

PREVENT

Committee name	Corporate Services, Commerce & Communities Policy Overview Committee
Officer reporting	Fiona Gibbs, Stronger Communities Manager
Papers with report	None
Ward	All

HEADLINES

To provide an update on the activity being taken in relation to delivering the Council's responsibilities under the Prevent Duty, as set out in the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Committee:

1. Note the report.
2. Endorse the work that is being undertaken with regards to managing local risk relating to violent extremism and the threat from terrorism, and in safeguarding those vulnerable to radicalisation.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The threat from terrorism, globally and in the UK, remains significant.

The UK faces a number of different and enduring terrorist threats. The main threat seen in the UK has been caused by the rise of Daesh and the creation of its cult-like "Caliphate", combined with the persistent threat from Al Qa'ida. However, more recently we are seeing that the white supremacist ideology is ever increasingly providing both the inspiration and justification for people who have committed extreme right-wing terrorist acts.

The **CONTEST** strategy aims 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.

PREVENT is a key part of the CONTEST strategy; its aim is to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. Early intervention is at the heart of "Prevent" in diverting people away from being drawn into terrorist activity. "Prevent" happens before any criminal activity takes place. It is about recognising, supporting and protecting people who might be susceptible to radicalisation.

Radicalisation can be described as the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies.

The eventual aim of radicalisation is to change what an individual believes in (their ideology) and their behaviour until they support or participate in violent extremist or terrorist activity. It is important to note that not all individuals who have radical views will end up being involved in extremism or in carrying out acts of terrorism.

As part of the Governments refresh of CONTEST, published in June 2018

The **Prevent** Strategy objectives are to:

- Tackle the causes of radicalisation and respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism.
- Safeguard and support those most at risk of radicalisation through early intervention, identifying them and offering support.
- Enable those who have already engaged in terrorism to disengage and rehabilitate.

Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015

Section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (the Act) places a duty on certain bodies (“specified authorities” listed in Schedule 6 to the Act), in the exercise of their functions, to have “due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism” (Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales 2015).

Role of the Local Authority and Partnership working

The Local Authority has a role in providing leadership within their area and ensuring that there is a locally coordinated plan in place, based upon an understanding of agreed risk. This plan needs to be informed through partnership working with multi agency and community involvement.

The Council’s policy on promoting stronger communities and equality, states that: “Hillingdon Council is committed to ensuring that vulnerable individuals are safeguarded from being radicalised into violent extremism and supporting or becoming terrorists themselves as part of the Home office Counter Terrorism strategy (CONTEST). Working with partners, we aim to tackle hate and extremism in all its forms and build a stronger, more resilient and cohesive borough.”

Delivering the Local Authorities responsibilities under the Prevent Duty, activity falls under the following:

Safeguarding procedures and referral pathways

Identifying and supporting those who might be vulnerable to radicalisation is a key aim of the Prevent duty. Being able to identify those at risk at an early stage provides an opportunity to offer the support they need to turn away from violence and address the factors that may have drawn them towards extremism.

Individuals can become radicalised for a variety of reasons, and anyone could become vulnerable and require support.

Channel is the multi-agency process for the management of cases relating to vulnerability to radicalisation and support of terrorism. As part of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act, there is an obligation on local agencies to cooperate in the delivery of Channel.

Channel is designed to be an early intervention process, targeted at vulnerable individuals, with an emphasis upon this being aligned to other safeguarding concerns

Channel is a Home Office sponsored programme and is currently coordinated by officers from SO15 Counter Terrorism Command with local authorities working in partnership and acting in the role as Chair of the Channel panel. It is based upon a multi-agency approach to identify and provide support to people at risk of radicalisation. Channel addresses risks from all forms of terrorism by drawing on expertise from the police, local authorities, other statutory agencies, and community organisations.

The Channel panel in Hillingdon meets monthly and is currently chaired by the Council's Prevent Lead and the deputy Chair is a Senior Manager from Children's Services.

Governance and assurance of safeguarding and Channel are reviewed annually and embedded within the priorities of both the Adults' and Children's Safeguarding Partnership boards and also reports into the Safer Hillingdon Partnership. Under new guidance published by the Home Office, the Council is required to submit an annual assurance statement to them, that is signed off by the Chief Executive.

