National Audit Office

REPORT

Reducing radicalisation: the Prevent programme

Home Office

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National Audit Office

Reducing radicalisation: the Prevent programme

Home Office

Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General

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Comptroller and Auditor General
National Audit Office

29 October 2026

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Key facts

Prevent receives thousands of referrals each year; only some of these meet the threshold for support, and only some individuals consent to receiving support

10,293

number of Prevent referrals in year ending September 2025 – the highest number of referrals ever received in a single year

2,159

number of referrals (21% of 10,293) that met the threshold for further discussion at Channel panels in year ending September 2025

969

number of individuals recorded as consenting to support through Prevent (54% of 1,810 individuals offered support), in year ending September 2025

The annual cost of delivering Prevent is low, especially compared with the estimated economic and human costs of terrorist attacks

£4.11 billion Home Office estimate of the total indirect costs of the five terrorist attacks in 2017, with the total direct costs estimated at £208 million (both figures in 2025 prices)[1,2,3]

£23.4 million annual Home Office internal Prevent budget for 2025-26

Despite an increase in demand, the Home Office has underspent its budget and reduced priority funding to local authorities

£33.7 million total unspent budget, in real terms, from the Home Office's internal Prevent budget over six years from 2020-21 to 2025-26, with an average underspend of 17% per year

54% reduction from 2020-21 to 2026-27 (£9.5 million to £4.4 million, in real terms) in Home Office priority funding to high-risk local authority areas across England and Wales to support delivery of Prevent; other local authority areas do not receive priority funding and fund Prevent delivery exclusively from existing resources

The types of people being referred to and receiving support through Prevent have changed

30% percentage of referrals with a clear, dominant extremist ideology in year ending September 2025 compared with 73% in year ending September 2017[4]

14% percentage of individuals who met the threshold for further discussion at Channel panels who were categorised as having a fascination with extreme violence or mass-casualty attacks (FEVMCA) in year ending September 2025

1 The five attacks included in this analysis were: Westminster Bridge, Manchester Arena, London Bridge, Finsbury Park, and Parsons Green.

2 Indirect costs include secondary impacts that occur as a consequence of changes in public behaviour following an attack, for example, reduced investment, lower economic activity, and subsequent losses in economic growth.

3 Direct costs include the immediate costs arising from a terrorist attack and borne by the government, public services, victims, and wider society. This could include the emergency services response, funding prison spaces, or repairing damaged property.

4 Referrals with a 'clear dominant extremist ideology' include those categorised as Anarchist Extremism, Extreme Right-Wing, Incel, Islamist Extremism, Left-Wing Extremism and Northern Ireland-related Dissident Republican Extremism. Referral categories are initially assigned by a Counter Terrorism Policing Case Officer based on information provided by the referrer. This may change as more information becomes available at various stages of the referral process.

Summary

1 CONTEST is the UK's counter-terrorism strategy. It has four pillars.

- Prevent, which aims to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.
- Pursue, which aims to stop terrorist attacks.
- Protect, which aims to strengthen protections against a terrorist attack.
- Prepare, which aims to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack.

2 The Home Office is the government department with overall responsibility for CONTEST, including responsibility for Prevent. The Prevent programme has existed in some form since 2003 but has changed over time. Its current objectives are:

- tackling the ideological causes of terrorism;
- intervening early to support people susceptible to radicalisation; and
- enabling people who have already engaged in terrorism to disengage and rehabilitate.

Prevent is delivered locally, and implementation varies across England, Scotland, and Wales. Prevent does not exist in Northern Ireland.

3 This report focuses on Prevent's objective of intervening early. The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 introduced the Prevent duty, requiring specified authorities to identify and refer individuals believed to be susceptible to radicalisation. The Act also requires local authorities to establish Channel panels. These are local multi-agency panels that assess cases and arrange support for people at risk of radicalisation. There are currently 159 Channel panels operating across England and Wales, each with members from Counter Terrorism Policing, local authorities, social care and health services.[1] Prevent referrals have increased significantly in recent years (see Figure 3).

1 Each local authority in England and Wales is required to be part of a Channel panel under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015. In some areas authorities have combined to create joint Channel panels. In Scotland there are a further 32 panels which are called Prevent Multi-Agency Panels.

Report scope

4 This report examines the extent to which the Prevent programme is meeting its objective to intervene early and support people susceptible to radicalisation. It looks at Prevent's operation in England and Wales only and examines:

- the Home Office's design and implementation of the programme in its current form;
- local delivery of Prevent; and
- the Home Office's oversight, monitoring and evaluation activities.

The Prevent system is complex, involving multiple stages and delivery partners (**Figure 1** on pages 7 and 8). We have created a data visualisation that maps Prevent's referral and support pathway. The data visualisation can be accessed here: *An Interactive View of the Prevent System*.

Key findings

Demand for Prevent

5 The annual number of referrals to the Prevent programme has increased each year since the year ending September 2020, reaching an all-time high of 10,293 in the year ending September 2025. Anyone can make a referral to Prevent. Referrals increased by 39% between year ending (YE) September 2024 and YE September 2025. The Home Office has not formally analysed the reasons for this increase, but its working understanding is that it may be due to heightened public and professional awareness of Prevent following the Southport Attack in July 2024.[2] As in other years, Counter Terrorism Policing (CTP) officers assessed that a large majority of these referrals, 78% (8,079) in YE September 2025, were ineligible for support through local Channel panels. Usually, this was because officers assessed the individual as not being at risk of radicalisation. In the same year, CTP signposted 61% (4,944) of the referrals that did not progress to Channel panels to other safeguarding services. However, some referrals were escalated within CTP because the risk was already too high for Prevent. In 2026, CTP began to analyse referral quality. It found that out-of-scope referrals primarily relate to the consequences of poor mental health, the use of hateful or offensive language without an extremist framework, and broader criminality. The Home Office and CTP have planned work to address referral quality, but it is at an early stage and yet to have an impact (paragraphs 1.6 to 1.9 and Figures 3 and 4).

2 The July 2024 Southport attack was committed by an individual who had been referred to the Prevent programme three times but had not met the threshold for Channel support. There has been considerable public scrutiny of the programme following the attack, including the 2025 Lessons for Prevent report and the 2026 Southport Inquiry, discussed in paragraphs 1.30 and 1.31 of this report.

Figure 1

Overview of the Prevent referral process from initial concern to Channel support

Prevent referrals are triaged and assessed by Counter Terrorism Policing before reaching a multi-agency Channel panel

