

Dorset (Dorset Council area) Channel Panel

Terms of Reference

Created: April 2021

1.0 Context

1.1 Full guidance on Channel Panels is provided in the *Channel Duty Guidance 2020: Protecting people vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism*¹. Panel members should read the guidance in full in conjunction with these basic requirements and Terms of Reference.

1.2 Channel forms a key part of the national Prevent strategy. Channel is an identification and intervention safeguarding multi-agency process, providing support to individuals who are at risk of being drawn into terrorism.

1.3 Channel became a statutory requirement as part of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015. **In practice, the legislation requires:**

- a) local authorities to ensure that a multi-agency Channel Panel exists in their area;
- b) the local authority to provide the chair;
- c) the Panel to develop a support plan for individuals accepted as Channel cases;
- d) the Panel to consider alternative forms of support, including health and social services, where Channel is not appropriate;
- e) the Panel will ensure accurate records are kept detailing the support plan, agreed actions and decision-making, and outcomes: and
- f) all partners of a Panel (as specified in Schedule 7), so far as appropriate and reasonably practicable, to cooperate with the police and the Panel in the carrying out of their functions

2.0 Purpose

2.1 Channel seeks to deliver prompt and tailored work in its conduct of assessing an individual's vulnerability to being drawn into terrorism, information gathering, developing, and delivering support packages to meet identified need and reduce vulnerability.

2.2 The Channel process is managed by the local authority, who will chair the Panel, in conjunction with the Police, and is the principal decision-making and co-ordinating body for the Channel Programme in Dorset.

¹ Channel Duty Guidance 2020: Protecting people vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/964567/6.6271_HO_HMG_Channel_Duty_Guidance_v14_Web.pdf

- 2.3 Decisions made by the Panel will be based on discussions which consider shared information, assessment of vulnerability, risk and support needs and the input of all core members. Decisions will ideally be based on Panel consensus; where consensus cannot be reached, Panel majority will be used, with the chair having the deciding vote where there is no Panel majority. The rationale for all decisions will be clearly recorded in the minutes.
- 2.4 The Panel has the ability to work outside scheduled meetings, in response to urgent or critical incidents.
- 2.5 Channel is a safeguarding and public protection measure that aims to ensure that children and adults of any faith, ethnicity or background receive support before their vulnerabilities are exploited by those that would want them to embrace terrorism, and before they become involved in criminal terrorist related activity.
- 2.6 Success of the programme is very much dependent on the co-operation and coordinated activity of partners. It works best when the individuals and their families fully engage with the programme and are supported in a consistent manner.

3.0 Membership and Meeting Frequency

- 3.1 The Channel Duty Guidance sets out that as a minimum, the membership will consist of the local authority Channel chair and the police.
- 3.2 Other partners (listed in [Schedule 7 of CT&S Act](#) and also Annex B of the Channel Duty Guidance) have a duty to cooperate, as far as is appropriate and reasonably practicable, to assist the police and the Panel in carrying out its functions.
- 3.3 It is proposed that the core membership of the Dorset Channel Panel will be the Corporate Director – Adult Social Care (Commissioning) (Local Authority Chair) and representatives from the following:
- Dorset Police
 - Counter Terrorism Police, South West, Dorset
 - Dorset Council Adult and Housing Service's
 - Dorset Council Children's Service's
 - Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service
 - National Probation Service
 - Dorset, Devon & Cornwall Community Rehabilitation Company
 - Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
 - Dorset Health Care
 - Education Establishments – as appropriate and on request
 - Child Care Providers (inc Fostering Agencies) – as appropriate and on request
- 3.4 Other members should be invited where they have input to the cases to be discussed, as determined by the Panel chair and invited each time.

- 3.5 A Council Officer within Dorset Council will chair Panel meetings. There is a named deputy chair who can deputise if the chair is absent from a meeting.
- 3.6 It is expected that Panel members attend regularly or ask a named deputy to take their place if they are unable to attend a meeting.
- 3.7 The Channel Panel will meet at least monthly where there are live cases for discussion, new referrals requiring a decision or cases requiring 6/12-month review. Where necessary, an emergency meeting can be convened if the individual's vulnerabilities require prompt consideration.
- 3.8 Where there are no cases/referrals requiring Panel meetings to be convened, the chair and local authority Prevent Coordinator will convene (a gap of no more than three months) wider Prevent meetings to take abreast of any changes to duties, legislation and/or knowledge, practice updates.
- 3.9 Panel members must also ensure that they keep up to date with any changes in duties and legislation and undertake training as required. Regular updates will be provided at Panel meetings.
- 3.10 Panels will constitute a single Panel, with a single chair, covering the needs of adults and children.

