

Epping Forest District Council Prevent Policy

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Contents

Page(s)

Introduction	3
Scope	3
Government Counter Terrorism Strategy (CONTEST)	3
Definitions	4
Prevent	4
Prevent Strategy	4
The Key Objectives of the Prevent Strategy	5
Local Authority responsibilities	5
Partnership working	5
Risk Assessment	6
Training	6
Use of local authority resources	6
Essex Prevent Board	6
Channel Panel	6
Safeguarding children and Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)	7
Channel Strategy Meeting	7
Designated Roles in the Council	7
Raising Prevent Concerns	8
Staff Procedure	8
Escalating concerns in relation to employees	9
Sharing information	9
The Internet and Prevent	9
Provision of an Action Plan	9
Useful contacts and websites	10

Introduction

The current threat from Terrorism and Extremism in the United Kingdom is real and severe and can involve the exploitation of vulnerable people, including children in order to involve them in extremist activity. This Policy is intended to provide guidance on the national Prevent agenda and how the Council will implement it locally. It sets out the Council's local obligations, proposed actions, statutory duties and responsibilities.

Supporting vulnerable individuals and reducing the threat from violent extremism in local communities is a priority for statutory organisations and their partners.

Scope

The Prevent Policy applies to all staff employed within the organisation, either directly or indirectly, and to any other person or organisation that uses the Council's premises for any purpose.

Preventing someone from becoming a terrorist or supporting terrorism has much in common with safeguarding vulnerable individuals from other forms of exploitation.

Government Counter Terrorism Strategy (CONTEST)

The Government's national counter terrorism strategy, called CONTEST, aims to reduce the risk to the United Kingdom and its interests overseas from international terrorism, so that people can go about their lives freely and with confidence. These forms of terrorism include:

- Far Right extremists
- Al Qaeda/Taliban/Islamic State influenced groups
- Environmental extremists
- Animal Rights extremists
- Faith-based influenced groups

CONTEST is organised around four work streams, each with a number of key objectives:

- **Pursue:** to stop terrorist attacks in this country and against our interests overseas. This means detecting and investigating threats at the earliest possible stage, disrupting terrorist activity before it can endanger the public and, wherever possible, prosecuting those responsible.
- **Protect:** to strengthen our protection against a terrorist attack in the UK or against our interests overseas and so reduce our vulnerability. Government priorities are informed by an annual National Risk Assessment which assesses the vulnerabilities we have and the threats we face.
- **Prepare:** to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack where that attack cannot be stopped. This includes work to bring a terrorist attack to an end and to increase the country's resilience so we can recover from its aftermath. An effective and efficient response will save lives, reduce harm and aid recovery.
- **Prevent:** to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. The Government believes it is not possible to resolve the threats we face simply by arresting and prosecuting more people. This is the view of our key allies around the world and Prevent needs to be an international effort as much as other parts of the counter-terrorism strategy.

Definitions

Adult safeguarding: Working with adults (a person over the age of 18years) with needs for care and support to keep them safe from abuse or neglect. Safeguarding is aimed at people who may be in vulnerable circumstances and at risk of abuse or neglect.

Children: Defined in the Children Act 1989 as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday.

Terrorism: Defined in the Terrorism Act 2000 (TACT 2000) as ‘an action that endangers or causes serious violence to a person or people or causes serious damage to property or seriously interferes or disrupts an electronic system’. The use of threat must be designed to influence the government or to intimidate the public and is made for the purpose of political, religious or ideological gain.

Radicalisation: Defined as the process by which people come to support terrorism and extremism and, in some cases, to then participate in terrorist groups.

Extremism: 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 also include in our definition of extremism calls for the death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas” (*HM Government Prevent Strategy 2011*).

A Prevent Concern: Does not have to be proven beyond reasonable doubt, but it should be based on something that raises concern which is assessed using existing professional judgement from staff.

Vulnerability and Prevent: A person who is susceptible to extremists’ messages and is at risk of being drawn into terrorism or supporting terrorism at a point in time.

Channel Panel: Channel is a Multi-Agency process which provides support to those who may be vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. Channel uses existing collaboration between partners to support individuals and protect them from being drawn into terrorism.

