

20 February 2024		ITEM: 6
Hidden and Extreme Harms Prevention Committee		
Thurrock Councils response to Prevent Duty		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-key	
Report of: Michelle Cunningham, Community Safety Partnership Manager		
Accountable Assistant Director: Michael Dineen, A/D Counter Fraud, Community Safety and Resilience Michele Lucas, A/D Education and Skills, Chair of Prevent Strategic Board		
Accountable Director: Claire Demmel, Interim Director of Public Realm – Transformation		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

In July 2023 the Home Office published a Refreshed Counter Terrorism (CONTEST) Strategy updated to reflect the changing threats and risks from terrorism in the UK.

The overall aim of the Government's counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST, is to reduce the risk from terrorism to the UK, its citizens, and interests overseas, so that people can go about their lives freely and with confidence. Prevent remains one of the key pillars of CONTEST, alongside the other three 'P' work strands:

- 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

The revised Prevent Duty statutory guidance 2023 from the Home Office came into force on 31st December 2023. This is following the independent review of Prevent conducted by William Shawcross and takes into account the 34 recommendations within the review.

The Prevent Duty requires specified authorities - of which Local Authorities are one alongside education, health, police, and criminal justice agencies - to help prevent the risk of people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. This sits alongside the Councils wider safeguarding duties.

The Home Office Prevent Duty guidance fact sheet summarises the following key changes:

- *amending the first Prevent objective to “tackle the ideological causes of terrorism”.*
- *updating terminology to reflect current best practice and official terminology.*
- *outlining the new Security Threat Check (STC), which consists of three questions, will ensure that high level decision-making within Prevent is always informed by proper consideration of the terrorism threat picture and responds proportionately.*
- *communicating the need for genuine concern about an individual’s path to radicalisation and that ideology should be a critical consideration (to improve the quality of referrals).*
- *clearer advice on how to understand and manage risk, including by having training and risk assessments; and*
- *including ‘Reducing Permissive Environments’ as a key theme to tackle the ideological causes of terrorism and broader radicalising influences.*

The Home Office Prevent handbook for Elected Members (Appendix 1) 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:

Commissioner Comment:

Not Applicable

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 That Members of the Committee note the current performance and areas for development as measured by the self-assessment audit completed using the Local Government Association Toolkit and Channel Panel self-assessment completed in April 2023.**

1.2 That Members contribute to discussion in relation to the development of Thurrock's refreshed Prevent Strategy 2024/2027 and are satisfied it provides a local response which is proportionate to the current terrorism and extremism threat.

1.3 That Members of the Committee are assured that appropriate governance is in place to ensure that through the Community Safety Partnership the risks outlined in the Counter Terrorism Local Profile are routinely reviewed and responded to as appropriate.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The definitions of terminology used in this report are listed below:

- The Government has defined **extremism** in the Prevent strategy as: "vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs."
- In the UK, the legal definition of **terrorism** is provided in section 1 of the Terrorism Act 2000. This defines terrorism as the use or threat of action which: involves serious violence against a person. involves serious damage to property. endangers a person's life.
- The UK Government defines **radicalisation** as "the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups."
- The police and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) have agreed the following definition for identifying and flagging **hate crimes**: "Any criminal offence which is perceived by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice, based on a person's disability or perceived disability; race or perceived race; or religion or perceived religion; or sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation or transgender identity or perceived transgender identity."

2.2 The following is taken from the briefing provided to Safer Essex (Appendix 2) and direct quotes from the published guidance are in italics.

2.3 Threat & Risk

2.3.1 An overview of the current threat and risk in the UK, in-line with the assessment is included in the revised CONTEST Strategy 2023 ie: *Islamist ideology is resilient and enduring. Extreme Right-Wing ideology is resurgent. Other ideologies are less present, but still have the potential to motivate, inspire and be used to justify terrorism.* It also references the increased complexity of terrorists holding *a range of personal grievances alongside the primary ideology for committing an attack* (often referred to as Mixed, Unclear & Unstable). It also recognises the risk of online radicalisation.

2.3.2 It notes that terrorist narratives have a number of common themes such as *antisemitism, misogyny, anti-establishment, anti-LGBT grievances and*

religious or ethnic superiority. It also recognises that *conspiracy theories can act as gateways to radicalised thinking and sometimes violence* and that those who violently adhere to movements and subcultures (such as Incels) could also *meet the threshold of terrorist intent or action*. This all reflects what is being seen locally and nationally with a convergence of issues by protest groups and the increased challenge in understanding the risk and providing suitable interventions.

2.3.3 Within the Home Office, Prevent delivery is informed by its Security Threat Check (STC) process and it is recommended that local partnership groups consider doing so. The STC asks:

- *Is this action mindful of the UK's current terrorism and extremism threat picture?*
- *Is this action proportionate when placed against the UK's current terrorism and extremism threat picture?*
- *Is this action likely to reduce the threat of terrorism or terrorist adjacent narratives?*

2.4 Thurrock

2.4.1 The National Threat Level remains as **Substantial** meaning that an attack is **LIKELY**. There remains no greater risk to Thurrock than other areas of the UK. Thurrock has the lowest Prevent referrals to hate crime across the Eastern Region over a 12-month period and is below average proportion of referrals to hate crime. Thurrock is a non-funded Prevent area in that the borough has a lower threat/risk level and do not have a dedicated funded Prevent resource in place.

