

REPORT TO: Safer Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 11 September 2018

REPORTING OFFICER Strategic Director – Enterprise, Community and Resources

PORTFOLIO: Community Safety

SUBJECT: Transfer of Channel Coordination from Police to Local Authorities

WARDS: Borough Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To receive a report on the transfer of Channel and Prevent Co-ordination from Police to Local Authority responsibility.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- 1) the report be noted; and**
- 2) the Board consider the information presented and raise any questions of interest or points of clarification following the presentation.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The Prevent Strategy has been reviewed and revised in line with Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015. The Act placed a duty that specified authorities (including local authorities), must have due regard to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. It also established a statutory responsibility for every local authority to ensure they had an identified panel to assess the vulnerability of identified individuals and put in place support plans, known as 'Channel Panels'. Since the establishment of the Channel Programme the responsibility for assessment and case management has been held by the Police. However, in line with a broader aim to position all Prevent activity closer to local communities and to link it with safeguarding and other partnership activity the Home Office has indicated their desire to transfer many of the responsibilities from the Police to local authorities.

3.2 In 2016, the Home Office initiated the 'Dovetail' pilot to assess the feasibility of transferring the resources and responsibility for administering the process and case management aspects of Channel from the police to local authorities, trialled initially in nine areas. The evaluation of the pilot was broadly positive and the decision of the Home Office is to extend the transfer of functions from the police to

local authorities in more areas on a regional basis, commencing in the North West. The intention is to implement a regional model with funding being provided by the Home Office to resource the assessment of referrals and management of cases by Local Authority Channel Coordinators.

- 3.3 An initial consultation meeting was held in October 2017 with Channel Panel Chairs and other local authority representatives on the options on the allocation of Coordinators in the region, based on current referral and case activity, and the expectations on local authorities to manage and recruit to these nationally defined roles. For the Merseyside and Cheshire part of the region a preferred option of a 'Three-Hub Model' was identified on the day by the local authority representatives in attendance. Consequently, discussion was held on possible management arrangements and the expectation of hosting by one local authority in the area. It was considered that, due to the level of existing resource and understanding already in place on Prevent and Channel, Liverpool City Council was best positioned to host these new roles, subject to clarity of hosting requirements, funding provision and service level arrangements across the wider area.

4.0 Background – Prevent and Channel Arrangements

- 4.1 The Prevent Strategy is one element of the Government's Counter Terrorism Strategy (CONTEST), with its aim 'to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism through:
- Countering ideology: taking down harmful internet content; support organisations to develop effective responses;
 - Supporting individuals who are at risk of radicalisation notably (but not only) through Channel;
 - Working with sectors and institutions where there are risks of radicalisation and opportunities for countering radicalisation: education, health, local authorities, policing, prisons, charities, faith based organisations, etc.'
- 4.2 The Channel Programme in England and Wales is a voluntary initiative that provides a multi-agency approach to support people vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. Currently, for those individuals where the police assess there is a risk of radicalisation, a Channel Panel, chaired by the local authority and attended by other partners, such as representatives from education and health services, will meet to discuss the referral, assess the extent of the vulnerability, and decide on a tailored package of support.
- 4.3 Channel Panels will only offer support where they consider it is necessary and proportionate to do so, given all the circumstances of

the case. Information shared among partners is done strictly in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

- 4.4 The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, placed not only the duty that specified authorities must have due regard in the exercise of their functions to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism; but also the requirement for each local authority to 'ensure that a panel is in place for its area, with the function of assessing the extent to which identified individuals are vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism' and for identified individuals develop, monitor and review a support plan. The associated guidance establishes the requirements for the Panels including core membership but does not prescribe how they should be operated allowing arrangements to be tailored for the area.
- 4.5 The local authorities in Merseyside and Cheshire have such arrangements in place. The Panels are chaired by the local authority, however, the method of convening the panels differs in each area, varying from a regular, established meeting of representatives from required agencies to convening case conferencing panels in line with Safeguarding procedures as and when assessments identify the potential need for support. The method of operation, frequency and average number of cases in each local authority area for Merseyside and Cheshire are listed in Appendix 1.
- 4.6 The referrals and case management are undertaken by the respective police forces by a designated 'Channel Police Practitioner' who also convenes the Channel Panel. Recently, in Merseyside this has been a Prevent Officer in lieu of a Channel Coordinator. It is the responsibilities of this role that the Home Office are transferring from the police to local authorities and have been trialled in the Dovetail Pilot.

5.0 Evaluation of Dovetail Pilot and Roll-Out

- 5.1 Since the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and significant events, the Home Office has clearly identified its aim and desire to position Prevent activity closer to local communities and link more effectively with Safeguarding and other partnership activity in local authority areas.
- 5.2 This has included indications of their intention to transfer responsibility of Channel coordination and associated Prevent activity (with the exception of the Police Terrorism de-confliction checks) to the local authority from the Police by the end of 2017/18. In line with this ambition, the Home Office launched a 12-month pilot, 'Dovetail' to assess the feasibility of moving the responsibility for Channel administration and case management from the police to local authorities. The nine pilot areas were resourced to establish Local Authority Channel Coordinators for the length of the pilot, with the

Police retaining the terrorism risk and Home Office acting as data controllers. In the North West the pilot areas were Blackburn with Darwen and Oldham.

Positive Aspects of the Pilots

- The number and types of referrals for Channel Panel consideration remained consistent
- The local authority lead for information gathering has helped to build better relationships with other partner agencies
- There was good attendance at the panels from partners, more consideration of which partner would be best to gain consent and the quality of discussion at the panels was improved in half the sites, attributed in part to a greater willingness to share information with the local authority.
- Relationships between the police and local authority were supportive both in timeliness of referrals and in helping to improve understanding and knowledge of the LACCs, leading to confidence in the recommendation to progress a referral to Panel by all parties.

