



Channel Panel Annual Assurance Statement – 2020/21

INTRODUCTION

This assurance statement captures local authority compliance with the requirements laid out under sections 36 – 41 of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (CTSA) (as amended by the Counter Terrorism Border Security Act 2019) relating to Channel panels and improving outcomes for those identified individuals who are vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. This assurance statement forms part of a self-assessment for local authorities capturing Channel practice within each local authority area and levels of compliance against aspects of Channel delivery articulated in the Channel Statutory Duty Guidance 2020. Section 36 (7) of the CTSA states that panels must have regard to this guidance.

This is the first annual assurance statement issued to local authorities, so will be used to set a baseline for local authority Channel practice from the financial year 2020/21; future submissions will capture assessments over the preceding year. The information gathered from this statement will also be used to identify where additional support to Channel panels needs to be undertaken, direct OSCT (Office for Security and Counter Terrorism) support, or provide a trigger for further reviews or observations, such as dip sampling. The statement forms part of the strengthened quality assurance framework for Channel panels across England and Wales with findings reported into OSCT business assurance arrangements.

The table below sets out key areas of control with assurance statements relating to standards to be achieved and options for assessment. Each local authority is asked to state the extent to which they believe their authority meets each of these standards and indicate the relevant RAG rating based on the definitions below. In the event of a combined panel – each separate authority serviced by the combined panel will be requested to complete the statement.

The evidential statement box is asking for evidence that shows how the authority has met the standard. It gives examples of ‘good practice’ evidence that would help to assure OSCT that the standard has been addressed. Where the assessment indicates that improvements are required, an outline of the steps needed with a timescale for completion is required. Please use an **X** to mark against the statement most applicable to your current position, providing a basis for the assessment and proposals (including a timeframe) for addressing areas of improvement. The statement should represent an honest critique of the arrangements in place at the end of the financial year 2020/21. Whilst evidence should be available to support your assessment, this is not required to accompany the statement submission, but should be reasonably accessible.

Chief Executive or Strategic Director level sign off is required for this assurance statement. Completion is required by all local authorities in England and Wales. Please return completed statements to Channel@homeoffice.gov.uk by **19 April 2021**.

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Definitions for compliance ratings

<p>Green Able to give reasonable assurance that the key area is being applied.</p>	<p>Amber Able to give reasonable assurance that the key area is being met. However, issues have arisen that may impact on this, and further explanation is provided in the assurance statement.</p>	<p>Red Unable to give reasonable assurance that the key area is being met. Reasons for this are provided in the assurance statement.</p>
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1	Key area of control – Legal Requirements under CTSA 2015	Compliance			Evidence for compliance rating	Areas for Improvement and timescales for completion
		Green	Amber	Red		
1.1	A panel is in place for the area (or combined area) with the sole purpose of providing support to those individuals who are identified as being vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism.				Monthly meeting & minutes	
1.2	Membership of the panel includes the local authority and police for that area which is wholly or partly within the authority.				Community safety inspector for district and LA attendees are authority area only	
1.3	Partners of the panel (as listed in Schedule 7 CTSA) act in cooperation with panel in carrying out its functions under section 36(4) CTSA. This includes the giving of information to determine whether an individual should be referred to the panel (section 38(3)). ¹				Attendees in minutes	

¹ All references to panel partners comprise those identified by the Channel chair, in addition to partners listed within Schedule 7.



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1	Key area of control – Legal Requirements under CTSA 2015	Compliance			Evidence for compliance rating	Areas for Improvement and timescales for completion
		Green	Amber	Red		
1.4	Partners of the panel have regard to the Channel duty guidance issued by the Secretary of State.					
1.5	In the instance of combined panels, appropriate representatives from each local authority and Policing area covered within the combined panel geography attend panel meetings.	N/A			N/A	

2	Key area of control – Strategic Governance	Compliance			Further details behind any amber or red entries	Areas for improvement and timescales for completion
		Green	Amber	Red		
2.1	Channel, as a local authority statutory function (Section 36 of the CTSA), is included within the local authority’s constitution.				Manjira Grant legal has reviewed constitution: The Channel process forms a key part of the “Prevent” strategy and this is encapsulated within the Council’s “Prevent” duties that are referenced in the constitution. As such, at this point	



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2	Key area of control – Strategic Governance	Compliance			Further details behind any amber or red entries	Areas for improvement and timescales for completion
		Green	Amber	Red		
		Green			we feel that no further amendment is necessary.	
2.2	Channel Panel activity is overseen by a local strategic multi-agency partnership board where Channel is a specified agenda item. The Channel chair attends this board.	Green				
2.3	The chair for strategic governance does not hold responsibility for elements of Channel panel delivery or hold the Channel chair function.	Green				
2.4	An escalation process to strategic governance is in place for the Channel Panel. This process is publicised to panel members/partners and referred to in any relevant governance public facing websites.		Amber		Statement on escalation process to be added to the confidentiality & disclosure so all aware of process	For April 21 panel
2.5	Channel (as part of Prevent reporting) is included within the local authority's governance arrangements.	Green				



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3	Key area of control – Chairing skills / core competencies	Compliance			Further details behind any amber or red entries	Areas for improvement and timescales for completion
		Green	Amber	Red		
3.1	The Chief Executive (or equivalent Head of Paid Service) has designated local authority officers as named chair and deputy chair, details of whom have been provided to OSCT. ² a. Named Channel chair and email contact:fleddra@thurrock.gov.uk..... b. Named Channel deputy chair and email contact:Jread@thurrock.gov.uk					
3.2	The Chair and deputy chair hold sufficient authority to direct multi-agency delivery.					
3.3	Chair and deputy chair have previous experience in chairing multi-agency panels or meetings.					
3.4	Chair and deputy chair have a sound understanding of Channel, Prevent and CONTEST strategies.					
3.5	Chair and deputy Chair have a degree of separation from any Home Office Prevent funded post in the local authority.					
3.6	Chair and deputy Chair are committed to completing training programmes requested by OSCT.					

