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**How does the UK's CONTEST
strategy effect Frontline Policing?**

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to ascertain whether the UK's counter terrorism strategy (CONTEST) has an impact on the day-to-day role of a frontline police officer, while also considering if should have an effect and how well frontline police officers understand CONTEST as a whole.

An analysis of existing literature shows that CONTEST should be having a dramatic effect on frontline policing, which leads way for the main purpose of this research which is conducted by means of a questionnaire sent out to Gwent Police officers serving within Response and Neighbour policing teams.

The findings of this research support the hypothesis that although CONTEST should be having a dramatic effect on frontline policing, it has very little to no effect on the officer's day to day role and the knowledge and understanding of CONTEST amongst these officers is low.



Table of Contents

Contents

Chapter 1 – Introduction	7
1.1 – Introduction	7
1.2 – The background of terrorism in the UK	7
1.3 – Background for Research	8
1.4 – Research Aims.....	8
1.5 – Conclusion –	9
Chapter 2 – Literature Review	10
2.1 - Introduction	10
2.2 – Prepare Pillar	10
2.3 – Prevent Pillar	12
2.4 - Conclusion	14
Chapter 3 – Methodology	15
3.1 – Introduction	15
3.2 – Research Method.....	15
3.3 – Data Type	15
3.4 – Evaluation of Methodology	16
3.5 - Conclusion	17
Chapter 4 – Analysis of Results	18
4.1 – Introduction	18
4.2 – Sample demographic	18
4.3 – Overall knowledge of CONTEST.....	19
4.4 – PREVENT and the Prevent Programme	20
4.5 – Responding to active or potential terror threats.....	20
4.6 – <i>Does CONTEST have an effect on your everyday role?</i>	21
4.7 – Results of Findings.....	22
4.8 – Conclusion.....	22
Chapter 5 – Conclusions and Recommendations.....	23



5.1 – Introduction	23
5.2 – Research aims.....	23
5.3 – Limitations of current research	23
5.4 – Overall Findings –.....	24
5.5 – Recommendations	24
5.6 – Future Research	25
5.7 – Conclusion.....	25
Bibliography	26
Appendices	29
Appendix A – Blank Questionnaire.....	29
.....	30
Appendix B – Questionnaire Responses	34



Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 – Introduction

The purpose of this project is to establish the extent to which the UK's counter terrorism strategy, CONTEST, affects frontline police officers and this chapter of the essay is going to establish the basic knowledge surrounding terrorism in the UK and the CONTEST strategy, and I will be laying the background information of the research I will be completing.

1.2 – The background of terrorism in the UK

The actual definition of terrorism has been greatly disputed by academics over a number of years, and an agreed definition is yet to have been found (Richards, 2015). However, the general themes seem to remain as, some kind of political violence that was done to have a wider psychological impact on the population of a country (Richards 2015, Krstic 2016). However, the definition that will apply for this project is the official definition provided by the UK government under the Terrorism act 2000. They define terrorism as, *the use or threat of action, that involves serious violence against a person, involves serious damage to property, endangers a person's, life other than that of the person committing the action, creates a serious risk to the health or safety of the public or a section of the public, or is designed seriously interfere with or seriously to disrupt an electronic system. The use or threat is designed to influence the government or an international governmental organisation or to intimidate the public or sections of the public, and the use or threat is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious, racial or ideological cause* (Legislation.go.uk, 2009).

Post 9/11 Brittan saw a strong rise in a more dedicated strategy to counter international terrorism with a combination of hard and soft methods of dealing with it (Bonino 2012), and in 2003 the CONTEST strategy was introduced to the UK as a formal strategy by the UK government for countering terrorism. This strategy contains 4 pillars defined by the home office (2023) as,

1. Prevent people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism,
2. Pursue terrorists to disrupt their plots,
3. Protect against a terrorist attack and reduce vulnerability,
4. Prepare to mitigate the impact of any attack

These pillars are often shortened down to the 4 P's of CONTEST which are, Prevent, Pursue, Protect and Prepare. The home office also states that the aim of CONTEST is to "Reduce the risk from terrorism to the UK, its citizens and the interests overseas, so that people can go about their lives freely and with confidence"



The threat from terrorism is always changing and to match it there have been multiple editions of CONTEST released with small changes in policy however, the above is where it currently stands at the time of writing.

Over the past decade the threat from terrorism has remained mostly Islamist Extremists. This branch of terrorism has the highest number of arrests, and an average of 250 people a year being arrested for terror related offences since 2002 (Home Office 2026). There have been two major international groups presenting the majority of the threat within this time period as Al' Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

1.3 – Background for Research

More recent terror attacks have brought questions asking how well certain aspects of CONTEST are working. Such as the Manchester Arena bombing in 2017, where the response from police and other emergency services was deemed poor by the enquiry; the London bridge and borough market attack in 2017 where the preparations for a hostile vehicle attack were not in place. Finally, the number of times that the Prevent scheme has failed to identify or failed to support a radicalised individual.

This brought up the question of whether CONTEST actually works and if the police, one of the leading organisations in counter terrorism within the UK (Northcott 2007, and Shaukat 2021) are able to carry it out. I will be answering this question initially by asking if CONTEST has an effect on frontline policing.

1.4 – Research Aims

As a part of my research I will be looking to achieve 3 main research objectives to answer the question that this essay asks.

1. What is the role frontline officers have in CONTEST?

First, in order to even consider the effect that CONTEST has on frontline officers, it must first be ascertained what role frontline officers have within CONTEST, both officially and what academics believe.

2. Does CONTEST have an effect on the day-to-day of a frontline police officer?

This forms a simpler version of the overall research question and will this will be achieved as a part of my actual research.

3. What is the current knowledge and understanding frontline officers have of CONTEST?



This is an important part of the research because if CONTEST is meant to have an effect on frontline policing but the frontline officers have little knowledge and understanding of it then its effectiveness of CONTEST will be significantly reduced.

1.5 – Conclusion –

This chapter has explained the basis for this essay and the research that I will be conducting. It has also explained the research objectives that I seek to achieve while completing my research. The remaining chapters of this essay will consist of a literature review, whereby I will seek to find what has already been researched to help shape the form of my research. I will look to discuss and explain the methodology that I will be using. Penultimately, I will analyse the results of my research and discuss my findings. Finally, I will look to pull everything together and draw overall conclusions finally answering the research objectives and making recommendations for improvements for policing and recommendations for further research into this topic area.



