

Prevent Strategy Cheshire East and Cheshire West

January 2024

Our **Vision** is to stop people within our communities' becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism and to protect people susceptible to radicalisation



Introduction

In 2003 the Government first published an Overarching Strategy for countering Terrorism. The CONTEST strategy has been subject to review and the most recent version was published in July 2023. The Government's response to counter terrorism is built on an approach that unites the public and private sectors, communities, citizens and overseas partners around the single purpose to leave no safe space for terrorists to recruit or act.

Their strategy, CONTEST, is the framework that enables us to organise this work to counter all forms of terrorism. CONTEST's overarching aim remains to reduce the risk to the UK and its citizens and interests overseas from terrorism, so that our people can go about their lives freely and with confidence. It reflects the findings of a fundamental review of all aspects of counter terrorism, to ensure we have the best response to the heightened threat in coming years.

The latest review found CONTEST to be well-organised and comprehensive and that we should continue our approach within the tried and tested strategic framework of four 'P' work strands:

Prevent: to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.

Pursue: to stop terrorist attacks.

Protect: to strengthen our protection against a terrorist attack.

Prepare: to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack.

In addition to updating the Overarching CONTEST Strategy, the Government also updated its PREVENT Duty Guidance and CHANNEL Duty Guidance in 2023.

Strategic context

The current UK National Threat Level is SUBSTANTIAL, meaning an attack is likely. Islamist terrorism is the foremost terrorist threat to the UK. Extreme right-wing terrorism is a growing threat.

Between the 2018 edition of the CONTEST strategy and the latest version published in July 2023, nine terrorist attacks have occurred in the UK and 39 terrorist plots have been disrupted. 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.

The recent attacks across Europe and the UK have also served to highlight the diversity and accessibility of methods by which individuals who are susceptible to these radicalising messages can commit attacks.

However, we will not always be successful in stopping attacks. Most future terrorist plots in the UK will employ simple methods that can be developed with ease and at speed. Terrorists still have the intent to also mount complex, potentially more destructive attacks, probably targeting crowded places or the global aviation system. The general availability and use of encrypted communications allows terrorists to disguise their plans better.

What is Terrorism?

Terrorism is the use or threat of action where it involves serious violence or damage, or risk of either, to person, property or electronic systems. It is designed to influence a government or to intimidate members of the public, and it is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause.

Specified authorities **must**, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

As such, the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 places a duty on offender institutions, schools, health and social care agencies, the police and local authorities to actively participate in the PREVENT programme.

What is Extremism?

Extremism is vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We (the government) also include in our definition of extremism calls for the death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas

There are many different types of extremism, but could be grounded in religion, the far right, islamophobia, animal rights or politics, antisemitism, misogyny, anti LGBT grievances among others. It is important therefore, that practitioners should be alert not only to violent extremism but also non-violent extremism, including divisive or intolerant narratives which can be linked to terrorist ideologies.

What is Radicalisation?

Radicalisation is the process of a person subscribing to extremist ideology. This can include legitimising support for, or use of, terrorist violence.

It is distinct from radicalism - within which Nelson Mandela or Martin Luther King might be appropriately categorised - in that it seeks to **disenfranchise**; that is, to create a narrative that doesn't already exist rather than fight for a cause borne out of injustice and oppression.

There is no single pathway to being radicalised. There are many factors which can, either alone or combined, lead someone to subscribe to extremist ideology, and therefore become an advocate of terrorism. These may include:

- Political or economic grievances
- Social and psychological factors
- A feeling of not being accepted by, or having an affinity with, family, community, or state

What is Prevent?

The aim of PREVENT is to reduce the threat to the UK from terrorism by stopping people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. Delivery of PREVENT is grounded in early intervention and safeguarding. The long-term solution to the threat faced by the UK from domestic or international terrorism is not just about more effective policing. PREVENT has 3 objectives. To tackle the ideological causes of terrorism; to intervene early to support people to stop them from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism; and to rehabilitate those who have already engaged in terrorist activity. It does this by:

- Focussing attention and resources and activity to where the threat from terrorism and radicalisation is highest.
- Ensure individuals receive rehabilitative interventions.
- Improve our understanding of those at risk of involvement in terrorism and enable earlier intervention.
- Focus our online activity on preventing the dissemination of terrorist material and building strong counter-terrorist narratives to ensure there are no safe places for terrorists online.
- Build stronger partnerships with communities, civil society groups, public sector institutions and industry to improve Prevent delivery.
- Re-enforce safeguarding at the heart of Prevent to ensure our communities and families are not exploited or groomed into following a path of violent extremism.