4.0 Secretariat

- 4.1 The local authority will perform all secretarial functions which include:
 - Creating an agenda and circulating this to members one week before the meeting;
 - Minuting the meeting and circulating these to core members and relevant partners in good time;
 - Ensuring key discussions, Panel decisions and the basis for all decisions are clearly recorded.
- 4.2 Channel Case Officers (Dorset Police) will keep a record of all VAFs and Channel minutes on CMIS (Case Management Information System). All other activity is summarised in a running case log.

5.0 Scope of the meetings and decision making

- The Channel chair liaises with the Channel Case Officer before all scheduled Panels.
- The agenda and papers for the Panel are issued to all Panel Members prior to the meeting.
- For cases to be discussed at Channel, the Channel Case Officer contacts all relevant agencies to gather information held to support the writing of the Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF). The VAF is circulated to Panel members in advance of the Panel meeting.
- Colleagues who have made the referral may be invited to attend Channel to provide the Panel with more information and background to the referral. Other relevant professionals who could have helpful information or advice

will also be invited to Panel at a specified time to join the discussion about the case.

- Meetings will risk assess referrals by using VAFs and any other information available and agree the most appropriate support to meet their needs.
- A decision will be taken by the Panel on the adoption of all referrals presented for consideration.
- Decisions made by the Channel Panel will ideally be based on Panel consensus, or if this cannot be achieved, Panel majority (with the chair having the casting vote). This will be achieved by respectful consideration of the views of partners working cooperatively.
- When deciding whether a referral should be adopted by Panel, the chair will ensure that a full discussion has taken place with the relevant specialist advice and information available. The minutes will reflect the details of each individual Panel member's contribution to the discussion and decision. Minutes will record Panel members' contributions.
- Panel members will ensure an effective support plan is put in place for any cases adopted and that consent is sought from the individual prior to the plan being activated and identify and commission a suitable intervention to offer support in order to reduce the level of vulnerability. This may include the use of a Home Office Intervention Provider. The use of an Intervention Provider will be considered for all adopted cases.
- Cases currently open to Channel will be discussed and reviewed at each Panel to decide whether Channel involvement is still necessary. For cases that are currently open to Channel there will be an updated version of the Support Plan and an updated VAF (at least every 3 months) circulated to Panel members in advance ready for review and discussion at the meeting.
- If an Intervention Provider is still working with the case, then it will automatically remain with Channel. The Intervention Provider will report its recommendations to the Panel, who will then decide if interventions should conclude. If a case has been adopted but there is no Intervention Provider, the police will be asked to review this after 3 months. On occasion, (i.e. where consent for Channel is withdrawn) the risk may not be mitigated or decreased through the Channel process and a case may be moved from Channel to police-led space.

6.0 Governance

- 6.1 The Dorset CONTEST Board has overall responsibility for the local overview and monitoring of partners implementation of Channel and the wider Prevent duty. Officers in the council with responsibility for Channel / Prevent will report to councillors through Dorset Council's People and Health Scrutiny Committee. The first report will be taken to the Dorset Council's People and Health Scrutiny Committee in May 2022, and annually thereafter. There are also strong links with the Pan Dorset Prevent Partnership and Dorset Community Safety Partnership (CSP).

6.2 Governance arrangements include provision for addressing escalated concerns.

7.0 Accountability

7.1 Members are expected to prepare by reading the agenda, vulnerability assessments and any supporting information in advance of the meeting.

7.2 Members are expected to complete their actions in good time and to report outcomes of their actions to the Panel.

7.3 The Channel chair should be briefed by the Channel Case Officer in advance of panel to aid agenda setting, meeting preparations and identify the appropriate panel members required to be in attendance. The pre-brief should only be used to provide a summary of referrals for consideration at panel: it should be concise, brief and not treated as a decision-making forum or a filter for consideration of Channel referrals.

