

Scrutiny Committee

26 June 2025

Prevent and Channel Panel Statutory Responsibilities

Report of: Jill Broomhall, Director of Adult social Care Operations

Report Reference No: SC/04/2025-26

Ward(s) Affected: All Wards

For Scrutiny

Purpose of Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to afford the Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to scrutinise the changing landscape and statutory responsibilities in relation to PREVENT.
- 2 Local Authorities, alongside partner agencies listed in the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015, have a statutory responsibility to comply with the Prevent Duties as laid out in Prevent duty guidance: for England and Wales (accessible) - GOV.UK
- 3 The Local Authority is also responsible for delivering the multi-agency Channel Panel Programme as laid out in Channel duty guidance: Channel duty guidance: protecting people susceptible to radicalisation (accessible) - GOV.UK
- 4 Following the tragic incident in Southport, in 2024, the Home Office published a Learning Review and made recommendations and changes to the remit of PREVENT Policing and Channel Panel. This report will provide a summary of the learning, outline the changes and risks, include an update on our current working arrangements and ensure that the Local Authority is cognisant of its corporate duty to protect those who are susceptible to radicalisation.

Executive Summary

- 5 The overarching framework governing for tackling Terrorism is called CONTEST. The first CONTEST strategy was published in 2003. Its aim is to reduce the threat of Terrorism to the UK so that people can live their lives safely and freely. The strategy enables government departments, local authorities, and intelligence agencies to work together to combat Terrorism, and is supported by a framework based on the four pillars - Prepare, Prevent, Protect and Pursue.

- 6 The latest version of CONTEST was published in July 2023. (Counter-terrorism strategy (CONTEST) 2023 - GOV.UK) The landscape is constantly changing, becoming more diverse and complex. It includes domestic threats which can be less predictable and harder to detect and investigate, persistent and evolving threats from Islamist terrorist groups overseas and advances in technology providing opportunities for online exploitation/radicalisation.
- 7 At the time of writing this report, the current official threat level to the UK remains as “Substantial” This means an attack is “likely” according to the government’s definitions. Raising it to critical would mean that intelligence and security services regard an attack as “highly likely in the UK.
- 8 PREVENT is one of the main vehicles for reducing the threat of Terrorism in the UK and sit alongside the other pillars:
- 9 PURSUE: to stop terrorist attacks
- 10 PROTECT: to strengthen our protection against a terrorist attack
- 11 PREPARE: to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack
- 12 The objectives of PREVENT, as set out in the duty guidance 2023 are to: tackle the ideological causes of terrorism, intervene early to support people susceptible to radicalisation and enable people who have already engaged in terrorism to disengage and rehabilitate.
- 13 Anyone who is worried that someone is being targeted and is susceptible to radicalisation, can make a referral to Counter Terrorism Policing. Families can seek advice by the ACT Early Website. The Police conduct the initial screening and risk assessment. They then consider whether the case should be managed by themselves, or whether a person would benefit from a multi-disciplinary approach. If it is the latter, the Police make a referral to the local Channel Panel.
- 14 Every Local Authority must have robust Channel Panel arrangements in place. The Chair and Deputy must be named Senior and Experienced Officers employed by the Local Authority. The multi-agency panel meets monthly, reviews new cases and offers tailored support to subjects who consent to accept support from Channel. This is a voluntary process. People will remain involved with Channel until the panel is satisfied that the person has been provided with enough information, 1:1 intervention and wrap around services which reduce the risk of further radicalisation. Some cases will be escalated back to the Police, where Terrorism risks have increased. Cases are reviewed at least every 6 and 12 months after they have exited Channel.
- 15 The Home Office do not permit us to share the numbers of PREVENT/CHANNEL referrals to Cheshire East. However, we can say that most referrals concern people aged 11 – 17. Often people with additional health, social and educational needs, who have experienced trauma and are seeking an identity. Most referrals come from education settings.

