

Prevent and Channel Guidance

Roots *and* Shoots

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WALNUT TREE WALK, KENNINGTON, SE11 6DN

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Guidance on Prevent and the Channel Programme

What is Prevent?

Prevent is the Government's strategy to stop people becoming involved in violent extremism or supporting terrorism, in all its forms. Prevent works within the non-criminal space, using early engagement to encourage individuals and communities to challenge violent extremist ideologies and behaviours.

What is Channel?

Channel is an early intervention multi-agency process designed to safeguard vulnerable people from being drawn into violent extremist or terrorist behaviour. Channel works in a similar way to existing safeguarding partnerships aimed at protecting vulnerable people.

Who does Channel work with?

Channel is designed to work with individuals of any age who are at risk of being exploited by extremist or terrorist ideologies. The process is shaped around the circumstances of each person and can provide support for any form of radicalisation or personal vulnerabilities.

How does Channel work?

Each Channel Panel is chaired by a local authority and brings

together a range of multi-agency partners to collectively assess the risk and can decide whether a support package is needed. The group may include statutory and non-statutory partners, as well as lead safeguarding professionals. If the group feels the person would be suitable for Channel, it will look to develop a package of support that is bespoke to the person. The partnership approach ensures those with specific knowledge and expertise around the vulnerabilities of those at risk are able to work together to provide the best support.

What does Channel support look like?

Channel interventions are delivered through local partners and specialist agencies. The support may focus on a person's vulnerabilities around health, education, employment or housing, as well as specialist mentoring or faith guidance and broader diversionary activities such as sport. Each support package is tailored to the person and their particular circumstances.

How will the person be involved in this process?

A person will always be informed first if it's felt that they would benefit from Channel support. The process is voluntary and their consent would be needed before taking part in the process. This process is managed carefully by the Channel Panel.

Who can make a referral?

Anyone can make a referral. Referrals come from a wide range of partners including education, health, youth offending teams, police and social services.

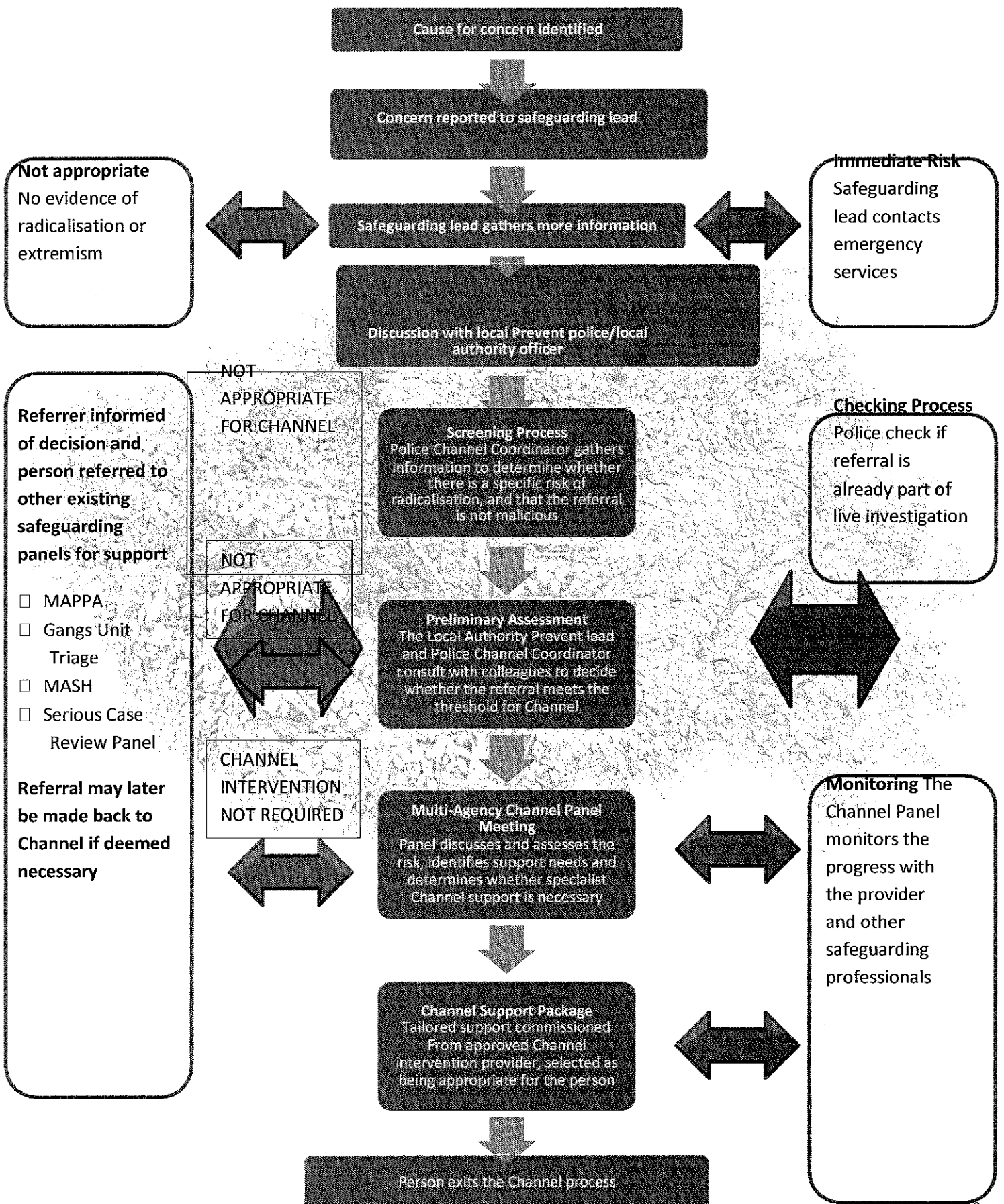
What happens with the referral?

