

# People & Health Scrutiny Committee

19 May 2022

## Prevent and Channel

### For Review and Consultation

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

**Local Councillor(s):** All

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

Report Author: Ian Grant

Title: Programme Coordinator for the Community Safety Team

Tel: 01305 228516

Email: [ian.grant@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:ian.grant@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk)

**Report Status:** Part Exempt

#### **Brief Summary:**

This report has two aims; to provide an opportunity for Elected Members to scrutinise the council's work in compliance with the Prevent Duty 2015; and to provide an opportunity for Elected Members to scrutinise the council's work in compliance with the Channel Duty Guidance 2020.

#### **Recommendation:**

To consider and comment on the Council's work on Prevent, including the Channel system.

#### **Reason for Recommendation:**

To support the Council in its duty to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and ensure it meets its statutory duties and expectations relating to Prevent and Channel. Channel Panels are multi-agency practitioner groups that come together when someone is identified as being at risk of being drawn into extremism.

## 1. **Executive Summary**

- 1.1 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.
- 1.2 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
- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 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.
- 1.5 In November 2020, the government released its 'Channel Duty Guidance' which sets out new expectations for local authorities. As a result, new arrangements were put in place to strengthen Dorset's Channel Panel.
- 1.6 Officers assess progress against Channel duties each year using the Home Office 'Annual Assurance Statement' as a guide. The latest assessment shows that Dorset Council is meeting its duties, though some work is ongoing and needs to be finalised.

- 1.6 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. **Climate Implications**

None.

4. **Well-being and Health Implications**

None.

5. **Other Implications**

Community safety, as set out in the report.

6. **Risk Assessment**

- 6.1 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 – Dorset Council Channel Annual Assurance Statement

Appendix 2 – Prevent Elected Members Handbook'

Appendix 3 – Channel Panel Case Study

## 9. Background Papers

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

Prevent Duty Guidance - [here](#)

Channel Duty Guidance - [here](#)

## 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 (summary provided at 11.2 and 11.3). The latest assessment, which includes consultation with the Home Office, 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, and as a result, the council has made the following changes:

- One Channel Panel in place, covering Adults and Children's.
- Channel Panel meet monthly, even where they aren't live cases, so learning, best practice, and other issues can be discussed.
- Nominated Chair and Deputy Chair.
- Strengthened Prevent oversight to include regular Prevent meetings to consider best practice, learning and latest developments.
- Created Terms of Reference for Channel Panel which are contained in the council's constitution.
- Undertaken an annual assurance statement on how the council is meeting its Channel duties and submitted this to the Home Office.

12.3 An area still outstanding is to create a Personal Information Sharing Agreement (PISA) for Channel, however, work is in train to resolve this.

12.4 Within Dorset Council, it was agreed previously that updates on work be taken through the Council's internal governance arrangements. This includes annual updates to the People and Health Scrutiny Committee.

12.5 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 In 2020 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 are taken through the Council's relevant overview and scrutiny committees.

13.3 A summary of a local case study which has been through Channel has been appended (appendix 3) to this report. This is to allow Elected Members to understand the role of Channel and how it has worked to support an individual at risk of becoming radicalised.

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.