or responding to issues that were of local relevance, often including far right activity.

Reflections on teaching

1. Teachers were very positive about the response of their students and felt that most of the young people had significantly developed their understanding of terrorism and extremism.

2. Although everyone had well-developed plans at the start of their teaching, most of the teachers made substantial changes as they taught, altering lessons, re-emphasising certain learning intentions over others and inserting additional material. This underlined the importance of being responsive and flexible in the delivery of the schemes of work.

3. Part of this flexible development of lessons was driven by teachers constantly evaluating the extent to which students were able to transition between the detail of case studies and the bigger picture.

4. Several teachers used a critical focus on the media as a way in to encourage personal reflection about prejudice.

5. Teachers were sensitive to the individual needs of children who had direct experience of radicalisation and extremism and negotiated with them individually to find the appropriate level of engagement in lessons.

Senior managers' views

1. There was a tendency among SLT to see the Prevent more in terms of referrals and interventions, than was evident among the lead teachers.

2. Some supported the curriculum project as a move towards a more proactive response to Prevent and in some of these schools there were several aspects of the curriculum being brought into alignment around Citizenship goals (including assemblies, tutor time and themed drop days), but some did not perceive the significance of this project and showed little awareness of how this curriculum project might connect up as part of a bigger picture. This indicates that in some schools it may be useful to conduct a strategic review of the role of Citizenship in the curriculum in order to capitalise on the opportunities available.

Key messages from the students' perspective

Reasons why schools should teach about extremism, radicalisation and terrorism

1. This is simply an important issue and students should have the opportunity to learn about it and develop their own opinions.

2. If discussions about these issues are not organised in schools, students may not have other opportunities to discuss them.

3. Many students trust teachers to handle these discussions sensitively and not close down opinions dogmatically. This represents a faith in the process of critical reflection to demonstrate the problems with extremist positions.

4. There is some specialist knowledge about the concepts (extremism, radicalisation and terrorism) and some important contextual information relating to acts of terror which are essential to being able to understand what is happening.

5. Tackling the issue makes it less of a taboo and starts to demystify it for children.

Suggestions for developing critical media literacy

1. Students value opportunities to engage with specific examples and activities which illustrate in concrete ways the bias, distortion and lies which are evident in media and social media coverage.

2. Students may benefit from learning about the strategies employed by extremist groups to elicit sympathy and draw people into their narratives. Understanding the techniques can enable students to spot them when they are being used.

3. Students also need to be taught the background to issues they encounter in the media, so that they can see for themselves where information is being misrepresented or simplified, and where interpretations are being placed on events which may distort the readers' perceptions.

4. Teachers can also usefully provide examples of people and organisations which often fall outside of regular mainstream media coverage so that students encounter the bigger picture, and so they can understand how omission also functions as a mechanism for media distortion.

Towards a political interpretation of terrorism

1. Students are able to move beyond a simple good / bad moral categorisation and begin to understand terrorism in more complex ways.
2. In doing so they find it helpful to encounter problems of categorisation, which encourage them to think about more complicated and nuanced judgements about what constitutes un/acceptable action.
3. Students also value the opportunity to encounter multiple perspectives, which enables them to understand there are a range of opinions and interpretations. This can avoid simplifying narratives.
4. This does not appear to lead to a relativism in which anything can be justified, on the contrary, students are able to sustain their criticism and condemnation of organisations such as ISIS, whilst developing their own explanation about why ISIS exists and what it seeks to achieve.

Thinking about Islamophobia

1. Whilst policy documents may adopt a formal language of neutrality, it seems essential in the classroom to engage with the context of Islamophobia, which provides the backdrop for debates about terrorism and radicalisation in the UK.
2. Students who were looking at ISIS were able to see how criticisms of ISIS could connect to a general prejudice of, or fear towards, Muslims more generally. The students in the focus groups understood this elision was taking place and sought to distance themselves from it.
3. Similarly, schools considering the extremism of far right groups would have to engage with the Islamophobia expressed by these groups.
4. Students value the opportunity to learn about the concept and the processes by which Islamophobia develops and is sustained.
5. Students are also able to reflect on how Islamophobia affects them, both as Muslims who are judged by others, and as non-Muslims who find themselves making unwitting judgements.

Explaining radicalisation

1. Some students at key stage 3 are able to engage in fairly sophisticated ways with the problem of what causes radicalisation. They have moved beyond simplistic accounts of how individuals are radicalised and are able to engage with complex explanations of how multiple factors play a part.

2. Explanations offered by students considered the immediate mode of engagement (social media and peers) but also incorporated more critical perspectives such as young people's experience of marginalisation in the UK. Some of the lessons included detailed case studies to help students think about these processes.

3. Some of the students were also able to understand the ways in which organisations interpret events from their own perspective and incorporate them into their own justificatory narratives.

4. There is some evidence that students are able to think both about (i) the causes of extremism, and (ii) how the way different groups account for those causes becomes implicated in their own extremist positions (such as the EDL focusing on Islam or immigration as a security threat).

Some implications for teachers of the survey data

1. Whilst this group of students compare favourably to earlier surveys in relation to their citizenship skills, there is still a significant minority who struggle with basic concepts such as distinguishing facts from opinions. This presents a challenge for teachers in terms of ensuring lessons are accessible, especially when using media sources.

2. The data about civil liberties and the degree to which freedom can be constrained to protect order indicates there are some internal inconsistencies in students' answers. This may indicate there is still more scope for teachers to ensure that the discussion of case studies connects explicitly to the underpinning concepts and principles (democracy, freedom, rule of law etc.).

Introduction

The project

A key challenge for schools is how to respond effectively to the Prevent duty and how best to develop critical thinking skills and resilience among pupils to challenge extremist ideas and counter the division and fear created by terrorism. In essence there are two important roles for schools:

1. A security role that concerns the duty of care schools have to identify children vulnerable to radicalisation as part of their wider safeguarding responsibilities.
2. A wider educational role to build the resilience of all children to radicalisation and enable them to recognise and challenge extremist views. The DFE and Ofsted recognise that Citizenship education has a unique and particular contribution to developing pupils' capacity as active, informed and responsible citizens based on a commitment to the values that underpin democratic citizenship.

Much of the work to date and much of what is on offer to support schools has been in response to the first role - security and safeguarding. This project focuses on the second role of schools in developing an educational response to the Prevent duty. Drawing on the principles set out in guidance from the Expert Subject Advisory Group for Citizenship and ACT (ESAG, 2015), teachers have been supported to develop innovative teaching strategies and lesson ideas. These use best practice in citizenship pedagogies to explore sensitive and controversial issues and to develop the critical thinking skills and resilience of their pupils.

The ACT 'Building Resilience' project involves teachers in schools across England developing innovative teaching strategies to build children's criticality and resilience to extremism and being drawn into terrorism. The project aims to develop and disseminate examples of best practice in the form of case studies including practical classroom materials, teaching ideas and appropriate pedagogies to support schools nationally in creating their educational response to the new Prevent duty. The ambition of the project is to support teachers working in different school contexts across England in developing the skills and knowledge pupils need to:

- think critically, explore and discuss controversial and sensitive issues
- recognise and challenge extremism and terrorist ideologies
- build resilience to radicalisation; and
- understand the value of democratic citizenship.

Nine schools developed their own project to reflect the local context and the teachers' views about what kind of response would be most appropriate for their students. The following list summarises the focus of each project:

- Extremism and terrorism as reported in the media.
- Political ideologies.
- Community people.
- Exploring issues of extremism and radicalisation through enquiry.
- Immigration and protest - a case study of the local area.
- Exploring extremism.
- Violent conflict in the community.
- Questioning perspectives on terrorism and radicalisation.
- Challenging prejudice and extremist views.

The projects varied in scale with the shortest taking place in one week of tutorial time and the longest lasting a half term of weekly Citizenship lessons. All the classes were in key stage 3 (11-14 years of age).

The Prevent policy and schools

Whilst there has been Prevent guidance for schools for a number of years, the statutory duty and subsequent guidance for schools and other public bodies has given this a much higher profile. In the duty, extremism has been defined as:

> "The vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs… [and] calls for the death of members of British armed forces is also extremism. (HMG, 2015: 2)

Whilst the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (2015) requires schools to have "due regard to the need to prevent people from being draw into terrorism" the DfE guidance adds that schools should also "think about what they can do to protect children from the risk of radicalisation" (DfE, 2015: 4), where radicalisation is defined as:

> "the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism leading to terrorism. During that process it is possible to intervene to prevent vulnerable people being drawn into terrorist-related activity." (DfE, 2015: 4)

In this guidance, and in much of the subsequent training and inspection, there has been a focus on safeguarding and child protection. However, the guidance also urges that:

> "schools can build pupils' resilience to radicalisation by providing a safe environment for debating controversial issues and helping them to understand how they can influence and participate in decision-making." (DfE, 2015: 8)

And this is further clarified in relation to citizenship education which is seen as providing a space where children can "explore political and social issues critically" and where children can learn about democracy and diversity (DfE, 2015: 8). This sits alongside the promotion of Fundamental British Values (FBV) as a new element of Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural (SMSC) development in schools (DfE, 2014). Among other recommendations this SMSC guidance includes the advice that schools should:

> "include in suitable parts of the curriculum, as appropriate for the age of pupils, material on the strengths, advantages and disadvantages of democracy, and how democracy and the law works in Britain, in contrast to other forms of government in other countries." (DfE, 2014: 6)

Schools are held to account for their work in this area by Ofsted, which now includes FBV in its definition of SMSC. According to the School inspection handbook, successful SMSC provision is evident where children demonstrate:

> "acceptance and engagement with the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs; they develop and demonstrate skills and attitudes that will allow them to participate fully in and contribute positively to life in modern Britain." (Ofsted, 2016: 35)

So, the project which is the focus of this evaluation report sits in this intensively regulated space where citizenship education is seen as a vehicle for the promotion of fundamental British values, in the context of SMSC, as part of a broader policy to prevent terrorism, extremism and build resilience against radicalisation. Ofsted's inspection of this provision has given this a high profile for school leaders, especially in the aftermath of the 'Trojan Horse' affair, where the DfE and Ofsted indicated their willingness to use these powers to scrutinise schools (Arthur, 2015).

However, despite the legal duty, the subsequent guidance, and the inspection and monitoring system, there is still some considerable scope for interpretation in how schools respond to the Prevent duty. At the heart of the problem is the vagueness inherent in the ideas of extremism and radicalisation. Parliament's Joint Committee on Human Rights (JCHR, 2016) has pointed out that the guidance to schools to promote tolerance of others' beliefs does not really resolve the problem. To take the example used by the Committee in its report, is a school (bound by this duty and working within equalities legislation) supposed to encourage children to show tolerance towards people whose beliefs lead them to be intolerant of homosexuality, or is it appropriate to be intolerant of people who are themselves intolerant? How do teachers simultaneously uphold the British values of tolerance towards others, whilst not challenging others' intolerance? Equally problematic is the Committee's question about how educational establishments strike the balance between "opposition to our fundamental values" (HMG, 2015: 2) and the Education Reform Act 1988 duty on universities to ensure staff have "freedom… to question and test received wisdom and to put forward… controversial or unpopular opinions" (JCHR, 2016: 4). The Committee further questions the language of safeguarding, arguing that there is "no shared consensus or definition as to what children should be safeguarded from" (JCHR, 2016: 5) and they make the argument that continuing to promote action without being able to clarify these issues runs the risk of further fuelling prejudice, destroying trust between religious communities (especially Muslims) and government, and thus doing more harm than good.

Against this backdrop, schools have to do something, and be seen to do something, but they have to pick a very careful path through these various problems. On the one hand the National Union of Teachers has argued clearly that teachers' "role is not to police the students that they teach" and they have urged teachers that:

> "It is important to ensure that the Prevent strategy does not reduce or constrain opportunities for 'safe' and educational debate. Students need opportunities… to express views, seek advice and have questions heard." (NUT, undated)

But on the other hand there seems to be pressure in some quarters to refer any young people who express opinions that *could* be seen as extremist. This has led to a significant rise in the number of children being referred to Channel – in the past school year (2015-16) 4,611 people were referred in total, of whom 70% were Muslims, half were children, and 352 were nine years old or younger (Farmer, 2016). This represents a 75% increase in referrals overall since the new duty came into force, and the number of referrals from schools has doubled from 537 to 1,121. One might argue that this is evidence of a heightened threat, or of improved training for teachers, but one might also wonder whether some teachers are referring children simply because they feel under more pressure to do so.