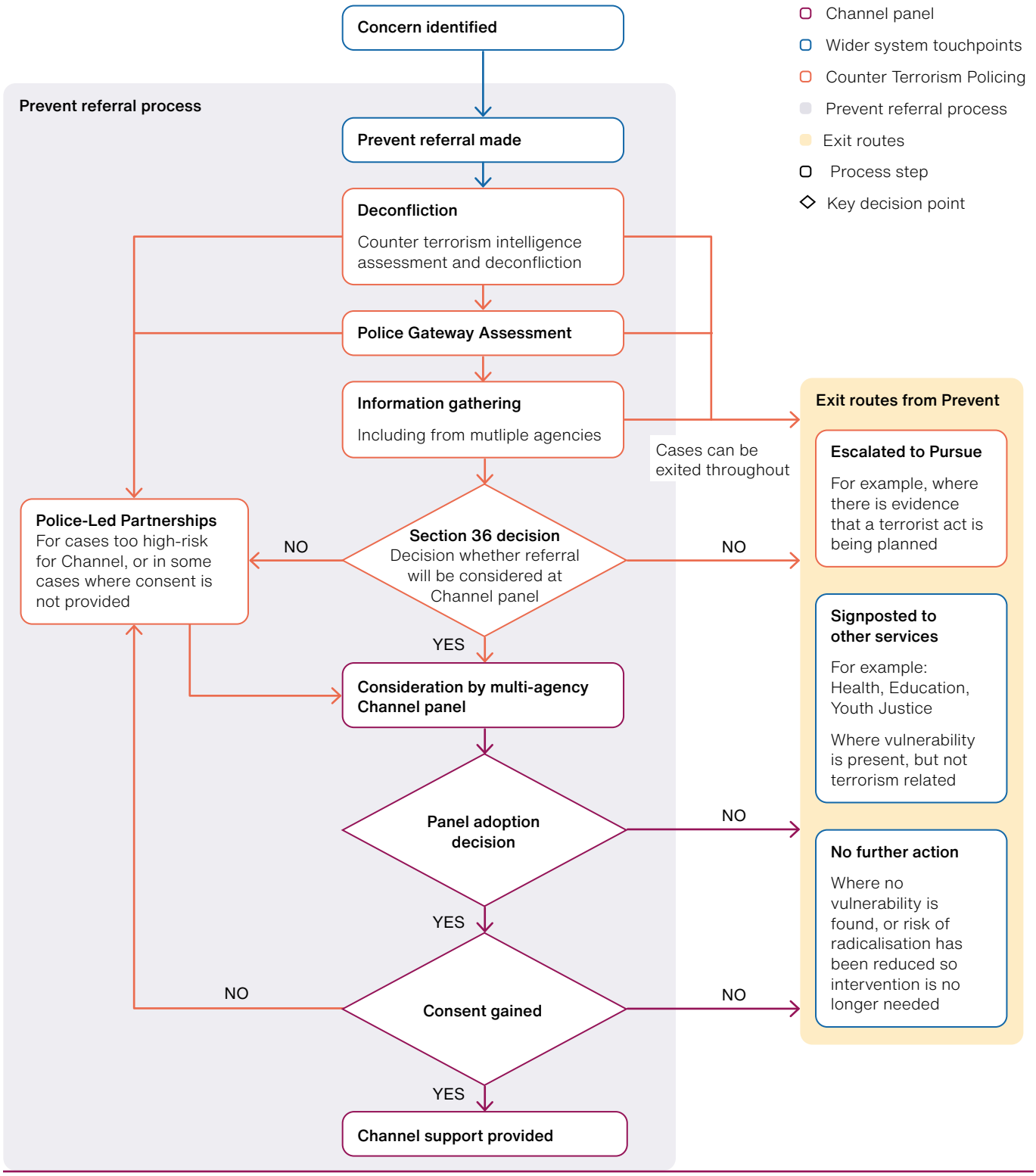


Figure 1 *continued*
Overview of the Prevent referral process from initial concern to Channel support

Notes

1 Counter Terrorism Policing are operationally independent, although the Home Office remains responsible for the Prevent programme.

2 Where a concern is identified, the Notice Check Share process should be followed – *Notice* if someone displays signs of radicalisation, *Check* what has been noticed such as with a designated safeguarding lead, and *Share* the concern if appropriate, typically through a Prevent referral.

3 The Counter Terrorism Policing Fixed Intelligence Management Unit deconflicts referrals against police records.

4 Police Gateway Assessment is an initial screening and triage phase, conducted by a Counter Terrorism Case Officer (CTCO).

5 The Prevent Assessment Framework is used from the Police Gateway Assessment and then throughout the rest of the process. It is broken into two sections, the Prevent Referral Screen, which supports decision-making from the Police Gateway Assessment until the Section 36 decision, and the Susceptibility Assessment, which is used while the case is in Channel.

6 Where cases are in a Police-Led Partnerships due to lack of consent, if consent is gained then the case can be considered for re-adoption at a Channel panel.

7 This figure only shows the Prevent referral process from initial concern to Channel support. For the full process please refer to our data visualisation which can be accessed here: https://nao-mesh.shinyapps.io/Prevent_process/.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of the Home Office's *Channel Duty Guidance*, 2023, and other Home Office and Counter Terrorism Policing documents

6 The content of referrals has changed in recent years, with only 30% of initial referrals in the year ending September 2025 linked to a clear, dominant extremist ideology. Historically, most Prevent referrals related to defined ideologies, such as Islamist Extremism or Extreme Right-Wing terrorism. However, referrals increasingly concern people without a clear, dominant extremist ideology. The proportion of cases with a clear, dominant extremist ideology has decreased by 43 percentage points since YE September 2017, equivalent to an average decline of 5.3 percentage points per year over the period. Since April 2024, CTP has separately categorised referred individuals who exhibit a fascination with extreme violence or mass casualty attacks but do not exhibit a clear ideology.[3] In YE September 2025, 8% of referrals fell into this category. These shifts reflect broader changes in terrorism and the availability and consumption of extreme material, particularly online. A significant proportion of referrals also involve people with confirmed or suspected mental health or neurodiversity considerations (paragraphs 1.10 to 1.12 and 2.4 and 2.10, and Figure 5).

3 CTP's definition of individuals with a fascination with extreme violence or mass casualty attacks is as follows: "Where an individual does not appear to have an ideology, but seems to have an interest in committing extreme or mass violence, which makes them a concern for Prevent. This could include those interested in school massacres but also where violence is targeted at other settings or individuals and is not based on a specific ideological motivation. If an individual is interested in violence in order to further an ideological goal, this ideology should be recorded instead."

7 Prevent may not reach all individuals susceptible to radicalisation who require early intervention and support. The programme relies heavily on referrals from public services, particularly education, which accounted for 34% of referrals in YE September 2025 while only 1% came from family and friends. Individuals susceptible to radicalisation who are not engaged with mainstream services, or whose concerning behaviour is only visible at home or online, are therefore less likely to be referred to Prevent. As a voluntary programme, engagement with Channel support is not guaranteed. In YE September 2025, only 54% of those recommended for Channel support were recorded as having consented to receive support, including just 38% of adults. The Home Office has not analysed barriers to referral and has only recently begun analysing consent patterns. These knowledge gaps reduce its ability to understand whether some vulnerable groups are being missed or why many individuals do not consent to support (paragraphs 1.13 to 1.15 and Figure 4).

The cost of Prevent

8 The Home Office lacks a good understanding of Prevent's full cost and the extent to which delivery depends on funding from other organisations. Prevent makes up a small proportion of the government's overall counter-terrorism budget of over £3 billion per year. The programme is delivered by numerous organisations, including central government departments, CTP, local authorities, and education and health bodies. The Home Office does not routinely collect information on the programme's full costs, including spending by other bodies. Without this, the Home Office does not know the extent to which Prevent depends on funding outside its control or variations in local investment and capacity. In 2025-26, the Home Office undertook a capability-mapping exercise which identified around £38 million of spending on early intervention across the system. However, this excluded some important organisations, such as local authorities, and relied on self-reported data. The Home Office has recently commenced work to improve its understanding of local delivery costs. We conducted our own analysis of the cost of running a typical local Channel panel based on survey responses from the Channel panels we used as case studies. We estimate that the cost of running these Channel panels ranged from £25,484 to £61,386 per year[4] (paragraphs 1.18 to 1.28 and Figure 6).

4 We estimated the annual cost of operating Channel panels using self-reported salary and staff time data collected from 35 participants across our six Channel panel case studies. Average salaries and time spent preparing for, attending and following up Channel meetings were used to derive an indicative annual cost for a typical panel. The estimate is based on a small sample of local Channel panels and should be treated with caution. The estimate excludes police staff (including CTP case officers and sergeants) and Intervention Providers. It does not reflect variations in local operating models, caseloads, panel activity or wider Prevent-related work outside Channel meetings and excludes employer on-costs and overheads. As a result, it may understate the full cost of local delivery.