Chapter 2 – Literature Review

2.1 - Introduction

Counter terrorism is a crucial part of modern-day policing, that has been streamlined and made easier to understand because of the UK's CONTEST strategy, which was created in 2003 and most recently refined in 2023. CONTEST provides a framework for how the UK deals with a constant unwavering terrorist threat and explains how the police should be adapting alongside terrorism. There is a great number of academic research and reviews into the effectiveness of CONTEST, most of which have been completed in the 2010's. The majority of these papers are based on how CONTEST can be improved, if it is practical and some on how it should be affecting every-day policing. The research I aim to complete and the question I am raising intends to fill the gap of how CONTEST actually effects the day-to-day role of frontline police officers. Based off the results of my research, evaluating CONTEST will become easier, as if officers don't know what it is, how it works and how it changes what they do then it cannot be called a completed success.

The important pillars of CONTEST that I will focusing on during my research will be Prevent and Prepare, this mainly due to the fact that Pursue is completed by specialist, counter terrorism, armed and unarmed officers and Protect is mainly down to legislators and premises owners. This is not to diminish the importance of Pursue and Protect, however, these are simply less likely to affect the role of frontline officers compared to Prevent and Prepare. Due to this the review will be focusing on existing literature on this topic also. Literature will be reviewed on a thematic basis of which pillar of CONTEST is best suited to the literature itself.

2.2 – Prepare Pillar

There is a simple, and well-known fact when talking about terrorism since the creation of CONTEST. Terrorism and the means in which those involved inflict terror and the means of radicalising people into terrorism is constantly changing. Glover (2023) highlighted this in a review of a multitude of terrorist groups, attacks and legislation, and has found that in recent years mainly since the later 2010's most attacks are committed by 'Self-initiated terrorists' (S-IT's). S-IT's will tend to use more simple methodologies such as mass stabbings as seen in the London Bridge attack in in 2017, which is in a stark contrast to the larger more complicated attacks of the early 2000's and before such as the 9/11 attack. Despite the general lack of complexity, and amount of planning involved, Glover stated that S-IT attacks can be just as deadly and effective at putting a terrorist message across. This highlights the importance of keeping frontline officers



informed as to the nature of the current terror threat, how it is likely to take form, and how frontline, unarmed officers are meant to respond to these attacks.

The main purpose of the Prepare pillar is ensuring an effective and resilient response to terrorist attacks, and previously this has not been the case and there has been too big of an importance placed on to Prevent and the other pillars. This has been witnessed in the 2017 Manchester Arena Bombing in which sadly killed 22 people and injured over 1,000. The first officers to arrive at the scene of this attack were unarmed, non-specialised officers who were part of the British Transport Police. The inquiry into the response to this attack simply found the response to the attack needed to be better (Saunders 2022). Saunders goes onto explain that there needs to be better communication, plans and more of an understanding of how to respond from a non-specialised officers perspective. This lack of training of the first attending officer led a poor overall response, showing the importance that frontline officers have in the response to these attacks. Baker-Beall et al. (2024) has found that since this incident there has been a bigger importance placed upon the Prepare pillar which is evidenced in a number of recent large scale training exercises, and the praise given to the officers who have responded to other terrorist attacks since, such as the London Bridge attack and the Manchester Synagogue Attack in 2025.

Information being shared to frontline officers regarding how they should be responding to attacks it will inherently affect their role, allowing them to be more knowledgeable and will assist negating the need for improvisation in such circumstances which has been described as “Equal[ing] inefficiency” by Alexander (2016). Inefficiency in such incidents and other disaster responses can have catastrophic consequences and lead to public disapproval and a general disbelief in the emergency services as a whole for responding to such incidents. The only way that us as police can counter a loss of trust and to continue to counter terrorists effectively and to learn from our previous mistakes (English, 2024).

Alexander also re-iterates the importance that a plan is not useful if those who are should be involved are not fully aware of the plan and how it comes to take form. This shows the importance of training exercises such as that in Dorset in January of 2026, which was a scenario based on a group of armed terrorists taking over a ferry. Large scale training scenarios such as this one are imperative to improving officers’ response to terror threats, as for effective responses to take place training needs to be up to the same standard as required in actual scenarios (Maheswari and Nalini 2025). Training of this nature will inherently have effect on frontline policing ensuring that officers are aware of the threats faced and the skills and procedures they need to be aware of. However, this training focuses mainly on specialised armed response to these attacks often rejecting the frontline officer’s important role during these incidents.



Countering this argument presented by Alexander is that you can only prepare for what you know may come, and as said by O’Kleasky (2014), terrorism is ever-changing and the best way to be able to prevent and prepare for attacks is to have a continually adaptive mindset on the best way to operate in countering terrorism.

From reviewing all of the literature surrounding the prepare pillar that I have mentioned it is clear that it has been neglected for a long period of time by emergency responders; despite its importance in supporting the other pillars and the overall response to terror threats. I was also able to see that there is high level of training and preparedness for terrorist attacks by specialised and armed officers as they are the ones who have received the most training for this. However, I have been unable to find any information on how the unarmed, unspecialised officer is to act when put into that situation. As a part of my research, I will be seeking to find the level of understanding of frontline police officers have of Prepare, and if they have any knowledge of their roles within a response to an active terrorist attack.

2.3 – Prevent Pillar

The prevention of radicalisation and stopping people from becoming terrorists has always been a focus since the creation of CONTEST. The Prevent pillar is mainly active through the Prevent programme in which CTP works alongside a number of different sectors that offer support and advice to those who have been deemed susceptible to terrorist radicalisation (West Yorkshire Police, 2026). Prevent referrals are currently at an all-time high in 2025 with a total 8,778 referrals being made and police being responsible for 30% of these which is only second to the education sector (36%) (Home office 2025). Brady (2016) has written that the general public consensus at the time of writing his report was that Prevent was a failure due to the amount of people that had been travelling abroad to join terrorist groups which at the time was predominantly ISIS. Prevent having negative reviews has continued to be an issue as stated by a Home Office report in 2024 which described the Prevent programme as “Not fit for purpose”. There are clearly issues with the Prevent limb of CONTEST, including the number of referrals, ability to assess risk, and a risk of “pre-crime” (Pantucci, 2010), which runs the risk of “exacerbating the very problem it seeks to address”.