² Changes to designated Channel chairs/deputy chairs must be notified to OSCT via Channel@homeoffice.gov.uk



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4	Key area of control – Panel Function and Form	Compliance			Further details behind any amber or red entries	Areas for improvement and timescales for completion
		Green	Amber	Red		
4.1	The Panel assesses the extent to which identified individuals are vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism and creates a support plan to address identified vulnerabilities.					
4.2	All standing panel members are actively involved in panel discussion, decisions and delivery.					
4.3	Panel meets monthly (within 20 days of the Police Gateway Assessment) to oversee all Channel cases in their area where there are live cases for discussion, referrals for decision or case reviews to be undertaken.					
4.4	Information is effectively shared between panel members and partners and is facilitated by an information sharing agreement (ISA).					
4.5	Consent to receive support is obtained in writing and no later than 3 months after the panel first adopts a case and offers an individual support.				Consent was verbal but form now in place for CTCO's to gain written consent. This will be shared at next channel	
4.6	Consent is informed, explicit and freely given without coercion or duress. ³					
4.7	Vulnerability Assessment Frameworks (VAF) are updated by the Channel Case Officer at least every 3 months or when any significant event impacts on the individual's vulnerability to being drawn into terrorism.					

³ Consent to access Channel support should not feature as part of any process whereby a sanction is imposed for non-compliance (e.g Child safeguarding arrangements, Probation or Youth Offending licence conditions, or court orders)



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4	Key area of control – Panel Function and Form	Compliance			Further details behind any amber or red entries	Areas for improvement and timescales for completion
		Green	Amber	Red		
4.8	The initial VAF is circulated to all relevant panel members and partners in advance of the meeting.					
4.9	Home Office approved Intervention Providers are considered for all cases where support is to be offered and the rationale for their use or preclusion is documented in the minutes.					
4.10	The support plan for individuals is kept under review to ensure individual needs are being met in line with identified or changing vulnerabilities. The panel assesses the impact of its actions or inactions when reviewing the support plan.					
4.11	The panel, in conjunction with counter terrorism police, keep the safeguarding risk and the terrorism risk under review when considering actions taken or proposed. Mitigating actions to reduce these risks are considered.					
4.12	Channel minutes accurately reflect decisions made by the panel and a rationale for those decisions. Minutes are taken by a dedicated minute taker and not a member or partner of the panel.					
4.13	All adopted cases are reviewed by the panel at least 6 and 12 months after closure which includes police checks, relevant service involvement, change of circumstances (including making family contact where appropriate), concerns arising since case closure and contact with initial referrer.					
4.14	Channel panel is proactive in considering families (where appropriate) within the assessment process and the support offer.				If the subject is a child or of vulnerability that would determine if they need an appropriate adult and	Any identified actions to develop from audit findings due June 21



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4	Key area of control – Panel Function and Form	Compliance			Further details behind any amber or red entries	Areas for improvement and timescales for completion
		Green	Amber	Red		
					parents were acting in this capacity updates would be passed. This should be captured in the channel minutes and decision making process within channel setting Case audit findings will highlight any further steps required	
4.15	There is a structured, agreed process for providing updates to family members.				Police maintain contact with families but lacks consistency in feedback to panel	Process to be understood by panel members & feedback received June 21



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5	Key area of control – Data Protection	Compliance Rating			Further details behind any amber or red entries	Areas for improvement and timescales for improvement
		Green	Amber	Red		
5.1	Management of data is compliant with the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulations 2018.					
5.2	Local Data Protection Information Notices have been updated to reflect Channel Panel functions and use of personal data.				These are in draft SET wide for sign up by each organisation	Sept 21
5.3	Local data protection policies are being followed for Channel data stored locally.					
5.4	All relevant Channel case documents including minutes, VAFs, Intervention Provider reports and support plans are uploaded onto the OSCT-approved Case Management Information System.				To work with ERSOU on detailing a supportive plan in channel for each individual as oppose to uploading minutes	June 21
5.5	All individuals receiving support from Channel are signposted to the Home Office Channel Data Privacy Notice for the OSCT-approved Case Management Information System.				Discussion between CTCOs and subject when they speak about consent and channel	

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This assurance statement provides an accurate assessment of compliance with Channel panel requirements for the financial year 2020/21, as detailed within the CTSA 2015 and Channel Duty guidance 2020. A commitment is made for those areas identified for improvement to be progressed within the timeframes stated.

Local authority Chief Executive/ Strategic Director Signatory:



Signed

Date 14/04/2021

Position ...Corporate Director of Resources & Place Delivery ...

Local Authority.....

Please indicate if part of a combined panel...Single Local Authority Panel

Please return completed statements to Channel@homeoffice.gov.uk by **19 April 2021**.