



CONTEST

Cheshire West & Chester's Strategy for Countering Terrorism

March 2022

Our **Vision** is to *stop people within our communities becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism*

Introduction

In June 2018 the Government published an updated strategy for countering terrorism 'Contest.' 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 review found CONTEST to be well-organised and comprehensive and that we should update 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.

Strategic context

The current UK National Threat Level is SEVERE, meaning an attack is highly likely. XFR Extremism, Islamist Terrorism and Extreme Right Wing are the largest threats of terrorism in the UK.

Using pernicious, divisive messaging and amplifying perceived grievances, Daesh and Al Qaida exploit the internet to promote warped alternative narratives, urging extremists within our own communities to subvert our way of life through simple, brutal violence. They deem anyone who does not share their rejectionist views as a legitimate target and any method of murder acceptable. They cynically groom the vulnerable and the young to join their movement, inspiring people within our own communities to commit senseless acts of violence.

The recent attacks across Europe and the UK have also served to highlight the diversity and accessibility of methods by which individuals who are vulnerable 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, among others

What is Radicalisation?

Radicalisation is process by which people come to support terrorism and forms of extremism leading to terrorism.

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

Radicalisation has a complex, often overlapping, range of causes which vary from one organisation or individual to another, but 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 long-term solution to the threat faced by the UK from domestic or international terrorism is not just about more effective policing. It is about tackling the factors that can cause people to become drawn into violent extremism and empowering individuals and communities to stand up to violent extremists. To safeguard and support those vulnerable to radicalisation, to stop them from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism

An integral part of CONTEST, the *Prevent* programme aims to stop people either from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. It does this by:

- Focussing activity and resources in those locations 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 in order 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.

Local authority duties

The *Prevent* duty guidance, published alongside the Act, goes into more detail about what is expected of us as a local authority.

We must:

- Communicate and promote the work and intentions of the *Prevent* programme
- Establish or make use of an existing local multi-agency group to agree risk and co-ordinate and monitor the impact of our *Prevent* activity. This is known locally as the Channel Multi-Agency Panel (MAP) and includes a wide variety of relevant partners, including the local authority, police, probation, health, social care and youth offending services
- Use our existing counter-terrorism local profiles to begin to assess the risk of individuals being drawn into terrorism
- Engage with our *Prevent* coordinator, our education institutions, health, probation services, enforcement agencies and others as part of the risk assessment process
- Mainstream the *Prevent* duty so that it becomes part of the day-to-day work of the authority - in particular safeguarding
- Develop a *Prevent* Action Plan where, through the multi-agency group, a risk has been highlighted
- Ensure that front-line staff have a good understanding of *Prevent*, are trained to recognise vulnerability and are aware of available programmes to deal with this issue

What is Channel?

Channel' is a voluntary, confidential programme which provides support to people who are vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. It operates across the country through Local Authority-chaired multi-agency panels and is not any form of criminal or civil sanction. 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 vulnerable people from being drawn into 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 under 18 to decide whether to take up the support it offers. Channel does not lead to a criminal record.

The Channel Panel

Each Channel Panel is chaired by a Local Authority and brings together a range of multi-agency partners to collectively assess the risk and decide whether a support

package is needed. The group may include statutory and non-statutory partners, as well as lead safeguarding professionals who have signed up to an information sharing protocol and attend a monthly panel meeting.

If the group feels the person would be suitable for Channel, it will look to develop a package of support that is bespoke to the person. The partnership approach ensures those with specific knowledge and expertise around the vulnerabilities of those at risk are able to 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.

Panel Members include representatives from Adults and Children's Social Care, Education, Probation, Colleges and University, Health and Police.

The Role of the Channel Panel

The panel jointly assess the nature and extent of the risk to the referral and discuss the most appropriate support plan. This is tailored to the individual's needs and can consist of one or multiple statutory and holistic interventions. The caseworker will be required to share relevant information to form an accurate assessment of need. They may be required to attend panel meetings and take away agreed actions and report back when completed. Support will continue to be reviewed as often as the panel suggest, until the case closes.

All partner agencies will be requested to provide pertinent information during the lifecycle of the case. If consent is not given or withdrawn at any stage or the individual's vulnerabilities and risks reduce, then the case will be closed. If any further concerns come to light, then a further referral can be made at any time. Closed cases are reviewed after 6 months as well as 12 months, at which point if there is no further risk identified, it will be exited completely from the Channel process.

The role of the Channel Co-ordinator

The Channel Co-ordinator is assigned to an individual/family will manage the case within their organisational structures, and will;

- 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 as required.
- Take ownership of agreed actions from Chanel Panel that fall within their service area and report back when 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, vulnerabilities and protective factors of the individual and assist the Panel to complete Vulnerability Assessment Framework.
- Provide regular updates and reports.
- Organise meetings with other professionals as required.
- Communicate and share information as appropriate with other professionals to effectively support the individual.
- Help to identify ideological or holistic intervention for the referral.