9 The Home Office has consistently underspent its own Prevent budget while reducing its funding to local authorities. In 2025-26, the Home Office had a budget for Prevent of £23.4 million. At year end it had underspent this by 28%, continuing a pattern of annual underspends that dates to 2020-21. On average, it underspent by £5.6 million (17%) in real terms annually over the last six years. The Home Office attributed some underspends to weaknesses in financial management and forecasting. Over the same period, the Home Office reduced the number of local authorities receiving priority area funding, and the total value of the funding provided. This funding targets areas that, in its assessment, face the highest Prevent-related risk. Priority area funding fell from £9.5 million in 2020-21, across 45 local authorities, to £4.4 million in 2026-27, across 27 local authorities, in real terms. The reduction was partly in response to the Home Office's interpretation of performance monitoring data, which found no notable difference in performance between funded and non-funded local authorities. Additionally, in both 2025-26 and 2026-27, the Home Office allocated just under £2 million to fund projects to reduce radicalisation. The Home Office told us that it is currently reviewing the priority area funding structure for 2028-29 onwards (paragraphs 1.18 to 1.26 and Figures 6 and 7).

Delivering Prevent

10 Channel panels demonstrate strong multi-agency working as they coordinate support for individuals susceptible to radicalisation, although access to wider services is increasingly constrained. Channel panels bring together organisations that provide tailored support to individuals at risk. Across the six panels that we observed, representatives from policing, health, education, social care, housing and other services worked together to assess individuals' circumstances and design support that might make a positive difference. Cases often involved a combination of radicalisation risks, safeguarding concerns, mental health issues and family difficulties. Panels we attended carefully scrutinised available evidence, sought additional information where necessary, and maintained clear accountability for agreed actions. In some cases, closure was considered due to a lack of terrorism risk but not agreed due to fear of the case not being picked up by wider safeguarding agencies. Keeping cases open despite the absence of a terrorism risk could unnecessarily stretch Prevent resources and reduce the capacity available to manage higher-risk cases (paragraphs 2.12 to 2.17).

11 Higher caseloads place pressure on CTP and Channel panels, increasing the risk of cases not being scrutinised consistently. The number of cases discussed at Channel panels increased by 117% between YE September 2024 and 2025. Practitioners reported growing workloads, with some regularly working evenings and weekends. We observed that monthly Channel panels typically last between two and seven hours but sometimes extended over two days. Panels sometimes adopted cases despite important outstanding information requests, creating a risk that decisions are taken without a complete understanding of an individual's circumstances. Practitioners also reported shortages of registered Intervention Providers. If caseloads continue to rise, demand may outstrip panels' capacity, increasing the risk that cases cannot be scrutinised as consistently or as thoroughly as intended (paragraphs 2.7 to 2.10 and Figures 3 and 9).

12 The Home Office's online Prevent training for front-line professionals does not cover new types of cases without a clear, dominant extremist ideology, nor does the Home Office have meaningful data on completion rates. The Home Office provides online training courses available to potential referrers subject to the Prevent duty.[5] The training does not address recent developments such as the growth in cases involving mixed or unclear ideologies, and the case studies included in the course have not been updated in four years. While the Home Office is able to collect data on the total number of training completions of its online courses broken down by region and sector, it cannot link these to individual participants or employers. In a dispersed system, the Home Office relies on training to maintain fidelity to Prevent's aims and approaches and to reduce ineligible referrals. The Home Office also provides training for Channel panel chairs and deputy chairs. Despite it being mandatory, as of October 2026, only 80% of Channel chairs and 60% of deputy chairs had completed the training. The Home Office told us this was due to high turnover within those roles (paragraphs 3.9 to 3.14).

5 Specified authorities are set out in Part 1 of Schedule 6 in the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and include local authorities; prison and probation services; schools and providers of education or training; NHS trusts, Local Health Boards, and the Board of Community Health Councils in Wales; and the police. The Prevent duty guidance states that specified authorities are expected to ensure appropriate front-line staff have a good understanding of Prevent, are trained to recognise where a person might be susceptible to becoming radicalised into terrorism, and are aware of available programmes to provide support.

The impact of Prevent

13 Available information suggests Prevent has a positive impact on many who receive support, but it is inherently difficult to demonstrate that the programme is preventing individuals from becoming terrorists. CTP data show that, in 2024-25, 58% of individuals exited Channel with no further counter-terrorism concerns after receiving support. The proportion of Prevent referrals involving individuals previously referred has fallen from 34% in 2015-16 to 21% in 2025-26. This may indicate that Prevent is having more success with individuals when it first encounters them. Meanwhile, only a small proportion of people with a Prevent history have committed terrorist offences: 67 out of 32,588 individuals, according to CTP data, between April 2022 and July 2026.[6] This includes 20 individuals who were in contact with Prevent at the time of offending. In our Channel panel observations, we heard of positive progress individuals had made. However, the Home Office has undertaken limited work to evaluate the effectiveness of Channel interventions and has not done enough to communicate where Prevent is having a positive impact, which contributes to ongoing scepticism about the programme (paragraphs 2.17 and 2.19 to 2.24, and Figure 11).

The scope of Prevent

14 Changing referral patterns have led the Home Office to confirm that individuals referred to Prevent without a clear extremist ideology may fall within the programme's scope. This, in part, may explain the increased number of borderline cases being discussed by Channel panels. In YE September 2025, 45% of the 2,159 cases discussed at a Channel panel did not have a clear, dominant extremist ideology. In YE September 2025, 14% of cases discussed involved individuals categorised as having a fascination with extreme violence or mass-casualty attacks, but no clear extremist ideology. The Home Office issued guidance in February 2026 confirming that Channel support should be available to individuals without a clear extremist ideology. In our observations, these cases often generated the lengthiest discussions as panel members debated whether they were giving sufficient weight to terrorism risk alongside wider safeguarding needs. The confusion is not helped by a disagreement between the Home Office and CTP on when cases with a fascination with extreme violence or mass-casualty attacks should be supported by Prevent. The complex, borderline nature of these cases means there continues to be a risk of inconsistent referral and adoption practices across local areas (paragraphs 3.2 to 3.8 and Figure 12).

6 Terrorist offences or TACT offences (offences under the Terrorism Act 2000) include those offences connected to the preparation, encouragement, support, financing or commission of terrorism, including membership of proscribed organisations, possession of terrorist materials, and collecting information useful for terrorism.

National oversight

15 The Home Office's performance monitoring and operational risk management processes are immature, given how long the Prevent programme has existed. Despite the Prevent duty being in place since 2015, the Home Office has only recently begun to introduce some standard elements of effective performance and risk management. Oversight of local delivery has historically focused on compliance rather than impact and relied on self-reporting. The Home Office does not have a complete view of delivery risks across the Prevent system, including whether delivery partners have enough people, skills and capacity to manage increasing demand. It also has not fully assessed whether it has the capability to mitigate some of Prevent's most significant risks. As a result, it has limited assurance that emerging issues are identified early, managed consistently, and used to inform decisions about priorities, resources and programme delivery (paragraphs 3.23 to 3.27).

16 There are limitations in the quality of data, the sharing of findings from learning reviews, and evaluation work, which reduce the Home Office's ability to identify emerging risks. While the introduction of the joint Prevent Case Management Tracker in 2024 has improved information sharing between the Home Office and CTP, significant issues remain.

