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# Countering Violent Extremism: Lessons on Early Intervention from the United Kingdom's Channel Program

Talene Bilazarian



**Program on  
Extremism**

## **Program on Extremism**

The Program on Extremism at George Washington University provides analysis on issues related to violent and non-violent extremism. The Program spearheads innovative and thoughtful academic inquiry, producing empirical work that strengthens extremism research as a distinct field of study. The Program aims to develop pragmatic policy solutions that resonate with policymakers, civic leaders, and the general public.

## **About the Author**

Talene Bilazarian is a doctoral candidate in Politics at the University of Oxford. Her research focuses on the local implementation of counter-terrorism policies in the United States and the United Kingdom. She has presented her work at the UK Home Office and the US Embassy in London and was involved in the CSIS Commission on Countering Violent Extremism.

*The views expressed in this paper are solely those of the author, and not necessarily those of the Program on Extremism or the George Washington University.*

## **Executive Summary:**

- Countries investing in early intervention to prevent terrorism have much to learn from observing the UK's well-established de-radicalization program and the innovative approaches being developed at the local level to challenge extremism.
- Interviews with law enforcement and local government officials in UK cities reveal the importance of identifying appropriate intervention providers, educating local service professionals outside of law enforcement, recording personal data sensitively, and maintaining clear language around intervention that increases transparency.
- Efforts to avoid alienating community members and include a broader range of service providers outside of law enforcement help to remove the stigma associated with de-radicalization programs and increase community willingness to engage with early intervention locally.

## **The Channel Intervention Program: Relevance for US Policymakers**

The United Kingdom has over eight years of experience with early intervention to prevent terrorism. Many of these efforts have centered around the Channel program, a local safeguarding panel designed to support vulnerable individuals who are at risk of being drawn into violent extremism. Channel is looked upon as a model for early intervention to counter radicalization, inspiring similar programming around the world, such as the FBI's Shared Responsibility Committees.<sup>1</sup>

The development of Channel has been rapid, with many hard-earned lessons gained nationally and from local experience optimizing Channel programs in diverse contexts. It is vital that practitioners outside the UK aiming to organize similar efforts learn from the UK's longstanding experience with early intervention.

Channel is an admittedly imperfect program with a checkered history--often beleaguered by a lack of transparency and varied implementation quality, particularly surrounding inappropriate referrals of British Muslims<sup>2</sup> for baseless reasons. The program has featured heavily within

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<sup>1</sup> Hussain, Murtaza and Jenna McLaughlin. "FBI's 'Shared Responsibility Committees' to Identify 'Radicalized' Muslims Raise Alarms." *The Intercept*. April 9, 2016. Accessible Online: <https://theintercept.com/2016/04/09/fbis-shared-responsibility-committees-to-identify-radicalized-muslims-raises-alarms/>

<sup>2</sup> Dodd, Vikram. "School questioned Muslim pupil about Isis after discussion on eco-activism." *The Guardian*. September 22 2015. Accessible Online: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/sep/22/school-questioned-muslim-pupil-about-isis-after-discussion-on-eco-activism>

national debates about whether counter-radicalization efforts curb free speech<sup>3</sup> or discriminate against Muslim communities<sup>4</sup>, a discussion which is beyond the scope of this paper.

This report instead focuses on how countries investing in early intervention efforts can maximize the utility of these programs by observing the development of the Channel program, and learn from its triumphs and its mistakes, both nationally and at the local level. It will extract transferable best practice from the UK's experience with Channel in the hope that it will offer guidance to those pursuing effective intervention programming in the US and other countries. Core findings gained from interviews with law enforcement and local government officials across the UK include the importance of identifying appropriate intervention providers, educating local service professionals, recording personal data sensitively, and maintaining clear language around intervention.

A sensitive approach to early intervention can avoid alienating community members and include a broader range of service providers outside law enforcement. Among other things, this will contribute towards removing some of the stigma associated with intervention, as a surveillance project maintained exclusively by police. The history of Channel demonstrates how small steps to increase transparency and include community members dramatically increases local willingness to participate in early intervention programs, advancing larger efforts to prevent violent extremism at home and abroad.