Prevent

Prevent is a key part of the CONTEST strategy, led by the Home Office. Its aim is to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism by working with individuals and communities who may be vulnerable to the threat of violent extremism and 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.

Prevent Strategy

The National Prevent Strategy was explicitly changed in 2011 to deal with all forms of terrorism and target not just violent extremism but also non-violent extremism, which can create an atmosphere conducive to terrorism and can popularise views which terrorists exploit. It also made clear that preventing people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism requires challenge to extremist ideas where they are used to legitimise terrorism and are shared by terrorist groups.

The Strategy also aims to stop people moving from extremist (albeit legal) groups into terrorist-related activity. In carrying out this duty, the specified authorities must have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

The key objectives of the Prevent Strategy:

- To respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism and the threat we face from those who promote it;
- To prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and ensure that they are given appropriate advice and support; and
- To work with sectors and institutions where there are risks of radicalisation that we need to address.

Terrorist groups often draw on extremist ideology, developed by extremist organisations; some people who join terrorist groups have previously been members of extremist organisations and have been radicalised by them. Prevent work is intended to deal with all kinds of terrorist threats to the UK. The most significant of these threats is currently from IS terrorist organisations in Syria and Iraq. But terrorists associated with the extreme right also pose a continued threat to our safety and security.

Islamist extremists regard Western intervention in Muslim-majority countries as a 'war with Islam', creating a narrative of 'them' and 'us'. Their ideology includes the uncompromising belief that people cannot be both Muslim and British, and that Muslims living here should not participate in our democracy. Islamist extremists specifically attack the principles of civic participation and social cohesion. These extremists purport to identify grievances to which terrorist organisations then claim to have a solution.

The white supremacist ideology of extreme right-wing groups has also provided both the inspiration and justification for people who have committed extreme right-wing terrorist acts.

Local Authority responsibilities

With wide ranging responsibilities and democratic accountability to their electorate, local authorities are vital to Prevent work. Effective local authorities will be working with their local partners to protect the public, prevent crime and to promote strong, integrated communities.

Section 26 of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 seeks to place a duty on specified authorities (listed in Schedule 6 to the Act) and says it must 'in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.' In complying with the duty all specified authorities, as a starting point, should demonstrate an awareness and understanding of the risk of radicalisation in their area, institution or body.

This risk will vary greatly and can change rapidly; no area, institution or body is risk free. Whilst the type and scale of activity that will address the risk will vary, all specified authorities will need to give due consideration to it.

Partnership working

Prevent work depends on effective partnerships. To demonstrate effective compliance with the duty, specified authorities must demonstrate evidence of productive co-operation, with local Prevent co-ordinators, the police and local authorities, and co-ordination through existing multi-agency forums. For the Epping Forest District, The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) has been identified as the appropriate forum and arrangements should be put in place to effectively monitor the impact of Prevent work.

It should be stressed that there is no expectation that the organisation will take on a surveillance or enforcement role as a result of Prevent. Rather, it must work with partner organisations to contribute to the prevention of terrorism by safeguarding and protecting vulnerable individuals and making safety a shared endeavour. The Prevent Lead will engage with partnership groups with the responsibility to share concerns raised within the organisation including the Channel Panels.

Risk Assessment

In complying with the duty, district councils should demonstrate an awareness and understanding of the risk of radicalisation in their area.

The local authority should use the existing counter-terrorism local profiles (CTLPs) produced for every region by the police, to begin to assess the risk of individuals being drawn into terrorism. This should include both violent and non-violent extremism which can create an atmosphere conducive to terrorism and can popularise views which terrorists exploit. Local authorities are expected to incorporate the duty into existing policies and procedures, so it becomes part of the day-to-day work of the authority.

Training

Local authorities are expected to ensure that frontline staff have a good understanding of Prevent in order to respond to vulnerable individuals who are in danger of being radicalised and being drawn into terrorism. Frontline staff who engage with the public should understand what radicalisation means and why people may be vulnerable to it. They need to be aware of what is meant by the term 'extremism' and the relationship between extremism and terrorism.

Staff need to know what measures are available to prevent people from becoming drawn into terrorism and how to challenge the extremist ideology that can be associated with it. They need to understand how to obtain support for people who may be being exploited by radicalising influences. Prevent Awareness Training is available to all staff on Litmos.

Use of local authority resources

In complying with the duty, local authorities are expected to ensure that publicly-owned venues and resources do not provide a platform for extremists and are not used to disseminate extremist views.

This includes considering whether IT equipment available to the general public should use filtering solutions that limit access to terrorist and extremist material. It is also expected of local authorities to ensure that organisations which work with the local authority on Prevent are not engaged in any extremist activity or espouse extremist views.

Essex Prevent Board

Epping Forest District Council is represented on the Essex Prevent Board by the Directorate Specialist. The aim of the Board is to set the overall partnership policy and strategy for Prevent in Essex.

Channel Panel

Channel is a Multi-Agency process, which provides support to those who may be vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. Representatives from Epping Forest District Council are required to attend Channel Panel Meetings where any individuals referred, are linked to the district. Channel uses existing collaboration between partners to support individuals and protect them from being drawn into terrorism.

Examples of support provided could include mentoring, diversionary activities such as sport, signposting to mainstream services such as education, employment or housing. The Channel process can access the use of an 'intervention provider'. This is Home Office funded and uses those on an approved list to work with individuals around their individual ideologies.

The Channel Co-ordinator will:

- Conduct an initial review of the information received to ensure the referral meets the necessary threshold.
- Contact partners through previously established Single Points of Contact to access further information.
- For individuals under 18, liaise with the local social care officer in Children and Young People's Services.
- Undertake a continuous risk assessment process.

Safeguarding children and Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)

In some cases, it may not be appropriate for an individual to continue through the Channel process because they are involved in a different statutory mechanism such as 'MAPPA' or child protection arrangements.

Channel is not intended to replace those referral systems; in such cases, ownership will rest with the relevant statutory support mechanism which may work alongside the Channel process if appropriate.

Channel Strategy Meeting

This meeting will be convened only when needed and will include involvement of a wider range of partners such as housing and education. If the consensus is that support is required, an appropriate support package will be set out in an action plan. At appropriate intervals the case will be reviewed, once the risk has been successfully reduced or managed the panel will recommend that the case is closed.

Designated Roles in the Council

All organisations should have an awareness of the Prevent agenda, the various forms radicalisation takes and be able to recognise signs and indicators of concern and respond appropriately. Radicalisation is a process not an event, and there is no single route or pathway to radicalisation. Evidence indicates that those targeted by radicalisers may have doubts about what they are doing. It is because of this doubt that frontline staff need to have mechanisms and interventions in place to support an individual being exploited and to help them move away from terrorist activity.

Epping Forest District Council has a duty to ensure safe environments where extremists are unable to operate. It is essential, therefore, that all staff know how they can support vulnerable individuals who they feel may be at risk of becoming a terrorist or supporting extremism.

Raising Prevent Concerns

Prevent is an on-going initiative and is designed to become part of the everyday safeguarding routine for staff. However, some officers within the Council have specific functions with regard to Prevent'. They work to ensure the Council fulfils its statutory requirements and ensures that all relevant issues are dealt with appropriately:

Safeguarding Lead Professional – Jennifer Gould

The Chief Operating Officer who has leadership and responsibility for Prevent and overall accountability for safeguarding children, young people and adults with needs for care and support.

Designated Safeguarding Lead – Caroline Wiggins

The Directorate Specialist is the district's Prevent Lead and sits on the Prevent Board/CTLTP meetings.

Single Point of Contact (SPOC) – Lynn Maidment

The Senior Safeguarding Officer who works with corporate safeguarding leads across the organisation.

Safeguarding Officer – Sevda Kaygili

Acts as SPOC when the Senior Safeguarding Officer is absent.

Staff Procedure

Where there is an identified or potential risk that a child, young person or adults with needs for care and support may be involved or potentially involved in supporting or following extremism; may be at risk of being drawn into terrorism; has begun to express radical extremist views; or may be vulnerable to grooming or exploitation by others.