Several commentators have argued that one of the exacerbating problems for schools is that the dominant response of government is to impose a securitisation perspective (Panjwani, 2016; Sieckelink, 2015). Here the language of surveillance, identifying risks and vulnerabilities and reporting back to the authorities tends to dominate. By contrast they discuss the potential of a more genuinely educational perspective, which would start with the question 'what does this mean for the young people themselves?' Sieckelink, reflecting on his interviews with young people who did espouse support for violent extremism, argues that such an approach would recognise that the route towards radicalisation may start with a quest for empowerment, agency and a search for meaning. Starting with the questions young people have, helping them to build the knowledge to understand the problems, and enabling them to see how they can make things better form the basis of an educational response to terrorism and extremism. Panjwani ends his discussion with this final comment:

> "The sooner the securitisation approach is replaced by an educational approach the better." (Panjwani, 2016: 338)

The following pages indicate some of the ways in which teachers and students have engaged with this challenge, and some of the lessons that can be learned.

Methodology

Ten schools joined the project and nine were able to complete their activities within the time-scale. Information for the evaluation was collected in the following ways:

- One of the evaluators attended the project meetings with teachers at the beginning and towards the end of the project. This enabled us to see the planning process in action and outline the formal data collection plan to teachers.
- Teachers completed a questionnaire in each of these meetings to assess the kinds of concerns they had about this project. The initial questionnaire captured their concerns as they were looking forward to starting this project in their school. The second reflected the concerns they had as they wrapped up this project and developed their plans for rolling the activity out in future years in school.
- Students were asked to complete a questionnaire at the beginning and end of the project to enable us to assess the impact of the project and how the students had experienced the lessons. These questionnaires were administered by the teachers and posted to the evaluators.
- The evaluators also undertook eight school visits during which lessons were observed, the lead teachers were interviewed, student focus groups were organised and, several members of senior management were interviewed, including two head teachers.
- There was also a separate Home Office evaluation survey for students to complete at the beginning and end of the project. Teachers were asked to administer these on separate days to the ACT evaluations to avoid overloading students.

The schools were assigned a pseudonym and references to the local context have been edited to ensure anonymity.

Staff questionnaire

The staff questionnaire used the well-established Concerns Based Adoption Method (CBAM) questions (George et al., 2006), specifically the 'Stages of Concern' questions. This includes 35 statements requiring a response 0-7 according to how true the statements seem to the respondent at the present time. The raw scores are grouped into seven pre-determined categories[1] and converted into percentile scores to enable comparison against a controlled sample developed by the CBAM team. Each individual questionnaire is then converted to a graph, highlighting the areas which concern participants – this clearly identifies the highs and lows of each category, and enables us to identify the profile of concerns for each individual. Repeating the questionnaire at the beginning and

[1] The categories are: un/concerned overall, informational, personal, management, consequence, collaboration, refocusing.

end of the project enabled us to track which concerns were resolved and which emerged as the project moved from the development phase to the roll-out phase.

In addition respondents were asked a series of open ended questions about their school's work on Prevent, their plans for each phase and, in the final evaluation, about how well the project had worked and how ACT had managed the process.

Student questionnaire

The student questionnaire was developed from a range of existing tried and tested sources to collect quantitative data. This was supplemented by some open ended questions in the final survey to collect feedback about the students' perceptions of what they had learned, how the lessons had gone and whether they had any advice for teachers and government in the light of their studies.

All students in the classes participating in the project were invited to participate. Teachers were given the option to allocate a number to each student so the evaluators could not identify individuals, or they were assured that if students identified by name, this would be coded as we entered the data to ensure students could not be identified from the database. In total there were 369 individual responses from students, of which 232 students' questionnaires could be paired to enable a direct comparison between the beginning and end of the project.[2]

The full questionnaire is in the appendix and reflects our adaptation of the following sources:

- Questions 7-9 drawn on Gibson's (2013) article in which he discusses the development of three related measures: (i) relative value of liberty v. order (Q7); (ii) support for the rule of law (Q8); general support for pro-civil liberties policies (Q9). These are scored on a Likert scale (1) strongly disagree – (5) strongly agree. Some questions were omitted because they were not relevant to this context. The results from these questions were analysed individually and then combined to compare means for each of the three areas.
- Question 11 is taken from the Civics Education survey undertaken by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) (Schulz and Sibberns, 2004). These questions assess students' attitudes towards democracy. Each item includes a statement framed as "when… that is…" (e.g. when everyone has the right to express their opinion that is) and students respond on a Likert scale (1) very bad for democracy – (5) very good for

[2] The gap relates to several factors, most notably the fact that some students were not present in both evaluation lessons and in some schools the questionnaires were not adequately coded or named by the teachers and so they could not be paired up at the end of the project.

democracy. This enabled us to compare the responses of this group of students to a much earlier survey in England reported by Kerr et al. (2002).

- Question 12 is also taken from the IEA Civics Education survey and is a simple test of citizenship skills, requiring students to distinguish fact from opinion.

Student focus groups

We conducted twelve focus groups in eight schools. Participants were either invited individually by their teachers (where the focus groups happened during class time) or self-selected from the class following a general invitation to participate by the evaluator (where the meetings took place in break time). All students were reminded that they could opt out of the focus group and choose not to respond to questions. Focus groups lasted between 15-25 minutes and were recorded and transcribed. The focus groups were flexible and so each one developed its own focus depending on what seemed of most interest to the participants. Evaluators used a basic structure for each session, although they also allowed the conversations to develop, asked follow up questions and pursued emergent lines of thought.

Focus group questions

1. What are you learning about in this project?
   Probe for specific issues and make links to the lesson observed. Make sure all participants share their views in turn.
2. Why do you think you're learning this? (How) Is it useful?
3. The wider project is about preventing terrorism. Ask students for their views on the following:
   - Why do you think people become terrorists or support terrorism?
   - How does this make you feel? (How) Does it affect you?
4. How can young people be encouraged not to become involved in terrorism or supporting terrorism?
5. Can schools help?
   What is your school doing? What seems to be working well? What could be done better?
6. If you were advising the government in this area, what would you tell them?

Staff Interviews

We interviewed the lead teacher in eight schools plus three additional interviews where the project was being taught by other colleagues. One interview was a joint interview with the lead teacher and a colleague, the others were individual interviews which lasted between 20-50 minutes. The interviews were recorded and transcribed.

As with the student focus groups, the evaluators started with a set of core questions but allowed the conversation to follow different paths depending on the respondents' interests and concerns. In

addition evaluators asked questions arising from the lesson observations[3] they undertook in the school.

Teacher interview questions

1. What is the most important thing you have done in relation to the Prevent policy?
2. What do you think is the most significant role of teachers and schools (as distinct from the police and other services)?
3. What do you think makes young people vulnerable to radicalisation?
4. What is the rationale for this curriculum project?
5. How does this lesson contribute to the whole sequence / project?
6. What are the key challenges in teaching this here?
   Prompt: are the any specific contextual factors you have thought about? Have any issues arisen as you have taught this?
7. What has the student response been so far?
8. What learning points would you identify at this stage?
   Prompt: What is working well? What could be improved?
9. What is the legacy of this project?
   E.g. will it continue? How will it be developed?

Interviews with head teachers and members of senior leadership teams followed a similar format to the teacher interviews, in particular the first three questions were the same.

Senior leaders interview questions

4. What is the most important contribution of the curriculum, i.e. knowledge and skills?
5. And within the curriculum, what is the most important contribution of citizenship education?
6. How well is your school doing on this?
7. Are there any areas for further development?
8. There are several organisations (such as the National Union of Teachers) which have expressed scepticism about the Prevent policy. If you were giving advice to the government in this area, what would you tell them?
   Prompt: is the current Prevent guidance for schools about right? Would you amend it or adapt it in any way? Would you propose different approaches?

How the evaluation tools relate to the project aims

The following table indicates how these methods related to the project aims:

Project objective	Related evaluation questions
Think critically, explore and discuss controversial and sensitive issues	Student evaluation Q12 (ability to distinguish fact / opinion as a prerequisite for criticality) Student focus group Teacher interviews
Recognise and challenge extremism and terrorist ideologies	Student focus group Teacher interviews
Build resilience to radicalisation	Student focus group Teacher interviews

[3] The lesson observation data was not analysed separately, it was used within the interview.

Understand the value of democratic citizenship	Student evaluation Q7-9 (support for civil liberties), Q11 (attitudes towards democracy) Student focus group Teacher interviews

Teachers

In this section we consider the questionnaire responses and interview data in broadly chronological order. We start with the teachers' concerns about embarking on the project, and compare this to the concerns they had at the end of the project as they made plans for rolling out or further developing the work. We then consider some of the characteristics of their planning, before moving on to share some of their reflections on the process of teaching these lessons. We end with a brief summary of some of the points emerging from interviews with senior management in schools.

Teachers' concerns

The participating teachers were experienced Citizenship teachers in charge of the Citizenship provision in their schools and had opted in to this project, therefore one would expect them to be relatively confident in their abilities to engage with this teaching challenge. This was largely borne out in the initial project meeting and in the questionnaires administered at the beginning of the project to identify potential areas of concern. The main area to emerge for all participants was how to support their colleagues who would be teaching these lessons, who in most cases were non-specialist teachers. The concerns were varied, but the most common perceived risks were that colleagues would lack the appropriate level of subject knowledge to engage deeply with the topic, and that non-specialists may not be confident or competent to manage discussions around particularly controversial issues. As one teacher put it:

> "I think that the biggest thing for me working with other people who delivered the lessons… is seeing how they reacted when I sent them through lessons saying can you also not just say this is I.S. this is what they have done, they are terrible, but also try to get the kids to think about where has it come from?... Another teacher was very uncomfortable with trying to sit on the fence and not give their opinion." (Beech, HoD)

In two schools these concerns led to specialist staff leading the classes this year, with a view to rolling out the teaching in future years. However, for most of the participating teachers, responding to this concern took considerable time and effort during the project. Indeed, a few teachers who had not registered any concern about time and resources at the beginning of the project indicated this was more of a concern by the end of the project as they thought about continuing to develop the work. This indicates that the actual time commitment required had become more evident, and continued to be significant in relation to plans for rolling out the work further.

Several teachers talked about having to meet on a regular basis to brief colleagues, talk them through resources, and prepare them for possible areas of questioning that students might raise in

class. In one case this included the head of department coaching a less experienced colleague by pretending to be students in class and firing questions at them and then working through strategies for dealing with difficult issues. The head of department said:

> "A lot of time is spent with him asking me questions about how I would approach it and him answering, so him acting as the student before he delivers the lesson and me giving the answers I would give. Then we did the opposite with me asking him questions that would keep pushing him to see where the questioning would take him. I would always deliver the lessons a week ahead of him so I would say these are the questions that were asked, these are the answers I would have given, you might be able to take it in this direction…" (Beech, HoD)

This point was echoed by another teacher who also used a role play technique to help her team think through how to tackle these controversial discussions:

> "As a practitioner… I think it would be really useful to do role plays for example, on how to deal with this situation, so I've tried to do that with my department but it's only sort of… it's not like I have any guidelines to go from… so yeah, try this one and try that one, it's just, get in discussions, OK if you're doing this lesson and child says this, how could you respond to it. And I think you need much more of that because you can't just presume that because we're professionals that we automatically know everything. There does need to be regular training I think." (Maple, HoD)

This is obviously incredibly time consuming but was felt to be essential in ensuring staff were adequately prepared for their role and the lessons were of sufficient quality to be effective. Some participating teachers also observed colleagues teaching these classes to offer further guidance and to monitor the quality of the lessons, for example the lead teacher in Laburnum School described how she supported colleagues and checked the scheme of work was being developed properly:

> "A staff member might come to me and say oh on this lesson on dictatorship I found this really good activity on specific dictators and we didn't finish the lesson last lesson so we're going to do that this lesson instead. And we have to have a conversation, saying, well is understanding how many dictators there are in the world significant to the aims of the scheme of work? And if you look at the success criteria of the lesson, understanding that is not important, it's the skills of evaluating that are. And we've had to have a lot of refocusing it. We do learning walks as well, where I get to pop into lessons to see how things are going." (Laburnum, HoD)

Such activities were not always facilitated by school timetables and so in one or two cases the lead teacher was unable to attend others' lessons or even call regular meetings. In such cases colleagues

had to spend considerable time in breaks, before and after the day, and in snatched conversations to try to keep on top of this issue.