- 16 The Home Office have a Quality Assurance Process in place which assesses each Local Authority regarding their PREVENT and Channel duties annually. Cheshire East completed its Benchmarking Assessment with the Home Office this year on 19th March 2025. To date Cheshire East has met all the necessary benchmarks for its delivery. The Home Office will confirm Cheshire East Benchmarking scores in a letter which will be sent to the Chief Executive of the Council in May or June 2025.
- 17 In addition, there are robust Governance arrangements in place in Cheshire East, with quarterly reports being presented to the Safer Cheshire East Partnership, the production of a Channel Panel Annual Reports and update presentations to the Scrutiny Committee. The Cheshire East Constitution was updated several years ago to reflect the work and risks associated with PREVENT.
- 18 Counter Terrorism Policing produce a Counter Terrorism Local Plan each year. A Risk Assessment is produced by each PREVENT Board, based on local threats and risks. The Action Plan captures activity undertaken by partner agencies and includes actions to address training, communication and engagement and working to reduce the risk of permissive environments via venue hire agreements. The Chair of the PREVENT Board is the Director of Adult Social Care, who also represents Cheshire East at the local CONTEST BOARD.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

1. Scrutinise and note the changing landscape and statutory responsibilities in relation PREVENT.

Background

- 19 The Home Office published an Independent Review into the Southport incident on 5th February 2025. The Prevent Learning Review was commissioned to examine the Prevent involvement with Axel Muganwa Rudakubana (AMR) prior to the tragic attack which led to the loss of three young lives, which AMR is alleged to have committed, on 29 July 2024 in Southport. It was done with the aim of identifying effective practice, organisational learning opportunities and any further areas for development. At the commencement of the review, prosecution had commenced but not finalised. Prevent learning review: Axel Muganwa Rudakubana (accessible) - GOV.UK
- 20 AMR was referred to Prevent three times. The **first referral** was received from AMR's teacher on 5 December 2019. The teacher reported several concerns regarding behaviours which included being excluded from his previous school for carrying a knife and searching for mass school shootings

on the internet using his school account. After a discussion with Prevent officers (CTCOs) in which AMR accounted for his internet searches, the case was closed on the Prevent system on 31 January 2020. Acknowledgement is made that AMR is extremely vulnerable but there is no CT/DE concerns and appropriate agencies are already in place to support him.

- 21 A **second referral** was received from AMR's previous school on 01 February 2021. It was reported that a pupil had showed them [social media] posts by AMR which they were concerned about and felt AMR was being radicalised. The CTCO acknowledged the previous referral, however considered the [social media] posts to be not CT/DE relevant and the case was closed on 17 February 2021.
- 22 A **third referral** was received from AMR's teacher on 26 April 2021. It reported that AMR had been observed with internet tabs open during a lesson showing a search for London Bomb and seemed to have a passionate interest in Israel/Palestine conflict, MI5 and the IRA. The CTCO acknowledged the previous two referrals but considered that AMR's needs were currently met outside of Prevent and there was no CT/DE concerns to address. The case was closed on 10 May 2021.
- 23 Overall, the Reviewer considered there to have been a high level of compliance by the Prevent officers with process timescales, assessment completion and adherence to policy that were in place at the time. However, although processes and policies have been largely followed, it is the subjective decisions that have come into focus and AMR should have been referred to Channel. The Review identifies several areas for learning to strengthen risk assessments, particularly around understanding indicators of radicalisation where a coherent ideology is not present and recognising the potential risk from repeat referrals. Several recommendations have been identified through this review. These include strengthening training and guidance, changes to terminology used within Prevent, and improving assurance processes.
- 24 The independent reviewer identified several factors that may have impacted decision making: The weight put upon the assessments and opinions made in the initial intelligence screening process:
- A focus on the absence of a distinct ideology.
 - Potentially incomplete lines of enquiry.
 - Under-exploration of the significance of repeat referrals.
 - An over-adherence to some aspects of policy where discretion was allowed, which may have influenced decisions taken.
 - More broadly a lack of independent business assurance
- 25 Since January 2025 the Home Office have instigated several measures to address the findings of the Learning Review and to look at PREVENT

legislation and procedures. An Independent PREVENT Commissioner, Lord Anderson, has been appointed to oversee this.

