



**Open Report on behalf of Andrew Crookham, Executive Director - Resources**

Report to:	<b>Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee</b>
Date:	<b>08 March 2022</b>
Subject:	<b>Annual Review of Prevent</b>

**Summary:**

To present to the Scrutiny Committee a summary of Prevent activity in Lincolnshire during the course of 2021/22 and the intentions for the coming year, to ensure Members are sighted on Prevent as a statutory duty.

**Actions Required:**

Members of the Committee are invited to consider the contents of this report, and comment, of the Council's role in meeting its statutory responsibilities under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015.

## **1. Background**

The UK faces a continuing threat from terrorism. The killing of Sir David Amess MP on 15 October 2021 and the explosion outside of Liverpool Women's Hospital on 14 November 2021, saw the national threat level, assessed by the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre, increased to, *severe*. This threat level has recently been reduced to substantial, meaning an attack is likely.

In respect of terrorism, Lincolnshire is assessed to be a low-risk area, but the conviction of Ben John (Addison Drive, Lincoln) under the Terrorism Act on 31 August 2021 demonstrates there can be no room for complacency.

National events and the ongoing Covid pandemic have impacted on the threat from terrorism and violent extremism. Lockdowns have increased periods of isolation as well as use of the internet. Proscribed organisations and extremist groups have had to adapt to the limitations on travel and face-to-face contact. The increasingly sophisticated use of the web and social media by organisations to spread online propaganda and extremist media, presents a complex challenge for organisations.

Action to tackle terrorism is covered by the Government's CONTEST strategy. Terrorism is defined by the Terrorism Act 2000; in brief, it means action, or threat of action, involving violence to the public and/or damage to property. This action must be focused on influencing the Government or intimidating the public, with the purpose of advancing a particular political cause.

Action to counter extremism is framed by the Government's 2015 counter-extremism strategy. Extremism is more difficult to define but is identified in the counter-extremism strategy as *"the vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs"*.

A third element to the strategic context for work around Prevent and counter-extremism is integration and cohesion. Extremism is a threat to community cohesion and will grow if cohesion fails; fostering cohesion helps build resilience to rises in extremism and helps limit opportunities for extremists to exploit.

This report is primarily concerned with the Councils' role in delivering one element of the CONTEST strategy: 'Prevent' – aimed at reducing the threat to the UK from terrorism by stopping people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. Prevent places a statutory duty on certain specified authorities, including councils, to "have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism" as per the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015.

Prevent has three objectives:

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

## **2. Lincolnshire Prevent**

### **- Governance**

To ensure that Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) continues to effectively deliver its Prevent Duty, it has put in place a robust framework for governance and leadership.

In terms of management and coordination, LCC's dedicated Prevent Officer sits within the Safer Communities Service in the Resources Directorate of Lincolnshire County Council. The purpose of the Community Safety Service is to prevent crime and enhance community safety, and to do so by facilitating effective partnership working (amongst other strategies), so the Prevent agenda sits neatly within that Service.

To demonstrate effective compliance with the duty, specified authorities must be part of a coordinated approach to multi agency working. Lincolnshire has a strong and effective Prevent Steering Group, and LCC is a key contributor providing both chair and administrative support to the Group. Membership is comprised of senior representatives from Children's Service and Adult Service directorates, as well as Counter Terrorism Policing East Midlands (Prevent), East Midlands Special Operations Unit - Special Branch Lincolnshire Police, Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue, Thames Ambulance Service Ltd (patient services), Probation and Prison Service, District Council, Ministry of Defence, Department of Education, local health partners, Department of Education, Lincoln College, Bishop Grosseteste and Lincoln University, Lincolnshire Community and Voluntary Service and JUST Lincolnshire. In terms of membership, Lincolnshire has one the best attended Steering Groups country-wide and is one of the few to have secured third-sector involvement.

The Prevent duty requires all eligible authorities to devise strategies and action plans proportionate to the local risk, in order to be able to achieve the three objectives set in the Prevent strategy, namely to: provide a response to the ideological threats of terrorism, prevent people from being drawn to terrorism, and assist organisations, sectors, and institutions that may face risks of radicalisation. The Councils Prevent Officer has worked with key partners to develop a partnership Prevent delivery plan, based on the assessment of local risk (Counter Terrorism Local Profile - CTLP), and the Steering Group directs the activity detailed within that plan.

The CTLP shapes the work of the Prevent Steering Group; helping to focus Prevent activity and allowing partners to best target their efforts and resources. The CTLP was revised at the end of 2021 and has been shared with the Steering Group and Chief Executives of all Local Authorities. The Prevent Steering Group Delivery Plan is now under review to take account of the recommendations made within the CTLP. A key area of focus for the partnership in the coming year is on-line radicalisation and considering how partners can best engage with individuals, who may be vulnerable to being drawn into extremism and terrorism through social media and on-line activities.

#### - **Channel**

A key element of Prevent delivery is Channel; a multi-agency approach to provide support at an early stage to those identified as being vulnerable to being drawn into any form of terrorism or supporting terrorist organisations. This process is managed by a statutory 'Channel panel', a body chaired by the County Council with representation from relevant sectors including, health, safeguarding, education, housing, immigration and border control, prison and probation providers and others. The Channel panel assesses the nature and extent of the risk and decides on the most appropriate support to protect people at risk of radicalisation.

