

3 February 2022		ITEM: 5
Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Thurrock Councils response to Prevent Duty 2015		
Wards and communities affected: all	Key Decision: Non-key	
Report of: Michelle Cunningham, Community Safety Partnership Manager		
Accountable Assistant Director: Les Billingham, Assistant Director, Adult Social Care and Communities		
Accountable Director: Julie Rogers, Director of Public Realm, and Chair of Community Safety Partnership		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report is to provide Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to fulfil their purpose as outlined in the Home Office Prevent handbook for Elected Members (Appendix 1) which states:

“Elected Members are crucial for successful delivery of Prevent, by overseeing and scrutinising local plans which ensure that citizens are kept safe, and vulnerable people are given safeguarding support from the harms of radicalisation. Elected Members also play a critical role in representing Members of their local community. They act as both a voice of local citizens; raising issues and concerns, whilst speaking on behalf of the Local Authority to communicate how policies and programmes operate.”

The handbook outlines three key roles for Elected Members in shaping and delivering Prevent activity locally:

- 1) Leadership and Direction**
- 2) Community Dialogue**
- 3) Scrutiny:** *Elected Members may also consider their role in providing transparency and accountability in delivering Prevent through formal scrutiny procedures. By holding to account the local delivery of Prevent, improvements can be made to implementation, and communities can be reassured by increased transparency.*

This paper allows Elected Members the opportunity to scrutinise the implementation of the Prevent Duty by Thurrock Council and to ensure that all elements of the Council work together to ensure that the Council is fulfilling its duties in regards to Prevent, in line with the Councils responsibilities under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 That Members of the Committee scrutinise and assure themselves of the response to the self-assessment audit completed using the Local Government Association Toolkit and provided for scrutiny at Appendix 2**
- 1.2 That Members of the Committee scrutinise and assure themselves of the response to the Channel Panel self-assessment completed in April 2021 and provided for scrutiny at Appendix 3**
- 1.3 That Members are assured that the action plan in place through the Community Safety Partnership responds to the risks outlined in the Counter Terrorism Local Profile and that these are routinely reviewed and are in line with increased National risk**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The PREVENT strategy is a key part of CONTEST, the Government's Counter Terrorism Strategy and aims to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. CONTEST is structured around a 4P approach to safeguard and support those vulnerable to radicalisation, to stop them from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.
 - Prevent: to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.
 - Pursue: to stop terrorist attacks.
 - Protect: to strengthen our protection against a terrorist attack.
 - Prepare: to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack.
- 2.2 Section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 places a duty on certain bodies, of which Local Authorities are one, in the exercise of their functions to have "due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism". This *Prevent duty* guidance¹ states that the authorities subject to the provisions must have regard to this guidance when carrying out the duty.
- 2.3 The other specified authorities in the Act who are also subject to the *Prevent* duty include criminal justice agencies including prisons, educational and childcare establishments, health and the police.
- 2.4 In order to prevent terrorism the Government is clear that this will mean challenging extremist (and non-violent) ideas that are also part of a terrorist

¹ *Prevent* duty guidance for England and Wales 16th July 2015 revised 2019

- ideology, including instances of unclear, mixed or unstable ideology whilst remaining committed to protecting freedom of speech.
- 2.5 The foundation of delivery of Prevent is based on early intervention and safeguarding. Prevent also facilitates interventions to stop people moving from extremist activity to terrorist-related activity.
- 2.6 Channel panels form a key part of Prevent. This is a multi-agency approach to:
- i) identify those individuals who are at risk of being drawn into terrorism
 - ii) assess the nature and extent of that risk and
 - iii) to provide early support to those identified as being vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism.
- 2.7 There is no defined threshold to determine whether an individual is at risk of being drawn into terrorism as there is no one profile of a terrorist. Channel is a voluntary process and offers early support regardless of age, faith, ethnicity or background. Channel allows individuals to receive support before their vulnerabilities can be exploited and before they potentially become involved in criminal terrorist-related activity.
- 2.8 In November 2020 the Home Office published Channel Duty Guidance: Protecting people vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. This document provides statutory guidance for Channel Panel Members and partners of local panels. The Counter Terrorism and Security Act sets out the duty on local authorities and partners of local panels to provide support for people vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. In England and Wales, this duty is met through Channel Panels. Our adherence to this guidance is measured through an annual self-assessment return and is provided at Appendix 3.

