



Prevent Peer Review Report

Report by Joan Tranent, Head of Children's Services

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to report to Cabinet the findings from the Prevent Peer Review team who visited Midlothian Council on the 8th and 9th May 2019.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Scottish Prevent peer review process is a sector-led improvement model which aims to evaluate the delivery of Prevent outcomes in a local authority, identifying good practice and making positive recommendations for improvement. The process was developed by the Scottish Government in collaboration with the UK Government and Scottish local authorities in order to support local authorities deliver the Prevent Duty¹.

The Prevent Duty came into force in July 2015 (and in September 2015 for higher and further education institutions) and required specified authorities – including local authorities – to have '*due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism*'. There is a statutory requirement for a Single Point of Contact, SPOC, to lead on Prevent, Joan Tranent, Head of Children's Services is Midlothian Council's SPOC.

The peer reviews are intended to be a constructive and supportive process with the central aim of helping local authorities and partners improve how they deliver Prevent outcomes. It is not an inspection or audit and is an entirely voluntary process available to local authorities.

The peer review approach is based on mature reflection, constructive self-assessment and critical friend challenge. It has two objectives: firstly, to support the development of an informed view, adequately evidenced, of how an area is doing in terms of delivering the Prevent Duty in partnership, and secondly, to identify practical actions to improve outcomes and productivity.

The UK Government has published statutory Prevent Duty guidance for Scotland which outlines what is expected of specified authorities under the duty and highlights the following as being key areas of delivery:

Leadership – includes understanding the risk of radicalisation; ensuring proper governance structures; and communicating the importance of the duty.

Capabilities – includes effective training; a referral process; and relevant policies and processes.

Partnership – includes how the authority works with the local CONTEST group; other collaborative initiatives; and how the council links with national networks.

Information Sharing – includes having relevant agreements in place; and whether the understanding of threat and risk is maintained and kept up to date.

Whilst there are fourteen aspects within the self-assessment framework, this report will present findings and recommendations based on the four key areas of delivery as shown above.

- 2.2** The peer review hosted by Midlothian Council is the fifth such review held in Scotland after a successful pilot exercise in February 2018. As such, the overall aims of the review were twofold; firstly to support the council through identifying good practice and making suggestions for improvement; and secondly, continuing to develop the process to ensure its effectiveness and relevance for Scottish local authorities.

- 2.3** The review consisted of six stages as highlighted in the attached report and required the completion of the self-assessment tool.

The self-assessment framework forms the basis of Prevent peer reviews. It includes statutory obligations from the Prevent Duty, along with good practice and aspects relating to the multi-agency support mechanism provided to vulnerable individuals (Prevent Professional Concerns – PPC). The framework comprised of 14 aspects where evidence was provided to the review team. The attached report offers more detail around the presented evidence.

The review team presented their findings to a group of senior leaders including the Chief Executive and Cllr Muirhead on the 9th May 2019.

2.4 Summary of Findings:

2.4.1 Leadership Good Practice

The review team found clear evidence of the strong leadership demonstrated by the Prevent SPOC with an enthusiasm to see the successful implementation of Prevent which was reflected by the other staff interviewed as part of this review. Crucially the SPOC is a visible and accessible member of staff with expertise being in an area of council business which is aligned to the Prevent strategy.

The leadership shown by the SPOC and deputy SPOC has been very positive for the organisation and this has been complemented by the support shown by the Chief Executive, combined with that of an elected member and staff in relevant business areas.

Areas for Improvement:

Midlothian Council may also wish to consider involving East Lothian Council within any enhanced Prevent group to widen the benefits already seen through the shared services approach seen in public protection.

The review team were of the opinion that the enthusiasm demonstrated by the council would be enhanced through establishing clear expectation and outcomes for staff throughout the organisation who have responsibility for delivering Prevent in their respective business areas. This process could be owned by the Prevent group which would ensure performance monitoring and feedback.