7.4 Police will own (are responsible for the identification and mitigation of imminent risks of individuals mobilising towards and terrorism offences) the terrorism risk and the Panel will own the terrorism vulnerability associated with all referrals and cases discussed.

7.5 It is expected that Panel members attend regularly or ask a named deputy to take their place if they are unable to attend a meeting. The named deputy chair will deputise for the chair if unable to attend the meeting.

7.6 Panel members must ensure that they keep up to date with any changes in duties and legislation and develop an improvement plan which includes identification of any training needs, at least annually. Regular updates will be provided at Panel meetings. It is expected that the Dorset Channel chair will attend relevant training, events and disseminate relevant updates or briefings to Panel members as necessary. There is an annual Dorset Channel Development Day.

8.0 Information Sharing

8.1 The Channel Panel will agree arrangements for sharing personal data relating to referrals, live cases and cases subject to review. An information sharing agreement to facilitate the appropriate and efficient sharing of information between partner agencies detailed within this term of reference will be developed and reviewed two yearly or in light of legislative and other changes.

9.0 Confidentiality

9.1 Information discussed by partners within the ambit of this meeting is strictly confidential and must be treated as such during the meeting and in the subsequent handling of any data considered at this meeting; data must not be disclosed to third parties without the prior agreement of the partners of the meeting.

- 9.2 Information shared should be directly or indirectly relevant to cases on a need to know basis. Clear distinctions should be made between fact and opinion.
- 9.3 All agencies should ensure that the minutes are retained in a confidential and appropriately restricted manner. These minutes will aim to reflect that all individuals who are discussed at these meetings should be treated fairly, with respect and without improper discrimination. All work undertaken at the meetings will be informed by a full commitment to equality considerations.
- 9.4 The responsibility to take appropriate actions rests with individual agencies. The role of the Channel Panel is to facilitate, monitor and evaluate effective information sharing to enable appropriate actions to be taken to increase public safety.
- 9.5 Channel Panel members will sign the Confidentiality and Official Secrets Act declaration at the start of each meeting.

10.0 Discharging Cases

- 10.1 When the Panel agrees that a case no longer presents a Prevent concern, or is no longer appropriate for Channel, the following discharge process should be followed to ensure that all decisions and actions are recorded with reasons.

When discharging cases from Channel other risk factors should be considered and appropriately discharged e.g. risk to self and others

- 10.2 If the panel is satisfied that the terrorism vulnerability has been successfully reduced or managed, they should recommend that the case then exits the process as the intervention is complete. A closing VAF should be completed by the Channel Case Officer as soon as possible setting out the reason for the panel's recommendations. The recommendations will need to be endorsed by the Channel panel chair and the Channel Case Officer
- 10.3 The most appropriate Panel member is identified to liaise with the individual and notify them of the Panel's decision.
- 10.4 Where the Panel has agreed that broader support may be necessary:
 - If that support is from an agency/service represented at Channel it is the responsibility of the representative to advise on what support should be considered and ensure that that their agency/service follows through with any agreed actions
 - If the support is not from an agency represented at Channel, a discussion will be held, and agreement reached about how the request for support will be progressed
- 10.5 The Channel Panel will review all adopted cases at 6 and 12 months after exiting from Channel. The Case Officer will drive this process, updating the chair on upcoming cases to be reviewed. The review process will include a request for relevant information from Panel members, including their service engagement, police checks, change of circumstances, and contact with the

initial referrer where appropriate. The Case Officer will ensure the Case Management system is updated to reflect the process and any decisions taken.

11.0 Security Clearance

11.1 It is recommended that the Channel Panel chair and deputy chair hold UK National Vetting clearance at 'Security Check' SC level clearance. The Home Office should be contacted to administer these requests.

12.0 Document Retention

12.1 The GDPR provides that personal data shall be '*kept in a form which permits identification of data subjects for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which the personal data are processed*'. When cases have been formally discharged from Channel Panel, the retention of data shall comply with the data retention policy of each agency.

13.0 Review of Terms of Reference

13.1 Terms of Reference will be reviewed on an annual basis or in light of legislative and other changes.