

Section 6: Channel Process

Identifying Vulnerable Individuals

36. There is no single way of identifying who is likely to be vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. Factors that may have a bearing on someone becoming vulnerable may include: peer pressure, influence from other people or via the internet, bullying, crime against them or their involvement in crime, anti social behaviour, family tensions, race/hate crime, lack of self esteem or identity and personal or political grievances.

37. All CPPs and local authorities should develop effective links between those coming into contact with vulnerable individuals, such as those working in the education sector, social services, health, children's and youth services, offender management services and credible community organisations. CPPs and local authorities should use their networks to highlight the importance of protecting those who are susceptible to being drawn into terrorism and to raise awareness about how Channel can offer support. In broad terms, panel members are not expected to become experts in countering radicalisation which may lead people to being drawn into terrorism, but should have completed the Channel General Awareness eLearning and Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent (WRAP) training (see paragraphs 92-98) in order that they are equipped to recognise some of the signs that someone may be vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism.

Referral Stage

38. Referrals are often likely to be made in the first instance by individuals who come into contact with vulnerable people. WRAP training outlines the process by which they do this (see paragraphs 92-95). When the initial referral is received, the CPP will assess whether or not the case is potentially appropriate for Channel. Part of the CPP's role is to filter out any inappropriate referrals.

Screening and Information Gathering Stage

39. If the initial information received through the referral shows a vulnerability that is not terrorist related then the case is not suitable for Channel; the CPP will refer the individual to other more appropriate support services. This will ensure that only those cases where there is a genuine vulnerability to being drawn into terrorism are processed through Channel.

40. All referrals that progress through to the Channel process will be subject to a thorough assessment of vulnerabilities by the Channel panel. The preliminary assessment is led by the CPP and will include their line manager and, if appropriate, senior personnel of panel partners. If necessary and appropriate, those listed in paragraph 24 may also be included.

Co-operation by partners of a panel

41. Partners of a panel may be requested to provide information about an individual to the CPP during the information gathering stage. It is considered good practice for the panel to draft a local information sharing agreement in order to expedite the appropriate sharing of information. The information could be shared using existing protocols established through Community Safety Partnerships or Safeguarding Boards, for example, or a bespoke one created for the purposes of Channel.

42. Section 38 of the CT&S Act requires the partners listed in Schedule 7 (repeated in Annex B to this guidance) to co-operate with the panel and the police in providing any relevant information so that it can effectively carry out their functions to determine whether an individual is vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. It is good practice for partners to respond to the police within five to 10 working days.

43. The partners of a panel must act in co-operation with the panel and the police in carrying out their functions for Channel. The duty to co-operate extends as far as is compatible with the partner's legal responsibilities in respect of their functions; compliance with the duty does not require or authorise the making of a disclosure that would contravene the Data Protection Act 1998 or the disclosure of any sensitive information. The CPP will provide advice on handling on a case-by-case assessment of necessity, proportionality and lawfulness.

44. If a panel partner has any concerns about the appropriateness of sharing the requested information, they should consult with the CPP, the local authority Channel Panel Chair, and their own data policy officials to ensure all are satisfied that the information requested is lawful, proportionate and necessary.

45. As a panel partner, if you have provided information for the Channel panel, it is highly likely that you will be invited to attend the meeting to discuss the individual case. Panel partners invited to meetings should attend to ensure that the full range of an individual's vulnerabilities can be discussed and expert advice sought from attendees.

Consent Prior to Information Sharing

46. The default for panel partners when determining what information can be shared should be to consider seeking the consent of the individual (or their parent/guardian). In some circumstances, consent from the individual will not be sought at this early stage. This will be dependent on the circumstances of the case but may relate to issues such as the health of the individual, law enforcement or protection of the public. Where consent cannot be sought, information sharing may take place if any of the exemptions to the various legislative provisions restricting information sharing applies, and it will need to be made explicit in the record of the case by a panel partner which exemption or gateway is being relied upon. A non-exhaustive list of Acts relating to information sharing is

attached at Annex A to this guidance.

Vulnerability Assessment Framework

47. Channel assesses vulnerability using a consistently applied vulnerability assessment framework built around three criteria. The three criteria are:

- a. **Engagement** with a group, cause or ideology;
- b. **Intent** to cause harm; and
- c. **Capability** to cause harm.

48. The criteria 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).

49. The three criteria are assessed by considering 22 factors that can contribute to vulnerability (13 associated with engagement, six that relate to intent and three for capability). These factors taken together form a holistic view of the vulnerability of an individual that will inform decisions on whether an individual needs 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.

50. Completing a full assessment for all 22 factors requires thorough knowledge of the individual that may not be available at the point of the initial referral. However, there are a number of behaviours and other indicators that may indicate the presence of these factors.