### **Channel within the UK's Broader Counter-Terrorism Efforts**

Channel represents one of the best-known components of the Prevent strategy. Conceived in 2007, Prevent forms the softer arm of the UK's broader counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST. The CONTEST strategy is comprised of the so-called "4 P's": *Pursue* (to stop terrorist attacks); *Protect* (to strengthen protection against a terrorist attack); *Prepare* (to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack); and *Prevent* (to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism).<sup>5</sup> Unlike the other aspects of CONTEST, Prevent addresses the underlying causes of extremism and aims to support individuals vulnerable to radicalization from becoming involved in terrorism before they have committed any crimes.

A broad range of community programs have been pursued under the Prevent agenda. These have focused on increasing the capacity of communities (particularly women) religious leaders, and

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<sup>3</sup> Nabulsi, Karma. "Theresa May's Prevent bill is extremism in the name of security." *The Guardian*. February 4 2015. Accessible Online: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/feb/04/theresa-may-prevent-bill-extremism-security-terrorism>

<sup>4</sup> Hooper, Simon. "Stifling freedom of expression in UK schools: The UK Prevent programme infiltrates schools, targeting students who express certain views." *Al Jazeera*. July 23 2015. Accessible Online: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2015/07/stifling-freedom-expression-uk-schools-150721080612049.html>

<sup>5</sup> HM Government. *CONTEST: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism*. London: The Stationary Office, 2011, 6. Accessible Online: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/97994/contest-summary.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97994/contest-summary.pdf)

youth to identify the signs of radicalization and resist extremist ideology locally.<sup>6</sup> Amidst significant changes to the strategy and limitations on funding, Prevent activity has increasingly focused around the Channel program, which has become one of the hallmark components of the strategy.

The UK's early intervention program provides support to vulnerable individuals who are drawn towards violent extremism in all forms, most notably of the Islamist and far-right variety. The program operates on the basis of community tips and referrals, which are then reviewed within a multi-agency structure, bringing together a range of local service providers on a panel to manage individual cases. This approach mirrors similar efforts to support sexual offenders and gang members, pairing a vulnerable individual with a certified intervention provider who provides one-to-one support.

Channel has received greater attention in the wake of the 2015 Counter-Terrorism and Security Act<sup>7</sup>, when all UK local authorities were required by law to establish Channel panels locally and maintain them in compliance with central government guidance.<sup>8</sup> As of 2015, public institutions such as schools, hospitals, and universities are now required to include the Channel program and establish internal mechanisms to manage the risk of violent extremism.

### **Channel in the UK: How it Works**

The Channel program operates in the pre-criminal space, meaning that Channel seeks to engage vulnerable individuals at a critical juncture before they have participated in acts of violence or terrorism. At the local level, Channel panels bring together a range of local safeguarding providers, including representatives from law enforcement, local government, the health sector, and education. In an effort to move core intervention responsibilities away from law enforcement, and thus avoid criticism surrounding the criminalization of thought, the UK's statutory guidance requires that the chair of the local Channel panel be a city council representative.

Because Channel operates as a safeguarding initiative, reported vulnerabilities are not treated as crimes. As a reflection of the pre-criminal nature of Channel, data about individuals are closely guarded to ensure privacy. Information about individuals engaged in early intervention programs is only accessible to members of the local Channel panel and remains internally protected from other local and national criminal databases. The program is entirely voluntary; referred

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<sup>6</sup> HM Government. *The Prevent Strategy: Guide for Local Partners*. London: The Stationary Office, 2008.

Accessible Online:

<http://resources.cohesioninstitute.org.uk/Publications/Documents/Document/DownloadDocumentsFile.aspx?recordId=134&file=PDFversion>.

<sup>7</sup> *Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015*. Accessible Online:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/6/contents/enacted>

<sup>8</sup> HM Government. *Channel Duty Guidance: Protecting vulnerable people from being drawn into terrorism*.

London: The Stationary Office, 2015, 5. Accessible Online:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/425189/Channel\\_Duty\\_Guidance\\_April\\_2015.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/425189/Channel_Duty_Guidance_April_2015.pdf).

individuals participating in Channel provide informed consent at the outset and can choose to leave at any time.