2.4.2 Counter Extremism and Terrorism – preventing violent extremism locally is currently one of the priorities for the Thurrock Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Strategy 2023/24, however the proposal is to remove it from 2024/25 as the partnership's response is embedded through the Prevent Strategic Board which will develop and implement Thurrock's revised strategy for 2024-27.

2.5 Governance

2.5.1 The Assistant Director for Education and Skills chairs the Strategic Prevent Board for Thurrock. The vice chair is the Head of Emergency Planning, Community Safety and Resilience who also attends the Essex CONTEST meetings. The Board reports directly to the Community Safety Partnership Strategic Board, providing an annual report which is also presented to the Cleaner, Greener, Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

2.5.2 The new Prevent Duty Guidance makes clear (as with the 2015 guidance) that responsibility for meeting the Prevent Duty lays with both senior officers and elected members.

- 2.5.3 Thurrock's Channel Panel is well resourced with good knowledge and is co-chaired by the Head of Social Work Support (adults) and Children's Service Manager.
- 2.5.4 There has recently been a workshop with Thurrock's Prevent Strategic Partnership to begin the process of refreshing the strategy in line with the new Prevent Duty guidance.

2.6 Current Assessment of Prevent in Thurrock

- 2.6.1 The Local Government Association self-assessment toolkit for councils was completed with Home Office colleagues in February 2023. A score of 1-2 indicates that statutory responsibilities are not being met, a score of 3 represents a position where the Duty is met, and a score of 4-5 signifies requirements are being exceeded.
- 2.6.2 The Home Office have benchmarked 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. Overall Thurrock Council was meeting the requirements of the Prevent Duty in all areas.

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

- 2.6.3 The process identified the following areas for development and recommended actions for Thurrock's Strategic Prevent Board:

Partnership:

- setting realistic time scales for action
- holding partners to account for this work and delivery

Training:

- tracking attendance at the monthly sessions
- e-learning made mandatory for all staff
- existing trained staff recompleting the training at set intervals (e.g., every two years)
- training to be incorporated into any induction plans for new staff

- 2.6.4 The Channel assurance process reviewed the following areas across 30 benchmarks of which 27 were green and 3 were amber.

Area of Control	Green	Amber	Actions
Legal requirements	3	1	Representation from health to be regular (ICB)
Strategic Governance	3	0	
Charing Skills	5	0	
Panel Function	12	1	There is a structured, agreed process for providing updates to family members, – case by case and process now in place
Data Protection	4	1	Local Data Protection Information Notices have been updated to reflect Channel Panel functions and use of personal data. All partners are now signatory to this.

2.7 Monitoring against Delivery Plan 2023/24:

Actions	Progress Q1 and Q2	Next Steps Q3 and Q4												
Review and refresh Thurrock's Prevent strategy for 2023/26 in line with the National review of CONTEST		Workshop planning Dec 2023, initial draft Jan for sign off by CSP Board March 2024												
Utilise the Prevent Communications Toolkit to improve dialogue and awareness with our communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comms. action plan in place Tension form reviewed & web site updated. Channel posters shared. Advice to home educators refreshed 	Promote messages in Thurrock resident's newsletter and to staff												
Continue to offer programme of training across partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivered 2 workshops. Hosted misogyny webinar Briefing for Designated Safeguarding Leads on neurodiversity Members of HEHC attended face to face training and all members offered session through Essex. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 workshops delivered Q3, 2 planned Q4. Training is revised quarterly in line with the latest threat and risk. 												
Respond to current risks in relation to vulnerabilities due to mental health and those aged under 18 hosting an event for practitioners	<p>Q3 71 people attended Prevent webinar in relation to Mental Health and neurodiversity.</p> <p>How confident are you in your knowledge of Prevent?</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Before</th> <th>After</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>0 – know nothing</td> <td>0%</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1 - basic understanding</td> <td>33%</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2 - good knowledge and understanding</td> <td>54%</td> <td>66%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Before	After	0 – know nothing	0%	0%	1 - basic understanding	33%	0%	2 - good knowledge and understanding	54%	66%	
	Before	After												
0 – know nothing	0%	0%												
1 - basic understanding	33%	0%												
2 - good knowledge and understanding	54%	66%												

	3 - able to champion confidently	11%	32%
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3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 Proposed strategic objectives:

1. Tackling the ideological causes of terrorism
2. Safeguard those susceptible to radicalisation
3. Rehabilitation through early intervention and referral to channel

3.2 We will achieve this through:

1. Leadership and Partnership:
 - Ensuring staff understand the risk of radicalisation that results in support for terrorism or involvement in terrorism by making sure they can access training resources and further guidance.
 - Building and promoting the capabilities to deal with radicalisation concerns, such as a formal pathway to escalate concerns and refer through to Prevent.
 - Promoting the importance of Prevent and the role staff play in countering terrorism.
2. Capabilities – develop and maintain appropriate capabilities to:
 - understand the risk.
 - manage the risk.
 - share information.
3. Reducing Permissive Environments through limiting exposure to radicalising narratives – including online, by taking steps to ensure appropriate checks are made to ensure someone seeking to use racialisation narrative in a public space are identified and stopped.