- The quality of the data available to measure key indicators of performance across the system is poor. For example, the Home Office has only recently started collecting reliable data on consent rates and outcomes for individuals following Channel support, limiting its ability to understand performance.
- The Home Office and CTP undertake separate learning reviews when individuals previously engaged with Prevent commit or attempt to commit terrorist or other serious offences.[7] CTP has established arrangements for implementing learning among its own staff; however, there is no shared system-wide approach to disseminating learning or assuring that recommendations are implemented across the Prevent system. The Home Office, with support from CTP, is working to develop a process to strengthen cross-system learning, but this is yet to be implemented.
- Multiple teams across the Prevent system conduct research and evaluation work, but there is no shared strategy to coordinate these activities. This risks research gaps, duplication of effort and inconsistent dissemination of learning and effective practice (paragraphs 1.15, 2.20 to 2.21, 3.19 to 3.22, and, 3.28 to 3.33, and Figure 13).

7 Terrorist offences (or TACT offences) include offences connected to the preparation, encouragement, support, financing or commission of terrorism, including membership of proscribed organisations, possession of terrorist materials, and collecting information useful for terrorism. Serious offences include murder, attempted murder, serious violence, other violence, public order offences, grievous bodily harm, arson, sexual offences and offences involving weapons, firearms or explosives.

Conclusion

17 Prevent plays an important role in the UK's counter-terrorism system by seeking to identify and support individuals susceptible to radicalisation before they become involved in terrorism. We found evidence that the programme has a positive impact on those who receive support, and Channel panels demonstrate strong multi-agency collaboration and accountability. However, rising referral volumes and an increasing proportion of referrals without a clear, dominant extremist ideology, are placing growing pressure on the system. Workloads are increasing with more borderline cases being discussed by panels, increasing the risk of inconsistent decision-making between local authorities. The Home Office has not done enough to understand or respond to these pressures, jeopardising the sustainability of the programme.

18 Prevent is not an expensive programme, particularly compared with the economic and human costs of a terrorist attack. However, it is inherently difficult to prove that it reduces the incidence of terrorism. For this reason, it is not possible to conclude in the conventional way on value for money. We have identified clear opportunities for the Home Office to increase Prevent's impact. These include enhancing its own performance monitoring and risk management, agreeing a unified view of case thresholds, and increasing its knowledge of how the costs of Prevent fall on local authorities and other delivery partners. There is little justification for the level of underspending Prevent has seen in recent years, in a context in which the Home Office acknowledges local workload pressures and has delayed some of its own research.

19 As the Home Office considers the future scope and eligibility criteria of Prevent, it must recognise that the programme is already supporting many individuals who do not fit traditional conceptions of a terrorist threat. If any of these individuals are to be supported elsewhere in future, it will need to ensure that alternative services have the capacity, skills and resources to support them.

Recommendations

a The Home Office should continue to work with Counter Terrorism Policing (CTP) to agree and communicate a unified view of the current thresholds for progressing cases with a fascination with extreme violence or mass-casualty attacks to Channel support. The Home Office should provide guidance and training to local practitioners when sharing the outcome of this work.

b To make effective use of the resources available to it, the Home Office should continue its work to strengthen its financial management, to avoid significant underspends on its Prevent budget in future.

c To improve its understanding of Prevent's financial dependence on other partners, the Home Office should continue its work estimating the cost to local authorities of delivering multi-agency Channel panels.

d To improve its oversight of Prevent and strengthen its ability to manage threats to the programme's delivery and operational effectiveness, the Home Office should further develop and embed a mature performance oversight and risk management framework. This should include:

- **i.** developing a more comprehensive view of delivery risks across the wider Prevent system by working with CTP and others to understand risks arising from the capability, capacity and resilience of key delivery partners, using relevant workforce, budget and operational delivery data;
- **ii.** developing stronger performance reporting by working with CTP and other partners to improve the quality, coverage and consistency of performance data, including data on outcomes, consent rates and training completion rates, and establishing clear targets for performance indicators so that success can be measured consistently;
- **iii.** ensuring that delivery risk and performance information provides insights into programme outcomes, emerging risks and delivery pressures, and is routinely reviewed by senior decision-makers and used systematically to inform programme governance, prioritisation, resource allocation and delivery decisions; and
- **iv.** assessing whether the programme has the capabilities and plans in place to mitigate its most significant risks and maintain operational resilience, including risks associated with increasing referral volumes, low consent rates, evolving patterns of radicalisation and other foreseeable delivery pressures.

e The Home Office should establish a more coordinated approach to sharing and applying learning between delivering partners. This should include:

- **i.** disseminating relevant findings from learning reviews to all Prevent delivery partners in a timely manner and obtaining assurance that recommendations and lessons identified have been appropriately implemented and embedded in practice; and
- **ii.** operating a single Prevent research and evaluation strategy in future between Home Office and CTP, ending any duplication of effort and ensuring that key priorities are addressed, such as research into consent and the impact of different intervention types.

Part One

The operation of Prevent in England and Wales

1.1 This part covers:

- how Prevent has developed, and previous external scrutiny of the programme;
- the trends in Prevent caseload, the characteristics of those referred, and how they are supported; and
- the cost of Prevent across central government and local authorities.

The development of Prevent

1.2 The Home Office is the government department responsible for delivering the UK's counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST. The 2023 strategy has four pillars: Prevent, Pursue, Protect and Prepare. The aims are to prevent people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism, to pursue terrorists by disrupting plots, to protect against terrorist attacks, and to prepare so the impact of any attack can be reduced.

1.3 The Prevent pillar has three objectives: tackling the ideological causes of terrorism; intervening early to support people susceptible to radicalisation; and enabling people who have already engaged in terrorism to disengage and rehabilitate. The Home Office defines radicalisation as "the process of a person legitimising support for, or use of, terrorist violence". This report focuses on Prevent's second objective of intervening early.

1.4 Counter-terrorism is a reserved matter, meaning the UK government has responsibility for it across the whole of the UK. However, Prevent is locally delivered through devolved structures and partners, so there are differences in its implementation in England, Wales, and Scotland.[8] Prevent does not exist in Northern Ireland. This report focuses on the implementation of Prevent in England and Wales.

8 Unlike in England and Wales, policing is devolved in Scotland. Referrals are tracked on a different case management system, and Police Scotland also publishes its Prevent statistics separately. Delivery also varies from England and Wales, with separate Prevent Scotland Duty Guidance and Prevent Multi-Agency Panel Duty Guidance in place of Channel.

1.5 The Home Office leads the Prevent programme nationally, providing guidance, training, oversight and performance monitoring. In 2015, the Prevent duty was introduced, which requires specified authorities to help address the risk of people becoming terrorists. The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 also requires local authorities to establish multi-agency panels, known as Channel panels, to assess Prevent referrals and organise support for individuals where necessary (**Figure 2** overleaf).

Trends in caseload

1.6 Anyone can make a referral to Prevent. The number of annual referrals fell to a recent low of 5,416 in year ending (YE) September 2020, likely driven by the public health restrictions in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic (**Figure 3** on page 20). It has increased in every year since, reaching an all-time high of 10,293 referrals in YE September 2025. The Home Office has not formally analysed the reasons for this increase, but its working understanding is that it may be because of heightened public and professional awareness of Prevent following the Southport Attack in July 2024.[9]

1.7 Not all referrals end up being discussed by Channel panels. After an initial intelligence assessment and deconfliction stage, police officers known as Counter Terrorism Case Officers (CTCOs) assess referred cases and decide whether there are "reasonable grounds to believe that the individual is vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism".[10] If grounds exist, the individual is referred onwards to a Channel panel. The decision on whether a case should progress to a Channel panel is known as the Section 36 decision.[11]

9 The July 2024 Southport attack was committed by an individual who had been referred to the Prevent programme three times but had not met the threshold for Channel. There has been considerable public scrutiny of the programme following the attack, including the 2025 Lessons for Prevent report and the 2026 Southport Inquiry, discussed in paragraphs 1.30 and 1.31 of this report.

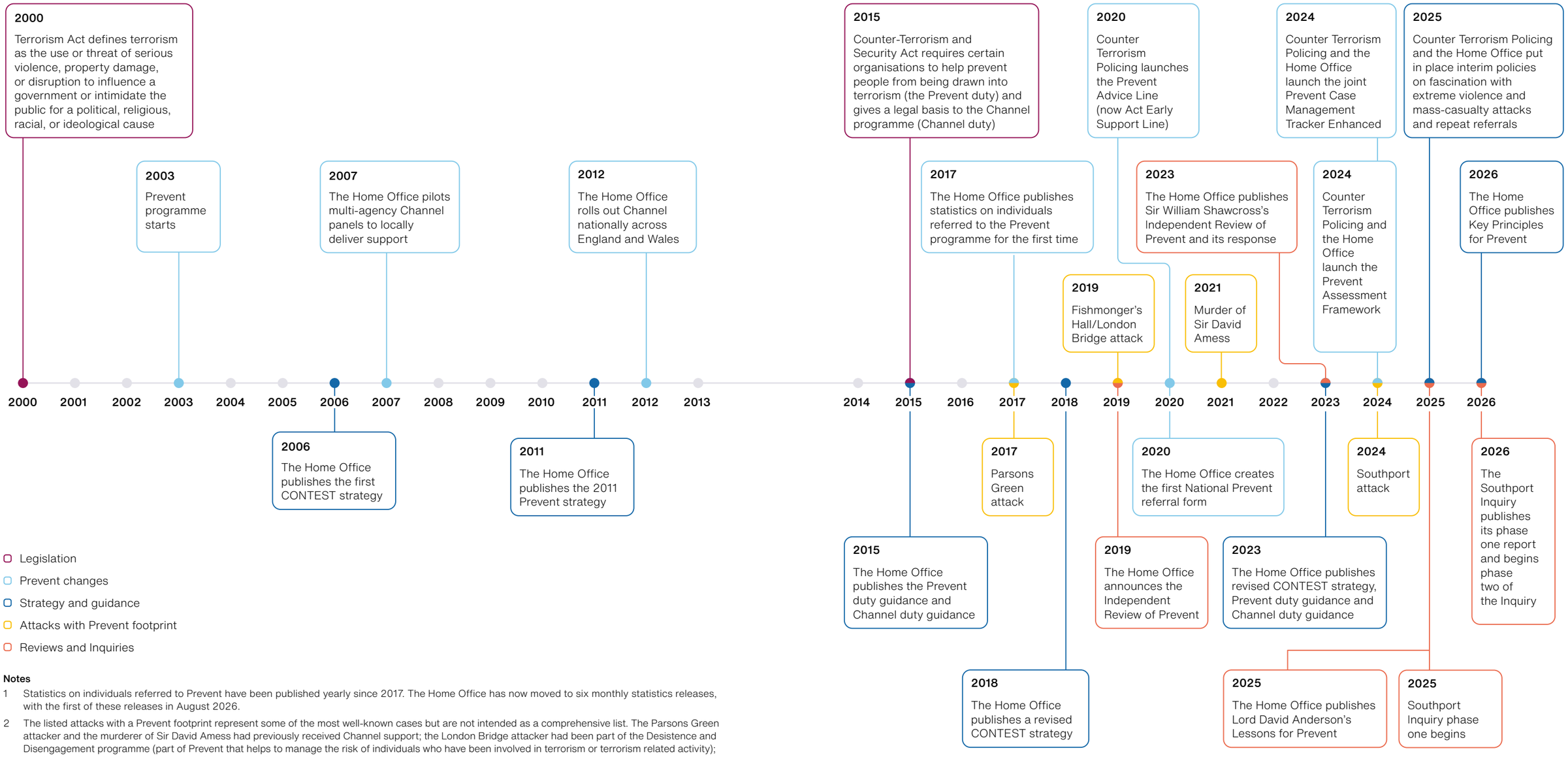
10 As set out in the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, section 36(3).

11 The initial intelligence assessment and deconfliction stage require the CTP Fixed Intelligence Management Unit (FIMU) to conduct a check against a range of police records. The FIMU receives information, assesses it, and decides on and recommends an outcome. This is either to escalate referrals within CTP or pass to the next stage of Prevent referrals.

Figure 2

Timeline showing the history of Prevent, 2000 to mid-2026

Prevent has existed in some form since 2003, with the Prevent duty introduced in 2015



Notes

1 Statistics on individuals referred to Prevent have been published yearly since 2017. The Home Office has now moved to six monthly statistics releases, with the first of these releases in August 2026.

2 The listed attacks with a Prevent footprint represent some of the most well-known cases but are not intended as a comprehensive list. The Parsons Green attacker and the murderer of Sir David Amess had previously received Channel support; the London Bridge attacker had been part of the Desistence and Disengagement programme (part of Prevent that helps to manage the risk of individuals who have been involved in terrorism or terrorism related activity); and the Southport attacker had been referred to the Prevent programme three times. The Southport attack was not classed as terrorism.

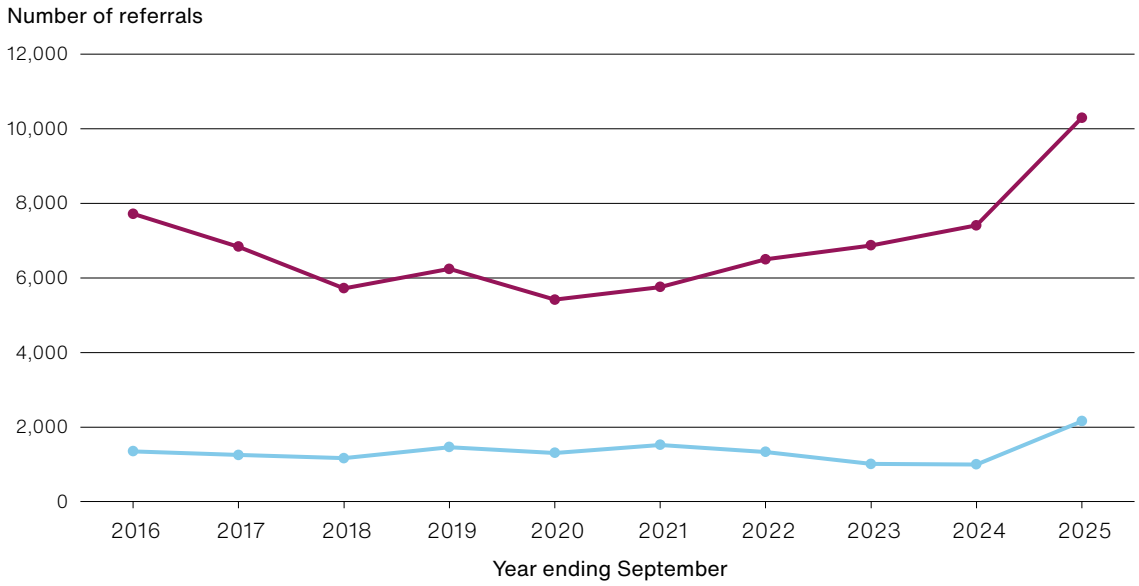
3 Channel expanded nationally in 2012 after being trialled since 2007. Channel was put on a legal basis in 2015.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Home Office, Counter Terrorism Policing and publicly available documents

Figure 3

Number of Prevent referrals and those discussed at Channel panel, between year ending September 2016 and year ending September 2025

The year ending September 2025 saw referrals into Prevent increase by 39% and those discussed at Channel by 117% from the previous year



	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Prevent referrals	7,716	6,836	5,722	6,240	5,416	5,755	6,500	6,873	7,408	10,293
Discussed at Channel	1,349	1,253	1,167	1,461	1,306	1,522	1,332	1,012	997	2,159

Notes

1 This figure captures all years of publicly available data on Prevent referral numbers, excluding Quarters 1 and 2 of financial year 2015-16.

