

Bedfordshire Channel Panel (Including Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton Councils).

Escalation of Concerns Procedure

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1. Purpose & Statutory Basis

Channel is part of the Prevent strategy. The process is a multi-agency approach to identify and provide support to individuals who are at risk of being drawn into terrorism. Channel may be appropriate for anyone who is vulnerable to being drawn into any form of terrorism, 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 activity

Channel focuses on providing support at an early stage. The programme uses a multi-agency approach to protect vulnerable people by:

- identifying individuals at risk
- assessing the nature and extent of that risk
- developing the most appropriate support plan for the individuals concerned

Sections 36 to 41 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 set out the duty on local authorities and partners of local panels to provide support for people vulnerable to being drawn into any form of terrorism. This is detailed in the Channel Duty Guidance which is statutory guidance for Channel Panel members and partners of local panels.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/425189/Channel_Duty_Guidance_April_2015.pdf

An effective Channel programme should enable the local authority and its partners to achieve improved outcomes for adults, children and families who are vulnerable to being drawn into any form of terrorism.

In Bedfordshire the Channel Panel Chair and every member of the Channel Panel should feel confident in his/her role and personal authority and understand his/her responsibilities to monitor and review the case and, where necessary, challenge poor practice as well as highlighting good practice. The Local Authority Channel Coordinators should also be able to identify and demonstrate best practice, and address promptly any poor practice.

We require the Chair of the Channel Panel to take a range of actions if there are concerns about progress of a Channel plan, the practice and management of the case or the allocation and deployment of resources, including attendance at Panel. The interventions available include:

- Discussion with the local authority Chief Executive or other Corporate Director.
- Discussion with the Chief Executive or other Director of any Channel Panel member or partner or their equivalent.
- Discussion with the Home Office Channel Office for Security and Counter Terrorism (OSCT) if the concern cannot be resolved with the Local Authority, Channel Panel member or partner service.

We have developed this Escalation of Concerns Procedure to ensure timely resolution for any issues that impede effective planning or the allocation of resources. The Channel Chair, Panel member or partner are personally responsible for activating the Escalation of Concern process, even if this step may not be in accordance with the panel members or the child or adults wishes or feelings, but may, in their view, be in accordance with the efficient working of the Panel and/or the best interest and welfare of the individual, as well as his/her human rights.

Where problems are identified, and in order to support their satisfactory resolution, the Channel Chair will initially be required to communicate directly with a Manager who has the necessary level of seniority to seek resolution. This may be escalated more swiftly through the Escalation of Concern stages if this is necessary to meet the needs of the individual, including a referral to the Home Office OSCT as a final stage if the local authority or its partners are unable to resolve the issue, and it is appropriate to do so.

2. Introduction

While formal processes exist these should not replace professional dialogue. It is expected that the reviewing processes and professional discussion should be utilised to resolve issues before a formal alert is raised, unless the risk is such that to do so would place an individual adult or child at risk.

The aim of any escalation of concern is to ensure the welfare of the individual remains of paramount importance and to secure the best outcome. **This is a shared objective for all professionals working with the individual and their family within the Channel Programme. Resolution of any escalation acknowledges that all professionals are working in the best interests of the individual adult or child and the efficient working of the Channel Panel.**

As such it is important for the Channel Chair to have a collaborative relationship with all Channel Panel members and partners, and their service management. When the standard of practice or allocation of resources impacts on the implementation of plans or outcomes, the Channel Chair should ensure that they negotiate with management up to the highest level, if necessary, in order to resolve the concern by negotiation. Usually these alerts will initially be raised at Informal stage and move to formal Escalation of Concern if not resolved. Alerts will be escalated where there is no response received or the response does not adequately address the concern.

3. Escalation of Concern Process

Informal Escalation of Concern Process

Whenever possible issues of concern about planning, the implementation or quality of the plans or decisions relating to it, resources or poor practice should be raised informally by the Channel Chair with the allocated worker and their manager, preferably through face-to-face discussions, and then follow up with an e-mail to confirm what was agreed.

Formal Escalation of Concern Process

Stage 1: Where the Channel Chair, Channel member or partner has identified significant issue(s) during/or outside a Channel meeting, the professional will consult with their line manager and the Channel Chair before initiating an alert.

The Manager of the appropriate service has the responsibility for responding to the alert in writing, in 5 working days to the Channel Chair who will discuss this with the professional raising the concern.

In the event that no response is received within this timeframe or the Channel Chair considers the response to be unsatisfactory they may proceed to the stages below:

Stage 2: Service Director or equivalent

The Service Director has lead responsibility for responding to the alert in writing within 5 working days.

Stage 3: Corporate Director or equivalent

The Corporate Director has lead responsibility for responding to the alert in writing within 5 working days.

If the Channel Chair and professional raising the management alert considers the response to be unsatisfactory then a Dispute Resolution Meeting should be convened within 5 working days, chaired by the Channel Chair.

The Channel Chair should also at this stage consider informing and consulting with the Chief Executive of Luton Council as the responsible body for the Bedfordshire Channel Programme, and other Chief Executives and the Office for Security and Counter Terrorism (OSCT), if appropriate

The Formal Escalation of Concern process should have timescales in total of no more than 20 working days

The Channel Chair and professionals may bypass any stage and progress the concern to the level s/he considers most appropriate.

At times obstacles to resolving the issue may rest outside or beyond the control of the local authority, for example in relation to staffing, interagency or resources issues. However, if these are impacting on the ability of Channel to meet the needs of a child or adult the Channel Chair should continue to escalate the issue.

At each stage a record of the action taken and the outcomes achieved must be included in the case record by the Local Authority Channel Coordinator (LACC). All alerts will be analysed on a quarterly basis by the LACC and included in the Channel Programme quality assurance and performance reporting. The report will be shared with managers to inform policy, practice and workforce development.