In addition to these concerns several of the teachers were particularly concerned about how the students would respond to the lessons. One teacher was cautious about the potential of lessons on terrorism and radicalisation to be linked automatically in children's minds to Islamic extremism, thus risking fuelling feelings of alienation or marginalisation. Another teacher was concerned about whether students might be upset by studying this topic, and this also led to him being concerned about the response of parents. Initially this led him to adopt a fairly cautious approach at the outset, tackling issues obliquely, for example, opening up a discussion of the need for empathy and an acknowledgement of multiple perspectives, by developing scenarios which were unrelated to terrorism or extremism.

One of the teachers was also concerned that he did not want Citizenship to be seen as a repository for other policy initiatives. Whilst he saw that there were clear benefits to engaging with Prevent through Citizenship, he was also wary about encouraging management to see this as setting a precedent. Whilst Citizenship lessons may well provide a useful context in which to discuss a wide range of issues, it is equally important to retain the coherence of the planned programme and not to allow it to become a tick-list solution to current policy. There is clearly a fine line to tread here but by the end of project evaluation this teacher felt that the project had been successful and was positive about the fact that it led members of the school leadership team to view Citizenship more favourably.

Two teachers acknowledged that their own subject knowledge may be challenged but in reality, this was the case for most of the teachers who were visited by the evaluators. It was common to hear how teachers had had to undertake further research to explore a range of complex issues, relating to specific case studies of terrorism, groups and individuals not widely discussed in the media, and aspects of Islam. Often these areas emerged through students' questions, or the teacher became aware that additional content would be required to enable students to access some of the deeper questions and concepts the teachers intended. The teacher from Beech School illustrates this:

> "I think that is going to be the biggest problem to anyone who wants to approach teaching something like this, teaching radicalisation or about Prevent, you have to do case studies and a lot of people think they know what the situation is about but once you start drilling down and the kids start to ask you, well what is the difference between

> Sunni and Shia, and why are these people fighting and where in the Qur'an does it say this and those sort of things… going away and speaking to other people and getting your knowledge, is what it basically forced me to do." (Beech, HoD)

By the end of the project teachers were generally less concerned about the project overall than they had been at the outset. Typical comments drew attention to the fact that students had engaged with the project very positively and the teachers had been impressed by the seriousness with which students applied themselves to the work. Whist all the schools plan to continue the work, most also indicated that they would expand the scheme of work to enable students to spend more time on such learning. In several schools the work was also being rolled out into other year groups and into assembly time to reach more people.

Key issues from teacher evaluations

1. Teachers were generally happy they could undertake the project and by the end they were even more confident overall.
2. The main area of concern related to supporting other colleagues, especially non-specialists. This continued to be the main concern by the end of the project.
3. Responding to this area of concern took considerable time and effort, especially to support non-specialist colleagues.
4. Schools planned to continue the work, and in most cases were planning to spend more time on the lessons and in several cases to roll out similar work to more year groups.
5. One of the main issues mentioned by teachers at the end of the project was how important it was that students have opportunities to engage in such discussions.
6. Although few teachers identify subject knowledge as a major concern, most of the lead teachers reported having to undertake additional research to build their own subject knowledge as part of their planning and teaching.

Teachers' planning

> "Defending against terrorism has to be by saying democracy is the way forward. That's the way to tackle this." (Poplar, HoD)

The teachers planned a diverse range of projects and in this section we aim to provide a flavour of the kinds of learning intentions they articulated for their own projects. Where we can we draw out common ideas or approaches to try to tease out some issues that might inform others embarking on

similar projects. The first thing that emerged from some of the interviews was the importance of developing a curriculum response to Prevent, to run alongside the safeguarding response in schools. The lead teacher in Poplar school saw both strands as complementary:

> "We have got some lessons which are 'don't become a terrorist, this is how a terrorist is going to come at you' but the tutorial programme, which is built on the so-called British values… it's teaching people how democracy works, how the rule of law works, how you can support the rule of law, and making them realise, we've got freedoms in this country which aren't so bad and if you do have problem in this country then there are ways of sorting it out.(Poplar, HoD)

Importantly, this curriculum response goes beyond just teaching fairly superficially about terrorism, and takes seriously the core conceptual knowledge required to really understand what it means to live in a democracy, and the range of strategies available to seek change in such societies. For some teachers though, the curriculum was not just an adjunct to the safeguarding policy, but a more appropriate educational response:

> "I think that having a curriculum focused response is the best way to have a response because going down the safeguarding route I feel like you end up either targeting the students or singling the students out or alienating the students who might even be vulnerable, whereas a curriculum focus is open to all and I think that's what's important… if I said to any of my students a year ago, I need to prevent you from being radicalised, I think they would have just stared at me and not known what I was talking about. So, unless they understand the concepts behind what all this stuff is and why it's there for them and their benefit, there doesn't really seem to be any point to the agenda at all." (Laburnum, HoD)

This lead teacher continued:

> "We are definitely still dealing with Prevent because I'm wanting to prevent extremism, but I want to prevent *extreme ignorance* or *extreme hatred* for groups without understanding what those groups actually are or what they involve." (Laburnum, HoD)

This sets the scene very well for the rest of this section and indicates that the teachers were engaging seriously with the subject knowledge that would help students understand terrorism and extremism better in the context of democratic citizenship.

This commitment to a treatment of the subject which opened up students' understanding and gave them room to explore the issues had to be held in tension with the concern that teachers might be accused of condoning (or failing to appropriately condemn) terrorism.

> "We know that an attack happened in Paris, we want to know why it happened, where it came from, what the thinking behind it was. *Not saying that then justifies it*, but if it explains it, it then opens up into a critical discussion and you can't have a critical discussion just on your emotional response to whether you like or don't like an act." (Laburnum, HoD)

This is familiar territory to history and citizenship teachers who are often trying to devise routes into topics which open up debate, rather than use teaching simply as a mechanism for generating a predetermined moral response. As the lead teacher in Laburnum School indicates, this is not just about not condemning, it's about asking the kinds of questions that allow for multiple responses and benefit from multiple perspectives. One of the ways this school built in this fruitful critical questioning was to explore the concept of 'uprisings' in different contexts:

> "I think that notion of uprising definitely needs to be engaged with because it's not always a negative thing, and I think if you make it a negative thing, from the citizenship perspective, you're completely destroying what the purpose of the subject is if we tell our students that anything that goes against the grain is extremism and we shouldn't like it, well what's the point of being in a citizenship lesson? The whole point of the lesson is to teach you that you can be the change."(Laburnum, HoD)

What this approach, and several others, seems to be pursuing is the idea that wanting radical change and pursuing it by radical means is perfectly possible within a democratic society. These teachers are trying to reclaim radical politics whilst demonstrating why terrorism and certain forms of radicalisation are wrong.

Several of the schemes of work focused on developing critical media literacy, partly in order to identify Islamophobia in the public discourse around terrorism:

> "There's a lot of Islamophobia in the media and I wanted to make sure that in the case studies lesson it was going through other examples of extremist groups because you do need to open up students' eyes to the fact that, even though the western media is specifically focused on Islamic extremists, there's a lot of others." (Maple, HoD)

This kind of work typically included analysing some of the media coverage and also planning for a wider range of case studies. This focus on the media was also partly to encourage students to adopt a more overtly critical approach towards interpreting the media in general:

> "Basically being able to challenge the information they're being fed is what I'm hoping so that they, and also being able to understand that umm, it's not just black and white as to, well they're bad people, that's why they're extremists, there can be a whole

different range of reasons that can draw people into it and that's something that's not really talked about..." (Maple,HoD)

"Yes it's about developing the skills to challenge all the information overload they get from social media… from parents as well… just having the skills to challenge that, to make their own reasoned judgements, and hopefully to then have factual information they can base their views on rather than…" (Elm, HoD)

In several school, this focus on critical independent thinking is linked both to the media and to parental attitudes, and so parents are sometimes characterised as obstacles to clear, rational thinking:

"I think what we need to do [is] just making sure that students are free to go out and form their own opinion. I don't think we should tell children what to think but I think we need to help children understand that maybe what their mum or dad says may not be true." (Willow, teacher)

Most of the schemes of work aimed to help students engage with fairly complex concepts and principles. The lead teacher in Yew School explained some of these underlying principles:

"It was balancing the right to protest over the rights of others; the role of the police in protest; the understanding that there are different ways to protest; understanding how communities can react differently to protest and come to resolutions, oh god there's loads, I've got it written down somewhere." (Yew, HOD)

But with her year 8 group she felt very strongly that the best way to approach these learning intentions was through an extended focus on a local case study that was receiving much media coverage in the town:

"I really think that for Citizenship to be… for the theoretical stuff to really take hold, they have to have some practicality, and see something that actually affects their lives. So local protests and fighting on their streets, well that affects them. So that's where I found it and I hope they can start to make decisions about what they see, what they hear at home, and start questioning that through what they learned in the classroom." (Yew, HOD)

Several other teachers talked about the ways in which they had selected case studies and the purposes that lie behind each one. Here the lead teacher in Beech School is reflecting on the benefits of choosing three unrelated case studies of terrorism:

> "When we looked at the ANC and the IRA the students seemed to understand why those two groups might want to fight. When it came to IS the students in the room really couldn't understand why IS were doing what they are doing." (Beech, HoD)

These discussions indicated some difficult balancing acts as there was little time available in most cases, and the case studies each require a bit of time to establish the context, describe what happened and elicit the discussion. However, there was a strong sense that case studies provide concrete examples and an element of narrative for students to grasp, and then through comparative discussions, these can lead to more abstract thinking about the core principles that actually form the learning intentions.

Another feature of planning that emerged in several conversations was the responsiveness evident from teachers.

> "A lot of the scheme of work has come from when I was talking to the students before I designed it and asked them questions and they didn't know what extremism was and they didn't know what terrorism was…"(Maple HOD)

But this was not just about responding to students' questions or to their lack of knowledge, there were also examples of teachers responding to common misconceptions or excessively narrow reasoning. In this example, the lead teacher from Poplar School demonstrates how he was seeking to challenge a form of moral relativism he had noticed in order to ensure the students thought seriously about the role of child protection and the possible limits to individual agency:

> "There's a divide between young people and adults and we had this when teaching FGM – a lot of them were saying well if the girl agrees and she said she wants it to happen then that's her choice, it's up to her, and they don't see her as a victim and, you know, I'm trying to challenge that… You know, take violent extremism, [pupils may say] it's up to them, and [I want] to make them realise that actually it has really bad consequences not just for them but for the community as well and families…" (Poplar, HoD)

We can see here how the safeguarding aspects of Prevent were not always separated completely from the curriculum teaching, and in this school in particular this connection seemed to be driven by the fact that some of the students' siblings had gone to fight in Syria. This meant these lessons took place in a context in which there was a high profile given to discussions about the need to protect young people by (legitimately) overriding young people's individual freedom to choose their own course of action.

Another common theme to emerge was the focus on content knowledge. Several teachers stressed how important it was that this be tackled at the most basic level to include the definition of key words:

> "So the way I went about this was to first of all deal with all the keywords that are in there… terrorism, radicalisation, those things and then deal with the myths that are around that at the moment." (Beech, HoD)

For one teacher this focus on key terms was so fruitful that she was considering using this approach more explicitly in her main subject – RE.