2 The total number of referrals reported includes individuals who are referred more than once during the year.

3 The number of Prevent referrals was lowest in year ending September 2020. This is likely to have been driven by the effects of public health restrictions in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Home Office statistics, *Individuals referred to and supported through the Prevent Programme*, April 2015 to March 2024 and April 2024 to September 2025

1.8 The proportion of referrals assessed as meeting the criteria for Channel panel discussion showed no clear trend between YE September 2016 and YE September 2025. The highest proportion was 26% in YE September 2021, and the lowest was 13% in YE September 2024. In YE September 2025, Counter Terrorism Policing (CTP) decided that 8,079 referrals (78%) should not proceed to Channel panels. In the same year, CTP signposted 61% (4,944) of these referrals to other safeguarding services or individuals for information or action, mostly to education and health bodies (**Figure 4** on pages 21 and 22).

Figure 4

Pathways and outcomes for Prevent referrals made between October 2024 and September 2025

Most referrals came from the education sector and the police, with around half being signposted to services other than Prevent

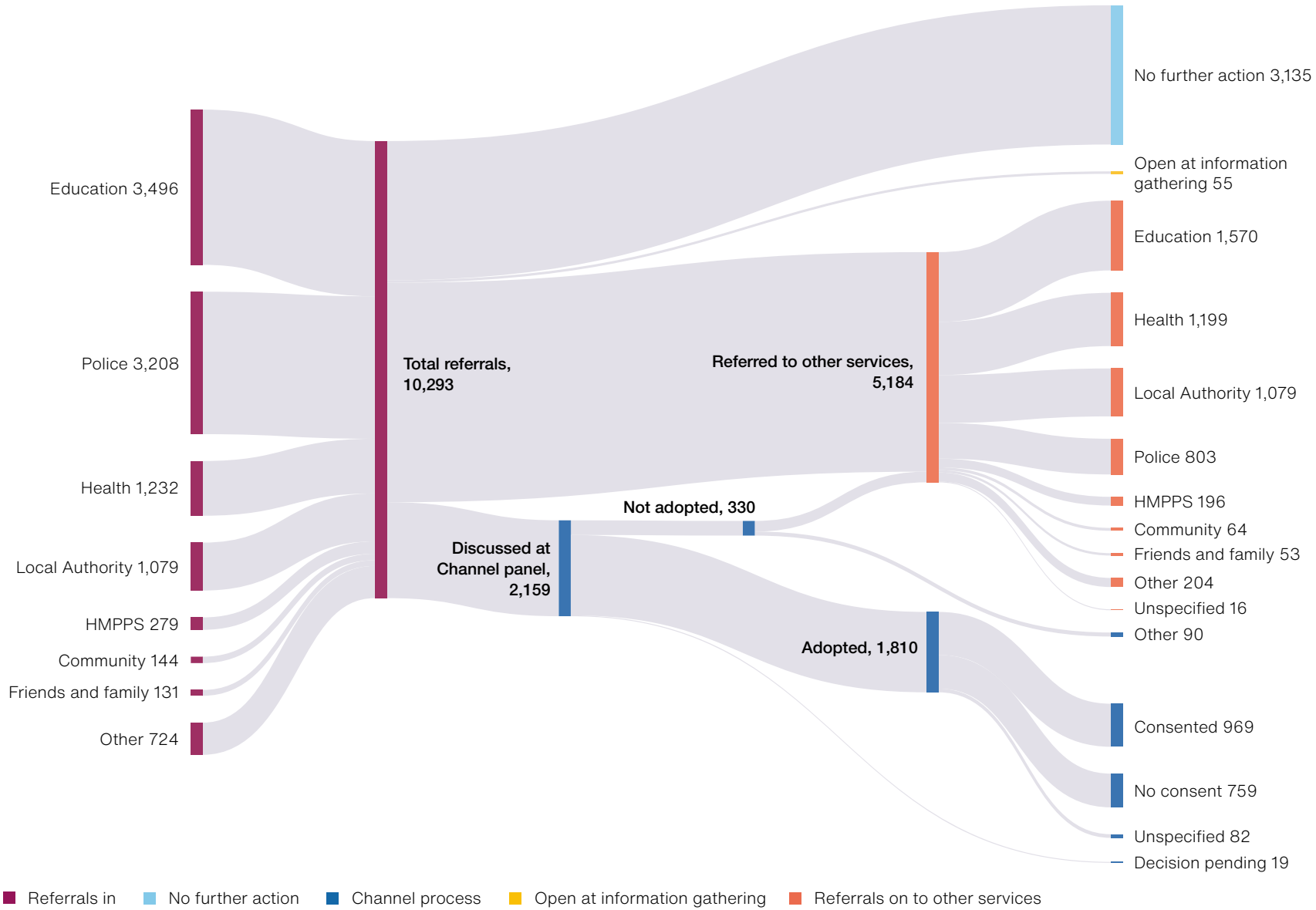


Figure 4 *continued*
Pathways and outcomes for Prevent referrals made between October 2024 and September 2025

Notes

1 Other services creating referrals and being referred to include employment, military, and government (including Home Office Immigration Enforcement and HM Revenue & Customs).

2 Counter Terrorism Policing determines whether a referral meets the threshold (Section 36 decision) to be discussed at a multi-agency Channel panel, whether it should be referred on to other services, or whether no further action from Prevent is required.

3 'No further action' includes individuals already receiving support through Prevent, those presenting a higher risk than can be managed by Prevent, and those who were found to have no susceptibility at initial assessment.

4 The figure combines the number of cases referred to other services at or before the Section 36 decision (4,944 referrals) and those that are referred to other services after they are not adopted by a Channel panel (240 referrals).

5 Those referrals not adopted by the Channel panel and not referred onwards are listed as 'Other' (90 referrals).

6 After a case is closed to Channel, it may then be referred to other services to ensure continued support. Those data are not included in this figure.

7 HMPPS: His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Home Office statistics, *Individuals referred to and supported through the Prevent Programme*, October 2024 to September 2025

1.9 A referral may not meet the criteria for Channel panel discussion because it requires a police response, or, despite appearing relevant for Prevent, it does not meet the Section 36 threshold and is better managed elsewhere. In 2026, CTP conducted a three-month review of referrals and determined that 19% were out of scope for Prevent and signified threshold misunderstanding by referrers. The review identified three key scenarios that led to unfounded referrals: mental health crises, hateful or offensive language unconnected to an extremist framework, and wider criminality. The Home Office and CTP have planned work to address this, but it is at an early stage and yet to have an impact.

