

<b>23 June 2022</b>		<b>ITEM: 6</b>
<b>Hidden and Extreme Harms Prevention Committee</b>		
<b>Communications Strategy in Relation to Prevent (Counter Terrorism and Extremism)</b>		
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> N/A	
<b>Report of:</b> Michelle Cunningham, Community Safety Partnership Manager		
<b>Accountable Assistant Director:</b> Les Billingham, Assistant Director Adult Social Care and Communities		
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Julie Rogers, Director of Public Realm		
<b>This report is</b> Public		

## **Executive Summary**

The Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 created a Duty on Local Authorities, and partners to have due regard, in the exercise of its functions, to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

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.

The Local Government Association have put in place a self-assessment toolkit for Councils to benchmark themselves against over 10 key areas. Working with the Home Office we have self-assessed our local performance of the Prevent Duty in 2022 reflecting that we are an unfunded area.

The recent performance process has identified the following areas of development and recommended actions for Thurrock's local Prevent partnership:

1. **Communication plan**-Develop a communications plan to increase awareness of Prevent.
2. **Engagement**-Consider further engagement with key groups to ensure open and transparent dialogue on Prevent.

The Home Office have recognised that in regard to the communications benchmark there can be challenges and in response are developing a package of support to assist areas with their communications activity and identified a team who can offer bespoke support where required.

We are therefore bringing our communications strategy to the attention of the Hidden and Extreme Harms Committee to provide you with the opportunity to fulfil your role, in relation to ensuring 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. The Home Office tell us in their Community Events Handbook, gaining buy-in from Elected Members can help to facilitate Prevent delivery, unblock issues, and can provide leadership and scrutiny locally to improve Prevent nationally.

For members new to the Prevent agenda please refer to the Elected members handbook (appendix 1). Training and further awareness is available at: [www.actearly.uk/](http://www.actearly.uk/)

## **1. Recommendation(s):**

**1.1 That Members note our approach to improve our engagement with communities in relation to Prevent**

**1.2 That Members act as key stakeholders in advising us on improvements to engagement with our communities**

**1.3 That Members are involved in development of any community projects**

## **2. Introduction and Background**

2.1 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 the criteria along with Home Office colleagues to assess the current situation as of February 2022.

2.2 A score of 3 represents a position where the Duty is met, a score of 1-2 indicates that statutory responsibilities are not being met and a score of 4-5 signifies requirements are being exceeded. The specific criteria used to provide scoring can be found at *appendix 2*.

2.3 The Home Office recognise that this process can be subjective and consequently have taken a rigorous approach to scoring by comparing results across all local authorities to ensure consistency. This scoring reflects requirements of the Duty as opposed to an in-depth evaluation of how effective Thurrock has been in reducing risks from radicalisation and terrorism.

2.4 Members should note that Channel is subject to additional assurance processes.

	Benchmark	Score
1	Risk Assessment	5
2	Multi-Agency Partnership Board	5
3	Prevent Partnership Plan	4
4	Referral Pathway	4
5	Channel Panel	4
6	Prevent problem-solving process	3
7	Training	4
8	Venue Hire and IT Policies	4
9	Engagement activity	3
10	Communications	2

2.5 As part of the process the following strengths were identified in Thurrock:

1. **Risk assessment:** Thurrock have a risk assessment process in place that is driven in part by the Counter Terrorism Local Profile, but local knowledge is utilised. Prevent is present within the corporate risk register and senior stakeholders are actively engaged and regularly appraised of the Prevent/CT risk or issues.

2. **Multi-agency partnership board:** Thurrock has an effective multi-agency partnership panel, Prevent Strategic Board Group. The board meets quarterly and covers relevant agenda items. It is well represented by partner agencies. The group drives delivery against the action plan and individuals held accountable for actions.

7. **Training:** Thurrock utilise an experienced trainer who is supported by the Prevent coordinator to deliver WRAP that is localised and adjusted to suit the audiences. Training records are kept, and certificates are issued to participants.

2.6 The recent performance process identified the following areas of development and recommended actions for Thurrock's Strategic Prevent Board:

**10. Communication plan** - Develop a communications plan to increase awareness of Prevent.

**9. Engagement**-Consider further engagement with key groups to ensure open and transparent dialogue on Prevent.

2.7 The self-assessment benchmarking exercise in Feb 22 identifies benchmark 10 – communications as a 2 rating. In response to this the strategy at *appendix 3* and subsequent action plan will support us in improving our rating to a 4.

2.8 We are committed to having a communications plan in place to proactively communicate and increase transparency of the reality / impact of Prevent work and support frontline staff and communities to understand what Prevent looks like in practice.

2.9 This will support the following outcomes:

- 1 Understand risk to our communities
- 2 Increased engagement with professionals to raise awareness
- 3 Foster positive relationships with public and within our communities
- 4 Educational establishments across Thurrock to be aware of risk and impact of extremism
- 5 Increased Referrals to channel

And ultimately enable us to reduce threat, harm, and risk to communities.