On the contrary, Prevention can be a difficult area work in as I have already discussed with previous research stating the changes in terrorist methodology over the years and also radicalisation methodology. An example of this was the shift into the use of social media and online radicalisation that was utilised by ISIS which proved very effective at getting a variety of individuals to partake in ISIS activities (Awan, 2017). With the recent change in methodology, ideals and even with the MI5 Director General stating that lines are becoming blurred and that he has never seen such a variety of threats before (MI5



2024), it begs the question as to how Prevent is meant to function effectively. Vale and Rose (2025) have stated that, “There is no set mould for terrorists of recent years making harder for effective prevention to be put in place”. This is evidenced by Vale and Rose by discussing a 13-year-old boy who has been convicted for being the leader of a neo-nazi, proscribed terrorist organisation. If a child can have such extreme views at such a young age and have them embedded and strong enough to create a terrorist organisation then how will be Prevent be able to identify and work with that child? This case also raises the point that Prevent are only as good as the referrals they receive, if a person goes through their life with extremist views but never goes through the Prevent then how is the programme able to work effectively?

So how can police assist in the Prevention of terrorism aside from simply just submitting referrals? Weisburd et al. (2022) has found that from a frontline officer’s perspective the best form of prevention is community policing and engaging with communities where risks are identified and working with them to help prevent radicalisation. This method of working with communities has always been used in other areas of policing, mainly relating to gangs and drug dealing, and it has proven to work so this method should be further implemented into community policing teams. Bahadur Lamb (2014) has also found that in order to better Prevent radicalisation then a far more caring approach needs to occur almost as if the officer were to be ‘looking after’ the person at risk. Despite this, Terrorism is normally believed to be a police or security forces matter, however, prevention is a part that everyone needs to start taking into account if it is work effectively. This is already demonstrated with the majority of Prevent referrals coming from the education sector, instead of law enforcement and security forces. The concept of Community Counter Terrorism was brought in by Huq (2020) as an idea of communities, who are often the most susceptible to radicalisation acting as their own counter terrorism force. An example of this which Huq described was members of a church removing those partly involved in terrorist recruitment therefore, removing the risk. This once again highlights the importance of police working with communities to inform them of the risks and asking for communities to also do their bit in Prevention.

Overall, there appears to be a range of research showing different opinions of how Prevent runs. Some will argue that it needs to change and it is not working, and others will say that it is doing the best it can do given the situation, and state that it’s in. It is also important to consider that whenever an attack happens the blame seems to most commonly fall onto Prevent, when some people may not have been referred at all and some people can simply not be changed. Shawcross (2024) has summarised this well by saying that “As a country we should be proud of Prevent and the proportionate and humane response that it represents” while also recognising that Prevent does also need to be improved. I also can also see that one of these ways that Prevention can be



improved is to increase the level of community policing and the awareness of terrorism and radicalisation in local communities.

2.4 - Conclusion

To summarise the literature available to me, it is clear that CONTEST is a very effective strategy at countering terrorism, in theory. The main difficulty it faces the ever-changing face of terrorism and the way that it is shaped by the global climate. As discussed, the rise of ISIS and their attack and radicalisation methodologies caused great levels of difficulty for all of the pillars of CONTEST. However, the strategy allows for change and accepts learning, which can be seen in the aftermath of the 2017 Manchester Arena Bombing. This means that over time the response to terrorism is only going to improve. There are also a number of ways that CONTEST and its individual pillars should be affecting frontline policing for example in the community policing aspect and the approach that we take to dealing with those at risk of radicalisation. However, there is very little and very difficult to find, literature on how CONTEST does actually affect policing. This gap in the research, I believe, may be the key to improving the UK's Terrorist response, as with a better understanding of how the frontline officers view, understand and are able to apply CONTEST, police forces will be able to improve how the officers are able to apply it among their usual roles.



Chapter 3 – Methodology

3.1 – Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapters there is some room for improvement in the implementation of the CONTEST strategy and that it should be having an effect on frontline policing. As a part of the literature review the role of a response officer within CONTEST, has been established and an apparent gap in existing research has been identified. As such, the aim of the research is to now establish the general knowledge and understanding of CONTEST by frontline officers and how they believe it affects their job role, if at all. This will fill the gap in the research that was discussed in the previous as to whether or not CONTEST does have an effect on a frontline officer's job role.

3.2 – Research Method

Careful consideration has been taken when deciding on a research strategy for this paper, weighing up the strengths and weaknesses of all methodologies. In doing so I have decided that the research will be carried out by creating an online questionnaire that can be sent out to my target sample. I have chosen this method as when used properly it allows for reliable and easy access to results (Bihi 2021), while also allowing the possibility of quantitative results and qualitative. As discussed previously, the sample I will be using will be targeted and limited to all frontline officers. I will define frontline officers as any public facing police officer from both neighbourhood policing teams and response units. This was chosen because it is able to fill some of the gaps that the previous chapter left, such as, the readiness of non-specialised officers, which officers on response units and neighbour teams are classed as. This is only due to the wide variety of work they have to carry out and does not speak down on their overall competence at being a police officer. Taking this into account a quota sampling is best suited to the research and the method I am adopting and to gather participants I will send out the online questionnaire over police intranet systems, reducing pressure on potential participants and increasing easiness of completion.

3.3 – Data Type

As a part of the research the main focus will be placed on quantitative results as it will allow for clear, concise, and objective results (Pilcher and Corazzi, 2024; Lim, 2025). However, the participants will be asked to provide more detail onto their answers where applicable and able to do so, meaning that qualitative data will also be taken into account. This will allow for research results to include significantly more detail allowing for some context surrounding the participants answers (Oranga and Matere 2023). A mixed result approach will allow for easy analysis of results which can be done through completing graphs and charts because of the quantitative data and then reading



through any extra qualitative answers that participants have given and highlighting those that would be considered interesting to the overall research aim. The questionnaire will follow themes that will by nature answer the aforementioned research aims. The questions will be mainly themed surrounding knowledge, understanding and the ability to implement and the effects CONTEST has had on officer's day-to-day role. In doing this care has to be taken to not word the questions in a way that will influence the participants answer's or question the participants competence, as this will create invalid results and reduce the willingness to participate.

3.4 – Evaluation of Methodology

The methodology described does best fit the research I intend to conduct, the time frame available and the type of results I will be requiring, however, each part of the methodology does it have its strengths and limitations.

The sample I have selected, as discussed will be frontline police officers, and the questionnaire will be distributed through Gwent Police intranet systems and potentially a word of mouth. These would be classed as quota and snowball sampling respectively, both are non-random sample styles, with quota sampling being effective due to that even with a small sample size it can yield effective and informative results and getting a representative sample; snowballing is effective due to its ability to quickly gather a large sample size (Bhardwaj 2019). However, as a researcher due to the non-random nature of these sampling methods it is important to keep in mind any potential sample bias could arise, as mentioned by Etikan and Bala (2017). It is also important to consider that a snowball sample could cause participants who are not a part of the target sample to take part in the study.

