

Appendix Two – Summary of Updated Channel Duty Guidance

The Channel duty guidance which was launched in November 2020.

Overview of the revised duty guidance

The refreshed Channel duty guidance has implications for how Channel panels are delivered across England and Wales from November 2020. It has been developed in conjunction with Counter Terrorism Policing HQ (CTPHQ), Channel chairs, deputy chairs and other key stakeholders who have been instrumental in shaping this guidance.

The guidance will strengthen the quality and consistency of panels and the practice of panel members across England and Wales more effectively managing the vulnerability of individuals at risk of being drawn into terrorism.

There were 561 individuals supported through the Channel process nationally during 2018/19; the highest recorded compared to previous years. This highlights the continued importance of Channel panels as part of the national infrastructure in preventing individuals from being drawn into terrorism; they continue to be a cornerstone of the government's response to protecting the public.

A summary of key changes featured within the updated guidance are:

- Greater emphasis placed on the statutory nature of panels, the requirement to have regard to the guidance and expectations on local ownership and delivery;
- Introduces arrangements for monitoring local compliance with Channel/PMAP duty guidance;
- Introduces the concept of minimum core competencies for panel chairs and deputy chairs, directing levels of skills, experience and completion of Home Office training for these roles;
- Introduces guidance for local governance and proposes minimum requirements to direct panel form and function, including auditability;
- Provides opportunity for chairs to gain UK National Vetting Security Check clearance at 'SC' level from police;
- Extends availability of referral data to panels from police, to support practice delivery, governance and performance oversight;
- Sets the expectation that local authorities inform the Home Office of their named chair and deputy chair, and that the Chief Executive of the local authority is satisfied with the appointment;
- Sets the expectation that the Channel chair and deputy chair will be independent from Home Office funded posts;
- Introduces the expectation to convene panel meetings monthly where a live case is held.

Local Authority Duties

Local authorities will be asked to complete an annual assurance statement. This will enable local Channel implementation to be documented, assured and for progress to be recorded.

key practical requirements for local authorities include

- Designating a Channel chair and deputy chair; core competencies have been introduced covering skills, training and experience to fulfil the roles
- Embedding Channel within local governance arrangements
- As a statutory function, ensuring Channel is incorporated within local authority constitutions
- Updating local Data Protection Information Notices (Privacy notices) to reflect Channel panel and the use of personal data

Local Authority Chief Executive approval and sign off is required for the Channel Assurance statement. Completion is required by all local authorities in England and Wales as stated in the refreshed Channel guidance. The assurance statement for Wolverhampton was returned to the Home Office in April 2021.

Overview of the purpose of the Assurance Statement

The assurance statement captures Wolverhampton's compliance with the requirements laid out under sections 36 – 41 of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (CTSA) (as amended by the Counter Terrorism Border Security Act 2019) relating to Channel panels and improving outcomes for those identified individuals who are vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism.

This assurance statement forms part of a self-assessment for local authorities capturing Channel practice within each local authority area and levels of compliance against aspects of Channel delivery articulated in the Channel Statutory Duty Guidance 2020. Section 36 (7) of the CTSA states that panels must have regard to this guidance.

This is the first annual assurance statement issued to local authorities, so will be used to set a baseline for local authority Channel practice from the financial year 2020/21; future submissions will capture assessments over the preceding year.

The information gathered from this statement will also be used to identify where additional support to Channel panels needs to be undertaken, direct OSCT (Office for Security and Counter Terrorism) support, or provide a trigger for further reviews or observations, such as dip sampling.

The assurance statement will form part of a strengthened quality assurance framework giving the OSCT oversight of the Channel Panel enabling them to provide assistance and support where identified. This will be integrated with a new professionalisation and support programme for chairs, deputies, and panel members, comprising of enhanced training provision, panel observations and Channel peer support

The statement forms part of the strengthened quality assurance framework for Channel panels across England and Wales with findings reported into OSCT business assurance

arrangements. Responses to this first assurance statement will provide a baseline, capturing a current assessment of the Channel panel for Wolverhampton. This will provide the benchmark against requirements contained within the refreshed guidance, identifying any areas for improvement which are to be progressed over the coming year.

There is a professionalisation and support programme to accompany the guidance launch. The programme will comprise training for chairs, deputies and panel members, Hydra training, panel observations and Channel peer support will take place. A series of regional roadshows are planned for the autumn to address any queries arising since the guidance launch. Both the Chair and Deputy Chair from Wolverhampton have attended all training and keep the panel informed of updated guidance. Training opportunities are also shared with panel members.

A meeting for Channel chairs will take place in October where a review of assurance statements, referral patterns and thresholds will take place, this will be followed by a Peer Review of Panels and/or Dip Sampling Cases.