Current Threat

- 2.9 Prevent addresses all forms of terrorism. On 15/11/21 the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC) increased the UK National terrorism threat level from SUBSTANTIAL to **SEVERE** meaning that a terrorist attack is **HIGHLY** likely. This change to the threat level was made in response to the murder of Sir David Amess and the attack in Liverpool.
- 2.10 There is no specific threat to the UK and no greater threat to Thurrock than anywhere else. The fact remains we should be vigilant to all potential risks from extremism and terrorism.
- 2.11 In response to the increased terror threat and the risks for Eastern Region outlined in the Quarter 2 Counter Terrorism Local Profile we have reviewed our action plan and will be strengthening it through:
- Identifying a Single Point Of Contact (SPOC) within each area of Council and an offer for them to attend champion training and be encouraged to

monitor and support concerns raised by officers in relation to any perceived threat

- To have a focus on vulnerabilities which may lead to self-initiated terrorism where mental health is an underlying factor
- Utilising the Communication Handbook (Appendix 4) to strengthen our local communication and engagement plan

Governance and Strategy

- 2.12 Counter Extremism and Terrorism – preventing violent extremism locally, is one of the priorities for the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) in 2021/22, and likely to remain so for 2022/23. It is also recognised within the Crime Prevention Strategy for Essex 2021/25.
- 2.13 Thurrock's *Prevent* strategy was refreshed in October 2020 and outlines our multi-agency response to tackle extremism and respond to the duty placed on agencies within the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015. This is published on our web site: [Prevent Strategy 2020/23](#). We have aligned our local strategic objectives to the National strategic objectives which are:
1. **Identify:**
 2. **Safeguard:**
 3. **Manage Risk:**

To deliver these National objectives in Thurrock:

1. **Identify:** We will promote, challenge and develop communities' capacity to challenge extremism through increased multi-agency working
 2. **Safeguard:** We will ensure that we safeguard our children and vulnerable adults from exposure to extremism
 3. **Manage Risk:** Through our Channel Panel we will take a multi-agency approach to identify and provide support to individuals who are at risk of being drawn into terrorism
- 2.14 Governance of Prevent is through the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Strategic Prevent Board which meets quarterly and is chaired by Les Billingham, Assistant Director of Adult Social Care and Communities. The CSP board receive an annual report on Prevent and quarterly situational risk assessment updates. This Board has been strengthened by the Hidden and Extreme Harms Committee which exists to ensure that all elements of the Council work together to ensure that the Council is fulfilling its duties regarding Prevent, in line with the Councils responsibilities under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015.
- 2.15 Protecting children and vulnerable adults from the risk of radicalisation should be seen as part of the Councils wider safeguarding duties, and is similar in nature to protecting them from any other harms be that whether these come from within their family or are the product of outside influences.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 The Local Government Association have put in place a self-assessment toolkit for Councils to benchmark themselves against over 10 key areas. Thurrock's Prevent Board have reviewed this with current situation as of December 21. The areas highlighted for further development and agreed actions are contained with Appendix 2 and summarised below:

<p>1. Local Risk Assessment RAG Rating: Green Actions: all complete Comments: Quarterly briefings, summarised within action plan and quarterly report to Directors Board</p>
<p>2. Multi-Agency Partnership Board RAG Rating: Green Action: Increase member engagement through Hidden and Extreme Harm Committee Comments: The Committee will serve to aid Elected Members to drive the improvement of the services involved forward including by interacting with partners and stakeholders. Report received Oct 21</p>
<p>3. Prevent Partnership Action Plan RAG Rating: Green Actions: To embed in service plans, linked to S17 Duty Comment: Partnership strategy and delivery plan in place. Refreshed in line with situational risk assessment quarterly</p>
<p>4. Referral Process RAG Rating: Green Actions: Respond to audit findings in Q4 21/22 Comments: Referral process in place and embedded</p>
<p>5. Channel Panel RAG Rating: Green Actions; Actions identified in self-assessment are now all completed Comments: Self-assessment completed April 21 and rated Green</p>
<p>6. Prevent problem Solving process RAG Rating: Green Actions: none noted Comments: Process in place to monitor including Afghan resettlement programme</p>
<p>7. Training Programme RAG Rating: Amber</p>