Police are often the first to be informed about local concerns, but the Channel guidance has strict protocols to ensure initial referrals are not formally adopted as Channel cases without rigorous assessment by the full Channel panel. If legitimate vulnerability has been identified after assessment by the panel, an individualized plan to address the unique vulnerability is developed. The plan is then implemented by a local intervention provider who works with the individual through an extended period of mentorship, while remaining in close communication with the broader panel. The Channel case remains open until the individual demonstrates lower levels of vulnerability after continual reassessment.

### **How Safeguarding Concerns Are Evaluated within Channel**

Channel referrals typically originate from the local community. A local service provider, such as a teacher or health professional, may communicate a concern about signs of radicalization to law enforcement or a Channel panel representative. Police first gather initial information about the individual to discern whether the instance represents a legitimate concern and should be presented to the panel for formal intervention.

The “3 Ms” are used to evaluate initial referrals received by police or presented to the local panel. To progress forward as a case for evaluation by the Channel panel, referrals must not be malicious, misinformed, or misguided.<sup>9</sup> A malicious referral is designed by a community member to hurt an individual who is not vulnerable to extremism and would not progress through the panel. A misinformed referral simply misinterprets the context around an individual, perhaps confusing a religious or political stance for vulnerability to violent extremism. A misguided referral operates on false evidence or may ultimately mistake another kind of safeguarding concern, such as mental or physical abuse, for extremism.

Local law enforcement stressed in interviews the importance of fostering open communication and community learning during the referral process.<sup>10</sup> In cases of inappropriate referrals, police aim not to censure community members but to use these instances as an opportunity to train them on the nature of radicalization and review what would be an appropriate referral. Where referrals are ultimately unrelated to violent extremism, police will still work to ensure that the relevant local professionals address these concerns appropriately.<sup>11</sup>

After passing through these preliminary checks, the individual case is presented to the Channel panel for assessment. If members of the panel already hold relevant existing information about the individual of concern, this will also be shared. The panel will then together assess the referral to determine if the case should be formally adopted

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<sup>9</sup> HM Government. *Channel: Protecting vulnerable people from being drawn into terrorism*. London: The Stationary Office, 2012, 15-16. Accessible Online:

<http://www.npcc.police.uk/documents/TAM/2012/201210TAMChannelGuidance.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Interview with South East Counter-Terrorism Unit Prevent Officer. Personal Interview. 9th November 2015.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with South East Counter-Terrorism Unit Prevent Officer. Personal Interview. 9th November 2015.

To achieve this, the panel uses an assessment framework developed by the UK's Home Office of 22 vulnerability factors.<sup>12</sup> These are classed according to: engagement with a group, cause, or ideology (i.e. feelings of grievance or susceptibility to indoctrination); intent to cause harm (i.e. attitudes that justify offending); and capability to cause harm (i.e. individual knowledge or access to networks). These categories of vulnerability are each assessed separately, recognizing that neither engagement, intent, nor capability alone determine vulnerability to violent extremism.

Local Channel panels have significant autonomy to manage referrals, often turning down cases that are believed not to warrant intervention. Panels determine their own thresholds of vulnerability, as in the number of vulnerability factors and extent of vulnerability, to merit adoption as a Channel case. These thresholds vary between local panels at the discretion of the individual panel. While the central government provides guidance on the range of vulnerability factors, the members of local Channel panels are making crucial decisions about which individuals receive early intervention. This is a reflection of the belief within the UK Home Office that extremism is a highly localized phenomenon, best dealt with by local professionals with sensitivity to the particular context around which vulnerability develops.<sup>13</sup>

If the panel determines that there are a sufficient number of vulnerability factors, the individual is voluntarily adopted into the Channel process and a personalized intervention plan is developed. The individual is then paired with an intervention provider, who uses a process of ongoing mentorship and counter-narratives to question the ideological foundations of extremism. British intervention practitioner, Rashad Ali provides an in-depth description of intervention processes at work within Channel, relating how intervention providers counseled individuals in the UK who justified the 2015 attacks at the offices of *Charlie Hebdo*.<sup>14</sup> These individualized sessions often go on for several months with continual reassessment by the intervention provider using the vulnerability framework, until the presence of vulnerability factors are seen to decrease.

