

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY PANEL	Agenda Item No. 9
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Report of the Executive Director of People and Communities

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PREVENT AND THE WORK OF THE CHANNEL PANEL

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To advise the panel on the progress in implementing the Prevent Strategy and the work of the Channel Panel.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Scrutiny is asked to scrutinise the council's approach to preventing extremism and to offer ideas that can improve the delivery model and the outcomes.

3. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 3.1 This report links to the local authority priorities in respect of safeguarding vulnerable children and adults and keeping all our communities safe, cohesive and healthy.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Prevent and Channel are key responsibilities for the local authority both of which contribute to reducing the risks of vulnerable young people and adults becoming radicalised and reducing any terrorist threats to the city. This was placed on a statutory footing in 2015.

5. KEY ISSUES

- 5.1 From the 1st July 2015 the government introduced a specific duty to a wide range of public bodies which requires them to have "due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism".

- 5.2 The specified bodies included in the Act are:

- Local authorities
- Police
- Prisons
- Young offender institutions
- Providers of probation services
- Schools
- Colleges
- Universities
- NHS bodies

- 5.3 The Prevent strategy, published by the Government in 2011, is part of the overall counter terrorism strategy, CONTEST. The aim of the Prevent strategy is to reduce the threat to the UK from terrorism by stopping people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. In the Act this has simply been expressed as the need to "prevent people from being drawn into terrorism".

5.4 The duty does not confer new functions on any specified authority. The term “due regard” as used in the Act means that the authorities should place an appropriate amount of weight on the need to prevent people being drawn into terrorism when they consider all the other factors relevant to how they carry out their usual functions.

5.5 The Prevent Strategy has three specific strategic objectives:

- to respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism and the threat we face from those who promote it;
- to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and to ensure that they are given appropriate advice and support; and
- to work with sectors and institutions where there are risks of radicalisation that need to be addressed.

5.6 The Government has defined extremism in the Prevent strategy as: “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. It also includes calls for the death of members of the British armed forces”.

5.7 Channel

Channel is a key element of the Prevent strategy. It was first piloted in 2007 and rolled out across England and Wales in April 2012 and became a statutory body in 2015. It is a multi-agency approach to protect people at risk from radicalisation. Channel uses existing collaboration between local authorities, statutory partners (such as the education and health sectors, social services, children’s and youth services and offender management services), the police and the local community to:

- identify individuals at risk of being drawn into terrorism;
- assess the nature and extent of that risk; and
- develop the most appropriate support plan for the individuals concerned.

5.8 Channel is primarily about safeguarding children and adults from being drawn into committing terrorist-related activity. It is about early intervention to protect and divert people away from the risk they face before illegality occurs.

5.9 The Channel Assessment Framework

The assessment framework involves three dimensions: engagement, intent and capability, which are considered separately. These factors must be carefully assessed prior to the case coming to panel. However there is no threshold for referrals to Channel, which may result in an apparently high rejection rate.

5.10 **Engagement with a group, cause or ideology.**

Engagement factors are sometimes referred to as “psychological hooks”. They include needs, susceptibilities, motivations and contextual influences and together map the individual pathway into terrorism.

5.11 **Intent to cause harm.**

Not all those who become engaged by a group, cause or ideology go on to develop an intention to cause harm, so this dimension is considered separately. Intent factors describe the mind-set that is associated with a readiness to use violence and address what the individual would do and to what end.

5.12 **Capability to cause harm**

Not all those who have a wish to cause harm on behalf of a group, cause or ideology are capable of doing so, and plots to cause widespread damage take a high level of personal capability, resources and networking to be successful. What the individual is capable of is therefore a key consideration when assessing risk of harm to the public.

5.13 Local Authority Responsibility for Channel and Panel Purpose

Legislation requires that:

- a. local authorities ensure that a multi-agency panel exists in their area;
- b. the local authority chairs the panel;
- c. the panel develop a support plan for individuals accepted as Channel cases;
- d. the panel consider alternative forms of support, including health and social services, where Channel is not appropriate; and
- e. all partners of a panel so far as appropriate and reasonably practicable, cooperate with the police and the panel in the carrying out of their functions.

5.14 The Local Authority Chair's Responsibilities

The Channel Panel Chair is responsible for:

- a. having oversight of all Channel cases in their area;
- b. ensuring that the appropriate representatives are invited to each meeting as panel members;
- c. establishing effective relationships across statutory agencies to ensure effective co-operation over information sharing and attendance at panel meetings;
- d. establishing the appropriate support plan for identified individuals by using the expertise of the panel;
- e. ensuring that the risks of persons being drawn into terrorism are identified and are referred to the appropriate agencies for action;
- f. ensuring an effective support plan is put in place, and that consent is sought from the individual before that plan is put in place; and
- g. ensuring individuals and/or organisations on the panel carry out their elements of the support plan so that an effective support package is delivered.

The Chair should be fully briefed by the Channel Police Practitioner on every referral so that they can assess all aspects of the case with rigour and agree the most effective response.

