# Channel Process

# OPERATING PROTOCOL

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# Introduction and Background

The threat from violent extremism in this country is real and severe. It can involve the exploitation of vulnerable people, with the aim of drawing them into committing criminal acts of violence and terrorism. This protocol is designed to provide a clear framework with which to respond to safeguarding concerns for those vulnerable individuals who may be at risk of radicalisation. It seeks to provide an early intervention / prevention strategy for professionals who work with those who may be vulnerable to the messages of violent extremism.

The London bombings on 7th July 2005 precipitated the introduction of the Government's strategy to counter terrorism, which was presented to Parliament in July 2006.[1] The strategy, known as 'Contest' provided four main work-streams:

- **Pursue** terrorists and their operations at home and abroad
- **Prepare** for the consequences and improve resilience
- **Protect** – reduce vulnerability of the public and UK interests
- **Prevent** to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism by tackling radicalisation and its underlying cause

In June 2008 the Government published, "The Prevent Strategy: A Guide for Local Partners in England" which explained the background to, and content of, the *Prevent* strategy, developed from the fourth work-stream of 'Contest'. It also provided guidance on the local delivery of the strategy.

With the aim of improving local delivery of the *Prevent* initiative, an updated version of the original document was published in June 2009, in which lessons learned and emerging best practice had been taken into consideration. In turn, this document "Delivering the Prevent Strategy: An Updated Guide for Local Partners" was further reviewed and largely replaced with the new, "*Prevent* Strategy" in June 2011.

The new *Prevent* strategy aims to:

- "respond to the **ideological challenge** of terrorism and the threat we face from those who promote it;

- **prevent people from being drawn into terrorism** and ensure that they are given appropriate advice and support; and

- work with **sectors and institutions** where there are risks of radicalisation which we need to address."[2]

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[1] Countering International Terrorism: The United Kingdom's Strategy, Cm 6888, July 2006
[2] *Prevent* Strategy, Cm 8092, June 2011, page 7

# Definitions

"**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. …. also includes …. calls for the death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas."[3]

The Crown Prosecution Service defines "violent extremism" as:

> "The demonstration of unacceptable behaviour by using any means or medium to express views which:

- foment, justify or glorify terrorist violence in furtherance of particular beliefs;

- seek to provoke others to terrorist acts;

- foment other serious criminal activity or seek to provoke others to serious criminal acts; or

- foster hatred which might lead to inter-community violence in the UK" [4]

# The Local Dimension

South Yorkshire was not included in the Government's list of 25 priority areas to receive funding for activities to address specific local risks.[5] Despite this, application of this protocol is necessary in order that the real threat of individuals being drawn into acts of terrorism is addressed locally. Experience has shown that terrorists, like other criminals, do not operate within geographical boundaries and no community can be considered immune.

Guidance set down in the original Prevent Strategy (June 2008) remains valid, stating that multi-agency working is crucial to the effectiveness of a locally-delivered Prevent programme. A programme of action was to be developed which:

- "meets the specific objectives of the Prevent Strategy;

- is jointly agreed and managed by the police, local authority and other partners;

- is proportionate to the level of threat in their area;

- reflects local needs; and

- sets out clear and tangible milestones in tracking progress."[6]

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[3] *Prevent* Strategy, Cm 8092, June 2011, page 107
[4] Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), 2011 at http://www.cps.gov.uk/publications/prosecution/violent_extremism.html

[5] *Prevent* Strategy, Cm 8092, June 2011, page 97
[6] leading the preventing violent extremism agenda, Local Government Association (LGA), Nov 2008, page 7

Such a programme (WRAP 3) has been developed and implemented.  Led by South Yorkshire Police, training for multi-agency partners has been, and continues to be provided, increasing awareness of the issues relating to violent extremism and the recognition of vulnerable groups.  This protocol serves to supplement this work and provide a procedure for alerting and reporting concerns about an individual, when radicalisation and potential for future violent extremist behaviour is suspected.

## Scope of the Protocol

This protocol applies to the prevention of all forms of terrorist or violent extremist activity and the radicalisation of vulnerable individuals.  This protocol applies to all partner agencies and organisations with responsibilities for the provision of social care services and seeks to address the second aim of the *Prevent* strategy outlined above.