- Staff should discuss, where possible, their concerns with their line manager or supervisor prior to referral.
- Staff should contact the SPOC who will manage such enquiries with support from Safeguarding colleagues. All reports referred should clearly identify the precise nature of the concern.
- Once the Safeguarding Team receives a concern, they will consider whether a situation may be so serious that an emergency response is required.
- If the SPOC or member of the Safeguarding Team determines that a safeguarding referral needs to be made, it will be done in accordance with local inter-agency safeguarding procedures.
- Further investigation by the police will be required, prior to other assessments and interventions.

Although it is expected that staff will use their professional judgement to identify whether an emergency situation applies, when there is information that a violent act is imminent, or where weapons/other materials may be in the possession of a vulnerable person, another member of their family or within the community a 999 call should be made.

- The SPOC or member of the Safeguarding Team will ensure that there is appropriate feedback to the member of staff raising the concern. They will advise on appropriate support for staff and the vulnerable individual.

For more information about the Council's Safeguarding Procedures, staff should refer to the Safeguarding Policy and relevant Procedures which are on the Intranet, along with the Safeguarding Report Form which should be used to raise a concern.

Escalating concerns in relation to employees

Although there are relatively few instances of staff in an organisation radicalising others or being drawn into extremist acts, it is necessary to be aware of the risk and have processes in place to manage any concerns e.g. disciplinary action.

Where an employee expresses views, brings material into the organisation, uses or directs others to extremist websites or acts in other ways to promote terrorism, the organisation will look to use non-safeguarding processes in order to address the concerns.

Where a staff member has a concern about a colleague, this should be raised with their line manager. The line manager will discuss the concerns with the Peoples Team Manager who will liaise with the Prevent Lead in the first instance. The Prevent Lead will assess and manage any related safeguarding risks and, where appropriate, the Police Prevent Lead will be contacted. The Peoples Team Manager will lead on advising the line manager in relation to the disciplinary process, should this be appropriate. The Prevent Lead will represent the organisation on Local Prevent Steering Groups and inter-agency meetings.

Sharing information

The Prevent programme must not involve any covert activity against people or communities. But specified authorities may need to share personal information to ensure, for example, that a person at risk of radicalisation is given appropriate support (for example on the Channel programme). Information sharing must be assessed on a case-by-case basis and is governed by legislation.

The Internet and Prevent

Vulnerable individuals may be exploited in many ways by radicalisers and this could be through direct face to face contact, or indirectly through the internet, social networking or other media. Access to extremist material is often through leaflets and local contacts. However, the internet plays an important role in the communication of extremist views.

It provides a platform for extremists to promote their cause and encourage debate through websites, internet forums and social networking. It is a swift and effective mechanism for disseminating propaganda material and is not always possible to regulate.

Staff should be aware of anyone making frequent visits to websites showing images such as armed conflict around the world and providing speeches and access to material from those involved in the radicalising process.

Provision of an Action Plan

With the support of co-ordinators and others as necessary, any local authority that assesses, through the multi-agency group, that there is a risk, is expected to develop a Prevent Action Plan. This will enable the local authority to comply with the duty and address whatever risks have been identified.

Essex Police

Tel: 101 and ask for the Prevent Team

National Anti-Terrorist Hotline

If you're concerned about suspicious behaviour in your neighbourhood or have information you believe may help the police. You do not have to give your name and all information received via the hotline is confidential. Information that might seem insignificant on its own could prove vital in a wider investigation. Suspicious behaviour could include people coming and going at strange times of day or night, someone taking an interest in security such as CCTV cameras without good reason, using false documents or simply behaving differently to how you've known them to behave in the past.

If you suspect it, report it.

Tel: 0800 789 321

Reporting Terrorist Material on the web

Residents in Essex are urged to make use of a new unit set up by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) to report terrorist material on the web. This website gives residents the chance to report anonymously: **www.direct.gov.uk/reportingonlineterrorism**

SET Prevent Policy

A guide for local partnerships and agencies in Southend Essex and Thurrock in preventing radicalisation: **www.essexsab.org.uk/professionals/guidance-policies-protocols/**

Prevent Duty Training

Access training courses on the Prevent duty, the threat from terrorism and extremism in the UK and how to support people vulnerable to radicalisation: **www.gov.uk/guidance/prevent-duty-training**