Even if the referral does not meet the local threshold to warrant progressing onward through the Channel process, referred individuals often display other forms of social vulnerability. In these instances, it is then the Channel panel's duty to ensure the individual in question receives relevant assistance from another local agency better suited to address their needs.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>HM Government. *Channel: Vulnerability assessment framework*. London: The Stationary Office, 2012. Accessible Online: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/118187/vul-assessment.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118187/vul-assessment.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> HM Government. *Prevent Strategy*. London: The Stationary Office, 2011, 39. Accessible Online: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Ali, Rashad. *De-radicalization and Integration: The United Kingdom's Channel Programme*. George Washington University: Program on Extremism, 2015, 8. Accessible Online: <https://cchs.gwu.edu/sites/cchs.gwu.edu/files/downloads/AliPaper-Final.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> HM Government. *Channel Duty Guidance: Protecting vulnerable people from being drawn into terrorism*. London: The Stationary Office, 2015, 5. Accessible Online: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/425189/Channel\\_Duty\\_Guidance\\_April\\_2015.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/425189/Channel_Duty_Guidance_April_2015.pdf).

## **UK Case Studies in Intervention: Best Practices**

Like other forms of safeguarding, the success of Channel or similar early intervention programs depends on the sensitivity and understanding of all individuals involved, especially the intervention providers that work directly with vulnerable individuals. Recognizing this, it is important that appropriate intervention providers are identified who possess skills to work effectively with vulnerable individuals and in cooperation with local partners. Cities responsible for developing intervention programs should seek out individuals with the ability to engage with young people and other vulnerable individuals, ideally with experience of dealing with ex-offenders and youth mentoring. Intervention providers should also have advanced subject matter knowledge in terms of the drivers for extremism and how these factors interact with the broader social and political context, both globally and locally. Finally, intervention providers need to be able to work administratively in partnership with other local agencies, ensuring that local stakeholders are kept updated about the progression of individuals through intervention programs. Intervention providers will be most successful when they can navigate across these several dimensions, acting as effective mentors, with a local and global perspective on extremism, and a capacity to adhere to the protocols of local agencies.

As concrete examples, two case studies are provided below, demonstrating how local intervention efforts in the UK were strengthened by identifying appropriate intervention providers, dealing sensitively with the personal data of referred individuals, and training local service professionals outside law enforcement. These efforts dramatically increased community understanding of the Channel process and willingness to engage in early intervention efforts.

### *Identification of Intervention Providers and Data Protection: A Case Study from the East Midlands*

Cities in the East Midlands region of the UK have become adept at selecting skilled intervention providers since the introduction of Channel. In these cities, law enforcement and local government representatives together selected individuals to provide interventions who were already engaged in relevant spheres of work such as youth mentoring, religious leadership, and offender management.<sup>16</sup> These individuals possessed an understanding about extremism, insight into the local context, and credibility with vulnerable individuals. Many had already been dealing with issues around violent extremism within their communities in an informal manner.<sup>17</sup>

A key element of Channel's impact in the East Midlands was that police working on the Prevent strategy were included in the selection of intervention providers. The relationships between them and the police created a strong rapport among professionals involved in Channel locally. Police were often able to gauge which intervention provider would be paired with a referred individual. Local police had close relationships with members of the local Channel panel and felt their opinions were respected and this generated additional investment in the Channel process across law enforcement.<sup>18</sup> This commitment to early intervention and safeguarding among local police

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<sup>16</sup> Interview with Rashad Ali, Former Intervention Provider. Personal Interview. February 17, 2016.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Rashad Ali, Former Intervention Provider. Personal Interview. February 17, 2016.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with East Midlands Counter-Terrorism Unit Former Prevent Officer. Personal Interview. February 3, 2016.

was perceptible by other local agencies, which fostered further trust in the legitimacy of Channel panels across the community.<sup>19</sup>