> "I think the focus on the 3 key words and getting them to question what they thought they were first and then getting them to research it using the internet, it's such a narrow focus, I think it probably had a greater impact than some of the things I try to cover, and I try to cover quite a big area and just the narrow focus of those 3 words probably had a good impact." (Willow, Teacher)

Here the insight seemed to be that paying attention to these key ideas provided students with a sharper set of conceptual tools for navigating this terrain. The depth of thinking and abstract concepts could be achieved through an initially very tight focus on definitions and myth-busting.

Some common issues in teachers' planning

1. All of the teachers had a clear idea of the distinctive contribution of the curriculum projects and how this complemented or improved upon the safeguarding response to Prevent.
2. The schemes of work included learning intentions which focused on subject knowledge (definitions of key terms and an understanding of core concepts such as rights, freedom and democracy) as well as critical media literacy skills and an understanding of political action for change. These lessons were not *primarily* concerned with attitude change, although teachers often assumed this could be an outcome.
3. Several of the teachers planned a variety of case studies, so that the concrete examples could be compared to elicit more abstract and evaluative discussions. These case studies were also provided to ensure students understood terrorism and extremism beyond the narrow focus on 'Islamic' terrorism.
4. Most of the teachers took some aspect of the local context as the starting point for their schemes of work. This included responding to students' questions, aiming to tackle areas of ignorance, or responding to issues that were of local relevance, often including far right activity.

Teachers' reflections on the project

> Class Teacher: "I'd say don't be afraid to raise an eyebrow because it's not an easy topic to cover, but you have to go at it with as much factual information, with as much enthusiasm as you can because it is a topic that needs to be studied."
>
> HoD: Yes, so make sure your own knowledge… you're not necessarily going to know everything… but arm yourself… not to be scared of it. We did take it on because I found it really rewarding to go through the process…" (Elm)

In the previous section we discussed some of the key ideas informing the teachers' planning and in this section we turn to consider some of their experiences of actually teaching these projects. The opening extract from a joint interview with a class teacher and the head of department in Elm School illustrates the generally positive experience. Whilst teachers recognised it was often hard work and placed significant demands on their time, especially preparing new resources and undertaking extra research, they felt the effort had yielded significant benefits.

Given the importance of developing critical media literacy in many of the schemes of work, it is unsurprising that this featured in most of the teachers' reflections on the project.

> "My class were quite shocked about the different things that came up after the attacks – they were completely fabricated, or they weren't what they seemed… The Chinese Whispers activity really summed that up and they really understood how the transfer of information can change from person to person. And from that looking at how attacks in Berlin and France have been portrayed in the media, and looking at the accurate and inaccurate things on Twitter, because that's a media they all use or most of them use, or Facebook." (Elm, HoD)

This learning intention was not developed separately from the broader discussion of terrorism and extremism and in several cases teachers drew attention to the process by which focusing on the media enabled students to develop their understanding of extremism. In this example the teacher discusses the ways in which analysing the media opens up discussions around xenophobia and racism, as part of a far right discourse:

> "One of the most interesting lessons and the most interesting lessons for the kids was the media one because one of those 'bingo' moments I had was a child saying, oh everybody, oh all immigrants are rapists and murderers, my sister got followed by one, and of course the kids reacted and were talking about that and talking him down and then when we did the myth busting we took the headlines versus statistics, and then at

> the end he said, oh miss no one ever does that, no one ever talks to us about the reality, I'm really glad to have had that lesson and it was just that moment when you suddenly thought ok for one kid he's now seeing behind that and it might not make a massive difference but he's going to start seeing things in a different way." (Yew, HoD)

This example also demonstrates how these academic skills are also related to the broader issues of addressing values and attitudes.

Teachers were generally very positive about the students' engagement and positive response to these lessons:

> "I am just really surprised by the responses of the kids. They've had such advanced thinking on a lot of things that I was really pleased with, because they're only year 7 and 8." (Yew, HoD)
>
> "They're actually really open to talk about it, young people. I think it's liberating for them because lot of the time adults tend to go, oh no, they're just children they don't need to know and I think that's more about us as adults rather than them as young people because they've got an awful lot of ideas." (Maple, HoD)
>
> "The staff have been really worried that they are not meeting the aims of the project, but I think the students have got further with it than the staff thought they have." (Laburnum, HoD)

This also meant teachers felt they had to interpret their schemes of work flexibly in order to respond to students as the lessons progressed:

> "Even though I've made Powerpoints and everything, I'm not sticking rigidly to it because you can get conversations going and that's more important than trying to get to the learning objectives per se because you can go off on a tangent and I've let myself do that with all the questions." (Maple, HoD)

Most of the teachers reflected on how they had adapted and added to their plans as the teaching proceeded. Typically teachers also said they would spend more time on the scheme of work when they re-developed it for future years.

The lead teacher in Beech School illustrated an important aspect of this on-going process of reflection and evaluation. He initially responded to feedback from the students:

> "Because in the first lesson, quite a few of the students who were in the sample group thought that you just wake up, and a lot of them thought you go to a mosque and you get radicalised, so I changed the scheme of work to take that into account, so students

> realised there are going to be short and long term reasons for radicalisation." (Beech, HoD)

He then realised that the students had no reference points beyond 'Islamic' terrorism, and decided to insert a series of case studies. We have already noted the importance of well-selected case studies in the planning process in general, but in this extract the teacher demonstrates how sensitively teachers have to manage these to ensure the right balance is achieved between the specifics of the case and the general connecting ideas which should emerge from them:

> "Then moving on to look at case studies of terrorism and extremism to see if there's a common thread that goes through it, so is terrorism a weapon of the weak? So we looked at IS itself, we looked at the IRA and we also looked at Mandela and the ANC, and looked at is there anything common between the three and what's different…" (Beech, HoD)

In this case, the teacher felt the students were able to generate some significant insights from this comparative approach:

> "[In relation to IS] the students saw it as kind of a land grab. They saw it as these people are just trying to get land. When we first starting looking at it they thought it was just religious, it was just these people want to push their religion. And then when we started looking, well what are these people trying to create? Is it a caliphate?... And after that they started to understand… well, are the reasons that they are giving reasons that would be considered to be valid? And the questioning around that was actually very good as well."(Beech, HoD)

This process also enabled a range of students to share their own knowledge and opinions:

> "A lot of the quiet students were able to come to forefront, so some of our quieter Somali girls started to chirp up and say, that's completely wrong, you can see the division between this ideology and the religion." (Beech, HoD)

Reflecting the complexity of this process, one aspect of his overall evaluation of the project was that some of the lower attaining students continued to struggle to move beyond the details of the individual case studies to generate these insights. He is therefore considering how to better scaffold this transition from case studies to comparative analysis when he revises the scheme of work for next year.

In another school, the scheme of work revealed a much deeper gap in students' knowledge, and the lead teacher was considering introducing another supplementary scheme of work to address this. This extract illustrates one of the consequences of such a lack of knowledge – if children have

serious questions about how the world works but lack the information and understanding required to explore the problem and piece together serious answers, then they are more susceptible to distorted narratives and fanciful conspiracy theories:

> "Another problem is that our students are very sheltered from the world, they watch very little news and a lot of what is said to them is just passed from word of mouth which is quite often very misleading for instance I've had people say that Obama is Osama bin Laden, you know, crazy conspiracy theories and you come up against those and I think a problem that we're having is that it makes students very susceptible to the narrative… So I think I'm going to have to develop a further scheme to get them to look perhaps at various conflicts in the Middle East, you know the historical side, just to give them some knowledge about what's going on." (Poplar, HoD)

Here we can see a distinctive educational role – to harness the productive potential of young people's questions as starting points for further learning. This requires teachers to have faith that education can undermine beliefs which are not well founded. This is reflected in the following extract from the lead teacher in Yew School:

> "To me it needs to have a specific dimension that's more directed to schools to make sure it's not just about identifying children to go up through the system, it needs to be brought back through education and stopping things happening before they get referred to Channel and before children become criminalised, if you like, because we're going to make a difference within homes and on the streets because that's where it's going to happen and we can't wait until it gets too late and hoping we can identify children… I think education is more effective than actually reporting people when it's too late and trying to re-educate them." (Yew, HoD)

Another issue which was addressed by several teachers related to how to handle the lessons where children were directly affected by extremism and radicalisation. For example, one teacher recounted a story from the previous academic year.

> "When I had a young lad last academic year who was coming out with extremist views, it took a year for me to gain his confidence and everything, where we would have open debates and he would be debating very strongly, and they would be on Muslim issues and if I didn't know about it we got to the point where he was happy to wait a week for me to research and then I would have a debate with him the following week… trust is easy to lose and hard to gain and I think that's one thing that we need to remember when we're in schools." (Maple, HoD)

This teacher felt the discussions in lessons were more likely to help the child to think through the issues with which he was grappling and come to a different conclusion than a referral to the formal Prevent mechanism. In this case the referral happened and she felt the police intervention had been heavy-handed and that the educational process had been curtailed.

Another approach to dealing with this emerged in Poplar School, where the teacher was teaching children whose family members had gone to Syria to fight. In this case he felt it was vital to engage in conversation with the children before the lessons started to negotiate the extent of their involvement:

> "We might have some people who have been directly affected by this issue and you really need to be aware about it because we've got brothers and sisters in the classroom, families, you really need to find out to start with who is coming and you either need to have a word with them beforehand and tell them what is happening and quite often they're alright about this, but they might say, well perhaps that's not for me at the moment and they can go and sit out, you don't want to be upsetting people who have had direct experience." (Poplar, HoD)

This sensitivity seems important given that lessons in the curriculum are part of a general entitlement for all students, which may have to be mediated for those with very such direct experience and possible pastoral needs.

We end this section with a reflection from the lead teacher in Beech School, which demonstrates how this process also enabled the teachers to develop their own opinions about Prevent and clarify their stance:

> "I do think there needs to be a Prevent strategy… at the start I didn't, and this is the weirdest thing… I do think there needs to be a Prevent strategy but I think the strategy itself… they need to speak to teachers and they need to speak to the people that the strategy is being aimed at… Because one of the biggest reasons why I didn't think there needed to be a Prevent strategy was the first Channel training I had. After having the second Channel training and then after designing the scheme of work and actually seeing how little the students knew and then how much they, I would say, knew at the end I can see there's a reason to teach this." (Beech, HoD)

The schemes of work provided a mechanism for the teachers to translate the Prevent agenda into the more familiar territory of lesson plans, learning resources and open discussions with students. This seems to capture the concern that it is difficult to judge a students' opinion if they are largely

ignorant of the topic, and that the appropriate educational response is to tackle the ignorance and help students re-evaluate their ideas and develop informed opinions.

Reflections on teaching

1. Teachers were very positive about the response of their students and felt that most of the young people had significantly developed their understanding of terrorism and extremism.
2. Although everyone had well-developed plans at the start of their teaching, most of the teachers made substantial changes as they taught, altering lessons, re-emphasising certain learning intentions over others and inserting additional material. This underlined the importance of being responsive and flexible in the delivery of the schemes of work.
3. Part of this flexible development of lessons was driven by teachers constantly evaluating the extent to which students were able to transition between the detail of case studies and the bigger picture.
4. Several teachers used a critical focus on the media as a way in to encourage personal reflection about prejudice.
5. Teachers were sensitive to the individual needs of children who had direct experience of radicalisation and extremism and negotiated with them individually to find the appropriate level of engagement in lessons.