The research method being an online questionnaire is an easy way to gather results to a large audience within a short space of time. As stated before, it can allow for a mixture of qualitative and quantitative answers and using each result analysis method individually yields its own and opposite strengths and weaknesses. While qualitative results hold a great deal of detail and relies heavily on interpretation of the qualitative answers for the research outcome and conclusion (Onwuegbuzie and Weinbaum 2017). This interpretation could mislead conclusions and discount the validity of the overall research outcome. Quantitative data, on the other hand, provides simple and unambiguous answers to the research question with the results (Khandker, Koolwal and Samad 2010), however, these answers can fail to provide context and individual circumstance. This is why a combination of both quantitative and qualitative results will create the most valid results, as it can combine the simple and structured results of quantitative while also allowing for the participants to provide context or additional information where able to do so with qualitative. While designing the questions for the



participants the wording of the questions will be given great consideration ensuring that the questions are open and allow for qualitative detailed answers to be given but also that they can be boiled to a simple answer that can be explained in a quantitative manner.

3.5 - Conclusion

In summary of this chapter, my methodology will consist of an online questionnaire, making use of a quota and snowballing sample technique, and a targeted sample of frontline police officers. I will then be aiming to have a mixture of quantitative and qualitative results which I will be able to analyse and draw conclusions from using graphs, tables, and analysis of written answers. This should allow for valid results and easily drawn conclusions for the research area, and research aims I have established.



Chapter 4 – Analysis of Results

4.1 – Introduction

In previous chapters I discussed about how my research would be conducted, and the background for the research. The research has now been completed and results have been obtained. In this chapter I will be analysing the results and discussing findings, in preparation for drawing conclusions.

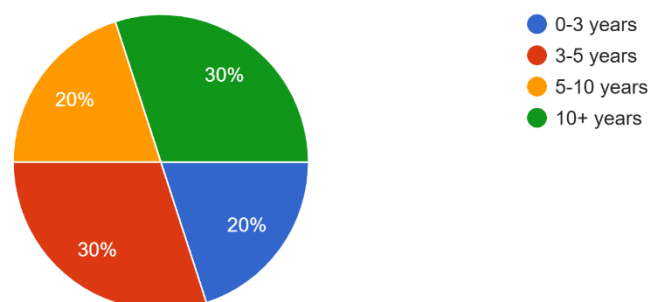
As talked about in previous chapters the UK's CONTEST strategy should be having an effect on everyday policing however, none of the research in the literature review discussed whether or not it actually did. As such the aim of my research was to ascertain if CONTEST does actually have an effect on frontline policing. In order to conduct my research, I have made use of an online questionnaire and used frontline officers (response officers and neighbourhood teams) as the participants.

My research is mainly quantitative in nature therefore, when analysing results, I will be making use of pie charts to make the review of the results easier. As a part of the questionnaire there are certain questions that have asked for more detail in a qualitative, explanatory form. Some of these answers have been investigated as relevant and important to the research aims.

The questionnaire and results have been split into 4 themes for analysis along with a demographic section to understand the how representative a sample is. The 4 themes are, overall knowledge of CONTEST, PREVENT and the Prevent Programme, responding to active terror threats, and if CONTEST effects their daily policing role. I have chosen these themes as they will better answer the research objectives and provide easy analysis of the results.

4.2 – Sample demographic

As talked about in the methodology section I have identified the sample by 3 different variables, these being, department, rank and years of service. 60% of the sample have defined themselves as response officers and the remaining 40% forms a part of



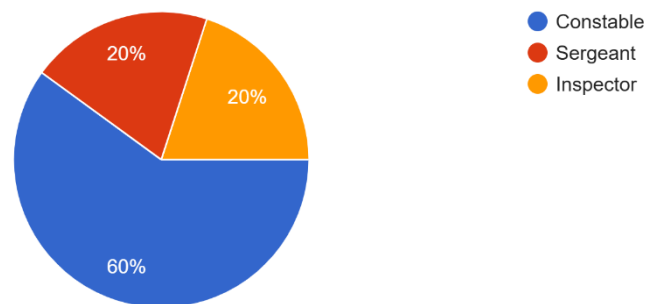


neighbourhood policing teams. The below figures 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 are pie charts to show the remainder of the variables in the total sample.

Fig.4.2.1 – Pie chart of sample split by rank.

Fig.4.2.2 – Pie chart of sample split by total years of service.

Although constables form the majority of the sample, they do also form the higher percentage of officers. Due to this the demographic of rank is proportionate to the demographic of the police. However, more sergeants forming the participants would have made the demographic as representative as possible. There is also a fairly even split between years of service of the participants, which although does mean that a wider variety of answers will be given, it may not be as representative of the UK forces as



possible as because of operation uplift which saw 20,951 additional officers into the police between 2020 and 2023 (Home office 2023). These officers would now be between 3 and 10 years' service, which should correlate to form the majority of the research demographic.

4.3 – Overall knowledge of CONTEST

The questionnaire began with asking for the participants overall understanding of what CONTEST is and if they know anything about it. These questions showed that 40% of participants answered 'no' when asked if they had any knowledge of the UK's counter terrorism strategy but then when prompted about the 4 P's of CONTEST knowledge then went up to 50%. However, when analysing the follow up question of 'if yes please explain your knowledge' the majority of participants could not name all four, showing partial knowledge of CONTEST instead of full knowledge. However, all participants who gave an answer to this question mentioned PREVENT which was found, in the literature review to be one of the two most applicable to frontline officers.



4.4 – PREVENT and the Prevent Programme

As stated above, PREVENT according to this research is the more well known aspect of CONTEST however, the questions relating to this theme asked if the participant had ever completed a referral, how they felt PREVENT worked, and if they would feel confident in knowing when a referral needed.

The vast majority of participants hadn't ever completed a referral, and no participant had ever completed more than one referral as seen in the below pie chart.

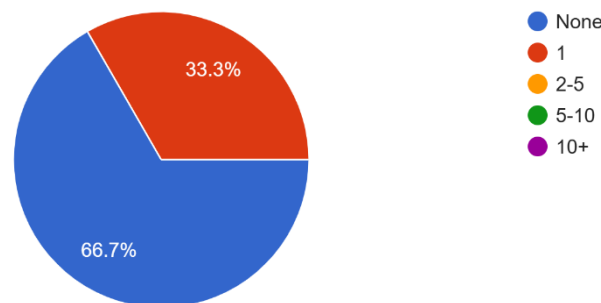


Fig. 4.4.1 Pie chart showing how many Prevent referrals participants had completed.

