

**Rotherham Channel Panel**

**Terms of Reference**

**1.0 Context**

**1.1 Full guidance on Channel Panels is provided in the** [**Channel Duty Guidance 2020**](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/964567/6.6271_HO_HMG_Channel_Duty_Guidance_v14_Web.pdf)**. 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:

1. local authorities to ensure that a multi-agency Panel exists in their area;
2. the local authority to provide the chair;
3. the Panel to develop a support plan for individuals accepted as Channel cases;
4. the Panel to consider alternative forms of support, including health and social services, where Channel is not appropriate; and
5. 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 Rotherham.

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; and
    - Police

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 as follows:

* RMBC children’s social care
* RMBC adults social care
* RMBC Early Help and Family Engagement service
* TRFT Named Nurse for safeguarding children and/or safeguarding adults
* RDASH mental health representative for safeguarding children and/or safeguarding adults
* Rotherham Clinical Commissioning Group safeguarding/ Prevent lead
* RMBC Channel Panel coordinator

Other members will be invited where they have input to the cases to be discussed as determined by the Panel chair. These may include, but are not be limited to:

* Education: Schools, further education colleges and universities
* Home Office Immigration (Immigration Enforcement, UK Visas & Immigration); Border Force
* Housing
* NHS professional services and practitioners such as mental health, substance misuse, GP services, hospital etc.
* Prisons
* Probation
* Social workers
* Youth offending services

3.3 A Council Officer within Rotherham 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.

**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;
        + Minuting the meeting and circulating these to core members and relevant partners in good time;
        + 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 and ensure they are accurately reflected in the minutes.

**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 5 working 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 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.
* 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 Safer Rotherham Partnership Board. The Safer Rotherham Partnership Board has overall responsibility for the local overview and monitoring of Rotherham Prevent partners’ implementation of the Prevent duty. The Channel chair reports regularly 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 arrangements include provision for addressing escalated concerns. Areas of disagreement or concern can be escalated to the Safer Rotherham Partnership Board or alternatively by utilising the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership [Practice Resolution Protocol: Resolving Professional Differences of Opinion in Multi-Agency working with Children and their Families](https://rotherhamscb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_practice_resolution.html?zoom_highlight=resolution) or the Rotherham Safeguarding Adults Board [Escalation and Resolution Policy](http://www.rsab.org.uk/downloads/file/17/escalation-and-resolution-policy)

**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.

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 Channel Chair will attend relevant training, events and disseminate relevant updates or briefings to Panel members as necessary. A programme of training opportunities is offered to Channel Panel members annually.

**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.

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

9.5 Channel Panel members will sign the confidentiality 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 minuted.

10.4 The most appropriate panel member is identified to liaise with the individual and notify them of the panel’s decision.

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

**11.0 Security Clearance**

11.1 It is recommended that the Channel panel chair and deputy chair hold SC level clearance. The Home Office should be contacted to administer these requests.

**12.0 Document Retention**

12.1 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.

**13.0 Review of Terms of Reference**

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