However, the protocol is not restricted to partner agencies alone. In the interests of the promotion of community cohesion and the ideology and application of the *Prevent* strategy for the prevention of violent extremism, non-partner agencies are also encouraged to apply this protocol and to alert the appropriate safeguarding services as necessary to share any concerns.

Although initial concerns may be focused on an increased susceptibility to terrorism / violent extremism, further enquiries may lead to a different type of vulnerability and risk being identified.  It should be emphasised that the overarching principal of this approach is around safeguarding – signposting and information sharing should take place to prevent other types of risk.

## Thresholds for Violent Extremism

It is not possible to define a 'typical extremist' since those involved in terrorism/extremism come from a diverse range of backgrounds and have an equally wide range of experiences.

Research has shown that indicators of vulnerability towards radicalisation may include a range of personal and external factors:

- **Identity** – that the individual feels 'distance' from their cultural and religious heritage and radicalisation occurs as people search for identity, meaning and a sense of community.

- **Personal Crisis** – individuals often feel tension within the family, experience a sense of isolation or have a low self-esteem. They disassociate from existing friendship groups and are therefore susceptible to becoming involved with new, possibly extremist groups.

- **Personal Circumstances** – local community tensions and events affecting their country or region of origin. They feel alienation from UK values and may feel a sense of grievance, potentially triggered by personal experiences of racism or discrimination or aspects of Government policy.

- **Criminality** – experiences of imprisonment and poor reintegration into society. Individuals may have previous involvement with criminal groups which they find difficult to disassociate from.

Whilst individuals who display these indicators might be vulnerable to radicalisation, such display does not automatically imply that they will follow this route. Other indicators, taken in isolation, or in conjunction with those set out above, can further help to clarify risk.

These are:

- being in contact with extremist groups
- openly supporting violent extremist causes or leaders of extremist groups
- accessing websites with a violent extremist nature
- possessing violent extremist literature
- justifying the use of violence to resolve societal issues and using extremist narratives
- joining extremist organisations[7]

# Vulnerability Indicators

The Channel process assesses vulnerability using a consistently applied assessment framework, built around three dimensions. The three dimensions are:

- Engagement with a group, cause or ideology;
- Intent to cause harm;
- Capability to cause harm.

The dimensions are considered separately as experience has shown that it is possible to be engaged without intending to cause harm and that it is possible to intend to cause harm without being particularly engaged. Experience has also shown that it is possible to desist (stop intending to cause harm) without fully disengaging (remaining sympathetic to the cause); though losing sympathy with the cause (disengaging) will invariably result in desistance (loss of intent).

The three dimensions are assessed by considering 22 factors that can contribute to vulnerability (13 associated with engagement, 6 that relate to intent and 3 for capability). These factors taken together form a rounded view of the vulnerability of an individual that will inform decisions on whether they need support and what kind of support package may be appropriate. These factors can also be added to and are not considered an exhaustive list. By undertaking regular vulnerability assessments, the progress that is being made in supporting an individual can be tracked through changes in the assessment.

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[7] Pan Greater Manchester Procedure for Working with Adults who are Vulnerable to the Messages of Violent Extremism – A Targeted Safeguarding Approach, January 2010

# The Channel Project

In October 2012 the Government published "Channel: Protecting vulnerable people from being drawn into terrorism – a guide for local partnerships" which set out advice for local partnerships on how to deliver Channel projects.  The role of this multi-agency panel is to develop appropriate support packages to safeguard those at risk of being drawn into terrorism based upon an assessment of their vulnerability.  The panel should be chaired by the Local Authority and include the Channel Police practitioner and other relevant statutory partners.