Views of senior management

> "I think to start with there were too many people reported under Prevent. But I think that's calmed down now and… as a result of it schools have now taken on the proactive things themselves… I don't want to be associated with a school where there are high levels of reporting in Prevent, because that means fundamentally there must be something wrong with the school." (Yew, Head)

We were able to conduct several interviews with head teachers and members of senior leadership teams with responsibility for Prevent. In this section we note briefly how their concerns differ slightly, at least in emphasis from those of the teachers. These respondents tended to focus much more on the notion of teaching as a corrective intervention, where issues had been diagnosed. In reality, this is not completely different from some of the views expressed by the lead teachers, but there tended to be fewer qualifications about accepting children's rights to develop their own opinion, and more focus on intervening to tackle opinions perceived as being problematic. This was most starkly expressed by a member of SLT in Willow School in the following extract:

> "It's to provide challenge to those comments, that when a student expresses a view that is not in line with our British values that actually they question it, that they establish what they mean by it, where it's come from and what they understand by what they're saying… Here it's providing that real point of challenge… we've done some work about, you know, about what people can say as part of freedom of speech but also what they can't say as part of the law – you can't express those views and opinions." (Willow, SLT)

However, as with some of the teachers, the corrective process was also seen as an educational one, rather than merely telling young people they were wrong, for example the head teacher of Yew School, talking about some of the majority white students at the school said:

> "They very much talk with lines from the Sun, the Daily Mail of immigrants and so on, that they're a bad thing and they're taking all the jobs and so on and so on… the biggest thing for us is to educate the students so they have their own point of view rather than the view of their parents." (Yew, Head)

For this head teacher, the identification and referral of students was seen as a rare occurrence and relatively unlikely in his school context, however, he had identified some underlying problems which should be tackled under the Prevent banner:

> "We don't tend to have the upper end of that radical view point in this school. It seems to be that they have, some of them, underlying racist feelings, that haven't reached as far as Prevent but could do if they are not proactively taught otherwise. So that's another reason why we are trying to be as proactive as possible." (Yew, Head)

In this school that had led to the reappraisal of Citizenship in the curriculum and more dedicated timetabled time for the subject. The work to explicitly tackle racism and prejudice (as potential starting points for far right extremism) was linked to a broader proactive programme of community programmes and volunteering, in what was framed as a more robust take on Community Cohesion agendas.

A senior leader in another school had a rather different take on the policy and he discussed several incidents where students had been referred to police because of teachers' suspicions of radicalisation. When asked about this curriculum initiative he did not make a strong connection, instead falling back on a slightly vaguer notion that good citizenship (non-extremist citizenship) would be generated as a by-product from a successful general educational experience:

> "I don't see it as coming from the Prevent agenda in a sense, I see it as being part of our duty as a school to educate our children to be non-discriminatory, to be respectful of

> other people regardless of where they've come from, or their background etc… that for me isn't a Prevent agenda, that's just an 'educate students to the best our ability' agenda, if you like… a by-product of that will be hopefully fewer people susceptible to radicalisation. But I see that as a good by-product rather than something you set out to do to prevent radicalisation." (Maple, SLT)

Whilst such a view may have its merits, it is also similar to arguments made against the introduction of Citizenship into the curriculum, as it assumes good citizenship does not need to be planned and taught, but can be inculcated through the school ethos. We would suggest that this was at odds with the views of the teachers in this project and, as we shall see in the next chapter, with the views of the students as well.

The final word in this section goes to the head teacher at Yew School, who we have already referred to. His sentiment sums up the impression we formed of the lead teachers in the schools:

> "You need enthusiasm from someone like Teacher X, who is not paid any responsibility for doing what she does, but she's a campaigner herself… so she truly believes in what she's doing, which then affects how the children… this thing today wouldn't have been organised without her. So, unless you have staff in your school who are passionate about it, like anything in school, things don't happen." (Yew, Head)

Senior managers' views

1. There was a tendency among SLT to see the Prevent more in terms of referrals and interventions, than was evident among the lead teachers.
2. Some supported the curriculum project as a move towards a more proactive response to Prevent and in some of these schools there were several aspects of the curriculum being brought into alignment around Citizenship goals (including assemblies, tutor time and themed drop days), but some did not perceive the significance of this project and showed little awareness of how this curriculum project might connect up as part of a bigger picture. This indicates that in some schools it may be useful to conduct a strategic review of the role of Citizenship in the curriculum in order to capitalise on the opportunities available.

Students

In this section we consider the impact the project had on the students, first by discussing the survey data collected at the beginning and end of the project, and secondly by presenting some of the themes emerging from the focus group conversations. We then report on the final survey findings in some details to provide a snapshot of students' opinions and attitudes in relation to extremism and terrorism.

Impact

All students in the participating classes were invited to complete questionnaires at the beginning and end of the project in their school. These were allocated a code by the teacher so they could be paired up to measure whether there were any significant changes during the period of study.[4] In addition to the closed questions which were repeated in both questionnaires, students were also asked for more general feedback about the project. In seven schools focus groups were conducted with students to discuss what they had learned and what they thought of their lessons.

The responses of the students as a whole indicate no significant changes took place on the specific indicators included in the questionnaires. We want to say a little more about this because on the face of it this seems unexpected, especially given the qualitative data discussed later. The first thing to point out is that the indicators only focus on specific aspects of the topic and it may well be that students learned about other issues that were not reflected in these questions. The second issue to be aware of is that the duration of the project was fairly short in most schools, and therefore it was unlikely that significant changes would have been seen over such a brief period of time. The third issue to bear in mind is that each school developed its own project, and so these overall findings are actually not measuring an impact of one intervention, rather they reflect nine separate interventions. Having said that, we also analysed the findings at school level but there were very few significant differences between the two sets of responses in each case. In some schools one or two measures changed in ways which appear to be statistically significant, but the size of the change was relatively small and so we have not reported them individually. We are also cautious of small statistical changes at the school level because of the small numbers in each case.

[4] The numbers reported here are based on those responses where we were able to pair up questionnaires and this number is lower than the total number of students participating in the project because some students were not in class on both occasions, some questionnaires were not labelled correctly and some were incomplete. The number of respondents for each question varies between 218 and 232 because some students chose not to respond to specific questions or marked more than one response and were therefore excluded from the comparison for that item.

The more positive interpretation of these results is that making time for students to think about and discuss terrorists, radicalisation and extremism does not have any observable negative impact on the students' opinions or beliefs. We know that some teachers feel cautious about tackling very controversial issues, but the fact that students' opinions remain relatively stable indicates there is no apparent harm in opening up these sensitive issues to discussion. Furthermore, given that most of the schemes of work focused on exploring diverse opinions and beliefs and challenging simplified narratives about right or wrong, and therefore could be seen as especially controversial in terms of questioning aspects of the Prevent policy, it is even more significant that students' beliefs remained relatively stable. Whilst the project aimed to secure some positive impacts, it is equally important, if not more so, to ensure that no unforeseen negative consequences follow from engaging in these difficult conversations.

Because the quantitative data indicates there were no major changes for better or worse, we report in more detail on this in the next section as a snapshot of students' views. This will provide readers with an insight into students' attitudes and understanding of these issues. In the rest of this 'impact' section we now turn to the open-ended questions and focus groups, which indicate that students perceived some significant benefits from participating in this project.

1. A valuable lesson

> "I think it's one of the only things we learn in school that is beneficial and helps us learn about the outside world." (Elm, survey 49)

One of the main messages to emerge from the qualitative data was how much students appreciated the opportunity to learn about and discuss these issues. Many reported that they simply did not have opportunities to discuss this elsewhere:

> "It's not something you normally talk about much…" (Elm, SFG)
>
> "I've never talked about terrorism and extremism in much depth, so it was good to understand it..." (Elm, survey 38)

One of the perceived benefits of studying about terrorism, extremism and radicalisation was that confronting the topic and opening it up to discussion helped somehow to dispel the mystery and fear:

> "Terrorists want us to be scared… and we just can't be scared of it, so we need to talk about it more…" (Elm, SFG)

> "Maybe if we just like talk about it more… maybe if we did it more frequently it wouldn't be such a scary prospect thinking about it." (Elm, SFG)

To this end one student advised teachers to be more confident about being upfront about the topic, because if they appear worried or ambivalent, then this may communicate itself to students, and reinforce the idea that this is somehow taboo:

> "Don't make it a bad thing to talk about because then the children… will think oh we can't talk about this or it's a bad thing to talk about, we can't do that… they [teachers] just need to be forward with it…" (Elm, SFG)

In reflecting on the practical advantages of studying this topic, students frequently mentioned how useful it was simply to know what the terminology meant because this clarified the debate for them and helped them understand the news and other sources of information. This idea of learning the key terms was mentioned frequently in the final evaluations completed by students. In the focus groups students also highlighted other aspects of the subject knowledge they felt they were learning:

> "Here they tell you the facts and the truth… not protecting us from… they let us know what these people actually do…" (Elm, SFG)
>
> "Schools are teaching us what happened in the past and the purpose of this is to prevent them happening in the future. I think our school is good at this, making us more aware of what is happening and we're not going to be as vulnerable as other people who don't know what's happening…" (Poplar, SFG)

Here then there is a clear sense that students equate knowledge with resilience – that being equipped to critically understand what is happening and what interpretations are being offered is empowering in itself. This also emerges in several of the themes below, where students make similar points in relation to using the media and understanding Islamophobia.

It followed from this sense of participating in important conversations that some students noted there should be more opportunities to learn about terror and extremism. For some they were interested in returning to the topic on a regular basis, to ensure it was not simply seen as a one-off unit:

> "I think we should come back to the subject each year because people have different opinions as they grow up, you could look back on opinions and see how the world has changed." (Elm, SFG)

Several others in the focus groups argued that such experiences should be an entitlement for all students and reflected on friends who did not discuss the issues in their schools. One student who had been enrolled in two other secondary schools compared those experiences unfavourably to her current school, where Citizenship featured more explicitly:

> "I've been to two other schools and they don't teach Citizenship… One school wasn't very multicultural so they don't really feel the need teach you about it because they think if it's not really happening to them it doesn't matter, and I went to another school where they never really spoke about it." (Maple, SFG)

This observation reflects a longstanding observation that many schools in exclusively or majority white contexts perceive they have no problem with racism, because there are no overt incidents, and therefore fail to prioritise tackling racism and prejudice in their curriculum and pastoral provision.

One student argued that addressing the issue in schools was useful, but pointed out there is considerable ignorance and prejudice in the general population, which schools will not be able to tackle. This student reflected on her experience of initiating conversations at home whilst she was studying this project at school:

> "We're saying we should be doing it for the children in school, but adults… when I've been going home and saying to my parents about this, they've been unaware of it. They know some of the groups but not exactly what they do and everything that is happening…" (Maple, SFG)

This reinforces the initial comment at the top of this section, that for many students this project provided them with the only opportunity to learn about and discuss terrorism and extremism.

It is also worth pointing out that students have a good deal of trust in their teachers, even when they are sceptical of the reliability of politicians, journalists, their parents and other adults in the community. To this end one boy reflected on what he thought was valuable about the approach taken by teachers:

> "When a teacher is teaching us they should always, at the beginning don't be biased at all, don't say this side is the evil side because they believe this, they should let the students think for themselves… even if you don't believe what they've chosen is correct, you don't just go, that's not the correct side you should be going with because they do this, this and this… If needed, and you think they could come bad if they do believe in

> this, don't just force it in their mouth, and go, 'believe in this', say 'well if you believe in this, then this is what could happen in your life'…" (Yew, SFG)

This reflects the pedagogic strategies commonly associated with teaching controversial issues and adopts a more sophisticated, and indeed *educational*, approach to the role of the teacher than that of transmitting the 'correct' values. Several other students made similar points when they argued that it was far from simple to change what someone thought, and that the appropriate role of the teacher was to encourage people to reflect on their opinions, critically investigate the reasons for them and consider the possible consequences.

It is apparent from this section that many students felt there was value in studying this topic in general. These reasons might be summarised as:

Reasons why schools should teach about extremism, radicalisation and terrorism

1. This is simply an important issue and students should have the opportunity to learn about it and develop their own opinions.
2. If discussions about these issues are not organised in schools, students may not have other opportunities to discuss them.
3. Many students trust teachers to handle these discussions sensitively and not close down opinions dogmatically. This represents a faith in the process of critical reflection to demonstrate the problems with extremist positions.
4. There is some specialist knowledge about the concepts (extremism, radicalisation and terrorism) and some important contextual information relating to acts of terror which are essential to being able to understand what is happening.
5. Tackling the issue makes it less of a taboo and starts to demystify it for children.