5.15 Panel Membership

Government guidance suggests that individuals drawn from the following groups should be considered as members of the Channel Panel:

5.16 NHS staff; Social workers; Schools, further education colleges and universities staff; Youth offending service staff; Local authority safeguarding managers (adult and/or children); Local authority Troubled Families Teams; Home Office Immigration (Immigration Enforcement, UK Visas & Immigration); Border Force; Housing staff; prison staff.

5.17 Other professionals should be called on to attend the panel to discuss specific cases.

5.18 The Peterborough and Cambridgeshire Combined Channel Panel

It has been agreed that there should be a combined panel which covers both Peterborough and

Cambridgeshire. This is permitted by the legislation and the panel is currently chaired by a staff member from the Peterborough Local Authority. The panel meets monthly at police headquarters in Huntingdon.

5.19 The panel membership currently includes the following partner agencies.

- An adult mental health representative who covers both Peterborough and Cambridgeshire.
- An adult social care representative who covers Cambridgeshire
- Representatives from both Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Youth Offending Services
- Representatives from both Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Children's Social Care services
- Representatives for education (schools) in both Peterborough and Cambridgeshire
- A representative from both Peterborough and Cambridgeshire Regional Colleges
- A number of police officers including Safer Schools in Peterborough and the public protection unit
- Community Cohesion representatives from both Peterborough and Cambridgeshire
- A Fire Service representative
- The Channel Police Practitioner, the regional police prevent manager and the police link to accessing interventionists
- A regional National Probation Service / Community Rehabilitation Company representative

5.20 Referral Information

There has been a steady flow of referrals into Channel over the first six months of the year, with Peterborough referring just over half the cases. Cases were referred from a variety of sources but come mainly from schools, the police and the Probation Services. Around half the cases referred concerned young people.

5.21 However given there is no referral threshold for Channel most of the cases are at the lower end of the risk spectrum and very few are offered an intervention although others are referred to other more appropriate agencies.

5.22 The relatively low level of cases adopted by the panel appropriately reflects Cambridgeshire's low radicalisation risk status.

5.23 However the number of referrals received indicates that there is good awareness in the local area of the importance of Prevent and that the Prevent Action Plan is having the desired effect.

5.24 Prevent Action Plan

Although Channel plays a key role in identifying and supporting people vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism the Local Authority also has wider responsibilities to reduce the risks of radicalisation in their area.

5.25 At a general level local authorities must:

- Assess risk of radicalisation in their area;
- Develop an action plan to reduce this risk;
- Train staff to recognise radicalisation and extremism;
- Work in partnership with others;
- Establish referral mechanisms and refer people to Channel; and
- Maintain records and reports to show compliance.

5.26 In response to the duties placed on the local authority a Prevent Action Plan has been established, covering the key areas set out above. Good progress is being made against the plan.

5.27 Risk assessment

The Counter Terrorism Local Profile was refreshed in April 2015 and is due to be published shortly. The risk to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough remains low. The Police are working on ensuring that intelligence from partner agencies is captured within this and mechanisms are being considered to support this.

5.28 Training

To date over 100 frontline Council staff have undertaken the mandatory Prevent WRAP (Working to Raise Awareness of Prevent) training, which has been provided by the City College. A further 100 frontline staff will receive the training in June and July. Mandatory Prevent training for non-frontline staff will start this month via an e-Module made available on Insite.

5.29 Working in Partnership

The Multi-Agency Prevent Delivery Board has had its first meeting. Meetings are held on a quarterly basis, chaired by Cambridgeshire Police, with representatives from both Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. This allows for a strategic oversight of Prevent across the County and allows action plans for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to be aligned.

5.30 Referral Mechanism for Channel

The process for making referrals to Channel is now in place with referrals initially following the same process as any safeguarding referral. However once a case has been identified as a potential Channel case it is passed to the Prevent police officer who will then implement a partnership wide information gathering process in advance of the case being considered at the next Channel Panel.

5.31 Use of LA Resources

Work has been completed to ensure that policies are in place to prevent local authority resources from being used as a platform for extremists. The Room Booking Policy has been updated to reflect this. Work has also been done with community centres to ensure they are aware and guidance has been provided on ensuring rental of community spaces is not being used to promote extremist views.

5.32 Mainstreaming Prevent into Everyday Activities

Prevent now forms part of overall safeguarding policies for both children and adults which are clear and robust to ensure all those at risk are identified.

5.33 Conclusion

Overall good progress is being made in both Channel's work and the wider duties required of the local authority. Good systems and processes are in place to tackle the risk of radicalisation and support for Channel by partners is generally very positive. Although the assessed risk of people becoming radicalised in Peterborough is low the local authority continues to take its responsibilities seriously and invests the appropriate time and resources to deliver against the responsibilities conferred on it.

6 **IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 Legal

Section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (the Act) places a duty on certain

bodies (“specified authorities” listed in Schedule 6 to the Act), in the exercise of their functions, to have “due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism”. This guidance is issued under section 29 of the Act. The Act states that the authorities subject to the provisions must have regard to this guidance when carrying out the duty.

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 None.

8. NEXT STEPS

8.1 Progress of the Prevent Action Plan and the Channel Panel to be reviewed.

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

9.1 None

10. APPENDICES

10.1 None