Channel is a government supported initiative which aims to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism through an integrated multi agency approach. It is a process that relies on close collaboration between police, partners and other key stakeholders, providing a mechanism for evaluating referred individuals who are perceived to be at risk of being drawn in to terrorism.  Channel operates in the pre-criminal space and aims to support vulnerable individuals, through targeted intervention relevant to the individual's vulnerability and risk, to prevent them from committing criminal acts.
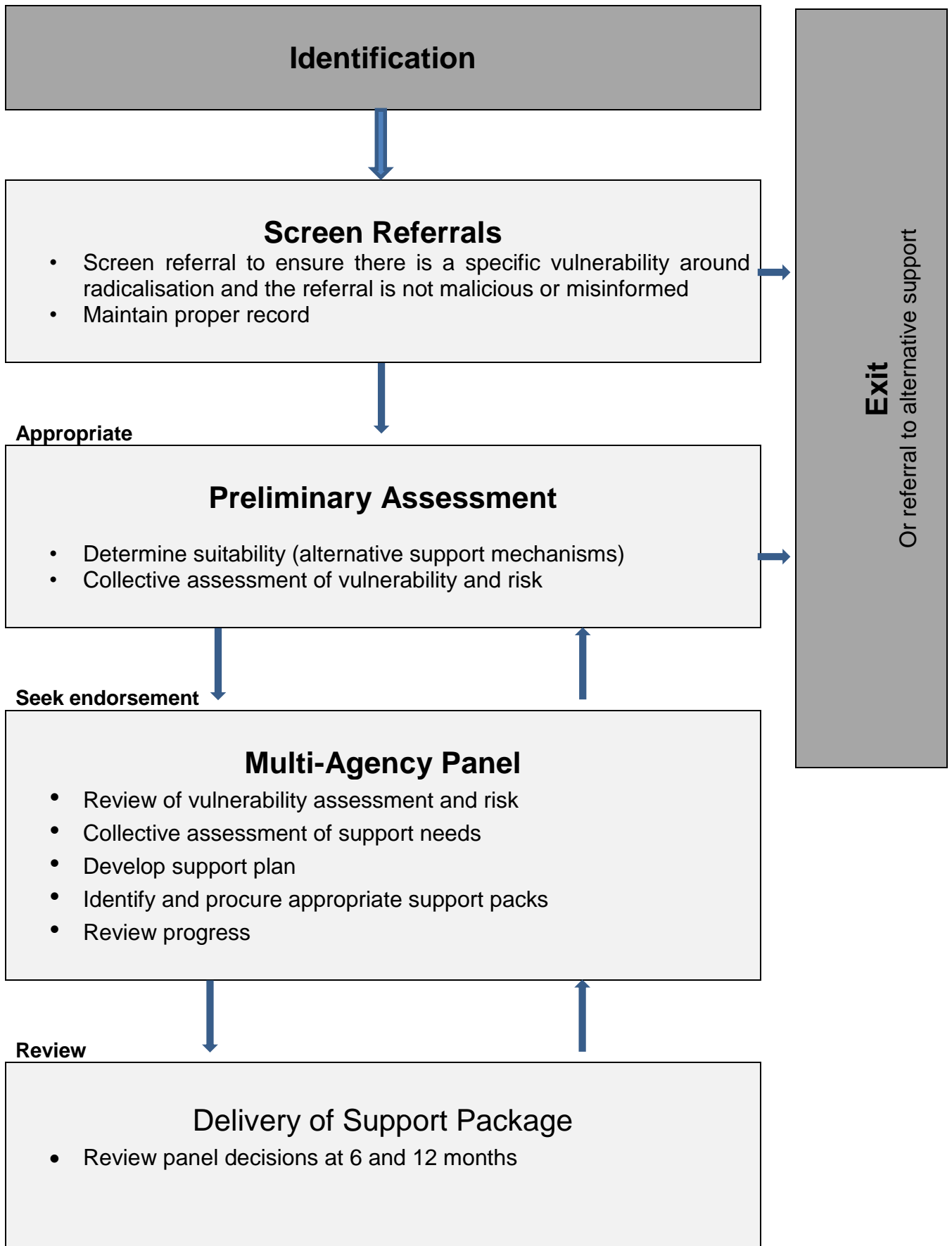
Channel began as a Home Office pilot back in 2007 in two police forces; prior to the Prevent strategy being fully developed. It expanded in 2008 and again in 2009 and now operates in 12 police force areas. Since the inception of Channel, policy and strategy has developed and evolved, resulting in the publication of the National Channel guidance for local partnerships in March 2010.

# The Channel Process

1. If a member of staff or professional from a partner or non-partner agency has concerns that an individual may be vulnerable to the messages of violent extremism, that person should discuss those concerns with their immediate line manager in the first instance.

2. The line manager must then report any concerns to a designated Senior Prevent / Safeguarding Officer within their own agency (if applicable) or to a partner agency if not (see key contacts section).

3. The Senior Prevent / Safeguarding Officer will refer to the relevant Prevent Contact named in the contacts section, which will instigate involvement from South Yorkshire Police.