Prevent duty guidance: Guidance of specified authorities in England and Wales

The PREVENT duty guidance holds statutory status as issued by S29 of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015. The latest version will come into force on 31st December 2023. The Guidance is for senior leadership teams in any Specified Authority, those with dedicated PREVENT and/or safeguarding duties, commissioners and external partners and those in frontline roles likely to engage with people who may be susceptible to radicalisation.

Specified authorities include education, health, local authorities, police and criminal justice agencies, prisons, and probation. The duty helps to ensure that people are supported as they would be under other safeguarding processes.

Cheshire East and Cheshire West have established Multi Agency PREVENT Boards which hold strategic responsibility for PREVENT duties within each respective Local Authority. The effectiveness of PREVENT in each Local Authority is measured annually by the submission of a Benchmarking Assessment to the Home Office. PREVENT Boards must demonstrate how they are implementing the principles of reducing radicalisation, early intervention, and rehabilitation by:

- Having a strong partnership working with effective governance
- Having a risk assessment in place based on the Counter Terrorism Local Plan
- Having an agreed Partnership Plan

- Having an agreed pathway in place for the referral of those identified as susceptible to radicalisation.
- Having an effective Channel Panel
- Frontline and contracted staff having a good understanding of PREVENT, are trained to recognise those who may be susceptible and are aware of available support programmes such as CHANNEL. Designated Safeguarding Leads and those with PREVENT responsibilities have more in-depth training.
- There are policies and procedures in place to reduce permissive spaces use by those who radicalise people into participating or supporting terrorism.
- There is a communications and engagement plan to provide people with information about PREVENT, increase awareness about the aims of PREVENT and know how to access support.

What is Channel?

‘Channel’ is a voluntary, confidential programme which provides support to people who are susceptible to being drawn into radicalisation. It operates in every Local Authority in the UK. The aim of the programme is to safeguard people from the harm which radicalisation can cause before they come to harm or become involved in criminal behaviour.

It works to support those who may be susceptible or vulnerable from being drawn into radicalisation or terrorism and provides a range of support such as mentoring, counselling, ideology-based intervention etc. Channel is about early action to protect vulnerable people from being drawn into committing terrorist-related activity and addresses all types of extremism.

Participation in Channel is voluntary, and consent is sought from every person before support is offered. It is up to an individual, or their parents for children aged 18 and under, to decide whether to take up the support it offers. Channel does not lead to a criminal record.

The Channel Duty Guidance: Protecting People susceptible to radicalisation.

Each Channel Panel is chaired by a Local Authority and brings together a range of multi-agency partners to collectively assess the presenting information contained in Prevent Assessment Framework (PAF), identify the ideology, consider the Counter Terrorism risk and decide whether to adopt the person onto the Channel Panel programme. The panel consists of statutory and non-statutory partners, as well as lead safeguarding professionals who have signed up to an information sharing protocol and can contribute to additional “wrap around” support to the individual where appropriate.

If the Channel Panel feels the person would be suitable for Channel, and once consent is obtained, it will look to develop a support plan that is bespoke to the person and records how each vulnerability factor is going to be addressed and by which agency. The panel will also be able to offer an independent Intervention Provider, who will offer dedicated 1:1 sessions to address specific ideologies and risks. The partnership approach ensures those with specific knowledge and expertise around the vulnerabilities of those at risk can work together to provide the

best support which could range from diversionary activities through to providing access to specific statutory and voluntary, community and faith services.

The Channel Panel will review the individuals progress at monthly meetings. All panel members have a responsibility to work collaboratively with the chair and panel partners to help mitigate identified risk and susceptibilities. This will include attending panel meetings, contributing towards the support plan and sharing information as necessary and proportionate. The Panel can invite additional guests to provide information such as a Head Teacher, Army Cadets etc.

Where a person who is receiving support from Channel is employed in a Position of Trust, the chair/panel will need to make a specific decision about disclosure to an Employer.

If partner agencies do not contribute to case discussions or fail to follow up on specific actions, the Channel Panel Chair will use the escalation policy to address any blockages.

Once the risk is reduced or removed, or consent is withdrawn, the case will be closed to Channel Panel. In some cases, due to the level of risk, the case will be transferred into the Police led space. A lead agency will be identified to oversee the case and report back any new risks. Each case is reviewed at 6 and 12 months following closure to Channel Panel. Feedback will be requested from the individual and or their family to measure the impact of interventions.

Cheshire East and Cheshire West's Channel Panels are chaired by a Senior Manager in Adult Safeguarding. Other Panel Members include representatives from Adults and Children's Social Care, Education, Probation, Youth Justice Service, Colleges and University, Health, Police and Community Safety.