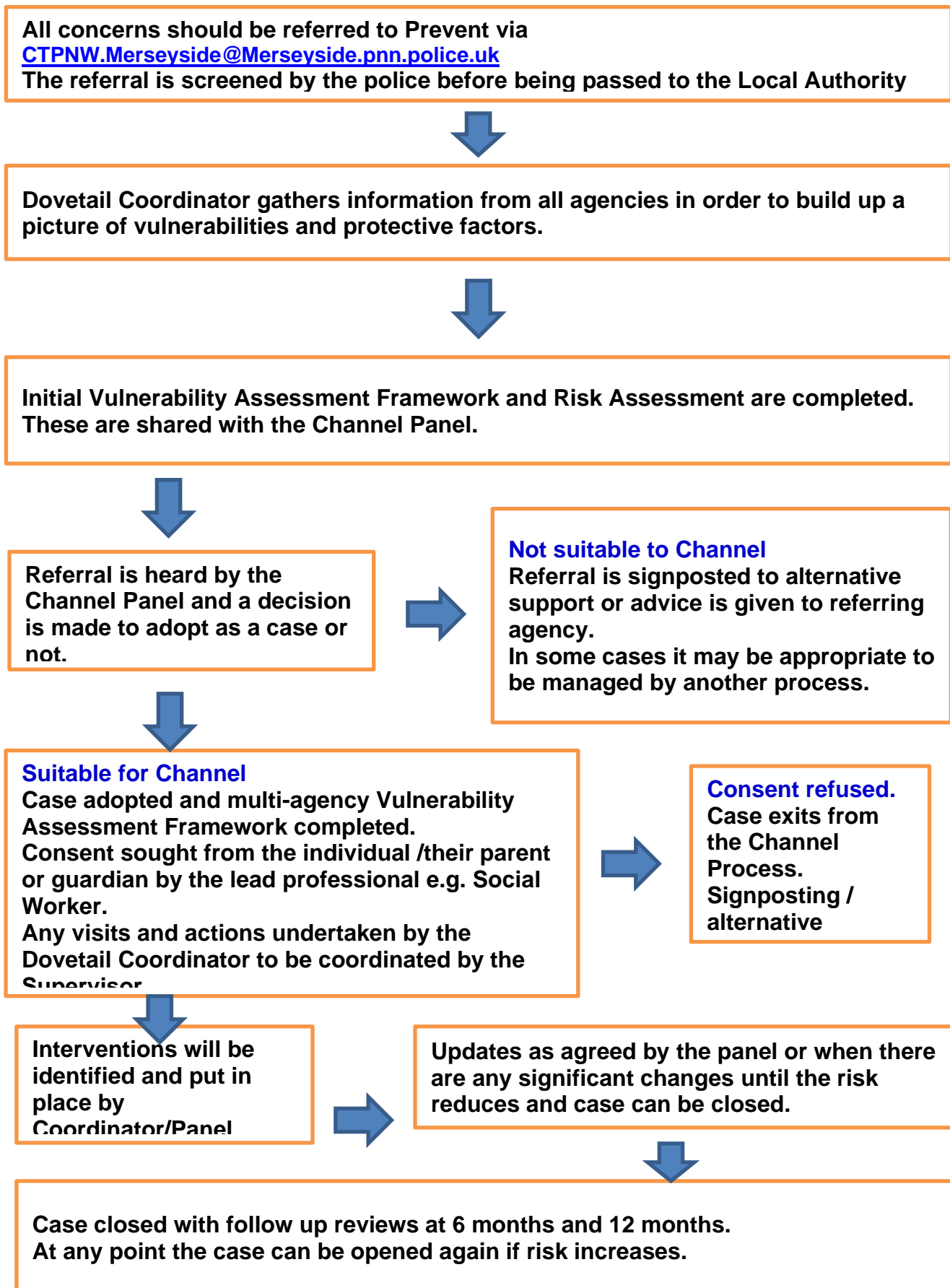
Confidentiality

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 a subgroup of the Local Safeguarding Adults Board and will report quarterly on progress as set out in the Business Plan.

Channel Process



The Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF)

Local partnerships that deliver Channel use a Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF) to guide decisions about whether an individual needs support to safeguard them from the risk of being targeted by terrorists and radicalisers and to address their vulnerability to radicalisation by assessing the kind of support that they need. The framework covers 22 factors that may cause someone to *engage* with a terrorist group, cause or ideology, *develop* the intent to cause harm or develop the *capability* to cause harm.

The characteristics covered by the VAF do not necessarily indicate that a person needs Channel support and it should not be assumed that it indicates that a person is either committed to terrorism or may become a terrorist. Local practitioners use the framework to complement their professional judgement when making decisions. An initial VAF is completed within 20 days of the referral by the caseworker and it will be shared with the Channel Panel. The VAF assists the Chair to make a recommendation to the police for a Sec. 36 decision to confirm it is appropriate to proceed with the referral to the Channel Panel.

Once a case is open to Channel the VAF is reviewed monthly and updated to record any changes until it is agreed that the case will close by the Channel Panel.

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 terrorism.

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:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/channel-vulnerability-assessment>

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 vulnerable 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 Channel Multi-Agency Panel will assume operational responsibility for the duties specified within the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and the *Prevent* programme

How?

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

Maximise links between policies and strategies that deal with 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 vulnerable to the messages of extremists

Why?

Safeguarding individuals from radicalisation and violent extremism is important. More and more vulnerable people are being influenced by alluring and dangerous views through social peer groups and online and are not making conscious and rational decisions about supporting or becoming terrorists 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