Law enforcement in the East Midlands was also sensitive towards how the data of individuals involved in Channel would be recorded, insisting that Channel cases be recorded outside of criminal databases. In the first years of the Channel program, law enforcement in the East Midlands created a separate, local database for non-offending, vulnerable individuals, who were voluntarily engaging in the Channel process. This method of recording data increased the willingness of local partner agencies to participate in early intervention, believing that referring to Channel would not pre-emptively criminalize individuals they were intending to safeguard.<sup>20</sup>

The East Midlands case demonstrates the importance of addressing anxieties about the recording of vulnerability from the beginning. By ensuring that counter-extremism programs were treated with the same sensitivity as other forms of safeguarding, community members and local partners were more willing to engage in intervention efforts. Today, all Channel cases are listed on a separate, centralized UK Home Office database, which is excluded from police or other criminal databases. Channel cases are only visible to individuals present on the local Channel panel and they remain internally protected from all other local agencies.<sup>21</sup>

The history of Channel also demonstrates the importance of training staff across local partner agencies about how to handle relevant concerns. By providing basic training to community members about how to identify the signs of extremism and how intervention operates locally, there is greater transparency around safeguarding processes. This training moves responsibility for the management of vulnerable individuals away from the exclusive control of the police, where they can be increasingly shared among local partners. It also helps to build rapport between police and local agencies, increasing the willingness of local professionals to discuss safeguarding concerns informally.

#### *Channel Training for Multi-Agency Partners: A Case Study from the South East Counter Terrorism Unit*

In one city in South East England, local police invested heavily in training local partners across health, education, and other social services about the nature of extremism and local intervention programs, through a “train the trainer” program.<sup>22</sup> Here, police trained representatives from across the local public sector who were then certified to credibly train and assist individuals within their hospitals, schools, and councils. “Train the trainer” provided a space to educate local community leadership *en masse* and for difficult questions to be answered for the benefit of all participants.

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<sup>19</sup> Interview with East Midlands Counter-Terrorism Unit Former Prevent Officer. Personal Interview. February 3, 2016.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with East Midlands Counter-Terrorism Unit Former Prevent Sergeant. Personal Interview. January 22, 2016.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with South East Counter-Terrorism Unit Prevent Officer. Personal Interview. 9th November 2015.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with South East Counter-Terrorism Unit Prevent Officer. Personal Interview. 9th November 2015.

Much of the training centered on how to express concerns about signs of radicalization and who to contact in these instances. Police were also able to communicate with local professionals about the nature of Channel, specifically the sensitivity involved in managing individuals of concern and the willingness of police to act as a local soundboard before a formal referral to the Channel panel would be made.

Importantly, these events delegated greater responsibility for early intervention to local agencies, removing the stigma around Channel as a spying agenda managed exclusively by police. After “train the trainer,” there were credible, local professionals outside of law enforcement with a sound understanding of Channel and a willingness to interact with the program in South East England. Police noted in interviews that these trainings increased multi-agency collaboration, citing how city council staff developed a community e-learning package about radicalization in consultation with local police after receiving this training.<sup>23</sup>

### **Community Dynamics: Building Trust in Local Intervention**

In many UK cities, Channel processes are unclear to community members, with perpetual misinformation and suspicion about the program. Community members are often unaware that referred individuals can voluntarily exit the Channel program at any time, that Channel deals with all forms of extremism, and that individual identities are internally protected from criminal databases. Often, communities where individuals have been inappropriately referred to Channel will be most suspicious of the program.

To prevent confusion, cities benefit from targeted community engagement—especially at the launch of local intervention programs—to communicate how counter-extremism intervention works. Representatives from law enforcement and local government can stress together that the approach to early intervention is closely inspired by other forms of safeguarding. Many cities have also created public resources online to address questions or hold public forums to discuss community concerns.

Beyond this, consistent language is key for the success of local intervention. Careful terminology around intervention increases transparency and understanding across both communities and local government about how intervention operates. It is crucial to distinguish between mere safeguarding conversations about the perception of risk and formal intervention. Often, conversations with law enforcement about concerns are portrayed as formal Channel cases, although the Channel panel never accepted them. Clear language about the distinct aspects of intervention, separating communication about informal concerns from cases progressing through established intervention protocols serves to deepen community trust to bring forward questions or concerns.