Referrals are processed through MASH, with a designated SPOC who liaises with the Channel Chair to ensure speedy and appropriate triage of cases received.

As Heathrow is in our Borough, we have introduced a protocol with their counter terrorism police unit, so that we can work effectively together to manage any safeguarding concerns relating to radicalisation that may come through the airport.

In Hillingdon, as has been reflected within the Home Office published data on Channel cases, whilst the reason for referral has mostly been linked to the influence of groups such as Daesh we have begun to see an increase in those relating to the extreme far right. There has also been an emerging trend in those where the ideology is deemed to be more mixed/unclear, where the vulnerabilities are much more complex.

Training for staff

A programme of training for staff and other stakeholders regarding Prevent is vital in ensuring that agencies are meeting their expectations in relation to safeguarding under the duty. The Council provides support to local partners and agencies in delivering training and has provided training to more than 5000 staff across the Borough from within the Council, education (including schools, FE&HE), health, voluntary and other settings.

This programme is ongoing and promotion of Home Office e-learning modules as well as face to face training are provided across our partnership working.

Risk assessment

Working with local partners to understand the picture in relation to radicalisation, and the potential risks or concerns that might impact the community, informs our local plan and is vital to ensure that we can respond effectively and proportionately.

This picture is forever changing, and it is important that we understand how that is impacting upon our local communities and how we can work together to tackle the influence of extremist groups. For example: understanding the online space and how that is used to spread extremist material and messaging and influence individuals who might be vulnerable.

Partnership working

There is a local Prevent Partnership group that has been in place since 2008 and works together to develop and implement an annual and local Prevent plan for Hillingdon.

This group meets quarterly with representatives from all local agencies to ensure that we are working collaboratively in meeting our responsibilities under the Prevent duty. This enables us to have a collective understanding and respond to any emerging patterns/ risks.

As part of governance and oversight, the Local Strategic Partnership and the Safer Hillingdon Partnership regularly review actions/ performance in delivering the Prevent duty and other work undertaken to tackle hate and extremism.

Building resilience

Through the Stronger Communities Partnership, a broader approach has been established to promote community involvement, integration, and inclusion, that underpins the building of stronger and more resilient communities.

We continue to deliver our MOPAC (Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime) funded programme in collaboration with police, schools, the college, the University and community, aimed at tackling hate crime and extremism. Enabling young people, women, and our diverse community to have their say on these issues and develop materials to raise awareness and encourage further dialogue.

One of the most important aspects of Prevent, is equipping individuals to be able to question, challenge, develop critical thinking skills, gain understanding and respect for others, whilst developing their own sense of identity, belonging and aspirations. This underpins, undermines, and helps build resilience to the extremists' message - which aims to divide communities and

promote intolerance and hate.

Workshops have been delivered in schools. With pupils discussing topics relating to promoting equality and diversity, challenging discrimination, and tackling hate. Pupils through their discussions have been able to demonstrate awareness of diversity in Britain, and understanding of core values including unity, respect, democracy, how to report concerns and more, leading to increased resilience and cohesion.

In working with our local communities, the programme has also included the recruitment and training of Hate Crime Upstanders. The Hate Crime Upstanders have been recruited from across local voluntary and community organisations to enable them to better understand all forms of hate crime, how to report incidents and support those from within the community who may be victims.

Implications on related Council policies

A role of the Policy Overview Committees is to make recommendations on service changes and improvements to the Cabinet who are responsible for the Council's policy and direction.

Ensuring that we are meeting our Prevent duty falls within the Council's policy of Promoting Stronger Communities and Equality in Hillingdon as reviewed and adopted by Cabinet in January 2020.

How this report benefits Hillingdon residents

This report aims to provide assurance that the Council is working towards its responsibilities under the Prevent duty, which aims to keep our residents safe from the influences of extremism and potential impacts from acts of terrorism.

Financial Implications

Hillingdon is a non-priority Borough for Prevent and as such receives no external funding from the Home office to deliver against the Prevent duty.

Legal Implications

If cases are not managed effectively, then individuals may become involved in undertaking an act of violent extremism or terrorism causing harm to themselves and the wider community. This also implies a reputational risk for the organisation.