Areas for Improvement

- Reliance on the police remained high in the early stages of the pilot, particularly with regard to the understanding of risk of radicalisation and completion of the vulnerability assessment framework, identifying the need to revise the training for LACC's prior to the commencement of the role
- Access to the Channel Management Information System was initially hindered until access from other agencies could be provided. The quality of information needs to continue to improve.
- Police expressed concern that the Counter-Terrorism risk may not be as effectively managed if there are delays in sharing information gathered by the local authority from other agencies, protocols and training for sharing of information more immediately with police should be in place.

- 5.3 Following the evaluation of Dovetail, the Home Office has taken the decision to extend the transfer of functions from the police to local authorities, rolling it out to other areas having adjusted it to a regionally-based model. Funding will be provided to resource the assessment of referrals and management of cases for the region as a whole. Individual local authorities will still be required to ensure there is a panel in place and which will continue to be chaired by the relevant local authority, but which will now be convened and draw on the Local

Authority Channel Coordinators rather than Channel Police Practitioners.

6.0 Options for the Regional Model

- 6.1 In September 2017, the Home Office shared the evaluation findings and their intention to transfer the responsibilities with all Local Authority Chief Executives. Subsequently, they invited Channel Panel Chairs and other local authority representatives to a consultation event for the North West on 19 October 2017. At the session, it was identified that the roll-out will be implemented by the Office for Security and Counter Terrorism (OSCT). The consultation event centred on the resources and roles that the Home Office had identified to effectively run the Channel process, namely the LACCs, and Supervisors who will ensure the LACC resources are shared appropriately, have oversight of Channel Panels and performance management of Channel in the Region.
- 6.2 Three options for the allocation of the resources, identified in line with current referrals and cases, were put forward to the group in attendance:

a. Three-Hubs Model

Three Hubs would be established, with three Supervisors and eight LACCs. The hubs would be established on the following footprint:

Merseyside & Cheshire – 3 LACCs

Lancashire and Cumbria – 2 LACCs & 3 Supervisors to cover all 8 LACCs

Greater Manchester - 3 LACCs

In this model, it is unclear both how the Supervisors are intended to be allocated if to a single hub or work together in one location but with geographic responsibilities. The LACCs would be recruited and employed by one of the local authorities in the sub-regional footprint with all funding provided by the Home Office and reporting to a relevant Head of Service for day-to-day management.

b. Single Regional Base Model

All 8 LACCs and 3 Supervisors based together working from one office, identified as being Liverpool OR Manchester. Based on the discussion the assumption would seem to be that one of these local authorities would recruit and employ these roles.

c. Alternative Three-Hub Model

The footprint would be as per the three-hub model above, but with on 2 LACCs for Merseyside and Cheshire and 4 LACCs allocated to Greater Manchester. The reason given for the alternative was that since May 2017, Greater Manchester had seen an increase in volume of referrals.

- 6.3 The Local Authority representatives in attendance requested more detail of the options and the thinking, it was identified that the information being used to determine the allocation of resources was not wholly reliable. While detail on how the Supervision role would be exercised and reviewed information, based on the discussions on the day, all attendees preferred the three-hub model, with the significant majority supporting Option A above.
- 6.4 On the day, representatives were in attendance from all Merseyside and Cheshire authorities, including the Assistant Director Supporting Communities and Prevent Coordinator from Liverpool City Council. Following the outline of the proposed models and preference for the Three-Hub model, the management of the resource was discussed briefly. It was suggested that Liverpool City Council would be best positioned to host given the existing established roles of Prevent Coordinator, Community Coordinator and Prevent Education Officer and close links with the Prevent Unit in Merseyside Police. These officers would work collaboratively with the LACCs and relevant Supervisor to continue to extend knowledge and good-practice sharing across both Merseyside and Cheshire. It was understood that any agreement to host such roles on behalf of the nine local authorities would be predicated on the appropriate funding levels being guaranteed by the Home Office and arrangements on allocation of resources are clearly established.
- 6.5 In describing the roles and expectations, the Home Office has provisionally advised that the salary levels for the LACC role would be in the range of £30-33,000 (approx. £43,000 with on-costs) and Supervisors in the range of £40-42,000 (approx. £52,000 with on-costs). However, it was understood that the job description and person specification would be subject to the relevant local authority's policies and procedures to ensure equity of pay. The job description and person specification are still outstanding from the OSCT, however it is clear that the LACC is more than an administrator and individuals will need a core set of behaviours, skills and abilities to undertake this role.

7.0 Recommendation and Next Steps

- 7.1 The timescales for the roll-out are still provisional with OSCT indicating the LACCs being in place for Summer/Autumn. Notwithstanding, as mentioned above, further detail such as job descriptions, confirmation of funding and confirmation of the preferred model by the OSCT are

still being progressed, on the basis of the Three Hub Model described in paragraph 6.2.

8.0 FINANCIAL UPDATE

8.1 Whilst the employees required for the preferred “Three-Hubs Model” will be employees of Liverpool City Council, the funding will be provided by the Home Office. The Council already operates a Channel Panel and recent numbers of referrals to it have been small.

9.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL’S PRIORITIES

9.1 Children and Young People in Halton

The Community Safety Service is a universal service that impacts on the health, safety and well-being of young people.

9.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

None

9.3 A Healthy Halton

The Community Safety Service is a universal service that impacts on the Health, safety and well-being of the residents of Halton.

9.4 A Safer Halton

The Community Safety Service is a universal service that impacts on the Health, safety and well-being of the residents of Halton.

9.5 Halton’s Urban Renewal

None

10.0 RISK ANALYSIS

None

11.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

None

12.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

12.1 There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.