Referrals are first screened for suitability through a preliminary assessment by the Channel Coordinator and the local authority. If suitable, the case is then discussed at a Channel panel of relevant partners to decide if support is necessary.

Raising a concern

If you believe that someone is vulnerable to being exploited or radicalised, please use the established safeguarding or duty of care procedures within your organisation to escalate your concerns to the appropriate leads, who can raise concerns to Channel if appropriate.

The Channel Process within FE Colleges



COVID-19 GUIDANCE

How extremists are using COVID-19 to promote disinformation, misinformation, and conspiracy theories

Briefing note for schools and further education providers

This briefing note is aimed at senior leaders, teachers, and safeguarding leads. It provides a short summary of the extremist response to COVID-19, highlighting the additional radicalisation risks for children and young people and suggested actions for settings to take.

During the pandemic, local authorities have seen a significant decline in Prevent referrals, raising concerns about the welfare of vulnerable children and young people. As schools return it is important that settings are extra-vigilant to radicalisation concerns, particularly as children and young people may have been exposed to disinformation, misinformation and conspiracy theories, sometimes called 'fake news', due to extremists exploiting COVID-19 to spread hateful narratives and increase division.

How do we define disinformation, misinformation, and conspiracy theories? • 'Disinformation' – 'Fake or misleading stories created and shared deliberately, often by a writer who might have a financial or political motive'. • 'Misinformation' – This also means fake or misleading stories, but in this case the stories may not have been deliberately created or shared with the intention to mislead. • 'Conspiracy theories' – Conspiracy theories offer a simplifying model for all that cannot be explained or easily understood. They typically involve an 'alternative' explanation for an event or situation to those provided by governments and official international bodies, sometimes suggesting a group, individual or organisation is responsible or hiding information from the public.

What are the radicalisation risks related to the impact of COVID-19?

Exposed to misleading and hateful content: Young people may have been exposed to fake stories or conspiracy theories about COVID-19, which attribute blame on minority groups. • Engaged with extremist individuals: Young people may have become exposed to or engaged with extremist organisations or individuals, especially online. • Increased vulnerability to radicalisation: COVID-19 may have increased vulnerability to radicalisation as children and young people may feel isolated, anxious, frustrated, and angry. This could increase the resonance of intolerant messaging and appeal of extremist groups or individuals offering explanations for the crisis.

What have been the extremist themes during the pandemic?

During the COVID-19 pandemic, false and misleading narratives about the virus have been spread, particularly online, to force change or to place blame on 'out-groups' and minorities. This can further incite hatred, justify violence, and divide communities. While some of this occurs on popular social media platforms, it can also be found on lesser known, less moderated platforms. These sites can include easily available extreme and conspiratorial content.

The Commission for Countering-Extremism (CCE)ii have highlighted the following prominent extremist narratives:

- Antisemitism: Several conspiracies blame the Jewish community for spreading the virus, including claims that COVID-19 is a Jewish plot, either as a hoax or a deliberate creation, to remove civil liberties and impose totalitarian rule.
- Anti-Muslim hatred: Claims that British Muslims have flouted social distancing rules and spread the virus have been promoted, particularly on social media. Whilst these have been disproven, high profile extreme right-wing influencers have blamed Muslims for the spread of the virus.
- Anti-Chinese hatred: Hate crime and hate incidents towards Chinese people have risen. Reports have found a 300% increase in the use of 'hashtags' that encourage or incite violence against China and Chinese people online.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Islamist: Islamist extremists have used COVID-19 to support existing narratives to promote the need for a Caliphate over democratic society, claiming the pandemic is a divine punishment for the West's 'sinful' behaviours.
- Right-wing: Right-wing extremists have similarly exploited the pandemic to amplify the weakness and hypocrisy of democratic values like tolerance and freedom.
- Accelerationism: Extreme right-wing individuals have promoted the idea that society is inevitably collapsing, and that right-wing terrorism can accelerate its end through inciting social conflict, violence and ultimately a race war.

Wider conspiracy theories: Extremist individuals have exploited a number of prevalent non-extremist conspiracy theories, related to 5G, track and trace and anti-vax, which can be detrimental to public health messaging. In some cases, these have been linked to antisemitic or other hateful narratives. Although Left Wing, Anarchist and Single-Issue (LASI) extremism is low, a minority of individuals

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have supported the targeting of 5G masts. This was based on the perception that masts allowed the government to control people.

What actions do settings need to take to protect students from radicalisation?

The education sector is best placed to understand the needs of their learners and will be familiar with supporting vulnerable children and young people. The following are suggestions the sector should consider when assessing the changes in the radicalisation risk to children and young people.

1. Review your setting's Prevent risk assessment, considering the impact of COVID19 and the information in this briefing, as well as any local changes in risk or community tensions.
2. Ensure staff are familiar with the issues raised in this briefing to increase their confidence in recognising concerns.
3. Ensure both staff and learners are clear on the reporting procedures to raise concerns.
4. During the pandemic, children and young people may have experienced the absence of trusted adults and positive role models. As such, extremist narratives and individuals offering an explanation for the pandemic may have had an increased appeal, and may have gone unchallenged. Dedicate time to rebuild these valuable relationships and have 'safe space' discussions with learners.
5. Review curriculum opportunities for critical thinking, online safety, and media literacy. Further support and guidance can be found below.

Signed by the Director:

Linda Phillips

Date: 9/11/20

Signed by the Chair of Trustees:

V. a. Stapel

Date: 9/11/20