- 26 20/1/25 The Prime Minister and Home Secretary made public statements about the Southport tragedy and announced the launch of a Public Inquiry, the appointment of the Independent Commissioner and measures to address the sale of knives.
- 27 27/1/25 The Home Office widened the Roots of Intervention, including Channel to be open to those individuals who are under over Counter Terrorism investigation. (Supporting tools sent to Channel Chairs on 24/1/25)
- 28 12/2/25 The Home Office published the learning review following the death of Sir David Amess MP who was murdered on 15 October 2021 whilst conducting a regular constituency surgery at Belfair's Methodist Church Hall in Leigh-on-Sea, Essex.
- 29 20//2/25 The Home Office share a Report regarding the prevalence of autism in the Channel cohort. Key findings indicated that an estimated 14% of Channel cases had diagnosed ASC, plus an additional 12% of cases where ASC was suspected but not formally diagnosed. The research involved qualitative interviews with Local Authority Channel practitioners and IPs.
- 30 6/3/25 The Home Office introduced changes to the Review Form used when a case is closed and at 6- and 12-month intervals.
- 31 10/3/25 The Home Office new the Multiple Referral (Repeats) Policy went live.
- 32 13//3/25 The Home Office updated the Prevent Case Management Ideology Categories to be used by Counter Terrorism Police
- 33 13/3/25 The Home Office made an addendum to the Channel Duty Guidance for local Policing to be alerted when a case is not adopted by Channel Panel or exits Channel Panel where a person has been categorised as "having a fascination with extreme violence or mass casualty attacks.
- 34 24/3/25 The Home Office the remit of Channel Panels to include Fascination with extreme violence/mass casualty attacks went live. **To note** that cohorts categorised as 'fascination with extreme violence or mass casualty attacks' have been relevant for Prevent since 2019, although analysis has shown there to be significant inconsistency with how such referrals are progressed through the system.
- 35 25/3/25 The Home Office issued Guidance to Channel Panels on how to use the PREVENT ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK more effectively. This is the assessment produced by Counter Terrorism Policing based on information gathering from all agencies and includes details of susceptibility, intent, capability, engagement and risks.
- 36 7/4/25 The Channel Panel Duty Guidance was updated and published.

Consultation and Engagement

37 No consultation is necessary for this report.

Reasons for Recommendations

38 This report sets out the statutory duties of the Local Authority in relation to PREVENT.

Other Options Considered

39 No further options have been considered as this is a legal duty placed upon the Authority.

Option	Impact	Risk
The Authority has a legal duty to comply with the responsibilities and duties in relation to PREVENT	Should an incident occur here, in the same manner as the Southport one, the impact for individuals, families, communities and the Council would be immense	It should be recognised that whilst we have robust policies, procedures and partnerships in place, which are quality assured by the Home Office annually, we cannot mitigate or predict all "lone wolf" extremist activity in Cheshire East, which may be emerging behind closed doors.

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal/Governance

40 The aim of Prevent is to stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.

41 The objectives of Prevent are to:

- tackle the ideological causes of terrorism
- intervene early to support people susceptible to radicalisation
- enable people who have already engaged in terrorism to disengage and rehabilitate

42 In fulfilling the prevent duty in Section 26 of the Counter – Terrorism and Security Act 2015 ('CTSA 2015') all specified authorities are expected to participate fully in work to prevent the risk of people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. The Prevent duty statutory guidance: England and

Wales was issued on the 7 September 2023 under Section 29 CTSA 2015 and came into force on 31 December 2023 replacing guidance which came into force in July 2015.

- 43 Sections 36 to 41 of CTSA 2015 sets out the duty on local authorities and partners of local panels to provide support for people vulnerable to being drawn into any form of terrorism. The Channel duty guidance: Protecting People susceptible to radicalisation has been issued under sections 36(7) and 38(6) of the CTSA2015 to support panel members and partners of local panels. Further guidance has been issued Prevent Multi – Agency Panel Duty guidance: protecting people vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism and a Policy Addendum.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

- 44 There are no financial implications requiring changes to the MTFS as a result of the recommendations in this report.
- 45 Cheshire East is an “unfunded” local authority and receives no additional government funding for the work of PREVENT. It should be noted that the responsibility for this has been undertaken by adult social care for seven years.
- 46 To meet the expectations of the Home Office and to effectively deliver our statutory duties, additional funding and/or capacity may be required. This would support the Administration and Training Requirements. If additional funding is required then it would either need to be funded by additional income from partners or grants, or alternatively the service could include this in the MTFS from 26/27.

