

REPORT TO: Safer Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 19th February 2019

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 responsibilities from the 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 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 have 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 link with safeguarding and other partnership activity the Home Office has now transferred those 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 was 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 and are chaired by the local authority, 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 have considered transferring from the police to local authorities that has 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

- 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 Dovetail and Channel Update

In addition to the 9 Local Authority Dovetail sites already operational, the North West region will be going live in January 2019. All Supervisors and Channel Coordinator staff have been recruited and received a five-day training package in November. The new staff will be based in Liverpool City Council, Manchester City Council and Blackburn with Darwen Council, responsible for Merseyside & Cheshire, Greater Manchester and Lancashire & Cumbria respectively.

This regional approach will give greater resilience in the face of varied demand, while still providing the wider benefits Dovetail offers. The Channel team are looking to extend the regional model to Wales and the Southwest in 2019/20.

7.0 Training update

The Prevent training team is to launch two new Prevent training products: a dedicated referral awareness eLearning package, and a package that explains in depth the Channel process.

Both have been designed and built with support with training users, government departments and sectors over the past two years, to complement the existing Prevent awareness eLearning. They enable users to flexibly navigate their way through the content, and gain greater insight, knowledge and skills to confidently carry out their functions to support people vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism.

7.1 Prevent Referrals

The training is for anyone who has been through the Prevent awareness eLearning or a Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent (WRAP), and so already has an understanding of Prevent and of their role in safeguarding vulnerable people.

The training follows on from the Prevent awareness training which introduces users to the NOTICE-CHECK-SHARE procedure for evaluating and sharing concerns relating to radicalisation. The package shares best practice on how to articulate concerns about an individual, and ensure that they are robust and considered. It is aimed at anyone who may be in a position to notice signs of vulnerability to radicalisation and aims to give them confidence in referring on for help if appropriate. It is also designed for those (for example line managers) who may receive these referrals and have to consider how to respond, whether that be establishing more context, or reaching out to partner agencies for support. A link to the training is below.

<https://www.elearning.prevent.homeoffice.gov.uk/preventreferrals>

7.2 Channel Awareness

This training package is for anyone who may be asked to contribute to, sit on, or even run a Channel Panel. It is aimed at all levels, from a professional asked to input and attend for the first time, to a member of staff new to their role and organising a panel meeting. It covers both an introduction to what Channel is, how it operates in the user's region, and how to organise a Channel Panel for the first time.

In response to feedback, it also covers information sharing, including how, when and with whom to share information of a Channel case. A link to the Channel Panel training is below.

<https://www.elearning.prevent.homeoffice.gov.uk/channelawareness>

7.3 Prevent awareness eLearning

The Prevent awareness eLearning has recently been refreshed. This includes updates to reflect the recommendations from the Parsons Green review, updated information following the change in threat and attacks of 2017, and new case studies. A link to the training is below.

<http://www.elearning.prevent.homeoffice.gov.uk>

8.0 FINANCIAL UPDATE

No significant impacts within the quarter from a financial perspective.

9.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

9.1 Children and Young People in Halton

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

9.4 A Safer Halton

The Community Safety Service as a universal service 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

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