2.4.2 Capabilities – Good Practice

The review team found that the council's understanding of their responsibilities in relation to the hosting and chairing of a PPC multi-agency panel meeting was good and, crucially, there was an understanding of the risk involved and how this should be mitigated in collaboration with partners.

There was evidence that Prevent is considered within IT and venue hire policies. The review team were particularly impressed with the approach to IT and that this had assisted with the identification of a potential vulnerability which could then be mitigated.

Areas for Improvement:

The implementation of training across the organisation has been positive, but the review team recommends that there is now an opportunity to carry out a full stocktake and evaluation of training undertaken so far. This could identify what will be required in the future and will also, through a training needs analysis, identify any potential gaps in business areas.

Any review of Prevent training should give consideration to any opportunities to collaborate with East Lothian Council, together with other local partners. Midlothian Council may also wish to utilise Scottish Government funding to support any training events or initiatives.

2.4.3 Partnership – Good Practice:

Midlothian Council were found to have located their implementation of the Prevent Duty within a partnership environment which maximises the benefits of already existing structures such as the shared public protection facilities. The appreciation of the benefits of partnership working will provide a positive opportunity to develop delivery in the future.

Areas for Improvement:

The council may also give consideration to strengthening links with the community and third sector groups in order to establish a positive dialogue about Prevent and ensure that any community tensions are effectively monitored. However, it is acknowledged that all external engagement about Prevent should be driven by need and proportionate to local threat and risk, so this recommendation will need to be carefully considered in relation to the local context. At the very least the strengthening of links will enable the SPOC to be better aware of local tensions which may have an impact on Prevent delivery.

2.4.4 Information Sharing - Good Practice

Midlothian Council recognised the need for a suitable Prevent Information Sharing Agreement to be in place and this is being worked on. The review team found that the absence of a completed document has not precluded information sharing between statutory bodies and there is evidence that referrals are made appropriately and multi-agency work undertaken where necessary. This process has certainly been enhanced by the shared and co-located public protection arrangements.

Areas for Improvement:

The absence of an ERTLP document was also noted and on-going work is intended to plug this gap and ensure the council are informed of local threat and risk through this process.

3 Report Implications

An action plan which is attached to this report has been devised which highlights all the suggested areas of improvements. The SPOC will ensure that the actions are taken forward and that the Prevent Group play an active part in driving forward improvements.

3.1 Resource

At this time we are requesting no further resources.

3.2 Risk

The risks are mitigated by ensuring that we continue to roll out proportionate awareness training of Prevent to staff, third sector agencies and residents within our communities. It was identified through this review that we should consider undertaking a full stocktake and evaluation of training undertaken so far. This would help us identify what will be required in the future and will also, through a training needs analysis, identify any potential gaps in business areas.

3.3 Single Midlothian Plan and Business Transformation

Themes addressed in this report:

- ☒ Community safety
- ☒ Adult health, care and housing
- ☒ Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- ☐ Improving opportunities in Midlothian
- ☐ Sustainable growth
- ☐ Business transformation and Best Value
- ☐ None of the above

3.4 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

3.5 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

The actions from the plan shall be monitored and reported on via the Contest Group.

3.6 Adopting a Preventative Approach

This report addresses the Council's policy to ensure Midlothian is a safe place to grow, live and work, manages risk and provides effective governance.

3.7 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

The report and its findings shall be shared with the voluntary sector and other relevant stakeholder groups

3.8 Ensuring Equalities

The report does not have any equalities implications.

3.9 Supporting Sustainable Development

3.10 IT Issues

3.11 Consultation

Midlothian Council staff were involved as were relevant stakeholders during this process and moving forward I will liaise with staff and other agencies as and when required to disseminate the learning.

4. Summary

Overall this was a positive review of our systems and leadership in relation to our Prevent duties. The report highlighted suggested areas for improvement which will be progressed by the SPOC through the Prevent group.

5 Recommendations

Cabinet is requested to:

1. Consider and note the attached peer review report and action plan.
2. Thank those who participated in this review.

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Background Papers: