

## **Revised CHANNEL Draft V5-Operational awaiting hyperlinks**

### **1.0 Context**

- 1.1 Full guidance on Channel Panels is provided in the Channel Duty Guidance 2020. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/channel-guidance>  
Panel members should read the guidance in full in conjunction with these basic requirements and Terms of Reference.
- 1.2 Channel forms a key part of the national Prevent strategy. Channel is an identification and intervention safeguarding multi-agency process, providing support to individuals who are at risk of being drawn into terrorism.
- 1.3 Channel became a statutory requirement as part of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015. In practice, the legislation requires:
  - a) local authorities to ensure that a multi-agency Panel exists in their area;
  - b) the local authority to provide the chair;
  - c) the Panel to develop a support plan for individuals accepted as Channel cases;
  - d) the Panel to consider alternative forms of support, including health and social services, where Channel is not appropriate; and
  - e) all partners of a Panel (as specified in Schedule 7), so far as appropriate and reasonably practicable, to cooperate with the police and the panel in the carrying out of their functions

### **2.0 Purpose**

- 2.1 Channel seeks to deliver prompt and tailored work in its conduct of assessing an individual's vulnerability to being drawn into terrorism, information gathering, developing and delivering support packages to meet identified need and reduce vulnerability.
- 2.2 The Channel process is managed by the Local Authority, who will Chair the Panel, in conjunction with the Police, and is the principal decision-making and co-ordinating body for the Channel Programme in the borough of Middlesbrough.

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- 2.3 Decisions made by the Panel will be based on discussions which consider shared information, assessment of vulnerability, risk and support needs and the input of all core members. Decisions will ideally be based on panel consensus; where consensus cannot be reached, panel majority will be used, with the Chair having the deciding vote where there is no panel majority. The rationale for all decisions will be clearly recorded in the minutes.
- 2.4 The Panel has the ability to work outside scheduled meetings, in response to urgent or critical incidents.
- 2.5 Channel is a safeguarding and public protection measure that aims to ensure that children and adults of any faith, ethnicity or background receive support before their vulnerabilities are exploited by those that would want them to embrace terrorism, and before they become involved in criminal terrorist related activity.
- 2.6 Success of the programme is very much dependent on the co-operation and coordinated activity of partners. It works best when the individuals and their families fully engage with the programme and are supported in a consistent manner.

### **3.0 Membership and Meeting Frequency**

- 3.1 In line with the Channel duty guidance, as a minimum, the membership will consist of the following:
- Local Authority Channel chair Head of Service –Stronger Communities Marion Walker or Deputy Chair Community Safety Manager Jane Hill; and
  - Police including the Counter Terrorism Channel Officer and a warranted officer representative from the most appropriate Neighbourhood Policing Team
- 3.2 Other members should be invited where they have input to the cases to be discussed. These may be standing members of the Panel as determined by the Panel chair and invited each time. These may include, but are not be limited to:

Local Authority Children's safeguarding  
Local Authority Adult Safeguarding  
Local Authority Youth Offending Service  
Local Authority Prevention  
Local Authority Asylum Seeker Support Officer

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National Probation Service  
Local Authority Homeless Service  
NHS (and its subsidiaries including-community mental Health, community Learning Disabilities services, in patient services Representative, general medicine representatives, forensic Specialist care)

- 3.3 The Head of Service for Stronger Communities at Middlesbrough Council will chair panel meetings. There is a named deputy chair who can deputise if the Chair is absent from a meeting.
- 3.4 It is expected that Panel members attend regularly or ask a named deputy to take their place if they are unable to attend a meeting.
- 3.5 The Channel panel will meet at least monthly where there are live cases for discussion, new referrals requiring a decision or cases requiring 6/12-month review. Where there are no cases/referrals requiring panel meetings to be convened, the Chair will ensure that there is a gap of no more than two months between Panels and the opportunity will be taken to provide training for Panel members. Where necessary, an emergency meeting can be convened if the individual's vulnerabilities require prompt consideration.
- 3.6 Meetings are scheduled 12 months in advance each year and meeting invites for the year are sent to Panel members' electronic diaries.
- 3.7 Panel members must ensure that they keep up to date with any changes in duties and legislation and undertake training as required. Regular updates will be provided at Panel meetings.
- 3.8 The Channel Chair reserves the right to schedule monthly meetings in as an allocated time/date for Channel panel members however these will only be activated if an active case hearing or a review meeting is required.

### **4.0 Secretariat**

- 4.1 The Local Authority will perform all secretarial functions which include:
  - Creating an agenda and circulating this to members one week before the meeting;
  - Minute taking the meeting and circulating these to core members and relevant partners in good time;

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- Ensuring key discussions, panel decisions and the basis for all decisions are clearly recorded.