Out of the responses that were given 70% of participants stated that they felt that the Prevent programme was effective at preventing radicalisation and terror threats with the remaining 30% mostly responding saying that if it did work then there wouldn't be terror attacks, and two responses saying that it does work fine but needs to be made better.

When asking how confident the participant would feel in recognising when a Prevent referral is required, I have asked their confidence level on a scale of 1-10 with 10 being the highest confidence and 0 being lowest. I have calculated the average confidence level of the participants by using the mean of all the results. The average confidence level of the participants is 5.66 out of 10 showing a mixed level of responses and an important area that could be subject to recommendations.

4.5 – Responding to active or potential terror threats

This area falls into the PREPARE aspect of CONTEST which, as found in the literature review, is a very neglected area of training for frontline police officers. This section started by asking about if the participant had received any training in responding to a terror threat and how effective they thought this training was if they received it. Out of all participants 70% stated that they had not received any training when it came to responding to a terror threat. However, out of the 30% that had received training their opinion of the effectiveness of the training was quite high.



On another 1-10 confidence scale the participants were questioned on how confident they would feel should they have to respond to a terror threat prior to the arrival of specialised officers. The average confidence level was 4.6 out of 10 which is quite low, and then when asked about what could be done to improve confidence levels nearly every participant asked for more training. Some participants also explained that aside from the basic principles of save and limb they would have no idea what to do should that situation arise. This section does have clear points to be raised for recommendations from these results that can be summarised from the direct words of officers.

4.6 – Does CONTEST have an effect on your everyday role?

The final section of the research was to ask the participants if they felt that CONTEST and counter terrorism actually did have an effect on their everyday policing role. Astoundingly 90% of participants answered no to this question which is seen in the below pie chart.

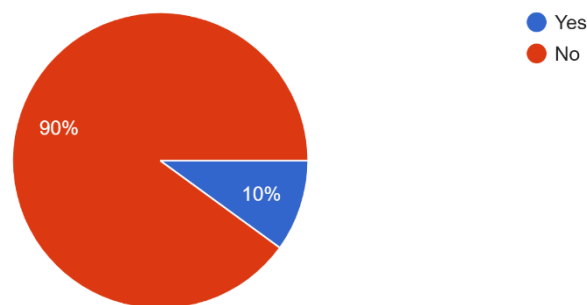


Fig.4.6.1 answers to if CONTEST and counter terrorism had an effect on the participants everyday roles.

These officers' opinions confirms the issues raised during the literature review and my initial hypothesis that although CONTEST should have an effect on everyday policing but actually doesn't. The final question asked was if they didn't feel that it did have effect then 'do they feel as though it should and how should it?'

When asked this, two themes appeared to arise. Firstly, if they had more training surrounding CONTEST and how it works then it can be better implemented, and secondly, geographical location and the susceptibility to terrorist attacks and radicalisation. This is a good point that has been raised by these participants as the rural forces where the populus is sparse is less likely to encounter terrorism than other forces that cover large cities like, Greater Manchester Police or the Metropolitan Police.



4.7 – Results of Findings

From the analysis of the results there is a number of relevant findings that can be drawn from the results and the 4 themes of the research questions.

Theme 1 being an overall knowledge of CONTEST which has shown that very few officers were able to identify the CONTEST strategy, and those that partook in the research and did know CONTEST were unable to identify all 4 pillars or explain it fully and competently.

Theme 2 covered PREVENT and the Prevent programme, from the previous theme this was the most well-known part of CONTEST with more participants identifying it than any other pillar. This theme has also identified that even though it is most well-known area of CONTEST, very few officers have completed a referral. There was also some feedback from 30% of participants that it needs to be improved and doesn't work as well as it should do.

Theme 3 asked the participants about how they feel about their ability in responding to the active terror threat which found that frontline officers receive very little training on responding to terror threats and have very little confidence in what they're meant to do. However, those few that have received some training saw higher confidence levels and said the training was very effective.

Finally theme 4 answered one of the main research objectives, does CONTEST affect your every-day policing role. 90% of participants stated that it does not have an effect on their role, which was mainly down to either the location they police being less likely to be a victim of a terror attack or a lack of knowledge as to how it could affect their role.

4.8 – Conclusion

This section has gone into detail surrounding the results of my research into how CONTEST affects frontline policing. I have discussed the 4 themes of the research questionnaire which provide detail into the research objectives.

There has been an analysis of the results obtained which was mostly quantitative and so was put into easy-to-understand pie charts along with an explanation of the results. Some qualitative answers were sought and given which have been summarised and used where necessary. The analysis of the results can then be put further into the findings which has shown that few officers know about CONTEST enough to implicate it as they should do, which in turn, means CONTEST is not having the effect on frontline officers that it should do.

This chapter has highlighted a lot of errors that are in place with the implementation of CONTEST but also some ways that it could be improved.



Chapter 5 – Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 – Introduction

Thus far, this essay has explored whether the UK's counter terrorism strategy effects frontline policing through means of literature review and conducting new research to better answer the question posed.

In this final chapter of the essay I will be revisiting my research objectives to ascertain if they have been completed, detail some of the limitations of my research, answering the research question by summarising my findings, discussing any recommendations for both improvement for the police and for future research.

5.2 – Research aims

In previous chapters I have discussed my research objectives; these were to answer the following questions –

1. What is the role frontline officers have in CONTEST?
2. Does CONTEST have an effect on the day-to-day role of a frontline police officer?
3. What is the current knowledge and understand frontline officers have of CONTEST.

These objectives have stayed the same for me throughout and I have tried not to deviate from these objectives. The first objective was answered within the literature review section of this essay. The second within the literature review and the actual research and the final, within the research alone.

5.3 – Limitations of current research

The biggest limitation of this research is simply the size of the experiment.

Unfortunately, only a small number of participants were able to take part, and in doing so it could be determined that the research is unable to be generalised to the rest of the policing population. In addition to this I only opened my research to Gwent Police officers, some which stated in their answers that officers in other forces which are more prone to terror attacks or terror threats may have more knowledge. This could be an interesting area for further research to see how the knowledge of implications of CONTEST change for frontline officers in different areas of the country. Further to this the demographics of participants isn't completely representative of the police population.



Another limitation that may have arisen was that the participants may have completed the questionnaire in company with another meaning that the answers given may not be completely representative of the actual participants knowledge and beliefs.

However, these limitations don't drastically reduce the validity of the results only show guidance and room for improvement for future research that could be done on this topic.