The role of the Counter Terrorism Police

Prior to a case being presented to Channel Panel, the Counter Terrorism Police will receive the Prevent referral and undertake a gateway assessment. They will request information from partner agencies and complete the Prevent Assessment Framework documentation. The Police will then make a S36 Decision regarding whether the case meets the criteria for Channel Panel.

The Police will thereafter:

- Share all information relating to the case with the Panel.
- Conduct their own organisational risk assessment and share that with the Panel.
- Liaise with the Panel to discuss the most effective way to engage the individual / family and discuss the Channel process and consent with them.
- Attend Channel Panel
- Commission an Independent Provider if this is felt by panel to be required.
- Collate updates and provide information to the Channel Chair prior to the next Channel Panel meeting.
- Completed or give updates.

- Inform the Panel of any changes or concerns which may impact upon the case, individual or associated risks.
- Continually assess the needs, susceptibilities and protective factors of the individual and assist the Panel to complete Vulnerability Assessment Framework.
- Provide regular updates and reports.
- Organise or attend meetings with other professionals as required for example Team Around the Family meetings, Strategy Meeting, Professionals Meeting.
- Communicate and share information as appropriate with other professionals to effectively support the individual.
- Help to identify ideological or holistic intervention for the referral.

Confidentiality

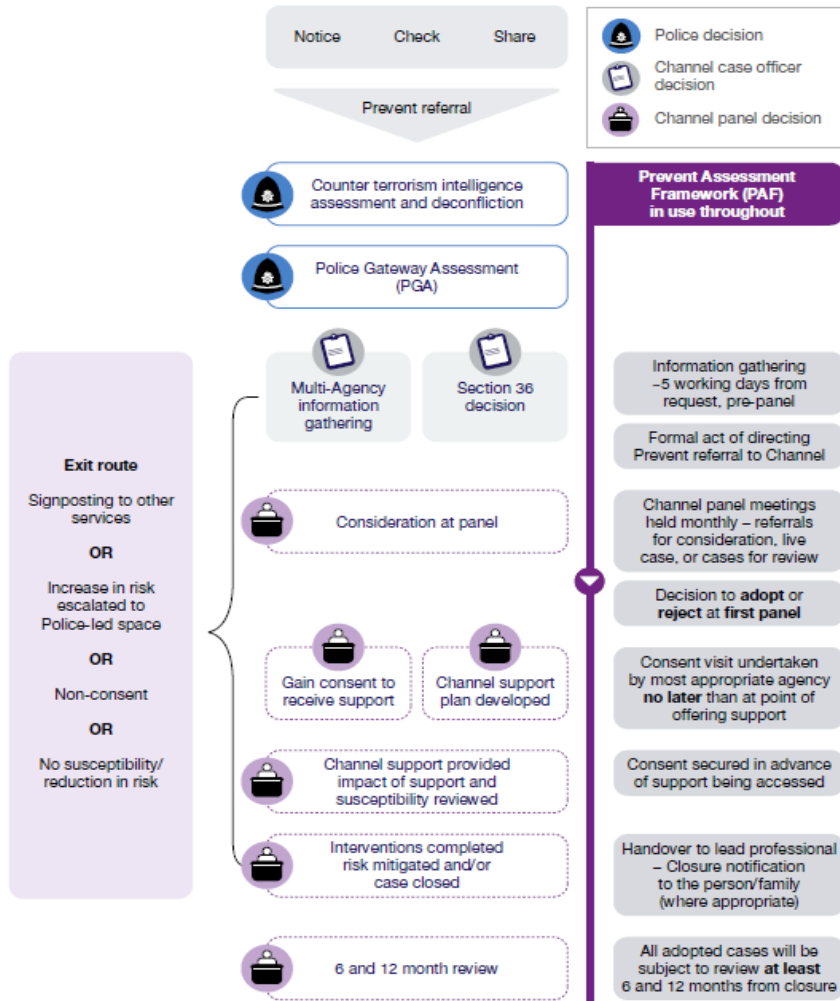
Each professional working with a Channel referral has responsibility to ensure information obtained during an intervention is kept confidential and stored securely, considering the legal requirements set out in the General Data Protection Act 2018.

Governance and Accountability

Channel is accountable to the Safer Cheshire East Partnership and Cheshire West Safeguarding Board respectively and will report quarterly on progress as set out in the Business Plan.

Prevent and Channel Process

Diagram 1: Pathway Diagram



The Prevent Assessment Framework (PAF)

Channel panels currently use a Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF) to guide decision making. The Prevent Assessment Framework (PAF) is being piloted but will replace the Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF) in 2024. The Assessment Form will help to identify CT risks, intent, capabilities, ideologies, susceptibilities, and protective factors. Once adopted by Channel Panel it will help to shape an individual's support plan and is reviewed monthly and updated to record any changes.