4.2 Case Officers will maintain an accurate record of vulnerability assessments/ panel decisions/actions/support plan are accurately reflected in the minutes.

4.3 All documentation in respect to CHANNEL cases are recorded by the CTCO on the CMIS system in accordance to Home Office requirements.

4.4 Attending officers have a responsibility to securely manage/control and dispose of documentation relating to CHANNEL meetings as per Middlesbrough Councils existing confidentiality and document retention policies encompassing laws in respect to General Data Regulation Principals

### **5.0 Scope of the meetings and decision making**

- The Channel Chair liaises with the Channel Case Officer before all scheduled Panels.
- If there are no new cases, a decision is taken at this point jointly between the police and the Channel Chair about whether the next Panel should go ahead. On some occasions it will be cancelled. Sometimes there is a requirement to hold an extraordinary interim Panel because of the volume of cases or if there is an emergency referral to discuss.
- The agenda and papers for the next Panel are issued to all Panel Members a minimum of 7 days prior to the meeting.
- For cases to be discussed at Channel, the Channel Case Officer contacts all relevant agencies to gather information held to support the writing of the Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF). The VAF is circulated to panel members in advance of the panel meeting.
- Colleagues who have made the referral may be invited to attend Channel to provide the panel with more information and background to the referral. Other relevant professionals who could have helpful information or advice will also be invited to panel at a specified time to join the discussion about the case.
- Meetings will risk assess referrals by using VAFs and any other information available and agree the most appropriate support to meet their needs.
- A decision will be taken by the panel on the adoption of all referrals presented for consideration.
- Decisions made by the Channel Panel will ideally be based on panel consensus, or if this cannot be achieved, panel majority (with the chair

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having the casting vote). This will be achieved by respectful consideration of the views of partners working cooperatively.

- When deciding whether a referral should be adopted by panel, the Chair will ensure that a full discussion has taken place with the relevant specialist advice and information available. The minutes will reflect the details of each individual Panel member's contribution to the discussion and decision. Minutes will record Panel members' contributions.
- Panel members will ensure an effective support plan is put in place for any cases adopted and that consent is sought from the individual prior to the plan being activated and identify and commission a suitable intervention to offer support in order to reduce the level of vulnerability. This may include the use of a Home Office Intervention Provider. The use of an Intervention Provider will be considered for all adopted cases and decision made to be recorded.
- Cases currently open to Channel will be discussed at each panel and formally reviewed by the Panel every 3 months to decide whether Channel involvement is still necessary. For cases that are currently open to Channel there will be an updated version of the Support Plan and an updated VAF (at least every 3 months) circulated to Panel members in advance ready for review and discussion at the meeting.
- If an Intervention Provider is still working with the case, then it will automatically remain with Channel. If the Intervention Provider recommends that the case is closed to Channel, then the Panel will make a judgement at the next meeting. If a case has been adopted but there is no Intervention Provider, the police will be asked to review this after 3 months. If it is felt that an Intervention Provider is not necessary, then it is likely that the risk of vulnerability to radicalisation is low enough for the case to leave Channel and be followed up by multi-agency support. On occasion, the risk may not be mitigated or decreased through the Channel process and a case may be moved from Channel to police-led space.

### **6.0 Governance**

- 6.1 The Channel panel chair reports directly to the Middlesbrough Community Safety Partnership. The Community Safety Partnership has overall responsibility for the local overview and monitoring of Middlesbrough Prevent partners' implementation of the Prevent duty and the administration of CHANNEL. The Channel chair reports at request to the Safeguarding Children's Partnership and Safeguarding Adults Boards and to councillors through the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board every 12 months or as required. Governance

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arrangements include provision for addressing escalated concerns. Areas of disagreement or concern can be escalated to the Middlesbrough Community Safety Partnership or alternatively by utilising the Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership [17. Professional Challenge and Resolution of Professional Disagreement \(teescpp.org.uk\)](#) or the Tees Safeguarding Adults Board –information on the most appropriate referral pathway can be found via this hyperlink [Local Policies, Strategies and Procedures | Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board \(tsab.org.uk\)](#)

- 6.2 Should the Channel Chair or Deputy Chair feels the need to escalate a concern in respect to the administration, attendance or a specific case in respect to Channel the Chair and/or deputy Chair in partnership will with the Counter Terrorism Case Officer will meet with the appointed Community Safety Partnership monitoring officer for Channel.
- 6.3 The appointed Community Safety Partnership monitoring officers is a member of the Middlesbrough Community Safety Partnership whom is not employed or funded in a Home Office position relating to PREVENT whom has sufficient authority to address concerns at a strategic level in respect to CHANNEL.

