

22 November 2016

Prevent

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Councillor Julie Fitzpatrick – Community Safety

Executive Summary:

The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the implementation of the Government's Prevent Strategy within the Borough, highlight current areas of work and challenges to delivery.

The Strategy

The Prevent Strategy is part of the Government's broader Contest Strategy and is aimed specifically at preventing people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorist organisations.

Although the Strategy has been in place for many years, the Counter Terrorism and Securities Act of 2015 now places a legal obligation on all 'relevant' authorities to:-

"In the exercise of their function have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism." (Section 26 CT&S Act 2015)

This is generally known as the 'Prevent Duty'

The Act also places a requirement on those authorities to prepare a risk assessment as an action plan together with a significant training schedule. In addition the Local Authority must operate a Channel Panel in order to coordinate multi-agency support for individuals.

Prevent Coordinator

The role of the Prevent Coordinator, in consultation with all stakeholders is to prioritise the threats and risks identified and implement a plan to address them. The plan is monitored by the Prevent Delivery Group who meet quarterly, with oversight and scrutiny from a recently constituted Contest Board.

Moving forward, the plan will take account of the changing threats nationally and the reducing influences around travelling to conflict zones. Given world events our plan is likely to change.

It has become increasingly clear that 'non-relevant authorities' are critical to the

Strategy and they should be encouraged and supported to adopt it.

Despite the fact that those agencies subject to the duty generally see the need for it, welcome and embrace it, and subsequent evaluation suggests significantly support it, the Strategy is constantly subject to criticism. The Home Office consider the criticism to be largely inaccurate and have issued detailed rebuttals. From a Walsall perspective, numerous survey's carried out by both Council and independent organisations, together with extensive engagement carried out largely by the Police, have failed to find any evidence of the issues raised by the critics.

Reason for scrutiny:

The Committee should seek assurance that the Local Authority, as a 'relevant authority' under the Act, is effectively delivering the 'general duty' fully and appropriately. This includes delivering the Strategy, together with Walsall's implementation of a 'Channel Panel,' are legal requirements of the Counter Terrorism and Securities Act of 2016

The Strategy clearly has important links to other service provision and the Committee should seek assurance that processes to work across Council services and Partners is effective and delivery intended outcomes.

Recommendations:

Members are asked to note

1. *Progress to date*
2. *The development and delivery of the action plan*
3. *The development and delivery of a Channel Panel.'*
4. *Specific work designed to address particular threat and risk.*
5. *Support the adoption of the strategy by non-relevant authorities.*

Background papers:

The revised Prevent guidance for England and Wales 2015, published by the Home Office.

Resource and legal considerations:

The Prevent Coordinator is charged with coordinating delivery of the Prevent Strategy. A small number of additional WRAP trainers (mainly school teachers) have been trained to build resilience in the training delivery.

Walsall has access to several Home Office approved and financed projects designed to address specific issues.

Citizen impact:

Despite national reports suggesting opposition to the Strategy no views of this nature have been found within Walsall communities. The aim of the Strategy is to prevent Walsall people being drawn to terrorism.

Environmental impact:

None

Performance management:

The Home Office set and monitor a raft of performance measures that the coordinator reports on quarterly. The outcome of this process is reported back to the Home Office.

Equality Implications:


None

Consultation:

Extensive consultation both locally and nationally around the Strategy has taken place.

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1. Report

1.1 The Strategy

The Prevent Strategy is part of the Government's broader Contest Strategy and is aimed specifically at preventing people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorist organisations.

1.2 The Counter Terrorism and Securities Act of 2015 now places a legal obligation on all 'relevant' authorities to:- In the exercise of their function have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. (Section 26 CT&S Act 2015). This is generally known as the 'Prevent Duty'

1.3 Authorities must prepare a risk assessment and a plan to demonstrate compliance with the duty. Local Counter Terrorism Units (CTU's) produce annual document called the 'Counter Terrorism Local Profile' (CTLP) to assist with this. This document brings together all relevant information and intelligence around the terrorist threat locally.

1.4. A significant part of the plan is awareness training to staff in all relevant authorities. This has involved training trainers and delivering that training to a prioritised list of staff. The priorities for last year were education and social work staff, particularly those with responsibility for vulnerable children and adults. Over 6,000 staff have been trained during this period. Staff in all Walsall schools have been trained.

1.5 Authorities must introduce a 'Channel Panel' in order to coordinate support for individuals. This operates on a case management basis and is in place in Walsall. A decision has been taken that Channel Panel will be chaired by the DCS.

2.1 Prevent Coordinator

The role of the Prevent Coordinator, in consultation with all stakeholders, is to prioritise the issues outlined in the CTLP and prepare the required plan to address it. The current plan recognises the relatively high numbers of arrests for terror offences in Walsall in the last 18 months and the risk from right wing groups.

2.2 The plan is monitored by the Prevent Delivery group who meet quarterly, with oversight and scrutiny from a recently constituted Contest Board.

2.3 The main priorities of the plan this year concern the risk to young people, particularly girls, the ever present on-line and social media threat and the need for robust referral processes for both young people and adults. In response, all schools and colleges in Walsall have received the Home Office approved and accredited 'Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent' (WRAP) training. Walsall College were recently judged 'Outstanding' in its delivery of the Prevent Strategy. In addition, strategies are in place, including a number of Home Office funded projects to address the on-line threat and the children and young person's referral process via the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). A recent review of the process carried out by West Midlands Police, Project Caireen, highlights Walsall MASH as a beacon of best practice in the

region. While we have an adult referral process, work is in hand to improve it.

3.1 CTLP

The publication of the next CTLP is imminent and given the changing threat nationally, together with the reducing influences around travelling to Syria and other conflict zones, which subsequently increase the threats of terrorism in the UK, our priorities will almost certainly change.

3.2 Local/National impact

Despite the fact that those agencies subject to the duty generally see the need for it, welcome and embrace it and subsequent evaluation suggests significantly support it, the Strategy is constantly subject to criticism, FOI requests and recently an increasing number of negative reports, largely from organisations hostile to it. The Home Office consider the reports largely inaccurate and prepared by people with vested interests. They have issued detailed rebuttals of all recent criticism. From a Walsall perspective, numerous surveys carried out by both Council and independent organisations, together with extensive engagement carried out largely by the police have failed to find any evidence of the issues raised by the critics.

3.3 The legal requirement to comply with the Act only applies to 'relevant authorities' identified within the legislation. As work progresses, other non-relevant authorities have been identified as critical to the process and they should be encouraged and supported to adopt the strategy.