5.4 – Overall Findings –

Firstly, as stated throughout the essay it can be easily that frontline police officers will only have a part to play in 2 of the 4 pillars of CONTEST, these being, Prevent and Prepare. This fact doesn't diminish the importance of the other two pillars as without them the strategy would have some holes and would not work as effectively as it does. The reason for Prevent and Prepare being most applicable to frontline officers is that being public facing they have a lot of engagement with the public and so are more likely to be involved with persons who may be risk of radicalisation. Frontline officers also need to be aware of Prepare and how their forces plan to respond to any terror attack in order to prevent a repeat of the errors that were found in the Manchester Arena inquiry.

Secondly, it also be seen from my research that CONTEST has very little impact on day-to-day frontline policing, however, it should do. This can be seen in both the literature review chapter but also my own research. 90% of participants stated that CONTEST has no effect on their everyday role and all participants said that it should be or should be having more of an effect.

Finally, it can be seen throughout my research that is a substantial gap in knowledge of the frontline police officer when it comes to CONTEST and the UK's counter terrorism strategy. This may be down to all of the participants being from a force where an attack is less likely compared to other force areas such as Greater Manchester Police or the Metropolitan Police. However, this does not mean that the gap of knowledge should be ignored.

5.5 – Recommendations

This research has generated 2 main areas for improvement in ensuring CONTEST is as effective as it can be and does impact the frontline officer enough to improve.

Firstly, I do not believe that the officer themselves is at fault when it comes to a lack of knowledge surrounding CONTEST, but the police force and counter terrorism policing. The onus of ensuring their staff is competent in all areas of policing should fall onto



them and as apparent in my research they are not covering the areas of counter terrorism sufficiently.

Secondly, the Prepare pillar need further training for unarmed officers in order to prevent repeating the errors of the Manchester Arena bombing response. This can be based off the available research found in the literature review but also in my research where 70% of participants stated that they had not received any training on how to respond to an active threat. A heightened knowledge and understanding of how to respond to these incidents should consequently mean that officers are more aware of what could be considered a potential threat.

5.6 – Future Research

This essay and the research contained within it has generated some interesting topics for future research. The same or similar experiment should be conducted again but on a national scale whereby policing areas who are more prone to terror attacks would form part of the demographic. This would explain if the issue is nationwide, local to Gwent Police or it changes by force. It would also be an interesting point of view to see what higher ranked chief officers say about how CONTEST and counter terrorism effects their day job and if they are more involved than lower ranked frontline officers.

5.7 – Conclusion

Throughout this study, I have been looking to answer the research question of “How does the UK’s CONTEST strategy effect frontline policing”. In doing so I have considered the state of existing research and reviewed a number of different academic sources and also completed my own research project. The research objectives have been fulfilled resulting in a strong evidence-based conclusion that although CONTEST should be having an effect on frontline policing, it is having very little impact. It is however, important to note that this project does have its limitations and that there is still room for plenty of future research.

There have also been some recommendations made which could be put forward to the police and other counter terrorism agencies which, if fixed could have no end of benefit not just to the police but whole population of the UK.



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Appendices

Appendix A – Blank Questionnaire

How does the UK's CONTEST strategy effect frontline policing?

This is a questionnaire that will form part of research for a university dissertation. All answers will remain anonymous, and if you wish to stop at any time then you can do so by closing the page and your results will be discarded and not used in the research.

This questionnaire does cover the topic of terrorism and the UK's response to terrorism which is deemed a sensitive area of research and may cause distress in some participants. Please keep this in mind throughout completion. All questions are non-compulsory so any questions you do not wish to answer you do not have to do so.

I will ask for, job role, rank, and years of service, this is only to gauge differences in knowledge based those variables. Again you do not have to fill this out if you do not wish to do so.

What is your job role?

- ☐ Response
- ☐ Neighbourhood Policing
- ☐ RPSO
- ☐ Other: _____

What is your rank?

- ☐ Constable
- ☐ Sergeant
- ☐ Inspector



How many years have you served in the police force in total?

- ☐ 0-3 years
- ☐ 3-5 years
- ☐ 5-10 years
- ☐ 10+ years

How do you feel the UK responds to terrorism and terrorist attacks?

- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- Very poor ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Excellent

Do you have any knowledge of the UK's counter terrorism strategy?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes, please explain your knowledge.

Your answer _____

Do you know what the four P's of CONTEST are?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No



If yes, please explain your knowledge .

Your answer

How many Prevent referrals to the Prevent programme before?

- ☐ None
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2-5
- ☐ 5-10
- ☐ 10+

Do you feel as though the Prevent programme works in preventing radicalisation and reducing the terrorist threat from those referred?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If no, how could it be improved?

Your answer



How confident do you feel in noticing when someone is being or has been radicalised into a terrorist ideals/groups?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not at all confident	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Extremely confident

Have you received any training surrounding a response to potential or active terror threat?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes, how effective was this training?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not at all effective	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Extremely effective

How confident would you feel responding to a potential or active terror threat prior to the arrival of specialised/armed officers?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not at all confident	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Extremely confident



Is there anything that could reasonable be done to improve our confidence in responding to a potential or active terror threat?

Your answer

Do you feel like the UK's counter-terrorism strategy has an effect on everyday policing or your job role?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, please explain how,

If no, do you feel as though it should and how should it?

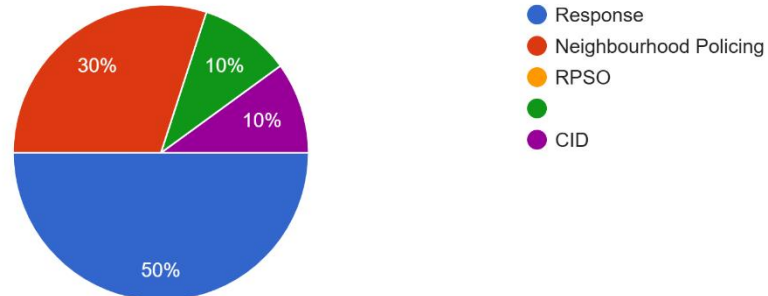
Your answer



Appendix B – Questionnaire Responses

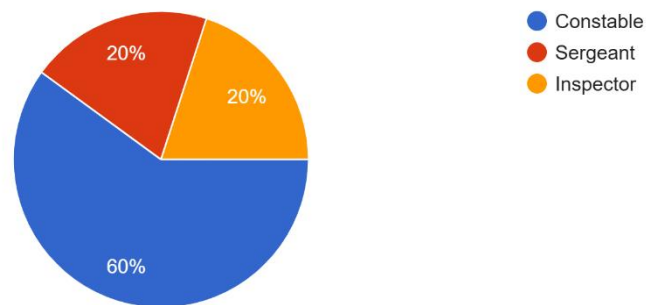
What is your job role?

