

# HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

## Decision Report

<b>Decision Maker:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date:</b>	7 December 2021
<b>Title:</b>	Annual PREVENT Report
<b>Report From:</b>	Director of Adults' Health and Care

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### Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this annual report is to provide information and assurance on:
  - the County Council's delivery of the PREVENT duty and responsibilities hosted within Adults' Health and Care;
  - delivery of the County Council's Channel Panel responsibilities; and
  - notable local events and national highlights.

### Recommendations

2. That Cabinet notes this update on PREVENT activity in Hampshire, including the work being undertaken by the County Council and its partners in the management and mitigation of issues related to duties under the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015, and the Counter Terrorism and Border Security Act 2019.
3. That Cabinet receive a further update in 12 months' time.

### Executive Summary

4. The fatal stabbing of Sir David Amess MP on 15 October 2021 is a stark reminder of the impact of terrorist action on our society specifically where the perpetrator is reported to have been known to the PREVENT programme. Over the past year, global events have impacted the domestic terrorism landscape and led to growth in hate crime incidences in some communities, resulting in increased demand for PREVENT services. The Covid-19 pandemic has also exacerbated the risk of people being drawn into terrorism, whilst giving rise to a strong and positive community-led response.
5. The County Council has robust internal arrangements to ensure compliance with PREVENT duties and continues to mainstream PREVENT across its business through strengthened governance. Leadership is also provided externally through the PREVENT Partnership Board, which has produced

several key policies and strategies this year as part of its multi-agency action plan.

6. The County Council and its partners have responded effectively to an increase in the volume and complexity of Channel referrals and there is good multi-agency engagement in Channel Panels. The County Council demonstrated full compliance with the Home Office Annual Assurance Statement for Channel.
7. There have been several notable events during the last 12 months within Hampshire, including the continuation of stickering across the county. This is where stickers are placed in usually prominent public spaces in support of a particular ideology/belief/group. Nationally, the County Council has continued to follow and contribute to inquiries, including the Government's consultation on the Protect Duty. Looking ahead, the County Council will take note of the Independent Review of PREVENT, which is due to conclude by the end of the year.
8. Chief Officers and the Executive Member for Communities have received confidential briefings in advance of this report being brought to Cabinet.

### **Contextual information**

9. The Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 created a statutory duty to have due regard to the need to prevent people being drawn into terrorism. This duty applies to all public bodies (local authorities, police, NHS, schools, further and higher education providers, probation, prisons and youth offending services). The duty also applies to private providers supplying public functions, for example in the education sector. PREVENT interventions are focused in the 'pre criminal space'. The lead responsibility for PREVENT sits with local authorities.
10. The ongoing importance of this agenda has been highlighted by the recent tragic and fatal stabbing of Sir David Amess MP at his constituency surgery on 15 October 2021. The County Council is unanimous in condemning this atrocity and upholding the right of all individuals, including those public servants and democratically elected individuals, to live and fulfil their duties without fear of intimidation, aggression, or violence, which is unacceptable in our society.
11. This is not an isolated incident and over the past year, global events have impacted the domestic terrorism landscape and led to growth in hate crime incidences in some communities, leaving some individuals and groups feeling exposed and vulnerable. This has increased demand for PREVENT services and highlights the ongoing importance of work to strengthen community resilience.
12. It is anticipated that this will continue to require a response from the wider strategic PREVENT partnership led by Hampshire County Council to support the work already started to build strong and resilient communities. The council's ability to engage with communities and the wider safeguarding partnerships is crucial in the delivery of the PREVENT duty to prevent those vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism from being radicalised.

13. At the time of writing, the threat level of International Terrorism to the UK is 'Substantial'<sup>1</sup>, meaning that a terrorist attack is 'likely'. For Northern Ireland the threat is 'Severe', meaning an attack is 'highly likely'.

### **Covid-19 Pandemic**

14. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the risk of people being drawn into terrorism. For example:

- Extremists have used apocalyptic narratives in referring to the pandemic encouraging supporters to take extremist action.
- Increased time online during lockdown is likely to have exposed more people to extremist narratives and potential radicalisation.
- Social media has been used to spread misinformation and disinformation about Covid-19 and the vaccine, and some legitimate groups are being 'hijacked' by extremists to further their cause.
- Gaming platforms are increasingly being used as social media platforms with encrypted chat rooms where terrorists can recruit, radicalise and raise funds through the use of crypto currency.

