

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Briefing Paper – Learning from Brighton and Hove’s Multi-Agency Safeguarding Response to Radicalisation</b>
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## **1. Background**

In early 2014 Brighton and Hove City Council were informed of a police operation which identified a cohort of young people, a number of whom were aged 17 and under, who may be at risk of radicalisation and travelling to Syria. This information led to the development of strategic meetings between the police and the Local Authority, which were led by the ‘Safe in the City’ partnership and chaired by the Chief Executive of the Local Authority. Children’s Services were of the view that the concerns regarding radicalisation should be considered as a safeguarding issue in respect of the young people aged under 18, and made the decision that child protection conferences should be held for the young people concerned in order to establish the level of risk and ensure appropriate safeguards were put in place. It was made clear that the CP Conferences were about safeguarding, and not criminalising, the young people. A decision was also made that the conferences should be chaired by two specific Child Protection Reviewing Officers, to ensure consistency of approach, joined-up practice, and confidentiality of information.

All of the conferences (10 meetings relating to 11 young people) that have been held have led to the young people being supported by Child in Need plans, unless they are already subject to looked-after child procedures. The original Child Protection Reviewing Officers have continued to chair some of their Network Meetings to provide some independent oversight and scrutiny of the risk management plans.

## **2. Challenges**

A significant challenge to the success of the CP conferences as multi-agency safeguarding meetings was effective information sharing given the sensitive nature of the issues and their relation to national security. In order to be effective the conferences required information, and professional views, from a number of different police teams, namely the South East Counter-Terrorism Unit, the local Prevent Service, Neighbourhood Policing, and the local Police Safeguarding and Investigation Unit (formerly the ‘Child Protection Team’). It was agreed at the start of this process that a representative from the Prevent team would present all the police information to the conference. This was initially a significant issue as there was a disconnect between the SIU and Prevent, which meant that conferences did not receive the safeguarding information from the police which would normally be presented. For example, the conferences did not have up to date police checks on the parents or family members, or a history of police call-outs to the home address. The

conferences would have been more effective if the SIU had attended in addition to Prevent and Neighbourhood Policing representatives.

In addition, there was an issue with the clarity and transparency of the police information in that the Prevent police officers did not have all the information relating to why a young person may be at risk or felt unable to share it given the security aspects. Often during the early conferences, the police information was generalised, and focused more on the group as a whole, rather than specific and detailed information regarding the young person who was the subject of the conference. It was also clear that for a number of the young people the concerns were based on their associations with other people and the significance of this had to be analysed within the conference. This led to concerns that Children's Services were aware that there were risks of radicalisation but unaware of the detail of such risks, thereby significantly compromising effective safety planning.

### **3. Moving forward and learning from the challenges**

The most important step in overcoming the challenges highlighted above, and in improving the effectiveness of the conferences, was the development of relationships between Children's Services and Police Prevent officers. This supported the sharing of much more detailed information, for example deconfliction reports, and much more clarity regarding the information that the conference needed from the police. The Children's Services Safeguarding Manager and the Prevent Detective Sergeant worked together to agree a format for the police information for the conference which included the family's history with the police, the young person's own offending behaviour, and the concerns regarding radicalisation. The development of these processes and the robust chairing by the CPROs, has been crucial in terms of ensuring that the conferences had a meaningful focus on safeguarding the young people and were not solely a process to prevent violent extremism or criminal behaviour. The vulnerability of these young people was evident and the young people had all experienced traumatic childhoods characterised by abuse or violence, had a range of behavioural and learning difficulties or disabilities, and a history of offending behaviour, characteristics which are consistent with the profile of other young people who are subject to child protection processes.

It is recognised that within Brighton and Hove, as a unitary authority, it has been possible to build and utilise relationships with officers within the police Prevent team and the SIU, which has been vital in terms of providing an effective response to these concerns. However, this has not been possible in the same way with the regional counter-terrorism unit and so it has been necessary to rely on this information being filtered down via the police system.

In order to share and address the risks to these young people and others who may also be at risk of radicalisation Children's Services has led on the

development of a multi-agency Children and Young People's Radicalisation Group. In addition, to representatives from all the teams within Children's Services and the Community Safety Team, this group includes representatives from the Police Prevent and SIU, Probation, and Youth Offending Services. This group is particularly effective in addressing the challenges of this process as it can serve to ensure the connection between the different police teams and, subsequently, a clarity of information and agreed action. This group has moved from a focus on the group of young people identified within the police's initial operation to embedding a safeguarding response to radicalisation, in all its forms, for all young people. This embedding of radicalisation within safeguarding practice has also involved other changes to ensure that this is something which can be responded to by the service as a whole and is not just seen as a specialist area affecting a very small number of young people. So, for example, it has included the dissemination of Channel awareness training to all social workers, the holding of WRAP (Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent) training, the review of the Local Safeguarding and Child Protection procedures regarding radicalisation, and the development of a clear referral pathway.

The dissemination of training to social workers is an important development in beginning to address social workers' fears regarding their own awareness of these issues and also how they intervene to support young people regarding radicalisation. This has been facilitated by close links with the Community Safety Manager with strategic lead for Prevent in the Local Authority and the Channel process, including the provision of 'intervention providers' such as faith mentors for some of the young people.

In terms of interventions regarding radicalisation, a theme of the conferences completed was the positive engagement from family members in this process as they are worried about keeping their children or relatives safe. This engagement is crucial in terms of safeguarding as it is often changes made by family members that may help to ensure these young people are not placed at risk. In terms of the young people's engagement with the conferences, approximately half of the young people attended their conferences, which is a higher proportion than is usual for child protection conferences. However, it remains the case that the engagement of these young people with support from agencies has remained the biggest challenge to the safeguarding process.

The Brighton & Hove LSCB fully recognises the risk of radicalisation and being drawn into terrorism as a safeguarding issue. This cohort of children and young people are a named group which receives specific monitoring and scrutiny, on both a strategic and operational level, from the Vulnerable Children Monitoring Group. This is a multi-agency sub-committee of the LSCB whose remit also includes children at risk of CSE, Missing, Modern Slavery and Harmful Traditional Practices.

With thanks to Brighton and Hove City Council. Please go to [www.seslip.co.uk](http://www.seslip.co.uk) for further information.