

**AGENDA ITEM**

**REPORT TO CORPORATE  
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

**DATE**

**REPORT OF**

**TITLE:** The future role of Stockton Borough Council in relation to PREVENT and CHANNEL.

**SUMMARY**

The purpose of this report is to update CMT on the Government's plan to place CHANNEL and PREVENT functions on a Statutory footing as part of the revised Counter-Terrorism Bill and the wider implications for Stockton Borough Council.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. CMT note the content of the report.
2. CMT consider additional and/or the re-directing of resources to carry out some initial scoping work in terms of engagement with BME and vulnerable community groups across the borough.
3. CMT agree to CHANNEL arrangements being picked up as part of the monthly multi-agency Problem Solving Group (PSG)
4. CMT support the roll out of PREVENT to front line officers, VCS organisations and community groups

**1. INTRODUCTION**

The current version of the national Contest Strategy was published in 2011 to reflect the change in terrorist threat and the Government's new policies on counter-terrorism, based on the following four principles:

- *Pursue*: to stop terrorist attacks in this country and against our interest overseas;
- *Prevent*: to address radicalisation to all forms of terrorism;
- *Protect*: to strengthen protection against a terrorist attack in the UK or against interests overseas and therefore reduce our vulnerability; and
- *Prepare*: to mitigate against the impact of a terrorist attack where that attack cannot be stopped, and promote resilience.

The aim of the Contest Strategy is to reduce the risk to the UK and its interests overseas from terrorism, so that people can go about their lives freely and with confidence.

Incorporated within the revised Contest Strategy was the Government review of the PREVENT programme, which was subsequently refreshed; aiming to prevent people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism, through the following objectives:

- Respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism and the threat we face from those who promote it;
- Prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and ensure that they are given appropriate advice and support; and
- Work with sectors and institutions where there are risks of radicalisation which we need to address.

Changes taking place on a national level coincided with the review of the Counter Terrorism Local Profile (CTLP), a statutory document that provides an understanding of the local threat and risk to Cleveland particularly relating to violent extremism, domestic extremism, national security issues and the subsequent potential risks to community cohesion. It is viewed as an integral intelligence source in terms of the Prevent agenda and has been historically utilised to inform delivery of Prevent activity on a Cleveland wide and district level.

Given the significant reduction in resources available and the review of the CLTP, a joint approach across all four Local Authority areas was agreed. In order to avoid duplication of services across Cleveland, a Cleveland-wide Prevent (Silver) group was established in 2013, replacing the previous four locality based groups. The move to a single group was to provide a coordinated approach to the Prevent agenda and to enhance the operational efficiency and effectiveness of all partners.

The Terms of Reference of the new Cleveland wide Prevent Silver Group outline that they will meet on a quarterly basis, with the first meeting of the year to coincide with the annual refresh of the CTLP. Members of the group commit to the following in order to maintain multi-agency arrangements throughout Cleveland to subsequently reduce the risk of radicalisation and / or extremism across the area:

- Maintain levels of awareness within their organisation about potential signs of radicalisation, extremism and / or terrorism, and how to take action;
- Maintain good communication links with Cleveland Police;
- Develop, encourage and maintain strong community relations; and
- Disseminate information which may be relevant to the Prevent agenda.

Steven Hume, Community Safety and Security Manager, is the current Chair of this group.

The CHANNEL programme is a key element of the PREVENT Strategy that uses a multi-agency approach to protect people at risk of radicalisation. CHANNEL consists of collaborations between Local Authorities, and other statutory partners such as the education and health sectors, youth and offender management services, the Police and 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

As such Channel is about safeguarding individuals from being drawn into committing terrorist related activity by intervening early to protect and divert people away from the risk before illegality occurs.

## **2. PLANS TO PUT CHANNEL ON A STATUTORY FOOTING**

At a Home Office briefing held in October 2014 PREVENT leads from Local Authorities across the country were informed of plans to place the CHANNEL processes on a statutory footing. In general this will reflect the current guidance which was published in 2012 with some minor changes, and will incorporate the following into statute:

- A local authority responsibility for convening and chairing multi-agency panels
- A responsibility on the Panel to produce a support plan for Channel cases following a vulnerability assessment
- A responsibility on the Panel to seek the consent of the person before support is provided
- A duty to co-operate on Panel members (this is likely to include a list of responsible / relevant authorities)
- A requirement that partners pay due regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State
- A standardised risk assessment to be used by the Police in relation to the threat to the community of terrorist activity, and a duty on the Police to provide the Panel with an overview of the risk assessments undertaken in relation to this threat.

Currently consultation is ongoing and the legislation is in the process of being debated in the House of Lords. It is anticipated that the legislation will receive Royal Assent by the February Parliamentary recess. The legislation will not seek to introduce new mechanisms for dealing with Channel cases but will leave this to each Local Authority area to determine as part of its existing processes.

It has been suggested that Local Authority areas will receive a small amount of funding to support the implementation of the new changes although this has not been confirmed.

## **3. IMPACT IN STOCKTON**

While it is clear that the level of risk and the subsequent volume of referrals in Stockton and Cleveland as a whole are significantly lower than other areas there is still a need to review arrangements.