15. Conversely, the pandemic has given rise to a strong sense of community in areas of Hampshire with community-led groups providing support to those at risk of radicalisation by reducing their social isolation and sense of injustice.

16. Hampshire's community focus is supported by the county's Community Safety Network and close joint working with District Council partners which, for example, enables swift responses to reassure communities where concerns of a PREVENT nature arise.

### **PREVENT arrangements within Hampshire County Council**

17. The **PREVENT team** is hosted the Adults' Health and Care Department and comprises 1.6 FTE and 1 FTE business support resource. The team facilitates compliance with the statutory duties and responsibilities placed upon the County Council and supports the PREVENT Delivery Group, Partnership Board and Channel arrangements, outlined below.

18. The County Council **PREVENT Delivery Group** meets quarterly and includes senior representation from each County Council department. It focuses on strengthening the organisational approach with respect to leadership, workforce capability, awareness, partnerships and information sharing. It is chaired by the Director of Adults' Health and Care and since its formation last year, has served to mainstream PREVENT across the County Council's business. Key achievements over the last 12 months include:

- completion of the County Council's PREVENT e-learning by 11793 staff members. This represents 93% of the total workforce;
- staff online Prevent toolkit providing guidance on what the duty means, identifying signs of radicalisation and how to report concerns with use of case studies;

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/terrorism-national-emergency>

- PREVENT sharepoint site for staff which includes operational guidance, signposting to multi-agency PREVENT support, policy, information on national and local PREVENT initiatives;
- delivery of additional briefings and training to staff, including senior leaders at the Hampshire Leadership Network, across all directorates at each Departmental Management Team detailing the Prevent duty and how it impacts on each service area;
- development and publication of a bespoke training strategy for staff in Hampshire schools, included a schools' specific toolkit and self assessment tool to help school's identify staff training needs and meet these needs; and
- creation and implementation of a multi-agency communications strategy to support consistent communications between agencies and share sensitive information in a timely manner.

### **PREVENT Partnership Board**

19. The **PREVENT Partnership Board** is a multi-agency forum with close links to the Hampshire County Strategy Group and respective Safeguarding Boards for Adults and Children. Through these groups links with community safety partnerships continue to grow, and the Partnership's work is broadening to consider the impact of other forms of abuse on people's vulnerability to being drawn into terrorism
20. The Board meets virtually on a quarterly basis and sets the overarching strategy and multi-agency action plan. The Plan focuses on the following three strategic areas:
  - Engagement and Awareness
  - Information Sharing
  - Disrupting radicalising Influences
21. These areas echo those used by Counter Terrorism Policing South East (CTPSE) and specific actions are informed by the Counter Terrorism Local Profile, as well as national developments from the Home Office / Office of Homeland Security. The Local Profile provides local and national data on PREVENT and highlights emerging themes. The Partnership works closely with CTPSE, which produces the Profile, to improve the relevance and accuracy of local data within it.
22. A Core Group meets monthly in addition to the Board to provide oversight of the action plan's implementation. Specific actions are delivered through thematic sub-groups. Over the last year, the Partnership Board has delivered several key policies and strategies including multi-agency communications and training strategies, the No Platform for Extremism Policy and a Channel Escalation Policy.

### **Channel**

23. The Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 introduced the Channel process to provide multi-agency, tailored support to people identified as at risk of being

drawn into terrorism. The level of risk and nature of support is considered by the multi-agency Channel Panel.

24. Statutory guidance requires a Channel Panel to be held monthly. However, due to the increased volume and complexity of referrals, the County Council currently leads a Channel Panel every two weeks, which has significantly increased the workload of the PREVENT Team.
25. Panel meetings are held virtually and are well attended by multi-agency partners. Support is provided to a range of adults and children with varying ideologies and backgrounds. Due to the security and sensitivity of Counter Terrorism intelligence, this annual report does not include details on referrals into Hampshire over the last 12 months. However, it is worth noting the
  - 81% increase in cases heard at Channel Panel between May – Aug 2020 and same period in 2021;
  - 100% increase in number of new cases heard at Channel Panel between January – April 2021, and May – August 2021.
26. In November 2020, the Government published revised guidance for the Channel Duty and which has now been implemented within Hampshire.
27. In January 2021, the County Council submitted its Annual Assurance Statement for Channel to the Home Office demonstrating full compliance.