4. The South Yorkshire Police designated Prevent officer will:

   - Liaise with designated Senior Prevent Officers, Police Channel Practitioners and Prevent Officers from other relevant agencies, as required.
   - Provide advice and support for team managers and agency staff.
   - Ensure the processes detailed in HM Government document: 'Channel: Protecting vulnerable people from being drawn into terrorism – a guide for local partnerships' is followed and adhered to.

5. Following the referral of any potentially vulnerable individual into the Channel process via the route described above, a preliminary assessment would be led by the Channel police practitioner, to include consideration of an initial vulnerability assessment.

6.  At this point partners should collectively assess the risk and decide whether the person:

    - is vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism and therefore appropriate for Channel;
    - should be referred to a different support mechanism; or
    - should exit the process.

7.  In assessing the risk, consideration should be given to:

    - the risk the individual faces of being drawn into terrorism; and
    - the risk the individual poses to society.

8.  Following the preliminary assessment and confirmation that the case is appropriate to continue through Channel, the referral should pass to the multi-agency panel, which is Chaired by the Local Authority.

9.  The multi-agency panel, using their professional expertise, will develop a support package. This will be based on a review of the vulnerability assessment completed by the Channel police practitioner at the preliminary assessment stage.

10. Multi-agency panel members should consider sharing any further information with each other for the purposes of Channel, subject to a case-by-case assessment of necessity, proportionality and lawfulness. Wherever possible, the informed consent of the individual should be obtained.

11. The panel may conclude that the individual is better suited to alternative support mechanisms or that further assessment indicates that the individual is not vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. In such cases the Chair of the panel is responsible for confirming the recommendation and ensuring that the decision is properly recorded.

12. All cases dealt with by the multi agency panel should be reviewed at 6 months and 12 months, from the point at which they exit the process, by senior managers.

13. If the panel consider that support to reduce vulnerability of being drawn into terrorist-related activity is required, they should devise an appropriate support package. This should take the form of a support plan setting out details of the statutory or community partners who will lead on delivery of the support.

14. Consideration must also be given to potential risks posed to the provider of any support package. The Action Plan should highlight identified behaviours and risks that need to be addressed. This will assist in case reviews and evaluating the effectiveness of the support package. All decisions should be properly recorded.

The diagram below shows the different stages within the Channel process, for information:

**Identification**

**Screen Referrals**
- Screen referral to ensure there is a specific vulnerability around radicalisation and the referral is not malicious or misinformed
- Maintain proper record

**Appropriate**

**Preliminary Assessment**
- Determine suitability (alternative support mechanisms)
- Collective assessment of vulnerability and risk

**Seek endorsement**

**Multi-Agency Panel**
- Review of vulnerability assessment and risk
- Collective assessment of support needs
- Develop support plan
- Identify and procure appropriate support packs
- Review progress

**Review**

Delivery of Support Package
- Review panel decisions at 6 and 12 months

**Exit**
Or referral to alternative support

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# Key Contacts

- **South Yorkshire Police** on 101 (non-emergency) or 999 (emergency)

- **Doncaster District Police Designated Prevent Officers -** PC 3450 Dev, Prevent Officer or PS 3712 Batty (via 101)

- **South Yorkshire Police Channel Practitioner** –Inspector Brendan Pakenham, Prevent Delivery / Channel Manager, 0114 2961374 or 07769 131474

- **Doncaster MBC** – Karen Johnson, Prevent Lead, 01302 862507

- **Doncaster MBC** – Bill Hotchkiss, Head of Service, Community Safety 01302 737831

- **Doncaster MBC –** Rachael Long, Community Safety Team, 01302 737469

- **Education –** Leanne Hornsby, Children and Young People, 01302 734865

- **Doncaster Children's Services Trust –** Richard Fawcett, Head of Service Safeguarding and Standards, 01302 734523

- **St Leger Homes of Doncaster –** David Abbott, Head of Tenancy and Estate Management, 01302 862602

- **RDASH –** Julie Lodge, Nurse Consultant, Safeguarding Children, 01302 798404

- **Clinical Commissioning Group –** Ian Boldy, Designated Nurse, Safeguarding Adults, 01302 566300

- **National Anti-terrorist Hotline - 0800 789 321**
(if there is sufficient reason to suspect an adult is vulnerable to the messages of violent extremism)

- **Home Office** - 020 7035 4848 (Monday – Friday)