10 responses



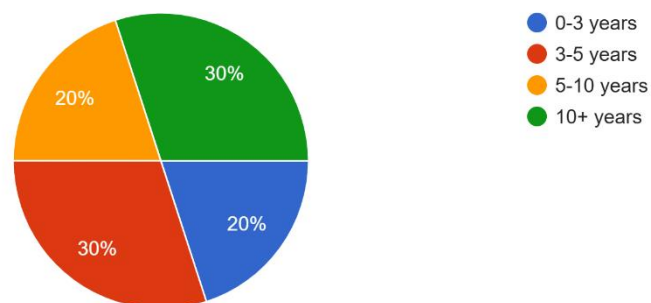
What is your rank?

10 responses



How many years have you served in the police force in total?

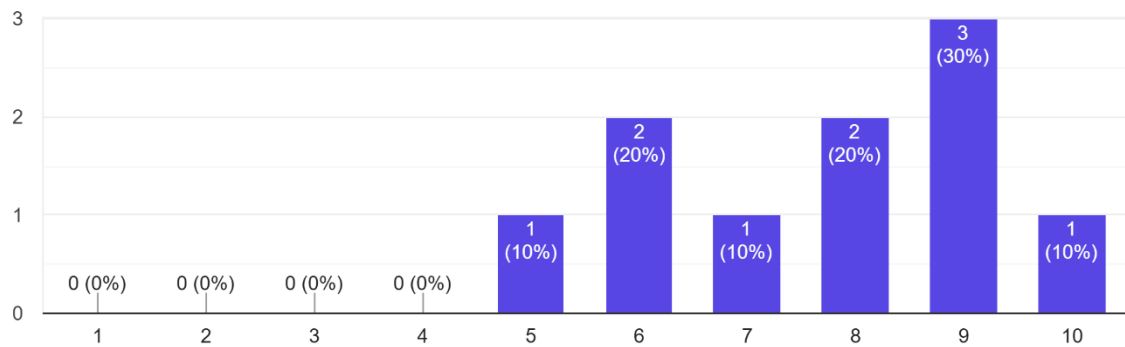
10 responses





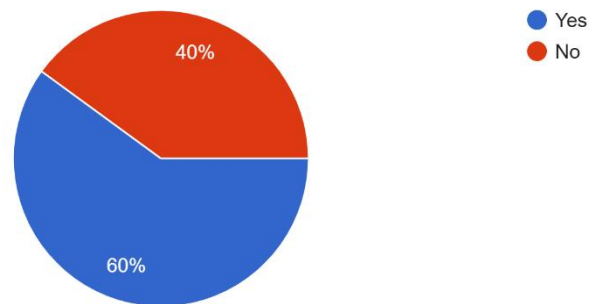
How do you feel the UK responds to terrorism and terrorist attacks?

10 responses



Do you have any knowledge of the UK's counter terrorism strategy?

10 responses



If yes, please explain your knowledge.

5 responses

it covers 4 areas of preventing preparing and responding

i know about the prevent programme and one of the goals is to actively seek out terrorists through things like CTP.

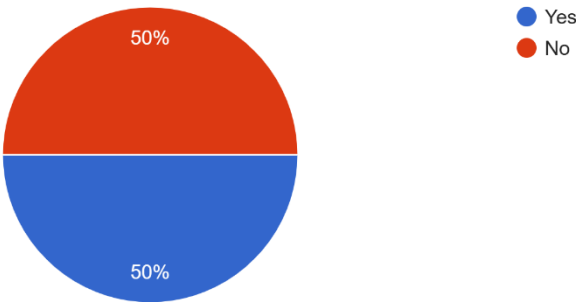
Different strands to provide holistic approach to terrorism

PREVENT, PURSUE, PROTECT, PREPARE

i know about the prevent programme.



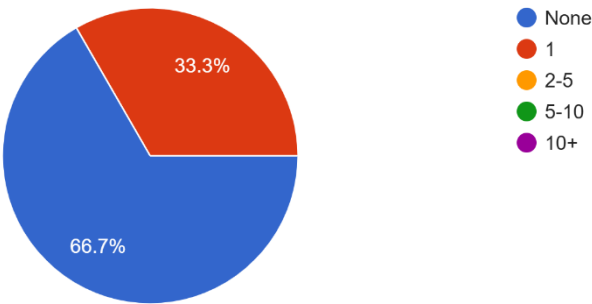
Do you know what the four P's of CONTEST are?
10 responses



If yes, please explain your knowledge .
6 responses

prevent, pursue, prepare,
Prepare, prevent, pursue protect
i know PREVENT.
Protect, prevent, pursue,
PREVENT, PURSUE, PROTECT, PREPARE
I know Prevent but don't know the rest.

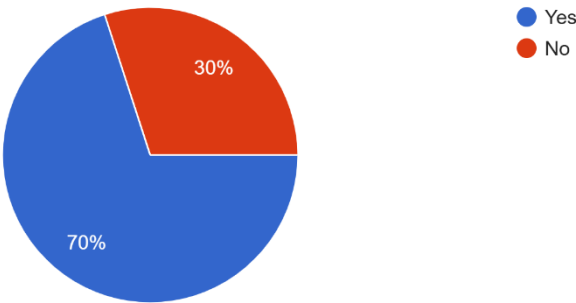
How many Prevent referrals to the Prevent programme before?
9 responses





Do you feel as though the Prevent programme works in preventing radicalisation and reducing the terrorist threat from those referred?

10 responses



If no, how could it be improved?

6 responses

it needs to be doing a better at diverted people.

Has worked for a limited number.
Should have earlier interventions

if it worked then there would be less terrorism and attacks.

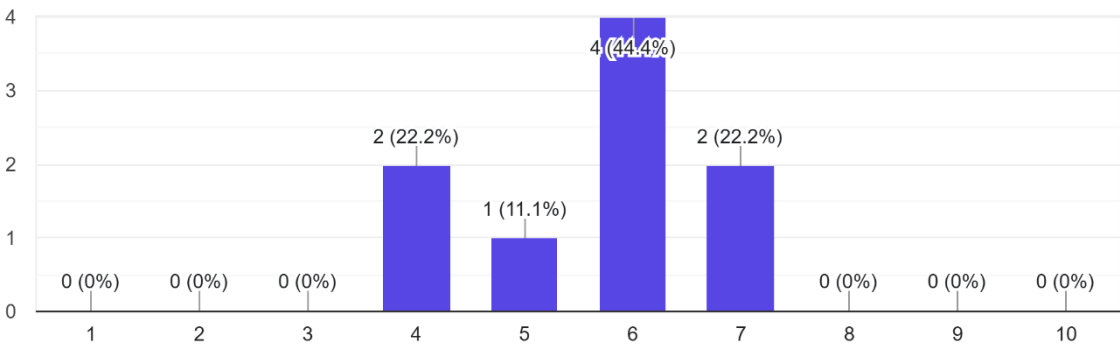
it does the job but could be a lot better.