51. Example indicators that an individual is **engaged** with an extremist group, cause or ideology include:

- a. spending increasing time in the company of other suspected extremists;
- b. changing their style of dress or personal appearance to accord with the group;
- c. day-to-day behaviour becoming increasingly centred around an extremist ideology, group or cause;
- d. loss of interest in other friends and activities not associated with the extremist ideology, group or cause;
- e. possession of material or symbols associated with an extremist cause (e.g. the swastika for far right groups);
- f. attempts to recruit others to the group/cause/ideology; or
- g. communications with others that suggest identification with a group/cause/ideology.

52. Example indicators that an individual has an **intention** to cause harm, use violence or other illegal means include:

- a. clearly identifying another group as threatening what they stand for and blaming that group for all social or political ills;
- b. using insulting or derogatory names or labels for another group;
- c. speaking about the imminence of harm from the other group and the importance of action now;
- d. expressing attitudes that justify offending on behalf of the group, cause or ideology;
- e. condoning or supporting violence or harm towards others; or
- f. plotting or conspiring with others.

53. Example indicators that an individual is **capable** of causing harm or contributing directly or indirectly to an act of terrorism include:

- a. having a history of violence;
- b. being criminally versatile and using criminal networks to support extremist goals;
- c. having occupational skills that can enable acts

of terrorism (such as civil engineering, pharmacology or construction); or

- d. having technical expertise that can be deployed (e.g. IT skills, knowledge of chemicals, military training or survival skills).

54. The examples above are not exhaustive and vulnerability may manifest itself in other ways. There is no single route to terrorism nor is there a simple profile of those who become involved. For this reason, any attempt to derive a 'profile' can be misleading. It must not be assumed that these characteristics and experiences will necessarily lead to individuals becoming terrorists, or that these indicators are the only source of information required to make an appropriate assessment about vulnerability. Outward expression of faith, in the absence of any other indicator of vulnerability, is not a reason to make a referral to Channel.

Links with extremist groups

55. The Prevent strategy 2011¹² makes clear that Channel is about stopping people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism, and that this will mean intervening to stop people moving from extremist groups or from extremism into terrorist-related activity. Where people holding extremist views appear to be attracted to or moving towards terrorism they clearly become relevant to Channel.

56. Association with organisations that are not proscribed¹³ and that espouse extremist ideology as defined in the Prevent strategy is not, on its own, reason enough to justify a referral to the Channel process. If professionals at a local level determine that someone attracted to the ideology of such groups also exhibits additional behavioural indicators that

12 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf

13 The Terrorism Act 2000 makes it a criminal offence to belong to, support, or display support for a proscribed organisation. A list of proscribed groups can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/proscribed-terror-groups-or-organisations--2>

suggest they are moving towards terrorism then it would be appropriate to make a referral to Channel. It would be the presence of additional behavioural indicators that would determine the suitability of the Channel process and not the fact they are associating with or attracted to a group that manifests extremist ideologies.

57. Association or support for a proscribed group is a criminal offence. It may be appropriate in some cases for individuals believed to be on the periphery of proscribed organisations to be referred to Channel. Professionals at a local level must consider whether a proscription offence has been committed before doing so. If there is evidence that a proscription offence has been committed this should be passed to the police.

58. The vulnerability assessment should initially be completed by the CPP and then be circulated in full to panel members in advance of meetings so that all relevant panel members can contribute their knowledge, experience and expertise to the case.

59. The vulnerability assessment should complement and inform rather than replace professional judgement and/or other assessments such as the Common Assessment Framework (or local equivalent) when deciding on the most appropriate types of support at panel meetings.

60. Further detail on the Vulnerability Assessment Framework is available at Annex C to this guidance.

Channel and offender management

Prisons

61. Channel can be used where appropriate to provide support to individuals vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism as a consequence of radicalisation and who are serving custodial sentences. This can be in cases where they are coming up to release from prison and there is a need to put in place some form of intervention or support prior to or following release.

62. The decision to refer an offender to Channel should be agreed in close consultation with Prison staff and the National Probation Service.

drawn into terrorism, the individual may be managed by either the appropriate offender manager or in some circumstances via a referral to Channel. This will be determined in close liaison between the offender manager and the CPP.

Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements

63. Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) are reserved for those who present the highest risk of harm in their local community. Most people are managed within MAPPA because of the nature of their offending. In some cases agencies may determine that an individual's vulnerability is such that it is best managed through the MAPPA process. Where this is the case, the multi-agency public protection panel can, if necessary, seek the advice of the Channel police practitioner. However, the case will remain subject to MAPPA and will not be adopted under Channel.

64. However, where an offender is MAPPA eligible and managed by a single agency, and is deemed to be vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism as a consequence of radicalisation, there may be certain circumstances where a Channel referral may be appropriate. It will then be for the single agency to liaise with the local Channel panel to determine how this risk should best be managed.

Probation

65. Where an offender is supervised in the community by a provider of probation services, and they are at risk of being radicalised and