Currently the PREVENT agenda is rolled out in Schools and Colleges and we work closely with officers from Special Branch to continually raise awareness through localised events and information sharing as well as the roll out of RAP (Raising Awareness of Prevent) training. It is envisaged that this will need to expand further, possibly to include more community groups and voluntary organisations as well as front line officers in the local authority and partner organisations. This will assist in raising awareness as well as encourage officers and individuals to look out for any suspicious activity or vulnerable individuals whilst working in the community.

In terms of CHANNEL referrals, we currently receive an average of two per year; although this may increase considering the current climate. Currently a panel meeting is called on an 'ad hoc' basis when an individual is highlighted as a concern. An initial request is referred to the Local Authority lead via Cleveland Police Special Branch. A CHANNEL meeting involves a range of partner agencies that have contact with the individual and/or the family in question. An action plan is agreed and this is monitored by the group until there are no further issues or threats. All actions are recorded and meetings are followed up with a detailed note of discussions.

In order to satisfy the new legislation, it is proposed that CHANNEL arrangements be incorporated into the existing Problem Solving Group (PSG) process which meets on a monthly

basis and is chaired by Steven Hume. The group is multi-agency and monitors and discusses individuals who are subject to ASB sanctions. The format is appropriate to include CHANNEL referrals without the need to create a new structure.

#### **4. DEMOGRAPHICS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN STOCKTON**

##### *SBC Diversity Team*

Currently the Diversity team is involved in a range of equalities, diversity and community cohesion work, some of which will have a direct and indirect impact on PREVENT, asylum and migration and wider community issues. Listed below are some of the networks, partnerships and projects that the team has been involved in over the last 12 months.

- Member of the Arrival Partnership asylum seeker & refugee network meeting
- Member of Stockton Sanctuary Asylum Seekers & Refugee Network Forum
- Attend the 'PREVENT' Sliver group meeting
- Supporting Stockton 'Hate' crime group and developed campaigns i.e. 'STOP Offence Incidents promotional materials and Busting the myth work in community hot spots.
- Member of Stockton Independent Advisory group as a critical partner with communities and Cleveland Police
- Developing & delivering awareness to officers around Asylum seekers and Refugees through training programmes aimed at social work teams and other council teams as bespoke training packages on request
- Supporting colleagues in social services on cases relating to people seeking asylum, refugees and BME communities
- Staffing the Diversity Helpline number

It has been identified that there is a need to review the current engagement structures to ensure that they are fit for purpose and to ensure that there are clear pathways for vulnerable individuals and communities to report issues and identify concerns. This view is shared across all four of the Tees authorities and there is a need for further information sharing in relation to demographics and community tensions. From a partnership perspective this information will also support the development and implementation of future CTLP's across the Cleveland force area.

##### *Stockton Independent Advisory Group*

In response to the findings of the McPherson report, commissioned following the death of Stephen Lawrence, Independent Advisory Groups (IAG's) were introduced in Police force areas. Stockton IAG brings together volunteers of all ages from a diverse range of communities to enable Police and public bodies to have a better understanding and dialogue with BME communities and vulnerable groups. In the last 12 months the group have achieved a number of outcomes and actions, relating to advising the police on their policies, training officers on community issues, work relating to the PREVENT and Hate Crime agenda and supporting the Council on some pieces of consultation work as well as promoting events, activities and services. The IAG recently appointed a new Chair and Vice Chair and a revised action plan has been developed.

##### *Current implications*

Due to the high national profile of terrorism and the increased threat, as well as other high profile cases such as child sexual exploitation in Rotherham and Rochdale, there is an increasing risk of individuals and groups becoming marginalised within communities. Anecdotal information

from front line Police, PCSO, ASB and NES officers has highlighted a rise in community tensions and there is a need to address this early to avoid this escalating. In addition to this we have also uncovered incidents of a racially aggravated nature that have not been reported to police or the Council's ASB Team. The continued increase in our asylum and migration population also present us with additional vulnerable groups who require support and are susceptible to exploitation.

There is a clear need to revisit the wider networks and engagement channels of BME and vulnerable groups to ensure that they are fit for purpose and to build confidence among individuals and community leaders. Currently this work is carried by the Community Safety Team and the Council's Diversity Team, although this forms part of their wider remit and competes with other priorities.

It is proposed that CMT consider the allocation of some additional resource to focus on this area of work. For example a dedicated officer could be tasked with carrying out a task and finish exercise exploring the existing engagement networks in more detail, what current support networks are in place as well as establish how the wider roll out of PREVENT at a community level can be achieved.

## **5. NEXT STEPS**

The Home Office has requested support from a number of Local Authorities to comment on the revised guidelines. Steven Hume is currently involved in this process and will represent the views of Stockton Borough Council as well as his counterparts in Hartlepool, Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland.

## **6. FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The revised Counter Terrorism Bill will place additional statutory implications on Local Authorities, the proposed recommendations of this report will have financial/resource implications.

## **7. CONSULTATION**

All ward members

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Background Papers:

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

Property Implications: