

Our Reference: 2434

FOI Request dated 16/07/2021 as follows –

- 1. How many Prevent referrals were made by the university in the academic years 2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21? Please break this down into staff and students.**
- 2. How many Channel support referrals (individuals who present with a ‘terrorism vulnerability’ and require Channel support) were made by the university in the same years, also broken down by staff and students?**

Response

The University of Hull does hold information relevant to this request, however, following review we have come to the decision to withhold the information under sections 24 (1) and 31 (1) (a) of the Freedom of Information Act.

Section 24 (1) provides that information is exempt from disclosure if it is required for the purpose of safeguarding national security. National security is not limited to the security of the UK, its military defence and its systems of government. The term includes co-operation with other states in combating national terrorism and guarding against actions targeted at other states which may impact on the UK and its citizens. The requested information is therefore covered by this exemption.

Section 31 (1) (a) covers all aspects of the prevention and detection of crime. It covers information held by public authorities without any specific law enforcement responsibilities, particularly where such information was provided by the public authority to a law enforcement agency as part of an investigation. It furthermore covers information which renders anyone, including the public authority itself, more vulnerable to crime. The information you requested is information which is disclosed to law enforcement agencies for the prevention and detection of crime. Its disclosure would undermine such efforts and has the potential to put the public at greater risk as further explained below under the ‘public interest’ section.

Considerations in favour of disclosure

- The Prevent programme is high profile and it is important for the public to understand how it is operated and if it is being used effectively by the University of Hull.

Considerations against disclosure

- There is a serious terrorist threat to the United Kingdom, and placing this information into the public domain could potentially put national security at risk by either jeopardising or negating efforts to prevent acts of terrorism and terrorist related crime.

- Disclosure may reduce the effectiveness of Prevent as a counter-terrorism strategy and ultimately lead to increased risk of crime and risk to the public.
- Releasing specific information would increase fears around the identification of individuals and partners involved in the process – irrespective of whether identification actually takes place.
- The public interest favouring disclosure assumes that referral locations are in fact in the areas of greatest risk and threat. This assumption may lead to unwanted wider assumptions being made about the level of radicalisation and terrorist activity taking place in a particular location. This could raise alarm and lead to an increased risk of community tensions and public order issues.
- This information, put together with other information already in the public domain could allow a detailed picture of Prevent and Channel engagement to be drawn across the country. This may reveal a pattern across the country which may then be used to undermine the Prevent and Channel programmes.
- It could undermine our ability to identify and protect vulnerable people referred into the programme.

The University of Hull recognises that there is a public interest in the disclosure of information which facilitates the accountability and transparency of public bodies for decisions taken by them. However, there is also a public interest in safeguarding national security and protecting the ability of public authorities to detect and or prevent criminal activity. Having undertaken the public interest test, the University of Hull has concluded that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the requested information.