Examples of language that designates these differences:<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with South East Counter-Terrorism Unit Prevent Officer. Personal Interview. 9th November 2015.

<sup>24</sup> These terms were co-developed through conversations with a South East Counter-Terrorism Unit Prevent Officer.

<i>Safeguarding Concern</i>	The preliminary conversation an individual has with law enforcement or a member of the local intervention panel when they want to discuss an initial concern or question
<i>Formal Referral</i>	An official referral presented for intervention to the local intervention panel
<i>Intervention Case</i>	A case that has been adopted into the formal intervention process and is being continually assessed and safeguarded by an intervention provider and other local agency partners

This terminology helps to clarify the distinction between individuals asking questions to clarify concerns as opposed to vulnerabilities that are determined as warranting intervention programming.

### **Conclusion**

The benefits of a preventative approach to countering terrorism and violent extremism have already been noted extensively by academics and policymakers.<sup>25</sup> The UK has consistently been held up as an international model for its terrorism prevention efforts, inspiring Australia’s Countering Violent Extremism plan<sup>26</sup>, Canada’s Prevent strategy<sup>27</sup>, and the U.S. National Strategy for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism.<sup>28</sup> As the US increasingly invests in the preventative dimension of counter-terrorism, American policymakers should look closely at the UK’s experience with early intervention, to observe lessons learned and emerging best practice in this rapidly evolving policy area.

The most critical lessons from the UK experience with Channel are the importance of maintaining community trust and transparency by training local staff outside law enforcement, carefully selecting appropriate intervention providers, recording at risk individuals outside criminal databases, and using precise language. These measures can increase the willingness of

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<sup>25</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. *Preventing Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism: A Community-Policing Approach*. Vienna: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2014. Accessible Online: <http://www.osce.org/atu/111438?download=true>; Sewall, Sarah. “Preventing the Next ISIL: An Evolving Global Approach to Terrorism.” Pardee School of Global Studies, Boston University. October 2015. Accessible Online: <http://www.state.gov/j/remarks/248075.htm>; Romaniuk, Peter and Naureen Chowdhury Fink. *From Input to Impact: Evaluating Terrorism Prevention Programs*. Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation, 2012. Accessible Online: [http://www.globalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/CGCC\\_EvaluatingTerrorismPrevention.pdf](http://www.globalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/CGCC_EvaluatingTerrorismPrevention.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> Commonwealth of Australia. *National Counter-Terrorism Plan*. 2012. Accessible Online: <https://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Media-and-publications/Publications/Documents/national-counter-terrorism-plan-2012.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> Government of Canada. *Building Resilience Against Terrorism: Canada’s Counter-Terrorism Strategy*. 2013. Accessible Online: <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/rslnc-gnst-trrrsm/index-en.aspx#s6>

<sup>28</sup> The White House. *Empowering Local Partners To Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States*. 2011. Accessible Online: [https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/empowering\\_local\\_partners.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/empowering_local_partners.pdf)

local agency staff and community members to engage with early intervention programs, ensuring vulnerable individuals receive relevant support.

Despite the prominence of the Channel program and efforts by the UK government to expand it, there remains significant variation in the effectiveness of local Channel delivery. Cities differ in terms of how local partners collaborate with one another, how individual cases progress through the Channel process, and how local communities understand the role of the panel, with critical implications for the functioning of Prevent within the UK's broader CONTEST strategy.

Any discussion of Channel panels or other similar early intervention programs must recognize that local governments have significant autonomy to construct panels in different ways. For instance, local intervention programs will develop different approaches to the selection of intervention providers and the management of referrals. Central government policies that account for emerging best practice can help standardize a higher level of local delivery, ensuring that vulnerable individuals everywhere receive the same standard of support.

As the history of Channel demonstrates, careful coordination between law enforcement, local service providers, and communities to protect participants and maintain basic levels of transparency can dramatically increase the effectiveness of early intervention efforts. American local government and law enforcement officials can benefit from the UK experience at a moment of strategic opportunity. Early intervention programs in the US are in their infancy with public opinion still in formation, allowing American practitioners to build local programming that avoids the mistakes of the past and builds on the foundation of lessons learned abroad.