Engagement with a group, cause or ideology:

Engagement factors are sometimes referred to as “psychological hooks”. They include needs, susceptibilities, motivations, and contextual influences and together map the individual pathway into radicalisation.

They can include:

- Feelings of grievance and injustice
- Feeling under threat
- A need for identity, meaning and belonging.
- A desire for status
- A desire for excitement and adventure
- A need to dominate and control others.
- Susceptibility to indoctrination
- A desire for political or moral change
- Opportunistic involvement
- Family or friend's involvement in extremism
- Being at a transitional time of life
- Being influenced or controlled by a group.
- Relevant mental health issues

Intent to cause harm:

Not all those who become engaged by a group, cause or ideology go on to develop an intention to cause harm, so this dimension is considered separately. Intent factors describe the mindset that is associated with a readiness to use violence and address what the individual would do and to what end.

They can include:

- Over-identification with a group or ideology
- ‘Them and Us’ thinking.
- Dehumanisation of the enemy
- Attitudes that justify offending
- Harmful means to an end
- Harmful objectives

Capability to cause harm:

Not all those who have a wish to cause harm on behalf of a group, cause or ideology are capable of doing so, and plots to cause widespread damage take a high level of personal capability, resources and networking to be successful. What the individual

is capable of is therefore a key consideration when assessing risk of harm to the public.

Factors can include:

- Individual knowledge, skills, and competencies
- Access to networks, funding, or equipment
- Criminal Capability

Further guidance and information:

CONTEST STRATEGY 2023 [Counter-terrorism strategy \(CONTEST\) 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/strategies/counter-terrorism-strategy-2023)

PREVENT STRATEGY 2023 [Prevent duty guidance: England and Wales \(2023\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/strategies/prevent-strategy-2023)

PREVENT DUTY TOOLKIT FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES [Prevent duty toolkit for local authorities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/toolkits/prevent-duty-toolkit-for-local-authorities)

CHANNEL DUTY GUIDANCE 2023 [Channel Duty Guidance: Protecting people susceptible to radicalisation \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/guidance/channel-duty-guidance-2023)

PREVENT TRAINING RESOURCES [Prevent duty training - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/prevent-duty-training)

ACT EARLY WEBSITE [ACT Early | Prevent radicalisation](https://www.actearly.gov.uk)

CHESHIRE CONSTABULARY [Staying safe from terrorism | Cheshire Constabulary](https://www.cheshire.police.uk)

Our **Vision** is.

To stop people within our communities' becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism

This will be delivered through three **Priorities**

- Embed Prevent into our mainstream activities.
- Build resilience to extremist ideologies within our communities.
- Safeguard those most susceptible to the messages of extremists

Embed PREVENT into our mainstream activities

Why?

It is not possible to resolve the current terrorist threats we face simply by arresting and prosecuting more people. The PREVENT programme is based on the ethos that prevention is better than cure, and intervening at the earliest possible stage of the process of radicalisation is the most effective way to ensure a reduction in support for terrorism of all kinds. Our local PREVENT Boards will provide strategic oversight on our respective PREVENT Duties and Channel Multi-Agency Panel will assume operational responsibility for the duties specified within the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015

How?

Train our staff to recognise the signs of susceptibility and know what to do about it

Maximise links between policies and strategies that deal with susceptibility AND vulnerability

Maintain an awareness of risks and put measures in place to mitigate them

Build resilience to extremist ideologies within our communities.

Why?

This strategy will not be effective if communities do not play a key role in the development of preventative work and community-based solutions to local issues which create a potential platform for extremists to spread their divisive and dangerous ideologies

How?

Communicate and promote the work and intentions of the PREVENT programme.

Identify, understand, and counter extremist ideologies in partnership with a range of institutions.

Maintain regular and effective dialogue and co-ordination with community-based organisations.

Safeguard those most susceptible to the messages of extremists

Why?

Safeguarding individuals from radicalisation and violent extremism is important. More and more people are being influenced by alluring and dangerous views through social peer groups and online and need to be protected by the agencies and professionals who have a duty to care for them.

How?

Ensure there are clear and robust safeguarding policies to identify children and adults at risk of radicalisation.

Share information regularly and effectively with our partners.

Ensure that publicly owned venues and resources do not provide a platform for extremists

How to report suspicions

Members of the public should always remain alert to the danger of terrorism and report any suspicious activity to the police on 101, 999 or the anti-terrorist hotline: 0800 789 321.

Email CTPNW.Merseyside@Merseyside.pnn.police.uk
Telephone - Cheshire Police on 01606 365 986