Channel is a voluntary programme and individuals must consent to receive support to address their vulnerabilities and reduce the risk to them. This support can range from access to mainstream services, such as health and education, through to family support and specialist guidance to understand and challenge ideological, theological or fixated

thinking. It can also include wider diversionary activities such as appropriate training courses.

Every case adopted into Channel is kept under review and routinely re-assessed for any changes to identified vulnerabilities and risks in relation to terrorism-connected offending.

#### **- Community Engagement**

The cornerstone of Prevent is our work with local communities and civil society organisations. The Council's Prevent Officer works with third sector organisations across the county to support a wide range of projects, working with schools, families and in local communities to build their awareness of the risks of radicalisation, their resilience to terrorist narratives and propaganda, and to help them know what to do if they have concerns about someone who may be vulnerable to radicalisation.

COVID-19 restrictions have presented some challenges to the delivery of community interventions during the last two years, but as we move out of Government restrictions, a number of engagement events have now been scheduled including a Women's Engagement Event in Grantham, a Families Safeguarding Event at RAF Waddington, a Heritage, Faith and Communities Event in Skegness and a Women's Engagement Event in Gainsborough.

Women's Engagement Events are aimed at raising awareness of the important role that women play in safeguarding others around them from being drawn towards extremism. They present opportunities for women to come together in a safe space to talk about prejudice, discrimination and racism and how they can manifest and create suspicion, division and hatred. Previous events have been attended by a combination of female practitioners working with women in the community, and female members of the local community.

#### **- Training and Development**

Under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, the Local Authority is required to ensure all staff are appropriately trained in order to be able to recognise radicalisation, extremism and vulnerability, and know how to refer those individuals who may be vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. This is a core area of activity for LCC's Prevent Officer.

Alongside Home Office Prevent and Channel eLearning training, Lincolnshire County Council delivers a Prevent training package that incorporates elements of the Home Office WRAP (Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent) training, but with some local context. Training and briefing sessions are free to all agencies and are delivered to:

- All LCC employees (every 5 years); from front line waste management services to back-office staff and school crossing patrols.
- LCC commissioned or grant funded service providers.
- District Council colleagues.

- Educational establishments; from child minders and nurseries to teachers, Governors and Safeguarding leads in Primary and Secondary schools.
- Community Groups.

There is always a healthy take-up of Prevent Awareness training, and request for bookings, have remained constant.

In response to the challenges presented by COVID, the Prevent Officer adapted delivery to ensure staff could continue to undertake Prevent training regardless of Government restrictions, so whilst those restrictions have had a bearing on the method of delivery the numbers of staff who have benefited from training is comparable to pre-pandemic levels.

The figures quoted below are from February 2021 to February 2022:

- Prevent Awareness sessions, either face-to-face or via Microsoft Teams, to 424 LCC staff.
- Prevent E-learning package via Lincs 2 Learn, to 1317 LCC staff.
- Prevent Awareness sessions (face-to-face) to schools and academies: 44 sessions (to 1293 staff).
- Prevent Awareness Sessions to District councils and community groups: 20 sessions

On-line sites, forums and profiles of an extremist nature are in abundance and easily accessible, and LCC's training offer needs to ensure it incorporates the risks of radicalisation through social media and the internet. In the coming months, LCC's Prevent Officer will be working to develop a new presentation designed for practitioners and safeguarding leads that tackles these issues.

A Development Day was held for LCC Members in January of this year, with contributions from East Midlands Counter Terrorism Policing, Counter Terrorism Special Operations Unit and Lincolnshire County Council Community Safety Service. This event was very well attended and positively received by Members, and the intention is to hold a second event during the course of 2022.

#### - **Young People**

Extreme right-wing influences on school age children has again been raised within the County Terrorism Local Profile. Currently any engagement with pupils in schools is undertaken by the Regional Briefing and Engagement Officer Prevent Team, Counter Terrorism Policing East Midlands Special Branch. The intention in the coming year is to utilise the Stay Safe Partnership (whose remit is to deliver prevention education to pupils across Lincolnshire), Lincolnshire Police Prevent Officers and Education colleagues to deliver Prevent messaging to pupils in secondary, sixth form schools and colleges across the county.

### **3. National developments**

In 2019, the Government committed to carrying out an independent review of the Prevent strategy. This independent review, carried out by William Shawcross, has now been

concluded and the Government is expected to publish its response to the findings and recommendations in the very near future. This review is likely to have implications for Prevent work across the country and may require partners to review the proposed plan of activity for 2022.

The UK Home Office has pledged to introduce a new legal requirement for public places to ensure preparedness for and protection from terrorist attacks. This new 'Protect Duty' commitment comes after the 2017 Manchester Arena bombing, in which 22 people were killed. The Government published the 'Protect Duty' consultation findings in January of this year. The Safer Communities Service is working closely with other Directorates within LCC to prepare for any such duty, as the Government further develops the legislation.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This report summarises the work being carried out by Lincolnshire County Council to deter people away from terrorism and extremism. It is hoped the report demonstrates to the Committee the meaningful contribution Lincolnshire County Council makes to the Prevent agenda; in its own right and as member of the Prevent partnership. National developments are likely to result in some local changes this year, but our strong Prevent partnership arrangements locally and regionally will ensure we are in a strong position to respond.

#### **5. Consultation**

##### **a) Risks and Impact Analysis**

N/A

#### **6. Background Papers**

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

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