3.3 Draft Priorities for year 1:

Leadership and Partnership

- Embed the revised Channel Duty guidance 2023
- Engage with private landlords

Capabilities

- Organisational assessment of training, identify where should be mandatory and monitoring in place
- Develop approach to raising awareness of different ideologies

Reducing Permissive Environments

- Enhanced engagement and awareness which aims to measure impact and reach

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 This report aims to ensure members are appraised and reassured that Thurrock Council is meeting the requirements of the Prevent Duty in all areas.
- 4.2 This report provides members of the committee opportunity to be consulted on the development of Thurrock's Prevent Strategy 2024/27 in line with the National Prevent Duty guidance. Although not a recommendation or compulsory, this report asks elected members to consider attending a workshop to enable members to provide input into the strategy.
- 4.3 This report allows elected members to fulfil their role in shaping and delivering Prevent activity locally through scrutiny.

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

- 5.1 A facilitated workshop has been held with all partners who are represented on Thurrock's Prevent Strategic Board to develop the strategy. This includes both Home Office and Department of Education regional advisors.
- 5.2 The partnership would like the opportunity to facilitate a workshop with members to input further into the strategy.

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 Prevent Duty guidance and Channel guidance 2023 the partnership 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

This is a statutory function through core funding and there are no financial implications arising from this report.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Gina Clarke**
Governance Lawyer & Deputy Monitoring Officer

Section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (CTSA 2015) places a duty on Local Authorities, schools, colleges, universities, health bodies, prisons and probation and police to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism, by embedding the Prevent Duty as a part of their wider existing day-to-day safeguarding duties.

The Prevent duty does not confer new functions on any specified authority. The term 'due regard' as used in the Act means that the Council should place an appropriate amount of weight on the need to prevent people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism when they consider all the other factors relevant to how they carry out their usual functions.

Updated statutory guidance, The Prevent Duty Guidance, issued under section 29 of the CTSA 2015, came into force on 31 December 2023. The Council is required to have regard to the Guidance when carrying out its Prevent duty. The purpose of the Guidance is to set out the expectations for each of the main statutory sectors and describe the ways in which they should comply with the Prevent duty.

When developing a Prevent strategy, Elected Members and the Council's scrutiny process have a key role in shaping the Strategy. In addition, in developing the Strategy the Council must comply with the public sector equality duty (s149 of the Equality Act 2010), to have due regard to the need to achieve the objectives set out in the Act to eliminate unlawful conduct under the Act, to advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. Therefore, an equality analysis of the proposed Strategy will be required.

When carrying out the Prevent duty, the Council will also need to ensure compliance other legal obligations, in particular ,of confidentiality and those under data protection legislation the Equality Act 2010 and Human Rights Act 1998.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**

Community Engagement and Project Monitoring Officer

The council's Community Equality Impact Assessment will be refreshed in line with the revised Prevent Strategy. The assessment in place currently recognises that whilst implementation of the Prevent strategy and action plan for Thurrock has a positive impact on whole communities, ensuring that they are safeguarded from the impacts of extremism and prevents people from being drawn into extremism there is a risk of stereotyping some faiths, young people, and males in particular.

The action plan takes care to balance the risks of all areas of ideology. The focus is in bringing communities together and empowering them to be able to challenge extremism in all its forms.

7.4 Risks

This is included within the Corporate Risk Log- No. 21: Failure to comply with the Prevent Duty 2015

The Prevent Duty under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 requires all specified authorities to have "due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism"; local authorities and their partners therefore have a core role to play in countering terrorism at a local level and helping to safeguard individuals at risk of radicalisation.

Failure to work with local partners to protect the public; prevent crime; promote strong/integrated communities and prevent people from being drawn into terrorism will result in the authority not complying with the Prevent Duty 2015 and may lead to increased acts of crime, lawbreaking, extremism, and terrorism.

The revised Prevent Duty Guidance 2023 S121 now includes: Additionally, local authorities should include Prevent within their corporate risk register.

7.5 Other implications (where significant) i.e., *Staff, Health Inequalities, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder, and Impact on Looked After Children*

This report will support members in ensuring that Thurrock Council is delivering on Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act and our safeguarding responsibilities.

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):

- www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance
- www.gov.uk/government/publications/counter-terrorism-strategy-contest-2023
- [Prevent duty guidance factsheet - Home Office in the media \(blog.gov.uk\)](http://Prevent duty guidance factsheet - Home Office in the media (blog.gov.uk))

9. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1: Home Office Prevent handbook for Elected Members
- Appendix 2: Safer Essex Briefing on 2023 Prevent Duty Guidance

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