### **7.0 Accountability**

- 7.1 Members are expected to prepare by reading the agenda, vulnerability assessments and any supporting information in advance of the meeting.
- 7.2 Members are expected to complete their actions in good time and to report outcomes of their actions to the Panel.
- 7.3 The local authority chair and police are expected to communicate between meetings with updates on developments in cases and discussion of new referrals.
- 7.4 Police will own the terrorism risk and the panel will own the terrorism vulnerability associated with all referrals and cases discussed.
- 7.5 It is expected that Panel members attend regularly or ask a named deputy to take their place if they are unable to attend a meeting. The named deputy chair will deputise for the chair if unable to attend the meeting.

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7.6 Panel members must ensure that they keep up to date with any changes in duties and legislation and develop an improvement plan which includes identification of any training needs, at least annually. Regular updates will be provided at Panel meetings. It is expected that the Middlesbrough Council Channel Chair and deputy Chair will attend relevant training, events and disseminate relevant updates or briefings to Panel members as necessary. It is the responsibility for the Channel Chair to organise and deliver an annual Middlesbrough Council Channel Development Day.

### **8.0 Information Sharing**

8.1 The Channel panel will agree arrangements for sharing personal data relating to referrals, live cases and cases subject to review. An information sharing agreement to facilitate the appropriate and efficient sharing of information between partner agencies detailed within this term of reference will be developed and reviewed annually.

8.2 The Middlesbrough CHANNEL panel's information sharing agreement is available on the Community Safety Partnership website.

### **9.0 Confidentiality**

9.1 Information discussed by partners within the ambit of this meeting is strictly confidential and must be treated as such during the meeting and in the subsequent handling of any data considered at this meeting; data must not be disclosed to third parties without the prior agreement of the partners of the meeting.

9.2 Information shared should be directly or indirectly relevant to cases on a need to know basis. Clear distinctions should be made between fact and opinion.

9.3 All agencies should ensure that the minutes are retained in a confidential and appropriately restricted manner. These minutes will aim to reflect that all individuals who are discussed at these meetings should be treated fairly, with respect and without improper discrimination. All work undertaken at the meetings will be informed by a full commitment to equality considerations.

9.4 The responsibility to take appropriate actions rests with individual agencies. The role of the Channel Panel is to facilitate, monitor and

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evaluate effective information sharing to enable appropriate actions to be taken to increase public safety.

- 9.5 Channel Panel members will sign the Confidentiality and Official Secrets Act declaration at the start of each meeting.

### 10.0 Discharging Cases

- 10.1 When the panel agrees that a case no longer presents a Prevent concern, or is no longer appropriate for Channel, the following discharge process should be followed to ensure that all decisions and actions are recorded with reasons.

**When discharging cases from Channel other risk factors should be considered and appropriately discharged e.g. risk to self and others**

- 10.2 The Case Officer will complete an “exit VAF” – which with any supporting documentation comprises the audit trail for the discharge decision.
- 10.3 The exit VAF is presented to the following panel meeting for agreement, and the decision is recorded in the minutes.
- 10.4 The most appropriate panel member is identified to liaise with the individual and notify them of the panel’s decision to close the case.
- 10.5 Where the panel has agreed that broader support may be necessary:
- If that support is from an agency/service represented at Channel it is the responsibility of the representative to advise on what support should be considered and ensure that that their agency/service follows through with any agreed actions
  - If the support is not from an agency represented at Channel, a discussion will be held, and agreement reached about how the request for support will be progressed
- 10.6 The Channel Panel will review all adopted cases at 6 and 12 months after exiting from Channel. The Case Officer will drive this process, updating the Chair on upcoming cases to be reviewed. The review process will include a request for relevant information from panel members, including their service engagement, police checks, change of circumstances, and contact with the initial referrer where

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appropriate. The Case Officer will ensure the Case Management system is updated to reflect the process and any decisions taken.

### 11.0 Document Retention

11.1 The GDPR provides that personal data shall be '*kept in a form which permits identification of data subjects for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which the personal data are processed*'. When cases have been formally discharged from Channel Panel, the retention of data shall comply with the data retention policy of each agency.

### 12.0 Review of Terms of Reference

12.1 Terms of Reference will be reviewed on an annual basis or in light of legislative and other changes.

Version Date	Version Ref	Reviser	Approved by	IA Review
23/11/2020	1.0	A.SHIPPEY		
30/11/2020	1.1	A.SHIPPEY (DRAFT INCORPORATING GDPR, GOVERNANCE)		
30/11/2020	1.2	A.Shippey (removal of exit and inclusion of access to VAF)		
23/4/2021	1.4	A.Shippey (Inclusion of governance paragraph 6.2/6.3 and signposting of ISA to csp website)		
20/5/2021	1.3	A.Shippey- inclusion of Tees Safeguarding children and adults escalation section under Governance and inclusion of CMIS)		