#### **Notable Events for Hampshire County Council in the last 12 months**

28. In Basingstoke in May 2020 a protest was organised by Save Our Rights UK against the national lockdown whose pro-rights supporters believe that government figures on Coronavirus are exaggerated.
29. In May 2021 Animal Rebellion protested at the Basingstoke McDonalds Depot with the intention to disrupt the exit of delivery lorries to bring an end to the fast-food industry and help create a sustainable plant-based food system.
30. In August 2021 Animal Rebellion protesters blocked the entrance to Fawley Refinery terminal to protest an £80m diesel expansion.
31. Stickers continue to be present across Hampshire with six recorded sightings related to swastikas, anti-COVID propaganda and white privilege.

#### **Key National Highlights**

32. Inquiry hearings for the Manchester Arena Independent Public Inquiry began in September 2020 and continue to hear evidence and accounts of those present at the time of the terrorist attack in 2017.
33. On 12 August 2021 a man shot dead his mother and four other people in a terror attack in Plymouth. Investigations have identified links to the 'InCel' movement (Involuntary Celibate – a member of an online community of men who consider themselves unable to attract women sexually and who hold views hostile to women and sexually active males). Police are reported to be considering reclassifying the incident as a terrorist attack.

34. In June, the County Council submitted its responses to the Government's Protect Duty consultation, which refers to enhancing the protection of publicly accessible locations. Government response is expected in early 2022.
35. William Shawcross was appointed as the new Independent Reviewer of Prevent on 26 January and will consider the UK's strategy for protecting people vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. The review's conclusions are due before both Houses of Parliament by 31 December 2021. Following the terrorist incident on 15 October 2021 there is increased scrutiny and attention on the Government's PREVENT strategy and this Independent Review.

### **Climate Change Impact Assessment**

36. Hampshire County Council utilises two decision-making tools to assess the carbon emissions and resilience impacts of its projects and decisions. These tools provide a clear, robust, and transparent way of assessing how projects, policies and initiatives contribute towards the County Council's climate change targets of being carbon neutral and resilient to the impacts of a 2°C temperature rise by 2050. This process ensures that climate change considerations are built into everything the Authority does.
37. This report does not detail specific projects or initiatives that can be assessed using the County Council's climate impact assessment tools but rather provides an annual assurance update on delivery of the PREVENT duty. Consequently, no Climate Change assessment has been undertaken.

### **Conclusion**

38. The County Council continues to deliver the requirements of the PREVENT Duty and is compliant with the Channel Duty guidance. The County Council, with its partners, will continue to adapt its approach to respond to the impact of global events and manage the increase in demand for PREVENT support, including the increase in Channel referrals. Hampshire County Council will keep under review the resources and, in particular, specialist resources deployed in maintaining our duties in respect of PREVENT and Channel, given the increased activity seen in this arena.
39. The Prevent Partnership Board is a key multi agency mechanism to meet the strategic aims of engaging our communities and raising awareness about the impact of radicalisation of individuals who are subject to the growing threat of extremist ideologies in Hampshire. Exercising a safeguarding approach to those who are identified within formal processes with no recognised ideology is an emerging theme for agencies and communities in a world increasingly reliant on digital communications.
40. The lessons which are continuously learnt from the emergency planning approaches applied through the course of the pandemic demonstrate the need for a strengthened approach between our local resilience networks and this significant anti-extremist safeguarding agenda

**REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:**

**Links to the Strategic Plan**

<b>Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:</b>	yes
<b>People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:</b>	yes
<b>People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:</b>	yes
<b>People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:</b>	yes

**Other Significant Links**

<b>Links to previous Member decisions:</b>	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
<b>Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives</b>	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015	2015
Counter Terrorism and Border Security Act 2019	2019
Channel Duty Guidance 2020	2020

<b>Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents</b>	
<p>The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)</p>	
<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

## **EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:**

### **41. Equality Duty**

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

### **42. Equalities Impact Assessment:**

As this is annual update there is not a requirement for an Equality Impact Assessment.