Human Resources

- 47 All Cheshire East Staff should be informed about PREVENT within their Corporate Induction, including Elected Members.
- 48 Frontline staff and managers should complete additional training depending on their specific responsibilities and interactions with PREVENT and CHANNEL. The Home Office introduced a new Training Portal in April 2025. There is an expectation that Frontline Practitioners across the Council, not only Adults and Children’s Social Care will be provided with this training. At the time of writing this report, we are considering who could deliver this and numbers of staff impacted.
- 49 Staff will require additional support when managing high risk and complex cases. This should be provided by 1:1 supervision and access to senior management advice.
- 50 Therefore, the risk surrounding the PREVENT work should be a Cheshire East Corporate responsibility, shared by the Corporate Leadership Team.

Risk Management

- 51 The Home Office categorise the national risk level dependent on current and emerging risks, and it remains at a Substantial Risk. Counter Terrorism Policing produce an annual Counter Terrorism Local Profile which is available via Resilience Direct. Thereafter Local PREVENT Boards produce a situational risk assessment which is updated and shared at quarterly Board Meetings.
- 52 It should be recognised that whilst we have robust policies, procedures and partnerships in place, which are quality assured by the Home Office annually, we cannot mitigate or predict all “lone wolf” extremist activity in Cheshire East, which may be emerging behind closed doors. Should an incident occur here, in the same manner as the Southport one, the impact for individuals, families, communities and the Council would be immense.

Impact on other Committees

Policy

- 53 The Home Office have updated PREVENT and CHANNEL Policy and Procedures this year which all Local Authorities are duty bound to implement. Local documentation has been updated and can be evidenced in the PREVENT Action Plan. Cheshire East and West have updated their Joint PREVENT Strategy to reflect the changes.
- 54 These statutory duties underpin Cheshire East’s ambition to protect children, adults and families from abuse, neglect and exploitation.

55

Commitment 1: Unlocking prosperity for all	Commitment 2: Improving health and wellbeing	Commitment 3: An effective and enabling council
---	---	--

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 56 All areas of Cheshire East are equally impacted by PREVENT and CHANNEL.
- 57 The Home Office is responsible for the PREVENT and CHANNEL statutory guidance. It is hoped that the recent changes and updates have included a national Equality Impact Assessment on all population groups.

Other Implications

Rural Communities

58 All rural and urban communities are equally impacted by PREVENT.

Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

59 Whilst anyone can be susceptible to radicalization, the national and local data tells us that young people between 11 and 17 are more susceptible, including those with autism spectrum disorder.

60 A recommendation is that the ownership and management of PREVENT should be shared equally between Adult and Childrens Social Care with named Senior Management participation.

Public Health

61 It should be noted that some people who are susceptible to radicalization may have experienced trauma and be impacted by where they live in terms of deprivation and access to services.

62 Anyone who is being drawn into terrorist activity and thinking will be impacted in a negative way and their health and wellbeing will be affected.

Climate Change

63 There are no foreseeable impacts on Climate Change.

Consultation

Name of Consultee	Post held	Date sent	Date returned
<i>Statutory Officer (or deputy) :</i>			
Ashley Hughes	S151 Officer		
Janet Witkowski	Acting Monitoring Officer		
<i>Legal and Finance</i>			
Roisin Beressi	Principal Lawyer	13/06/25	13/06/25
Nikki Wood-Hill	Finance Manager	13/06/25	13/06/25

<i>Other Consultees:</i> <i>Executive Directors/Directors</i>			
Helen Charlesworth-May	Executive Director Adults, Health and Integration	02/06/25	03/06/25

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Sandra Murphy Head of Adult Safeguarding Sandra.murphy@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	<u>Prevent learning review: Southport attack - GOV.UK</u> https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-learning-review-sir-david-amess-attack
Background Papers:	<u>Prevent duty guidance: England and Wales (2023) - GOV.UK</u> https://www.communitycvs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Prevent-Duty-Toolkit-for-Local-Authorities.pdf <u>Channel duty guidance: protecting people susceptible to radicalisation (accessible) - GOV.UK</u>