

# People & Health Scrutiny Committee

## 11 December 2023

### Prevent and Channel

#### For Review and Consultation

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr L Beddow, Culture and Communities

**Local Councillor(s):** All

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

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**Report Status:** Public

#### **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 subsequent 2023); and to provide an opportunity for Elected Members to scrutinise the council's work in compliance with the Channel Duty Guidance 2020 (and subsequent 2023).

#### **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](#), which was updated in September 2023, following the release of the Independent Review of Prevent, 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
  - Reduce permissive environments by ensuring council resources are not used to provide a platform for extremists or to disseminate extremist views
  - Collaborate with other councils on Prevent issues
  - Act as priority areas for Prevent (specific councils only)
  - Work with other agencies and organisations supporting children
  - Monitor and quality assure Prevent delivery
- 1.3 Whilst the new guidance does not place new functions on the council, it does reflect current best practice as well as strengthen guidance for councils to follow.
- 1.4 Officers assess progress against Prevent duties each year using the updated '[Prevent Duty Toolkit for Local Authorities](#)' and through an annual benchmarking exercise with officers from the Home Office (Regional Prevent Advisor). The appended benchmarking results demonstrate that Dorset Council is meeting compliance, 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 The '[Channel Duty Guidance](#)', which has been updated in October 2023, sets out expectations for local authorities in carrying out their functions in relation to Channel.
- 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.
- 1.7 Since the last committee update, officers from across the council have worked hard to strengthen the council's response to Prevent and Channel. Some key highlights include:
- Embedding local Channel arrangements.
  - Strengthened assurance processes for the Pan Dorset Prevent Partnership Board.
  - Strengthened local community engagement work, particularly young people, professionals and wider community.
  - Worked with Home Office to help shape national policy.
  - Continued to demonstrate strong compliance.
- 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. Officers are currently working with the Home Office to explore further opportunities to strengthen engagement with elected members.

## **2 Financial Implications**

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

## **3 Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications**

None.

## **4 Well-being and Health 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 – Dorset Council Channel Annual Assurance Statement 22/23

Appendix 2 – Home Office Benchmarking Tool 22/23

Appendix 3 – Prevent Elected Members Handbook

## **9 Background Papers**

Prevent Duty Guidance - [here](#)

Prevent duty toolkit for local authorities – [here](#).

Channel Duty Guidance - [here](#)

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

Independent Review of Prevent Home Office Factsheet – [here](#).

CONTEST Strategy – [here](#).