

People & Health Overview Committee

4th May 2021

Prevent

For Recommendation to Council

Portfolio Holder: Cllr G Carr-Jones, Housing and Community Safety

Local Councillor(s): All

Executive Director: V Broadhurst, Interim Executive Director of People - Adults

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Report Status: Public

Recommendations:

Members of the committee:

1. Consider and comment on the Council's work on Prevent, including the Channel system. This is to support the Council in its duty to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. Channel Panels are multi-agency practitioner groups that come together when someone is identified as being at risk of being drawn into extremism
2. Recommend to Full Council via the Audit and Governance Committee that Article 11 of the Council's Constitution is amended to include the new statutory Channel Panel, its proposed membership and terms of reference.
3. Consider how to increase awareness of Prevent work amongst Dorset Councillors including by using the Prevent Elected Members Handbook published by the Home Office.

Reason for Recommendations:

To ensure Dorset Council meets its statutory duties and expectations relating to Prevent.

1. Executive Summary

Section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 places a duty on local authorities in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

The Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales sets out requirements on local authorities to:

- Work in partnership to co-ordinate Prevent activity
- Assess the risk of individuals being drawn into terrorism
- Develop action plans relating to Prevent
- Train staff
- Ensure local authority resources are not used to provide a platform for extremists or to disseminate extremist views
- Collaborate with other local authorities on Prevent issues
- Act as priority areas for Prevent (specific local authorities only)
- Work with other agencies and organisations supporting children

Officers assess progress against Prevent duties each year using the Home Office 'Prevent Duty Toolkit for Local Authorities' as a guide. The latest assessment shows that Dorset Council is meeting its duties, though some work is ongoing and needs to be regularly updated.

Channel Panels are multi-agency practitioner groups that come together when someone is identified as being at risk of being drawn into extremism. Panels put support packages in place to steer individuals away from extremist activity.

In November 2020, the government released its 'Channel Duty Guidance' which sets out new expectations for local authorities.

The Home Office recognises that local authority elected members play a key role in local Prevent delivery. They have published a 'Prevent Elected Members Handbook' that explains the Prevent programme in-depth, helps build understanding and can be used in meetings and when engaging with local communities.

2. Financial Implications

Financial implications are considered minimal, with work being picked up through existing budget arrangements.

3. Well-being and Health Implications

None.

4. Climate implications

None.

5. Other Implications

Community safety, as set out in the report.

6. Risk Assessment

Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

7. Equalities Impact Assessment

The Council's work on Prevent and Channel is directed by Government legislation and statutory guidance. It is assumed the Government has completed relevant equality impact assessments on these.

8. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Channel Panel Terms of Reference and Membership

Appendix 2 – Home Office Prevent Elected Members Handbook

9. Background Papers

Home Office e-learning on Prevent - [here](#)

Prevent Duty Guidance - [here](#)

Channel Duty Guidance - [here](#)

Footnote:

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.

10. Introduction

- 10.1 Section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 places a duty on local authorities in the exercise of their functions to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.
- 10.2 Requirements include working with partners, developing action plans, assessing risks, training staff and running Channel Panels.

11. Progress Against Duties

- 11.1 Officers assess progress against Prevent duties each year using the 'Home Office Prevent Duty Toolkit for Local Authorities' as a guide. The latest assessment shows that Dorset Council is meeting its duties, though some work is ongoing and needs to be regularly updated.
- 11.2 The risk assessment process is annual and action plans require regular monitoring and updating annually. Staff training is assessed and adapted as needed to ensure it meets the standards set by the Home Office. Safeguarding policies and procedures cover working with other agencies and organisations working with children.
- 11.3 The Council is required to ensure that publicly owned venues and resources do not provide a platform for extremists and are not used to disseminate extremist views. ICT have been through a process of harmonising security software for Dorset Council and have provided assurance that adequate security software is in place. This includes Libraries who have IT equipment that is normally accessible to the public. Most council owned buildings have covenants written into tenancies and leases to prevent extremism and/or radicalisation being promoted. Any new agreements or those under review will be picked up as and when required.

12. Channel Panel Arrangements

12.1 Channel Panels are multi-agency practitioner groups that come together when someone is identified as being at risk of being drawn into extremism. Panels put support packages in place to steer individuals away from extremist activity.

12.2 In November 2020, the government released its Channel Duty Guidance which sets out new expectations for local authorities.

12.3 Dorset Council is required to:

- Have in place a single Channel panel covering both adults and children
- Chair Channel panels for its area
- Have a nominated chair and deputy chair (by the Chief Executive), ensuring they meet core competencies (details of the chair and vice chair must be notified to the Home Office)
- Be members of the panel in addition to the Police and other relevant partners who will have a duty to cooperate
- Work with other areas where a Channel panel takes place across local authority areas
- Hold monthly channel panels where there is a live case
- Have in place strong local governance and an escalation process with Channel included in the Council's constitution
- Have in place a Personal Information Sharing Agreement (PISA).

12.4 Terms of reference and membership for the new statutory channel panel is provided at appendix 1. Members of the Committee are asked to recommend it to Full Council for inclusion in the Constitution.

12.5 Within Dorset Council, the intention is to take updates on work through the Council's internal governance arrangements, including the relevant overview and scrutiny committees.

12.6 Partnership governance arrangements are through the pan-Dorset Prevent Partnership Group which reports to the overarching pan-Dorset CONTEST Board (CONTEST is the UK's counter terrorism strategy).

13. Elected Members and Raising Awareness

13.1 The Home Office recognises that local authority elected members play a key role in local Prevent delivery.

- 13.2 Last year Dorset Council Councillors received training on Prevent and a briefing on the Council's work. In response to the new requirements, annual updates on Prevent and Channel work will be taken through the Council's relevant overview and scrutiny committees.
- 13.3 The Home Office have published a 'Prevent Elected Members Handbook' that explains the Prevent programme in-depth, helps build understanding and can be used in meetings and when engaging with local communities. The handbook is provided at appendix 2.