Work better at Preventing and noticing early signs better.

it does the job but could be better

How confident do you feel in noticing when someone is being or has been radicalised into a terrorist ideals/groups?

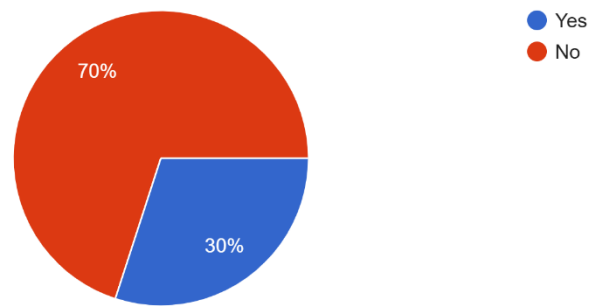
9 responses





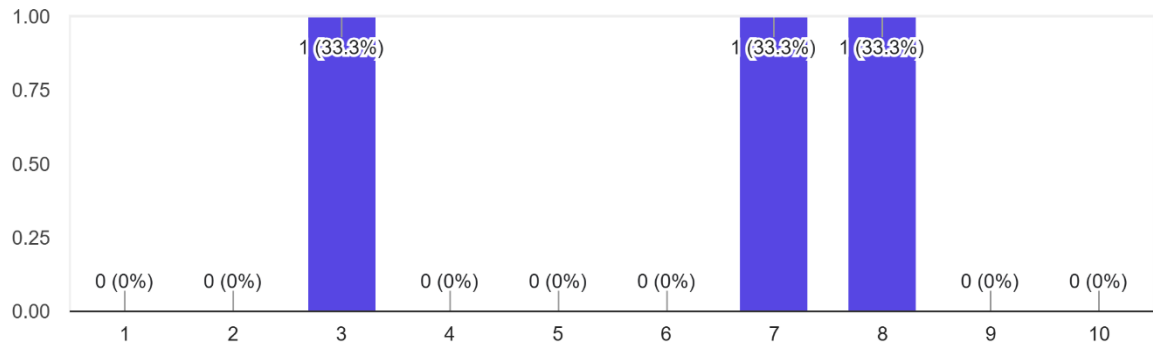
Have you received any training surrounding a response to potential or active terror threat?

10 responses



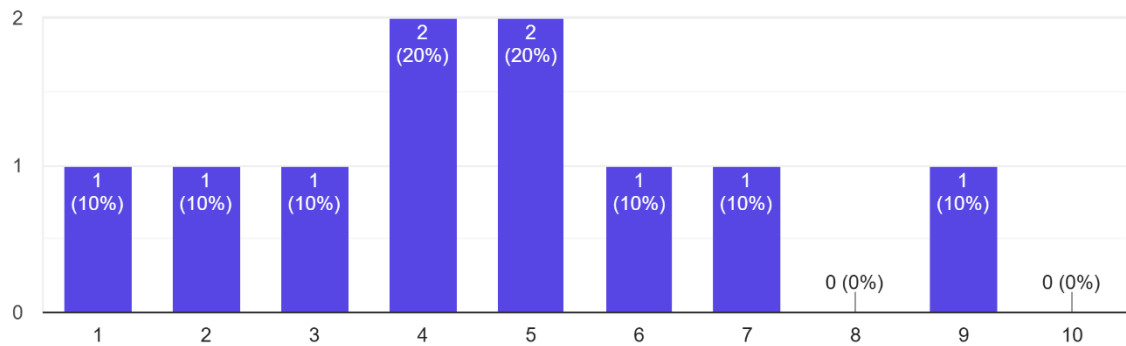
If yes, how effective was this training?

3 responses



How confident would you feel responding to a potential or active terror threat prior to the arrival of specialised/armed officers?

10 responses





Is there anything that could reasonable be done to improve our confidence in responding to a potential or active terror threat?

9 responses

implementing training

training needs to be done as i haven't had any and wouldn't know what to do more than the main policing principles.

for unspecialised officers we would likely just hold an area while firearms go in so i think it would relatively simple for us but the main peelian principles remain.

Scenario based exercises, learning from previous incidents and this information more accessible within policing

the basic knowledge of the peelian principles applies, direction would likely come from higher up and involve the stay safe principles.

better training about how unspecialised officers are meant to do it.

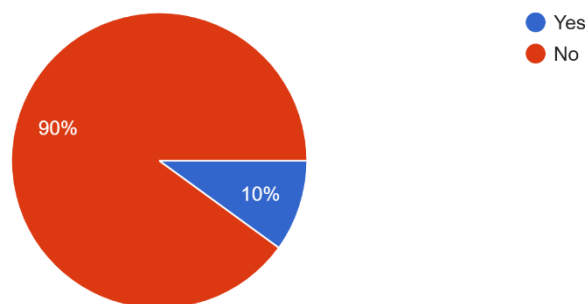
there is no actual training on response to terrorism apart from the stay safe principles which only work in certain scenarios.

basic principles of saving life but would have no idea beyond that.

the training was only about the stay safe principles and was an online learning package so wasn't very helpful or informative. The training could do with having a more practical aspect to it, involving a range of officers.

Do you feel like the UK's counter-terrorism strategy has an effect on everyday policing or your job role?

10 responses





If yes, please explain how,
If no, do you feel as though it should and how should it?

9 responses

should have training and better preparations.

i havent had use any terrorism powers or have felt that i needed to put in a referral to prevent.

Greater traing is required for frontline officers on the importance of referrals

i do think about it where it applies but it could do with more training because of the impact that terrorism can have on the UK.

i think no mainly because of where i am based but it should be further implemented to more populated policing areas where terrorism is more likely and communities are more suceptible to it.

i think it should have more an effect but it also depends on the communities vulnerability to terrorism.

i have never had to use or think about it in my time on the force.

it should but it never has as we receive very little training surrounding it response and the overall strategy about it.

mainly because of where i work but i feel like i should be thinking about it more.