Characteristics of referred individuals

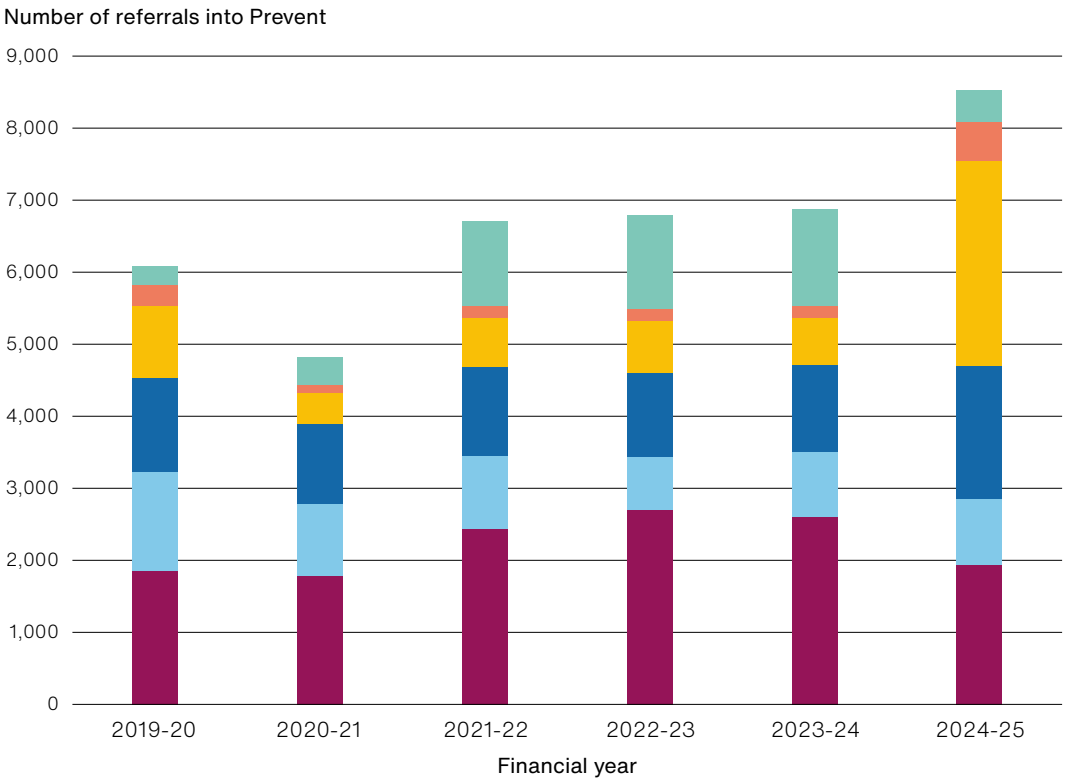
1.10 Children under 18 have consistently made up around half of all Prevent referrals. Meanwhile, the proportion of people arrested for terrorism-related offences who are children has been growing, from 6% or less before 2020-21 to a high of 19% in 2024-25.

1.11 There has been a decline in the proportion of referrals linked to a clear, dominant extremist ideology. In YE September 2025, only 30% of referrals presented a clear, dominant extremist ideology compared with 73% of referrals in YE September 2017. This was equivalent to an average decline of 5.3 percentage points per year over this same period. In 2024-25, CTP recorded 2,859 cases with no identified ideology, making it the largest referral category. This differed markedly from the period 2019-20 to 2023-24, when no-ideology referrals averaged 697 a year (**Figure 5** on pages 23 and 24).

Figure 5

Outcome of Counter Terrorism Policing (CTP) analysis of Prevent referrals by type of concern between 2019-20 to 2024-25

According to CTP analysis, 2,859 referrals were classified as presenting "no ideology" in 2024-25, more than four times the average recorded per year between 2019-20 and 2023-24



	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
No ideology, but other susceptibility to radicalisation identified and vulnerability present but no ideology or counter-terrorism risk	1,850	1,793	2,447	2,698	2,602	1,932
Islamist Extremism	1,386	988	1,002	734	899	926
Right-Wing Extremism	1,296	1,117	1,237	1,176	1,217	1,838
No ideology	1,010	426	684	717	650	2,859
Fascination with extreme violence or mass-casualty attacks, without other ideology present	278	116	168	170	166	529
Multiple ideologies, with no dominant ideology	258	379	1,166	1,298	1,341	437

Figure 5 *continued*
Outcome of Counter Terrorism Policing (CTP) analysis of Prevent referrals by type of concern between 2019-20 to 2024-25

Notes

1 According to the data set out above, there were 8,521 Prevent cases in 2024-25. This differs from the 8,775 referrals reported in the latest Home Office statistical release for 2024-25 (*Individuals referred to and supported through the Prevent Programme*, published August 2026 and covering the year ending September 2025). This difference reflects several factors. The data above count cases, whereas the Home Office statistical release counts referrals. As an individual may be referred more than once, the number of referrals may be higher than the number of cases. Small differences may also arise because Counter Terrorism Policing (CTP) extracts annual data at slightly different points around the start of each financial year. In addition, the analysis above includes only the six categories in the revised classification system with the highest number of referrals and therefore does not represent all referrals to Prevent. It excludes Left-Wing Extremism, Anarchist Extremism, Northern Ireland-related Dissident Republican Extremism, Incel, 'Other' and 'Unspecified'.

2 The categories used to classify referrals by type of concern in this figure reflect the revised classification system introduced in April 2024. To provide a consistent time series, pre-April 2024 categories have been mapped to the closest equivalent categories in the revised system. Specifically, 'School Massacre Ideology' was mapped to 'fascination with extreme violence or mass-casualty attacks, without other ideology present'; 'Mixed/Unclear/Unstable and Conflicted' was mapped to 'multiple ideologies, with no dominant ideology'; 'No risk, vulnerability or ideology present' was mapped to 'no ideology'; and 'Vulnerability present but no ideology or counter-terrorism risk' was mapped to 'no ideology, but other susceptability to radicalisation identified and vulnerability present but no ideology or counter-terrorism risk'. Referrals classified as 'Right-Wing Extremism' and 'Islamist Extremism' were categorised consistently before and after the introduction of the revised classification system.

3 When a referral is made to Prevent, a Counter Terrorism Policing Case Officer categorises the referral by type of concern, dependent on the information provided by the referrer. Further information related to the case may become available as the case progresses through the referral process. The data above include data recorded when the referral is first received.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Counter Terrorism Policing data, May 2025

1.12 The Home Office and CTP introduced new categories from May 2024 in response to changing trends in the types of concerns observed among referrals. This included introducing a category to capture individuals with a fascination with extreme violence or mass-casualty attacks, but without a clear ideology. In YE September 2025, 8% of referrals were categorised in this way.

1.13 Education and police are consistently the two professional sectors from which most Prevent referrals have come over the last 10 years. In YE September 2025, 34% of referrals came from education professionals and 31% from police. By contrast, only a small proportion of referrals are made by family members or friends, varying between 1% (YE September 2025) and 4% (YE September 2016) of all referrals annually. This brings a risk of those whose radicalisation reveals itself only at home, among friends, or through their domestic internet usage being less likely to be referred to the programme. To date the Home Office has not analysed the barriers to referrals or considered how to address them.

Channel support

1.14 There are currently 159 Channel panels across England and Wales.[12] The panels map onto local authority boundaries, but authorities can create and meet as a combined panel. In YE September 2025, panels adopted 1,810 (84%) of the 2,159 cases they discussed.

1.15 Before support can be provided, individuals or, in the case of children, their legal guardians must consent to receiving intervention since it is a voluntary process. In YE September 2025, 54% of individuals offered Channel support were recorded as providing consent (Figure 4).[13] For under-18s 66% of guardians gave consent. Meanwhile, only 38% of adults consented. Significant levels of non-consent have been a persistent problem. However, the Home Office did not collect comparable data until May 2024. To date, the Home Office has done little work to understand the cause of low consent rates and how it might be addressed. Together with CTP it now plans to conduct research into consent patterns, though there is no timetable for this work owing to resource constraints and restrictions on the use of some CTP data (see Part Three).

1.16 Where consent is given, Channel panels tailor packages of support for individuals based on their assessed needs; this can include a range of interventions. Where an individual requires theological or ideological support, Channel panels must commission an Intervention Provider (IP). IPs provide one-to-one ideological and theological mentoring to challenge individuals' harmful views or behaviours. Other support can include practical and family mentoring. As of March 2026, there were 85 registered IPs across England and Wales.