<p>Actions: Needs assessment to identify gaps to be completed, results from schools audit awaited and champion training to be offered. Comments: Training offer is strong and continues to be delivered virtually. Will require review in line with Home Office updates</p>
<p>8. Venue Hire RAG Rating: Green Actions: Guidance to be shared with licensed premises and currently being trialled with community venues Comments: Policy in place within Local Authority and guidance shared with education settings. Community venues and licensing guidance drafted and currently being tested for promotion April 22</p>
<p>9. Community Engagement RAG Rating: Amber Actions: To continue to identify gaps in opportunity for engagement and ongoing outreach work Comments: We are mindful that there is always more we can do to reach out to a wide range of our communities</p>
<p>10. Communications RAG Rating: Green Actions: to refresh plans in line with the newly launched handbook Comments: To be in place by April 22</p>

3.2 The Home Office required the first assurance statement in relation to Channel Panels to be returned in April 2021. This forms part of a strengthened quality assurance framework for all Channel Panels across England and Wales, which includes an enhanced role for the Office for Security and Counter Terrorism (OSCT) in strengthening oversight of panels, enabling those requiring assistance and support to be identified. This recognises the importance of Channel Panels as part of Prevent delivery, and the related roles within them.

The areas which were highlighted for further development and agreed actions are contained with Appendix 3 and summarised below:

Ref	Key area of Control:	Compliance Rating	Areas for Improvement
1.	Legal Requirements under CTSA 2015		N/A
2.	Strategic Governance		An escalation process has now been added to the confidentiality and disclosure agreement
3.	Chairing skills / core competencies		N/A
4.	Panel Function and Form	Green as of Sept 21	Written consent is now provided.

			The process for consideration to families is to be reviewed
5.	Data Protection	Green as of Sept 21	SET wide Local Data Protection Notices to be signed up to. Support plans to be detailed for each individual

The Prevent Board is pleased to report that as of Sept 21 all areas are now rated green:

- Panel function and form: Sept 21 agreed processes now in place as identified through case audits
- Data Protection: This was signed and adopted in Sept 21

3.3 Summary of Activity delivered in 2021:

- Continued attendance at quarterly briefings and response to the Counter Terrorism Local Profile, revise or action plan to reflect any emerging risks and threats, and update and share as appropriate the situational risk assessment for Thurrock
- Event policy drafted which is being trialled across some community premises.
- Guidance on event bookings and speaker booking form has been shared with educational settings and ready to go to licensed premises
- Ongoing promotion of ACT Early to increase awareness within communities
- Prepared and presented a report for the newly formed Hidden and Extreme Harms Committee to support Members to reach out to communities on this agenda
- Continued to offer training sessions in conjunction with my learning for professionals with 50 attending.
- Briefed the Independent Advisory Group to Essex Police to maintain their knowledge

3.4 Summary of Planned Activity for 2022:

- Embed a new Chair and Vice Chair for our Channel Panel and utilise Regional training offer
- Work with our new Regional advisor (appointed to support non funded Prevent areas) to implement any National learnings and best practice.
- Utilise the Communication Handbook to improve our communication and
- Along with a focus regionally we will increase awareness with those working with under 18s and those who may be vulnerable due to Mental Health.
- We will review our Prevent Champions across the Council and ensure appropriately trained and encouraged to monitor and report concerns of staff and communities
- Continue to monitor communities for any tensions in relation to the Prevent agenda

- Continue to engage with the wider CONTEST agenda across Essex through Regional Forum

3.5 Equality Impact Assessment

The Community Safety Equality Impact Assessment 2020 highlighted:

