

## PREVENT/COUNTER TERRORISM UPDATE

### INTRODUCTION

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on issues relating to Prevent both at a national level and within Stockton.
2. The Prevent Duty came into effect on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2015; local authorities are now required to fulfil a range of responsibilities as articulated in the Prevent guidance. Broadly this work falls into the following categories:
  - **Partnership** – local authorities should establish or make use of multi-agency groups to coordinate and monitor Prevent related activity.
  - **Risk Assessment** – local authorities should use Counter-Terrorism Local Profiles, to assess the risk of individuals being drawn into terrorism in their local area. This risk assessment should also be informed by engagement with wider partners in the local area including schools, childcare providers, universities, colleges, local prisons, probation services, health, immigration enforcement and Youth offending teams.
  - **Action Plan** – Using the risk assessment, if the local authority assesses a risk in the local area, a Prevent action plan should be developed to prioritise and facilitate delivery of projects, activities or specific interventions to reduce the risk of people being drawn into terrorism in the local authority.
  - **Staff Training** – local authorities will be expected to ensure that appropriate frontline staff have a good understanding of Prevent and are trained to recognise the vulnerability to being drawn into terrorism and are aware of available programmes to deal with this issue. Local authority staff will be expected to be aware of, and make appropriate referrals to Channel, which has separately been placed on a statutory footing in the CT&S Act 2015.
  - **Use of local authority resources** – local authorities will be expected to ensure that publicly owned venues and resources do not provide a profile for extremists. Consideration should also be given as to whether IT equipment available to the general public should use filtering solutions that limit access to terrorist and extremist material. New contracts for the delivery of services in a local authority should reflect the principles of the duty in a suitable form.

• **Other agencies and organisations supporting children** – a range of private and voluntary agencies provide services or exercise functions for children, for example children’s homes, independent fostering agencies, and bodies exercising local authority functions. These bodies must ensure as part of their local authority safeguarding arrangements that staff are aware of Prevent.

• **Out of school settings supporting children** – local authorities should take steps to understand the range of activity in their area in this space and take appropriate and proportionate steps to ensure that children attending such settings are appropriately safeguarded.

## **NATIONAL CONTEXT**

1. Since 2013 the number of Counter Terrorism arrests have increased and a number of Islamic and Right Wing extremist plots have been foiled. The decision to list National Action as a proscribed organisation in December 2015 has also led to a number of arrests.
2. The Home Office have taken on board feedback and consultation in relation to information sharing and the use of the Counter Terrorism Local Profile (CTLP). A minimum standards document has been issued to LA Chief Executives, highlighting the key partners who need to be consulted as a minimum as part of the local Counter Terrorism exchange. Previously the CTLP has been classified as a highly secure/sensitive document and as such this has led a difficulties in seeking meaningful engagement with some partners with a perception that the document and its subsequent recommendations and actions are owned by the Police. The importance of partnership contributions and collective responsibility in addressing issues has led to the Home Office reissuing guidance that the document should now be written at the Official tier and as such this reduces the need for individuals to have Security Clearance prior to its dissemination.
3. The Government published its revised Contest Strategy on the 4<sup>th</sup> June 2018. In light of the events which took place last year, the revised strategy outlines new powers for Police and Security Services, tougher prison sentences and revised partnership arrangements at a local level. In summary new areas include:
  - Publication of the new Counter Terrorism Bill which will ensure that the Police and CPS have the necessary powers to disrupt activity.
  - Amend existing terror offences to account for the growth in online extremism
  - Tougher sentencing framework
  - Enable overseas terror offences to be prosecuted in the UK

- Pilot new multi-agency approaches to share information and data with a broader set of partners as well as support more local interventions within communities
  - Increased safeguarding approach through Prevent
  - Seek new and strengthened partnerships with the private sector
4. In 2017 the Government also announced the setting up of a commission for Counter Extremism which will have responsibility for policy work and will provide support to Local Authorities and the voluntary and community sector. To facilitate this process, a newly created Home Office position of Lead Commissioner for Counter Extremism has been established. Sara Khan was appointed to this role in February 2018.
5. Prevent operates in the 'non-criminal' space, and as such this has a number of implications for local authorities and partners. Therefore a key element of Prevent is the Channel programme which requires local authorities and partners to provide support for people who are deemed vulnerable and at risk of being drawn into terrorism. The aim of Channel is to provide support at the earliest stage to reduce the risk of an individual committing an offence. The multi-agency approach adopted by Channel aims to identify those at risk, assess the nature and extent of the risk and develop a plan for support. Essentially the process is similar to other safeguarding approaches which are carried out by local authorities and partners on a day to day basis.

## **OPERATION DOVETAIL**

6. To support the Channel process the government announced in 2016 that there would be changes, with the aim of reiterating the safeguarding aims of the process by transferring some elements from the police to local government. The rationale for this move was to position Prevent closer to communities and improve links with Safeguarding and other partnership activity. This approach, known as Operation Dovetail was piloted in 9 local authorities in 2017 (Oldham, Kirklees, Lancs (including Blackburn and Blackpool), Kent, Croydon, Haringey, Brighton, Swansea and Luton) an evaluation of the pilots was published in August 2017, and the Home Office is now proposing to introduce Dovetail across England and Wales in the form of a regional roll out of new arrangements.

7. Under the Dovetail proposal, the police will continue to be key partners and retain the counter-terrorism risk. They will still be responsible for checking that individuals assigned to Channel are not currently under investigation and that referrals are not being made maliciously. However, the remaining elements of Channel will be transferred to local authorities.
8. Currently local authorities chair Channel panels and under the new arrangements this will continue, however local authorities will now have responsibility for gathering information about referred individuals, assessing individual's level of risk, commissioning support from intervention providers, reviewing progress and risk over time as well as providing the administrative support and updating information databases.
9. In terms of responsibility for making initial visits to the referred individual/family and seeking consent, under Dovetail this will now be carried out by the individual/service deemed 'the most appropriate' and is likely to be a case worker or professional who is known and currently working with the family. Under the current arrangements this visit is carried out by Police and while in the main this has been effective, there is a commitment to further reduce the risk of individuals feeling criminalised and encourage improved engagement in the process.
10. The proposed model for Dovetail will work on a regional basis, with support being provided by Home Office funded Local Authority Channel Co-ordinators (LACC's) it is envisaged that these posts will co-ordinate processed and arrangements for a number of Channel panels across local authority boundaries. LACC's will be managed by Supervisors who will also be Home Office funded. The posts will be located in Regional Hubs within selected local authorities servicing a number of panels across the region.
11. The Home Office conducted a number of regional feedback sessions on the proposals last autumn to seek the views of local authorities. Following consultation the Home Office have agreed to pilot the new arrangements on a regional basis in the North West with a view to implementing the learning across other areas in due course.

## **CURRENT POSITION IN STOCKTON**

12. To date over 1,000 members of staff over 49 sessions from Stockton Borough Council have received Prevent training. A number of awareness sessions have been carried out with management teams and service areas. In addition to this, training and awareness has also been rolled out to schools and there is a learning resource available online which has been utilised across a number of Local Authority areas nationally. General information in relation to Prevent is also available on the Stockton Borough Council website along with details on how to report any concerns.
  
13. While it is clear that we have a clear pathway in place and good awareness within the local authority and school settings there is a need to ensure that we review our arrangements within schools to ensure that this continues, particularly in relation to how future training and awareness needs will be resourced.