2. Media literacy and critical thinking

> "Before I didn't know… I knew what was going on the news, but I didn't know how to understand it." (Laburnum, SFG)

In addition to the general arguments explored in the first section, students discussed several specific areas where they felt they had learned some valuable insights. Several of the teachers focused on the role of the media in their schemes of work and this obviously emerged as significant in those schools. In addition, in Laburnum School the students had chosen to look at Islamophobia in the

media in an earlier project, but drew on this in the context of their current project, which was more overtly focused on different political ideas.

In one school the students were very engaged in a 'Chinese Whispers' activity, where messages were passed through the class to see how easy it was to distort the original information. This direct experience was clearly powerful as it was discussed in both focus groups in that school and appeared in many of the students' evaluation questionnaires at the end of the project. This hands-on approach to the media was also fruitful in relation to interrogating particular examples of media coverage, for example one group reported:

> "We looked at some images from Twitter that weren't actually true, there was a picture of a stadium before the terrorist attack, but it wasn't that actual place…" (Elm, SFG)

This very concrete example of a Tweet which was entirely fabricated seemed to hit home with students who argued:

> "It made us a bit more aware, like don't believe everything you read."
>
> "If I see something like that and I'm interested, I'll look at some articles instead of just believing it…" (Elm, SFG)

These specific activities and case studies seem to function in two ways, first they help make the general points about bias and reliability more accessible and immediately relevant, and second they seem to make the learning more memorable for students.

Some students moved beyond the general notion that one has to take care when interpreting media, and especially social media, and began to reflect on the ways in which their new found knowledge about terrorism enabled them to read the media more critically. One student, who had been learning about the group Anonymous, identified this as a strange omission from the mainstream media:

> "You hear about armies going over to Syria to help fight them but you don't normally hear about people like Anonymous trying to fight on-line, which is different but in a good way." (Elm, SFG)

Another group took a more broadly critical stance on the media coverage they had seen relating to terrorist attacks in France and Belgium during their study:

> "We were looking at how the media plays a big part of it as well, the media alter our perception on terrorism and how with all the events that have been happening recently, like in Paris and in Belgium, what we think of terrorism is that it is religious as opposed to political and other things…" (Beech, SFG)

And in another school, where the teacher had introduced case studies of different forms of extremism and terrorism, with different types of action and different motivations, students were also able to use this specific information to make the following observation about media coverage:

> "Sometimes you only really see it from one side, sometimes you only see the Islamic side of extremism, especially in the media but I think it's showing us that there is more than just this type… obviously you've got animal ones, the far right groups, but really in the media at the moment you never really see anything about those groups, they're sort of forgotten about, it's like reminding us that they are there and anyone can be brought into them." (Maple, SFG)

These comments indicate that students are able to use the specific understanding they develop about case studies of terrorism to identify the ways in which the media tends to contribute to a public discourse which is focused narrowly on Islamic terrorism, and on the religious justification of such terrorism. In fact, as we shall see below, students began to question the extent to which religion plays a key part in terrorism, but here they are certainly moving towards a fairly critical understanding of the media.

In one school, students acknowledged that young people are particularly susceptible to media distortions, because there is simply so much background information they do not know:

> "I think it's kind of being brainwashed by the media because they only give you information than can alter your opinion depending on what they want you to think, so they'll only shine a light on negative things that have happened, you won't get any positive feedback on other places, that we haven't generated our own opinion on yet, so kind of, they want you to think in a certain way which is the same way they're thinking and they give you that… make you think in their way, not your own…" (Laburnum, SFG)

However, the same group of students also believed schools can play a part in ensuring they are sufficiently well-informed to read the media more critically and identify where opinions are being expressed and where one might argue with them:

> "I think what schools can do is make sure they give students enough knowledge about the situation and then, even if they still take in what the media say, they have their own opinion whereas like… if the school has given you enough information you can see past what's being fed you in a way…" (Laburnum, SFG)

In Maple School a group of students were able to use the same approach to discuss social media:

> "Obviously you've got all the pages like Britain First which are openly… which openly show their hate and they can pay to get promoted so when you open up they're always there, and they've got all these videos of their marches and things like that and you can hear what people are saying back to them, obviously they're provoking it but some people do get drawn in by that and think oh they're saying it back so they must be the bad guys…" (Maple, SFG)

This indicates that there may also be some value in introducing students to the strategies employed by groups to present specific views. In this case, clearly the students are able to bring a strong critical lens to the websites and understand how the organisation is attempting to elicit sympathy and draw people in. For these students, awareness of such strategies, enables them to perceive what is happening, and to move beyond passive consumption. This was also evident in their acknowledgement that this can sometimes be uncomfortable:

> "If you go on and something's happened, like an attack has been done by a group then it's number 1 trending and I click on it for the information to find out about it, and you kind of learn, but it's quite dark if you get me, what they're exposing people to…" (Maple, SFG)

Having said that, it is worth reiterating that the vast majority of students who expressed an opinion on this matter argued that it was better for teachers to tackle the subject than sidestep it. Only two of the students' evaluations suggested this could be upsetting and might be avoided and these were among the youngest (year 7).

In terms of developing critical media literacy, the following issues were mentioned by the students:

Suggestions for developing critical media literacy

1. Students value opportunities to engage with specific examples and activities which illustrate in concrete ways the bias, distortion and lies which are evident in mainstream media and social media coverage.
2. Students may benefit from learning about the strategies employed by extremist groups to elicit sympathy and draw people into their narratives. Understanding the techniques can enable students to spot them when they are being used.
3. Students also need to be taught the background to issues they encounter in the media, so that they can see for themselves where information is being misrepresented or simplified, and where interpretations are being placed on events which may distort the readers' perceptions.
4. Teachers can also usefully provide examples of people and organisations which often fall outside of regular mainstream media coverage so that students encounter the bigger picture, and

so they can understand how omission also functions as a mechanism for media distortion.

3. A political understanding of terror

> "When we were little… we never really touched the subject, it would just be like, that's bad and this is good, but in Citizenship we really go through it and it really challenges your mind…" (Oak, SFG)

This opening extract is a reflection on the distinctive role of Citizenship lessons in the school curriculum, but it illustrates a general sense in several of the focus groups that studying this topic in Citizenship classes does open up the topic to a more subtle discussion. In most circumstances terrorism is generally presented in stark black or white terms – it is simply wrong. But of course it is also a complex political phenomenon – there are different forms of terrorism, different motivations and therefore different interpretations. None of this is to say that terrorism is acceptable, merely that there is a deeper political understanding required if we are to move beyond condemnation towards understanding and formulating a response.

The lessons often tackled this through activities that encouraged students to think about specific situations or case studies and decide whether they are acceptable or not (if they should be considered extremist). In one focus groups the students reflecting on this activity said:

> "We learned about the line that what some people think is extreme, might not be for others, like it's quite hard to divide what's extreme and what's not…" (Elm, SFG)

Opening up the issue of what does or does not fall into the category of 'extremist' behaviour also shifts the debate into the more obviously contested area of ethical and political judgement:

> "You have to think about what's right and wrong for you, I guess that's why they have different opinions on it." (Elm, SFG)

Such engagement requires opportunities to consider different perspectives on the issues under discussion, and this emerged as a strong and consistent feature in several of the projects:

> "Looking at things from another person's perspective…" (Beech, SFG)
>
> "It allows you to see another point of view so you're not just one sided it can also develop your own opinion on things, you might believe in one thing but you can look at why another person believes in something else." (Maple, SFG)

As with the previous section, students appreciated their teachers' selection of appropriate case studies and examples, for example, in one school where the teacher had revised the scheme of work by inserting additional case studies, a student recalled:

> "We learned about freedom fighters… I think sir said this was this quote that one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter, I think basically it means… for instance Mandela… Margaret Thatcher saw him as a terrorist but other people saw him fighting for freedom from Apartheid… (Poplar, SFG)

Again, one can see how the careful provision of specific case studies opens up space to consider a range of arguments where the prevailing discourse indicates there may be nothing but right or wrong. In another school this was reflected in the following observation:

> "I think with the whole ISIS thing, it's kind of a topic that we all know about but we're not really knowledgeable, because we don't know the inside and out of it, it's kind of, you see this terrorist group as a terrorist group and you're not really given information to make your own opinion on the whole of it in a way." (Laburnum, SFG)

In reflecting on this, another student returned to the ways in which we all rely on the information that reaches us through the media and how this continues to distort our perception:

> "I think we have a fixed point because… I read world news… and I know… on a daily basis in Palestine and Syria, there are daily deaths, and the news doesn't portray it as big as the Berlin or Paris attacks… and that's where the whole installing fear into people comes in because they just think they're aimed at this group of people, well no, ISIS are attacking their own people as well… (Laburnum, SFG)

One student pulled together these threads to present his own analysis of ISIS. He explicitly drew on a range of other examples of terrorism / political violence to inform his argument and concluded:

> "I think it's more of a political terrorism… they use Islam as an excuse, it's not an Islamic war, they're just using it as an excuse to like build and group…" (Beech, SFG)

Whilst this was the most explicit statement of this point of view, most of the focus groups reflected this kind of political understanding of ISIS. As we will see in the final section on 'radicalisation' this kind of understanding does not lead the students to see ISIS as making legitimate political demands but it does help them to understand it.

These student reflections indicate that these young people are able to work towards a more political interpretation of terrorism, which is characterised by the following attributes:

Towards a political interpretation of terrorism

1. Students are able to move beyond a simple good / bad moral categorisation and begin to understand terrorism in more complex ways.
2. In doing so they find it helpful to encounter problems of categorisation, which encourage them to think about more complicated and nuanced judgements about what constitutes un/acceptable action.
3. Students also value the opportunity to encounter multiple perspectives, which enables them to understand there are a range of opinions and interpretations. This can avoid simplifying narratives.
4. This does not appear to lead to a relativism in which anything can be justified, on the contrary, students are able to sustain their criticism and condemnation of organisations such as ISIS, whilst developing their own explanation about why ISIS exists and what it seeks to achieve.

4. Islamophobia

> "The word Islamophobia is quite interesting because you hear about all the racism that goes on in the world and it kind of sums it up… I like giving it a name, you can identify it more, and like someone just making a joke, you can say that's offensive more if it has a name." (Elm, SFG)

This opening quotation illustrates again the value students place on learning about key terms or concepts which help them understand and think about the topic. For the girl who made this comment, there was a real sense that learning the word enabled her to pull together a range of issues she had been thinking about. The Elm School focus groups took place during the week after the EU referendum and the school was dealing with a number of incidents of children experiencing anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim comments in the local community and inside the school. The essence of the focus group conversation is captured in the following extracts:

> "And it shows how Muslims are stereotyped with a label because there's an extremist group ISIS and everyone now thinks that Muslims are like ISIS, when they're not." (Elm, SFG)
>
> "The media only really talks about Muslim terrorists, they brush over other forms of terrorism…" (Elm, SFG)
>
> "It's strange to think that maybe the way the media represents these people completely changes the opinion of a person. They might have been fine with a certain person before and then after they've read something about the person or their religion and it completely changes the way they see people…" (Elm, SFG)

This reflects the argument that several groups of students made, that the partial reporting of terrorism helps to sustain an association between Islam and terrorism, which then leads to a general prejudice or fear of Muslims.

Such discussions were not solely about how the 'general public' or 'others' may succumb to Islamophobia and the students were also able to reflect on how this affected them individually. One Muslim girl noted her own experience of prejudice:

> "Because I have family members and friends who wear the hijab and abaya and when they go out they get looks and stuff, people look at them and I guess they're a bit more nervous to talk to them… as it is right now ISIS are sort of portraying Islam in a bad way… and in my opinion ISIS aren't Muslim they are just enemies of humanity… but that's just my opinion…" (Laburnum, SFG)

She also felt the school could do more to teach positively about Islam and Muslim practices, as she encountered a lack of understanding around fasting during Ramadan.

For another group the discussion of Islamophobia moved into a more general reflection on the ways in which prejudice seeps into an individual's consciousness:

> "If you saw a group of black young adults I would feel more threatened than a group of young white adults…"
>
> "You're racist…"
>
> "I'm not racist…"
>
> "You hear more about it, so you kind of assume what will happen…"
>
> "I feel like these lessons make you think more and make you look further into what you think and how you react mentally…"
>
> "When you learn about it more you realise that a lot of people do stereotype these people and it's not right, and it makes you think how people feel… what it does to them." (Elm, SFG)

Clearly these kinds of discussions are not going to result in instant or dramatic outcomes over a short period of time. As one year 7 boy in Oak School pointed out – a lot of these outcomes are learned over time, through repeated opportunities to re-visit and re-think the issues. However, the significant point here seems to be that students were able to locate themselves personally within the discussion and analysis of Islamophobia. Turning topics like this into lessons with learning outcomes and assessment tasks can run the risk of divorcing the content from real life and turning it into cold academic case studies but, as the discussion above and the following extract demonstrate,

students are also using these lessons to work through what they think, how they perceive their own situation and how they have been influenced by wider social processes:

> "I'm quite nervous around people like that [Muslims] but I think you just have to put that to the side and just carry on because you can't let that stop you… [*where does that nervousness come from?]…* the news and the media presenting things in a negative way, that's made me nervous but I know that's just how they want to… like their opinion of it… and how they want to take it, but I know that the religion is quite a peaceful religion." (Laburnum, SFG)

Studying terrorism, extremism and radicalisation in the contemporary context opens up discussion of Islamophobia, simply because this is part of the cultural context in which such debates are unfolding, some of the key issues from this selection of student responses are:

Thinking about Islamophobia

1. Whilst policy documents may adopt a formal language of neutrality, it seems essential in the classroom to engage with the context of Islamophobia, which provides the backdrop for debates about terrorism and radicalisation in the UK.
2. Students who were looking at ISIS were able to see how criticisms of ISIS could connect to a general prejudice of, or fear towards, Muslims more generally. The students in the focus groups understood this elision was taking place and sought to distance themselves from it.
3. Similarly, schools considering the extremism of far right groups would have to engage with the Islamophobia expressed by these groups.
4. Students value the opportunity to learn about the concept and the processes by which Islamophobia develops and is sustained.
5. Students are also able to reflect on how Islamophobia affects them, both as Muslims who are judged by others, and as non-Muslims who find themselves making unwitting judgements.

5. Thinking about the causes of radicalisation

> "I think the main thing that is the most difficult thing to find out about this topic is why the extremist groups, obviously they have their reasons and their beliefs, but why do they take it to an extent where it's mass murders and beheadings and, you know, brainwashing people and I think that's the hardest thing to find out and I don't know if you'll ever get the answer to it…" (Maple, SFG)

All the student focus groups were asked about why, in their opinion, young people might be susceptible to radicalisation. This is a controversial way to frame the issue but we were aware that this is part of the common discourse around Prevent, and that many of the schemes of work looked at this question. We were interested in the extent to which students reproduced official narratives around the path to radicalisation, or developed alternative explanatory frameworks. As the quotation we used to open this section indicates, some of the students resisted the temptation to rush to diagnose the problem and managed to hold on to the complexity of their discussions. These responses indicate a range of understandings which reflect the various positions in the academic literature and in policy debates.

Some students identified the role of social media and peers in the process of radicalisation:

> "It could be the things they hear, like on social media and things…" (Elm, SFG)
>
> "It's peer pressure, like their friends telling them how cool it is…" (Elm, SFG)
>
> "Kind of persuaded, or a bit of brainwashed into thinking it's the right thing to do…" (Elm, SFG)

Some students had studied case studies of young people who had been radicalised and developed these kinds of explanations in relation to these case studies:

> "… in previous lessons we've talked about interpretations, like of Sharia Law, and I think IS are becoming terrorist, and people are becoming close to them… and they try to manipulate vulnerable people and put words into their mouth, twist it, and keep them away from democratic laws about how you should handle stuff…" (Poplar, SFG)

Whilst this student is struggling to explain clearly exactly what she means, it is possible to discern here the idea that individuals may be susceptible to an organisation which preys on vulnerability and has developed techniques for appealing to people and drawing them in.

Other students tried to consider more complex motivations, which often touched on social processes of exclusion and marginalisation. The notion of young people being without a voice emerged in several discussions:

> "You could make an overall guess and say it's because the people in power aren't listening to them and doing the things they really think they need, but that's probably not what every single person becoming an extremist wants or feels…" (Maple, SFG)
>
> "… Feeling betrayed by the government, feeling that they're not listening, and that you're just like an empty voice…" (Beech, SFG)

Others tried to empathise with someone who is made to feel like an outsider, through being the object of surveillance and / or Islamophobia:

> "If you're on the receiving end… and you hear about young Muslims who feel unwanted by the society around them, so they may feel wanted by ISIS, maybe it's making them feel wanted…" (Elm, SFG)
>
> "If someone… is told their whole life that, if people say because you're Muslim you're a terrorist I think they'll sort of go, well am I, I don't know, question themselves and they'll be more likely to put themselves in a situation, like looking at sites where people can sign up and they'll be more inclined to join, and they'll see it and think well people think I already am, so what harm is there in joining anyway?" (Elm, SFG)
>
> "Before, I used to think terrorists were people that just went and shot down everyone, but when you look at the background of it and how people might have felt and the way they must have been, like if you say we live in democracy, well if you do live in a democracy you have a chance to speak up, but certain people don't, and when they try to they don't really listen… they might feel neglected and it's like the government doesn't want to listen to them and they feel like they have to lead to bigger actions for them to listen which then leads to terrorism sometimes…" (Beech, SFG)

Whilst these students are struggling slightly to articulate exactly what they think, there is a clear attempt here to think seriously about what would lead someone to take such a drastic step as rejecting democratic norms and pursuing extremism. This line of reasoning seems fairly close to the argument being developed by some commentators opposed to the Prevent policy.

Some students also considered foreign policy as a possible explanatory factor to account for how organisations like ISIS have developed and are able to draw in new supporters.

> "England is one of the powerful countries in the world, and like obviously France has been attacked not that long ago, Belgium have as well, and we've launched air strikes on Syrians and so I think that leaves us quite vulnerable and exposed to terrorist attacks, because the fact that we attacked them kind of gives them a justification for their actions, it doesn't mean that it's right yeah, but they could use it as an excuse and say it's revenge, you did it to us, we'll do it to you…" (Beech, SFG)

It is noticeable here that the student is able to explain how the air strikes can be used within ISIS propaganda, without confusing this with providing an actual justification. This results from a serious engagement with the problem of motivation, which is evident in the following extract from the same boy:

> "Obviously a group like ISIS didn't start from nothing, obviously there's something there to help it start and help it build… there's a purpose to it and something has made them do it, it's not like one day they just got up and said, oh I want to build this empire, I want to like bomb people… there's obviously something that's happened that made them do it…" (Beech, SFG)

Again, what seems significant here is that the student is able to engage with this difficult question, explore some fairly complex possible explanatory factors and hold these perspectives together without over-simplifying his conclusions. It is probably fair to say that the majority of students who participated in the focus groups did not have enough background information, nor had they reflected as deeply as this student, and therefore this kind of questioning is not typical. However, it does demonstrate that key stage 3 students are certainly capable of engaging in these difficult questions of motivation and causation, and making some sense of it. In some ways it is notable that these kinds of responses demonstrate a more overtly political explanation than that typically offered by the teachers, who tended to focus on the personal and inter-personal processes of radicalisation and the kinds of tell-tale signs one might look out for.

Some students were also aware of how the contemporary debate about extremism was being linked with immigration could also lead to extreme and dangerous counter-responses on the far right:

> "These things [terrorist attacks] are happening more often yes, but they're not actually too often… The news is covering all of this but not giving us the proper stories and people are going oh my god it could happen next here and we need to make sure our borders are strong enough and we shouldn't let people through anymore, it's too dangerous, but if we stop people getting through our borders people can still have terrorist attacks in the country because all it takes is one person to be radicalised… it doesn't need more people coming in, that's the sad truth of it." (Yew, SFG)

This student had been studying local far right anti-immigration marches and counter-demonstrations and clearly had drawn the conclusion that right-wing extremist groups were incorporating inaccurate links between immigration and terror into their campaigns. Another student made a similar point about the ways in which parties on the right may well be exacerbating problems of alienation and exclusion:

> "When we did about the referendum, there was a group called UKIP and the guy who is the leader of it is really racist and doesn't like immigrants. I think that's what's causing lots of people to feel vulnerable and angry. There's a leader that doesn't like a community of people and that causes lots of violence." (Poplar, SFG)

Ultimately this led one student to lament that some mainstream politicians were making a strategic error in tackling terrorism by responding with more surveillance and interventions:

> "Their points are right, saying they want to stop every extremist group but they're using extremist ways to do that, like they're fighting fire with fire but that's not going to work…" (Maple, SFG)

Again, this seems to reflect the kinds of debates going on between politicians and serious commentators about the problematic ways in which discussion of extremists becomes associated with debates about immigration.

Students are clearly able to engage with the question of what contributes to radicalisation at a number of levels:

Explaining radicalisation

1. Some students at key stage 3 are able to engage in fairly sophisticated ways with the problem of what causes radicalisation. They have moved beyond simplistic accounts of how individuals are radicalised and are able to engage with complex explanations of how multiple factors play a part.
2. Explanations offered by students considered the immediate mode of engagement (social media and peers) but also incorporated more critical perspectives such as young people's experience of marginalisation in the UK. Some of the lessons included detailed case studies to help students think about these processes.
3. Some of the students were also able to understand the ways in which organisations interpret events from their own perspective and incorporate them into their own justificatory narratives.
4. There is some evidence that students are able to think both about (i) the causes of extremism, and (ii) how the way different groups account for those causes becomes implicated in their own extremist positions (such as the EDL focusing on Islam or immigration as a security threat).

A snapshot of students' views

In this section we summarise the quantitative data collected at the end of the project from the participating schools. Whist the projects varied between schools, all the students had an opportunity to discuss terrorism, extremism and radicalisation to become better informed about these issues. These lessons may therefore be seen as a capacity building intervention so that the final survey could be said to represent the students' informed opinions. The data indicates some of the issues we might think about in future curriculum projects relating to this topic.

Students' Citizenship skills

The IEA survey in 1999 included several measures of student capability to understand citizenship and exercise citizenship skills. Of these two measures were included in this evaluation questionnaire to gauge students' relative abilities.[5] Both these questions required students to differentiate between a fact and an opinion. The absolute score is less significant here than the comparison between this group of students and the national survey (Kerr et al., 2012).

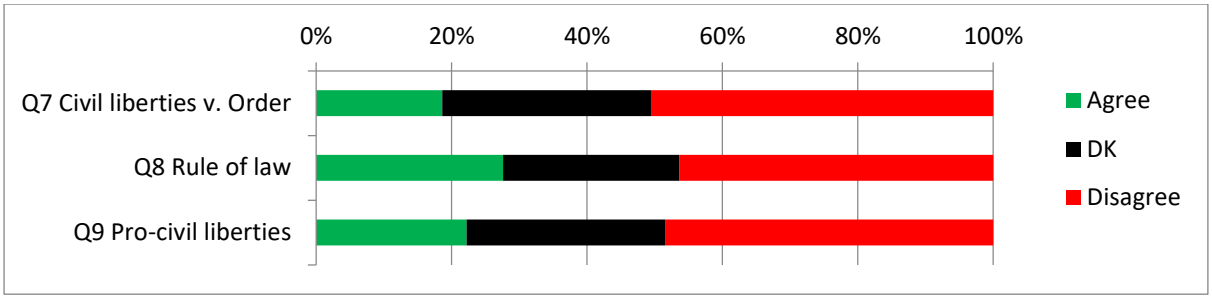
- Q12a: in the final evaluation 72% of students identified the correct answer, and in the IEA survey this was 63%.
- Q12b: in the final evaluation 74% of students identified the correct answer, and in the IEA survey this was 53%.

This indicates that the students participating in this project appear to have higher levels of citizenship skills (at least in relation to this narrow measure) than the national sample who were surveyed in 1999. This may well be a result of these students already operating in Citizenship-rich schools, where these kind of skills are addressed more routinely. However, the note of caution here is to remind teachers that even in such positive environments, approximately one in four KS3 students are unable to differentiate between a fact and an opinion. This seems to present a significant challenge to engaging all students in critical analysis of media and the construction of discourses around Islamophobia.

Support for civil liberties v. order

The first set of questions were based on items devised by Gibson (2013) to test opinion about civil liberties.[6] There was a slight tendency to support civil rights over order (Q7 mean 3.39) and a similar level of support for civil liberties (Q9 mean 3.43). In relation to support for the rule of law, there was also a slight tendency to support the principle (Q8 mean 3.34). The distribution of scores for these three categories are shown in the graph below (because of the wording of these questions, disagree means support for the principle). One can see the principles of civil liberties and the rule of law are supported by approximately half the students overall, but about one in five scored fairly low for support of civil liberties, and a quarter questioned the absolute rule of law. The rest fall into the rather large pool of 'uncertain' and this reflects the number of students opting for the neutral response in other questions as well.

[5] The IEA survey in 1999 included 14 year olds, and most of the participants in this project were in years 8 & 9.
[6] Students answered ten questions, organised into three categories, and a mean was calculated for each of the categories. These questions used a scale of 1 (strongly agree) – 5 (strongly disagree) where 3 offered a neutral 'uncertain' option. Higher scores indicate more support for the principle.



The table below also summarises the responses for individual questions in this section of the survey. This shows that there is particularly strong support for freedom of expression and tolerance of diversity. The highest score here is for Q9a where 72% of students effectively rejected the notion of racial profiling by the police. A further notable feature of these responses is that students are more likely to uphold the rule of law for individuals than for government – only 13.8% of people agreed with the idea that "it is not necessary to obey a law you consider unjust" (Q8a) whilst 43.8% felt it was acceptable for the government to "bend the law in order to solve urgent social and political problems" (Q8b).

	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree
7a Society shouldn't have to put up with those who have political ideas that are extremely different from the majority	8.9	31.0	60.1
7b It is better to live in an orderly society than to allow people so much freedom that they can become disruptive	30.3	31.8	38.0
7c Free speech is just not worth it if it means that we have to put up with the danger to society of extremist political views	16.7	29.7	53.5
8a It is not necessary to obey a law you consider unjust	13.8	23.8	62.5
8b The government should be able to bend the law in order to solve urgent social and political problems	43.8	21.7	34.5
8c When it comes down to it, law is not all that important; what's important is that our government solve society's problems and make us all better off	25.1	32.5	42.3
9a It is acceptable for the police to stop or detain people of a different religion or race if these groups are thought to be more likely to commit crimes	13.2	14.7	72
9b Teachers in Britain should support government policies in order to promote loyalty to our country	25.9	38.7	35.5
9c Government should be allowed to record telephone calls and monitor emails in order to prevent people from planning terrorist or criminal acts	31.1	29.3	39.5
9d The police should be allowed to investigate people who participate in non-violent protests against the British government	18.6	34.4	46.9

These figures indicate the diverse opinions in the classes being taught and certainly illustrate that the opportunities to discuss these issues did not lead to an imposition of a particular political

viewpoint. The student responses remained consistent over the project and illustrate the legitimate range of opinions about how to best strike the balance between individual liberty and collective order and security in the context of terrorism. We suggest these figures might help teachers to focus their teaching even more explicitly on these deep underlying democratic principles, so that opportunities to discuss terrorism and extremism are related back to underpinning concepts such as liberty and the rule of law.

What is good and bad for democracy?

Results in this table are shown as percentages[7] and provide the data for the students in this project and additional data from a survey of 14 year olds in England in 1999 as a comparison point.

	Bad for democracy	Don't know	Good for democracy
11a When everyone has the right to express their opinions freely that is	7.8	10.1	82.1
	8.8	6.3	84.9
11b When newspapers are free of all government control that is	25.3	31.4	43.2
	39	17.6	43.4
11c When people demand their political and social rights that is	20.1	37.3	42.6
	28.1	14.4	57.4
11d When immigrants are expected to give up the language and customs of their former countries that is	55.1	35.5	9.4
	62.5	20.7	16.8
11e When people who are critical of the government are forbidden from speaking at public meetings that is	64.4	28.5	7.1
	60	18.3	21.1
11f When citizens have the right to elect political leaders freely that is	8.3	19.6	72.0
	12.3	11.7	76.1
11g When courts and judges are influenced by politicians that is	49.8	32.5	17.7
	52.5	23.7	23.7
11h When there are many different organisations for people who wish to belong to them that is	10.9	43.2	45.8
	19.2	13.8	67
11i When political parties have different opinions on important issues that is	15.1	27.8	57.2
	23.2	13	63.8
11j When all television stations present the same opinion about politics that is	61.6	24.0	14.4
	63.4	14.2	22.4

[7] The results in the grey shaded boxes are the results of the IEA (1999) England survey, for comparison.

11k When people refuse to obey a law which violates human rights that is	55.1	28.1	16.7
	60.4	12.6	26.9
11l When newspapers are forbidden to publish stories that might offend ethnic groups that is	35.5	35.1	29.4
	29.9	15.3	54.8
11m When government leaders are trusted without question that is	64.6	25.4	10.0
	51	14.6	34.5
11n When people peacefully protest against a law they believe is unjust that is	11.3	27.1	61.6
	21.6	18.9	59.5

The table shows that by and large the students in this group answered as one might expect, given the previous IEA survey, that is, they tend to concur on what would be good or bad for democracy.[8] The questions relating to control of the media indicate that, even in the context of critical discussions of media coverage of terrorism and Islam, students still tend to favour media freedom and are sceptical of government control. Students seemed more likely to state that trusting leaders without question was bad for democracy (Q11m) than in the previous survey. This may not be surprising given the focus on the need for independent critical thinking which had run through these lessons.

Some implications for teachers

1. Whilst this group of students compare favourably to earlier surveys in relation to their citizenship skills, there is still a significant minority who struggle with basic concepts such as distinguishing facts from opinions. This presents a challenge for teachers in terms of ensuring lessons are accessible, especially when using media sources.
2. The data about civil liberties and the degree to which freedom can be constrained to protect order indicates there are some internal inconsistencies in students' answers. This may indicate there is still more scope for teachers to ensure that the discussion of case studies connects explicitly to the underpinning concepts and principles (democracy, freedom, rule of law etc.).

[8] The higher number of students opting for the 'don't know' category may simply reflect the layout of this survey which placed this option in the middle rather than at the end as a separate category, this may have encouraged more students to opt for it as a 'safe' option if they were unsure. On the other hand, it have reflected a genuine inability to weigh up the other options and come to a clear conclusion.

Recommendations

There are detailed summaries and several points of recommendation in the executive summary at the front of this report. In this final section we have sought to distil some of the core recommendations for the different audiences.

Recommendations for government

1. Policy, and the guidance associated with countering extremism and preventing radicalisation, should clarify the *educational* role of teachers (in terms of building knowledge and skills) in addition to their *safeguarding* role. Such clarification should emphasise the need for teachers to devise curriculum responses which are sufficiently flexible to take account of local contexts.
2. Schools should be encouraged to provide a high quality citizenship education curriculum, within which such issues can be taught.
3. Teachers should be supported with appropriate training and resources to enable them to develop curriculum provision in this area.
4. The review of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and the call for a review of citizenship education in the Education White Paper (2016) provide opportunities to promote high quality citizenship specialist teachers who can lead this work in schools.

Recommendations for senior management

1. Schools should provide a planned and coherent programme of teaching and learning to ensure pupils have opportunities to critically engage with extremism and radicalisation. Such a programme should fit within a broader commitment to promoting democratic citizenship.
2. Citizenship subject leaders are key to ensuring the school develops a clear curricular response, which is aligned with other aspects of anti-extremism policy, and that other less specialised staff are well supported.
3. Citizenship subject expertise is required to tackle such controversial and sensitive topics in lessons to ensure young people acquire the knowledge and skills required to understand and engage with these issues.
4. Staff need to be trained to enable them to teach about radicalisation and extremism and have time to support one another to monitor and enhance the quality of provision.

Recommendations for teachers

1. Teachers should discuss their concerns about teaching these topics and collectively agree a way forward which the whole school can support. This is important to give teachers the confidence to teach young people about extremism and radicalisation.
2. Teachers need to take account of their students' backgrounds, experiences and perceptions and plan lessons which respond to their needs and the local context.
3. Teachers should plan lessons which allow students to develop informed opinions and debate a range of contrasting perspectives.
4. Teachers' lessons should focus on the development of knowledge and skills and not foreground their own ethical judgements. Students valued this approach and felt knowledge functions as a form of resilience.
5. Teachers need to plan their use of contrasting case studies and examples carefully to ensure students have time to process and analyse the information and make connections to the underlying citizenship principles and concepts including democracy, freedom, justice, the rule of law and identity.

For further information

To find out more about this project visit the project website: www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/act-building-resilience-project

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Appendix

About you

1. Your school:

2. Your name (or a number assigned by your teacher):

3. Feedback on lessons:
You have been learning about democracy, terrorism and extremism. Could you tell us what you thought of these lessons overall?

4. Feedback on learning
What is the most important thing you have learned?

5. Future learning
What advice do you have for your teachers? You could think about what questions you still have about this topic; what else would you like covered in lessons; or ideas for how teachers could improve the lessons.

6. Your advice
The government wants to prevent young people from being drawn into radicalism, extremism and terrorism. What advice would you give the government about how to go about this in schools?

Please tell us your opinion on the following statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree
7a. Society shouldn't have to put up with those who have political ideas that are extremely different from the majority	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7b. It is better to live in an orderly society than to allow people so much freedom that they can become disruptive	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7c. Free speech is just not worth it if it means that we have to put up with the danger to society of extremist political views	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8a. It is not necessary to obey a law you consider unjust	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8b. The government should be able to bend the law in order to solve urgent social and political problems	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8c. When it comes down to it, law is not all that important; what's important is that our government solve society's problems and make us all better off	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9a. It is acceptable for the police to stop or detain people of a different religion or race if these groups are thought to be more likely to commit crimes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9b. Teachers in Britain should support government policies in order to promote loyalty to our country	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9c. Government should be allowed to record telephone calls and monitor emails in order to prevent people from planning terrorist or criminal acts	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9d. The police should be allowed to investigate people who participate in non-violent protests against the British government	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please tell us your opinion on the following statements	Very bad for democracy	Quite bad for democracy	Don't know / doesn't apply	Quite good for democracy	Very good for democracy
11a. When everyone has the right to express their opinions freely that is	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11b. When newspapers are free of all government control that is	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11c. When people demand their political and social rights that is	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11d. When immigrants are expected to give up the language and customs of their former countries that is	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11e. When people who are critical of the government are forbidden from speaking at public meetings that is	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11f. When citizens have the right to elect political leaders freely that is	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11g. When courts and judges are influenced by politicians that is	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11h. When there are many different organisations for people who wish to belong to them that is	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11i. When political parties have different opinions on important issues that is	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11j. When all television stations present the same opinion about politics that is	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11k. When people refuse to obey a law which violates human rights that is	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11l. When newspapers are forbidden to publish stories that might offend ethnic groups that is	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11m. When government leaders are trusted without question that is	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11n. When people peacefully protest against a law they believe is unjust that is	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

These final questions are the only two with a right and a wrong answer so think carefully.

12a. The following question contains three statements of fact and one opinion. Which is an opinion?

☐ A. Actions by individual countries is the best way to solve environmental problems

☐ B. Many countries contribute to the pollution of the environment

☐ C. Some countries offer to cooperate to reduce pollution

☐ D. Water pollution comes from several different sources

12b. The following question contains three statements of opinion and one fact. Which is the fact?

☐ A. People with very low incomes should not pay any taxes

☐ B. In many countries rich people pay higher taxes than poor people

☐ C. It is fair that some citizens pay higher taxes than others

☐ D. Donations to charity are the best way to reduce differences between rich and poor

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