- There is no age profile and applies to all age groups, however the action plan has a clear focus on prevention of radicalisation of young people and in particular focus is the local duty in educational establishments
- Prevent needs to support people vulnerable to radicalisation due to learning disabilities or mental health and therefore may have a positive impact on this group
- There is a concern nationally that Prevent stereotypes the Muslim community and therefore has a negative impact on the Muslim population. A positive benefit of the strategy is to encourage dialogue between all communities

3.6 Conclusion

The current threat level nationally is severe and this is why the *Prevent* agenda is recommended to remain a priority for the CSP in Thurrock:

- There is no identified greater risk to the community of Thurrock than elsewhere in England
- The key challenges faced by the CSP for the coming year in relation to Prevent are to:
 - Support the new Channel Chair to minimise level of risk
 - Continue to promote our training offer and review quarterly in line with identified threat
 - Work with the Hidden and Extreme Harm Committee to review the training offer in line with Home Office updates to increase awareness of communities and the *Prevent* agenda
 - Continue to respond to changing threat levels and risk
- Respond to the proposed Protect Duty - part of the Government's approach to improving protective security and preparedness at publicly accessible locations.
- The key message for Members and communities is that "Communities Defeat Terrorism" and that if you act early help is available to families and friends. [Report terrorist or extremist content online – Action Counters Terrorism \(campaign.gov.uk\)](https://www.actioncounters.org.uk/report-terrorist-or-extremist-content-online) to be promoted widely

4. **Reasons for Recommendation**

- 4.1 Scrutiny of the self-assessment audit will provide the Committee an opportunity to be assured that Thurrock Council is meeting its statutory requirements placed upon it within the Counter Terrorism and Security Act (CTSA) 2015.

- 4.2 Scrutiny of the Channel Panel self-assessment will provide the Committee an opportunity to be assured that Thurrock Council is compliant with Channel Panel requirements for the financial year 2020/21, as detailed within the Channel Duty Guidance 2020.
- 4.3 To enable Members to be confident that through the Community Safety Partnership Strategy and action plan that we are responding proportionally to identified risk and monitoring implementation of actions required to mitigate those risks.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 The Hidden and Extreme Harm Committee were provided with the opportunity to scrutinise Prevent at their meeting in October
- 5.2 All partners within the Prevent Strategic Board have contributed to the self-assessments and reviewed. They monitor the actions identified through the local action plan.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1 The Thurrock Community Safety Partnership is central to delivering Thurrock Council's priority of:

People – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay.

This means:

- High quality, consistent and accessible public services which are right first time
- Build on our partnerships with statutory, community, voluntary and faith groups to work together to improve health and wellbeing
- Communities are empowered to make choices and be safer and stronger together

- 6.2 In ensuring that Thurrock Council fulfil their statutory duties outlined in the CTSA 2015 we can be confident in processes in relation to safeguarding those vulnerable to radicalisation.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Laura Last**
Senior Management Accountant

There are no financial implications arising from this report

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Courage Emovon**
Principal Lawyer / Manager
Contracts & Procurement Team

The Prevent strategy and associated action plans and self-assessments provide evidence that the Council is fulfilling its duties with regards to Prevent, in line with the Council's responsibilities under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015.

The report assures members of the committee of the Council's action plan as outlined in the recommendations and Legal Services is on hand to advise on any legal implications arising from this report and the Council's duties and responsibilities as provided under the Counter – Terrorism and Security Act 2015.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
Community Engagement and Project
Monitoring Officer

There are no direct implications in relation to diversity and equality from this report. The Prevent strategy has an Equality Impact Assessment in place.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health Inequalities, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder and Looked After Children

This report will support Members in ensuring that they are delivering on Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act.

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- Government *Prevent* duty tool kit for Local Authorities
[:https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/736759/Prevent_Duty_Toolkit_for_Local_Authorities.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/736759/Prevent_Duty_Toolkit_for_Local_Authorities.pdf)
- Channel Duty Guidance;
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/928326/6.6271_HO_HMG_Channel_Duty_Guidance_v13_WEB_English.pdf

9. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1: Home Office Prevent handbook for Elected Members
- Appendix 2: LGA self-assessment toolkit for Thurrock June 2021
- Appendix 3: Channel self-assessment for Thurrock April 2021
- Appendix 4: Communications Handbook

Report Author:

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