2.10 Our Strategy has 6 Objectives to deliver by March 2023:

1. We will identify opportunities for positive press
2. We will identify reactive opportunities and flag for support.
3. We will provide regular (e.g. monthly) publication of new materials through resources such as newsletters and social media
4. The Local Authority website will have accurate contact details and detailed, localised information about Prevent.
5. We will provide regular briefings to members through existing Committees
6. We will increase engagement with educators on this topic

2.11 Alongside Elected Members our key stakeholders are:

- Those working to educate our Young People, including school governors
- Parents and Guardians
- Listening to voices of young people themselves and we will do this through our Youth Council
- Those in the voluntary sector supporting those who may be vulnerable to radicalisation e.g. mental Health Services
- Our partners working in the health and criminal justice services

2.12 We will prioritise engagement with:

- Elected Members,
- Youth Council
- Faith leaders
- Community leaders – IAG members

- #TeamThurrock (professionals and residents) who we have identified as having the most influence locally in our communities

2.13 To date we have completed the following activity:

Objective	Actions Delivered
1. Opportunities for positive press	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our Independent Advisory Group received a presentation at their meeting in May</li> </ul>
2. Reactive opportunities flagged for support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have refreshed our Community Tension monitoring report</li> <li>• We have identified 9 champions across Directorates for enhanced specialist training</li> <li>• We have developed a tool kit to support venue hirers in their decision making</li> </ul>
3. Regular publication of new materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have met with the participation officer to develop our approach to young people</li> </ul>
4. Reviewed our web site information on Prevent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided updated contacts for hosting on Government web site</li> </ul>
5. Regular Member briefings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivered 2 briefings to the HEHC</li> <li>• Provided an annual update to the CGSOS Committee</li> <li>• Provided all members with a LTAI booklet and card. Available at <i>appendix 4</i></li> </ul>
6. Engagement with educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written to all Headteachers to provide Governors with a Let's Talk About It booklet</li> <li>• Prevent Lead for Department for Education has delivered training to our SEND schools and attended Safeguarding Leads Forum and provided a briefing</li> <li>• We have provided termly risk assessments to school safeguarding leads and now extended to a wider contextualised safeguarding report</li> <li>• Shared New Classroom Resources on Terrorism and Extremism: Let's Discuss at <i>appendix 5</i></li> </ul>

### 3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 Community engagement is a core part of the Prevent strategy, giving family and friends confidence to know what to do if they're worried someone close is expressing extreme views or hatred, which could lead to them harming themselves or others.
- 3.2 The Home Office explain why Prevent Engagement is necessary as: *Prevent safeguards people who are at risk of radicalisation, stopping them from being exploited into supporting terrorism or becoming terrorists. It is also about building resilience in communities, empowering them to tackle the causes of*

*radicalisation locally through a variety of projects and civil society organisations.*

*The strength of Prevent comes from communities working together to ensure that people who are at-risk can be offered support. Prevent is delivered through a wide network of partners within communities, civil society organisations and public sector institutions. Through these partnerships, almost 3,000 people have been adopted to Prevents voluntary and confidential Channel programme since 2012, which supports people who are considered to be vulnerable to exploitation from terrorist influences.*

- 3.3 Whilst not a Prevent priority area, by focusing on Community engagement and looking to host an event we will reduce the risk through:
1. Building understanding in relation to Prevent, increasing peoples trust in the programme, specifically Channel Panels, and increasing likelihood that those identified as needing support are more likely to accept. It should be noted that the Prevent process is voluntary
  2. By being open and transparent with communities with regards Prevent can reduce any tensions that there maybe in relation to the programme
  3. Improving the number and quality of referrals received from communities by improving understanding through dialogue and opportunity to share and discuss case studies
- 3.4 Next steps are through utilising the Community Events Handbook at *appendix 6* to design Prevent Community Engagement Events appropriate and tailored to the needs of Thurrock residents.
- 3.5 Later in the year there will be an option for non-funded areas to apply for funding for Community Projects in relation to Prevent, which we will be seeking to take advantage of.

#### **4. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 4.1 The reasons for reducing our risk by improving our engagement with communities is outlined in 3.2.
- 4.2 Elected Members can provide leadership and scrutiny locally to facilitate Prevent delivery.
- 4.3 We will be seeking member support to apply for any funding opportunities in relation to Community projects.

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

- 5.1 The purpose of this report is to consult with Members in relation to this agenda.
- 5.2 We will also use our Independent advisory Group to consult with, as required

5.3 This report will be shared with our Youth council.

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

6.1 Priority 4 of the Community Safety Partnership Delivery Plan 2022/23 is:

Counter Extremism and Terrorism: Preventing Violent Extremism locally.

6.2 Improving the way we support engagement between partners, civil society, and communities, will support delivery of the Local Authorities Duty in relation to Prevent.

## **7. Implications**

### **7.1 Financial**

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

There are currently no financial implications, and based on risk we are not a Prevent funded priority area.

### **7.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **Judith Knight**  
**Deputy Head of Legal Services (Social Care and Education)**

Section 26 of the Counter - Terrorism and Security Act 2015 places a duty on the Council, in the exercise of its functions to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. This does not place a new function on the Council but impacts on how existing functions are carried out.

The government has produced statutory guidance on the exercise of this duty under Section 29 of that Act – revised on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 – see [Revised Prevent duty guidance: for England and Wales - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/prevent-duty-guidance-for-england-and-wales). The Council must have regard to that guidance in the exercise of its functions.

The guidance sets out the powers that the Secretary of State has in order to intervene, should they consider that the Council is not discharging its duty.

### **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 Impact on Looked After Children

None

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report:**

[Developing a Communications Strategy - Template and Guidance.pdf](#)

9. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1: Home Office Prevent handbook for Elected Members
- Appendix 2: Home Office Local Authority Toolkit
- Appendix 3: Communications Strategy to Deliver Prevent for Thurrock
- Appendix 4: Let's Talk About It guidance (website for online viewing): [www.ltai.info](http://www.ltai.info)
- Appendix 5: Educate Against Hate resources (website for online viewing): [Let's Discuss: New Classroom Resource on Extremism and Terrorism](#)
- Appendix 6: Community Events Handbook

### **Report Author:**

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