1.17 There is no fixed timeframe for closing a Channel case. Panels may close cases because consent is withdrawn, objectives have been met, or there has been an escalation in an individual's risk, meaning they no longer meet the criteria for Prevent. Where there is an escalation in risk, cases may be moved to Police-Led Partnerships or into Pursue.[14]

12 The number of Channel panels can change as local authority arrangements for combined panels are not fixed.
13 The Home Office data split consent results by 'Adopted – consented', 'Adopted – no consent', and 'Adopted – unspecified'. The category 'Adopted – unspecified' includes referrals that have been discussed and recommended to be adopted as a Channel case but have an empty consent outcome on the Prevent Case Management Tracker. In YE September 2025 82 cases were recorded in this category.
14 A Police-Led Partnership is a multi-agency approach led by CTP to manage individuals, groups or institutions with Prevent-related concerns where Channel is not appropriate, for example where consent to support in Channel is refused but concerns remain about radicalisation or potential terrorist offending.

The costs of Prevent

Home Office spending

1.18 As a multi-agency programme with national and local dimensions, Prevent is funded from many sources. Not all this funding is ring-fenced or even easily identifiable. For instance, Prevent responsibilities often represent only one component of an individual's job, which is mainly focused on health or education.

1.19 The July 2025 Lessons for Prevent report stated that Prevent accounted for an estimated 3% of all counter-terrorism expenditure of more than £3 billion per year. While the human impact of terrorism on victims, families and communities cannot be quantified, Home Office analysis of the five terrorist attacks in 2017 estimated total direct costs of £208 million, and indirect costs of £4.11 billion (both figures in 2025 prices).[15,16,17] The following section describes what is known and what is not known about the costs of Prevent and of Channel specifically.

1.20 In 2025-26, the Home Office had a budget for Prevent of £23.4 million. Of this, it spent £16.8 million, an underspend of 28%. The Home Office's budget is intended to pay for the generation of national policy, guidance and research, as well as for performance management and oversight of local Prevent activities, and for the provision of targeted funding to Prevent priority areas across England and Wales.

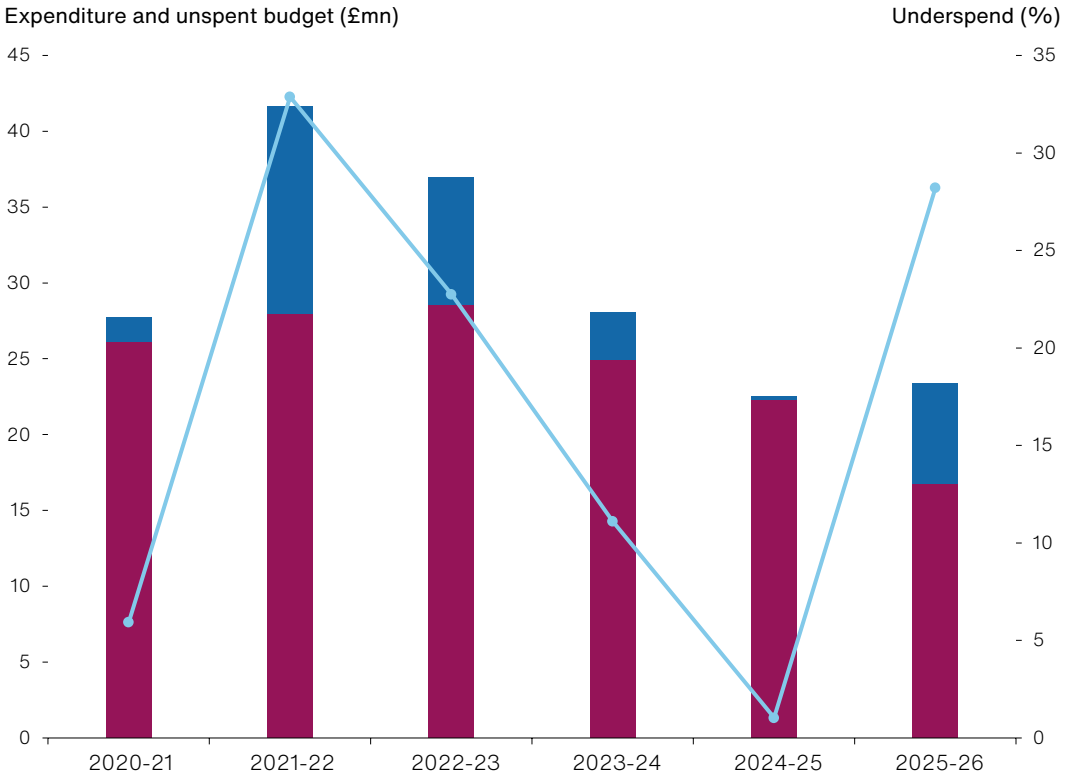
1.21 Our analysis shows that underspends have been normal in recent years (**Figure 6**). The Home Office underspent its Prevent budget in every year from 2020-21 to 2025-26, by an average of £5.6 million (17%), in real terms. The Home Office told us that the underspends within the Prevent Directorate were partly attributable to weaknesses in financial decision-making and capabilities. For example, at times, accruals were processed incorrectly, and forecasting was inaccurate. In some instances, officials had double-counted VAT, and in others budgets had been set to incorrect budget codes. Other reasons for underspends include delays to projects when the Home Office did not reallocate the moneys to other parts of the Prevent programme. While the level of underspend reduced in the two years to 2024-25, it increased again in 2025-26. Although some of these issues persisted, the Home Office told us that the underspend in 2025-26 was likely exacerbated by structural changes within the Department.

15 The five attacks included in this analysis were: Westminster Bridge, Manchester Arena, London Bridge, Finsbury Park, and Parsons Green.
16 Direct costs include the immediate costs arising from a terrorist attack and borne by the government, public services, victims and wider society. This could include the emergency services response, funding prison spaces, or repairing damaged property.
17 Indirect costs include secondary impacts that occur because of changes in public behaviour following an attack, for example reduced investment, lower economic activity, and subsequent losses in economic growth.

Figure 6

Home Office expenditure and underspend on Prevent between 2020-21 and 2025-26, in real terms

The Home Office underspent a total of £33.7 million (in 2025-26 prices) between 2020-21 to 2025-26, from its Prevent budget, averaging an underspend of £5.6 million (17%) per year, in real terms



	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	Total
Expenditure (£mn)	26.11	27.98	28.57	24.95	22.31	16.78	**146.70**
Unspent budget (£mn)	1.65	13.70	8.42	3.12	0.23	6.59	**33.71**
Programme budget (£mn)	27.75	41.68	36.99	28.07	22.54	23.37	**180.41**
Budget underspend (%)	5.93	32.88	22.75	11.10	1.03	28.21	

Notes

1 Financial data have been adjusted to 2025-26 prices using inflation and deflation indices. Indices are based on Office for National Statistics Quarterly National Accounts, June 2026.

2 Expenditure presented relates to programme cost; this is money allocated to deliver public services rather than day-to-day costs such as payroll. Due to the way the Home Office classifies its expenditure, the graphic includes some pay costs.

3 Expenditure and unspent budget may not exactly sum to programme budget in any given year due to rounding.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Home Office financial data, 2020-21 to 2025-26

1.22 The Home Office also funds CTP, which plays a major role in delivering Prevent. A Home Office capability mapping exercise in 2025-26 estimated that in that year CTP's expenditure on Prevent's second objective was £21 million. This was based on a self-reported assessment by CTP. IPs are paid for out of the CTP budget for Prevent, as are the additional costs of delivering support, including travel expenses. CTP estimates that the average cost of an IP session ranges from £360 to £430.

Local authority spending

1.23 Local authorities mostly fund the delivery of the Prevent duty without support from the Home Office, and the Home Office does not know the extent of local costs. This limits the Home Office's understanding of its dependence on external funding and the variation in levels of local investment. However, it has begun work to understand local costs, which it expects to conclude by spring 2027.

1.24 As part of this audit, we conducted our own analysis of the cost of running a typical local Channel panel based on survey responses from the Channel panels used as case studies (see Part Two). We estimate that the annual cost of running a panel ranged from £25,484 to £61,386.[18]

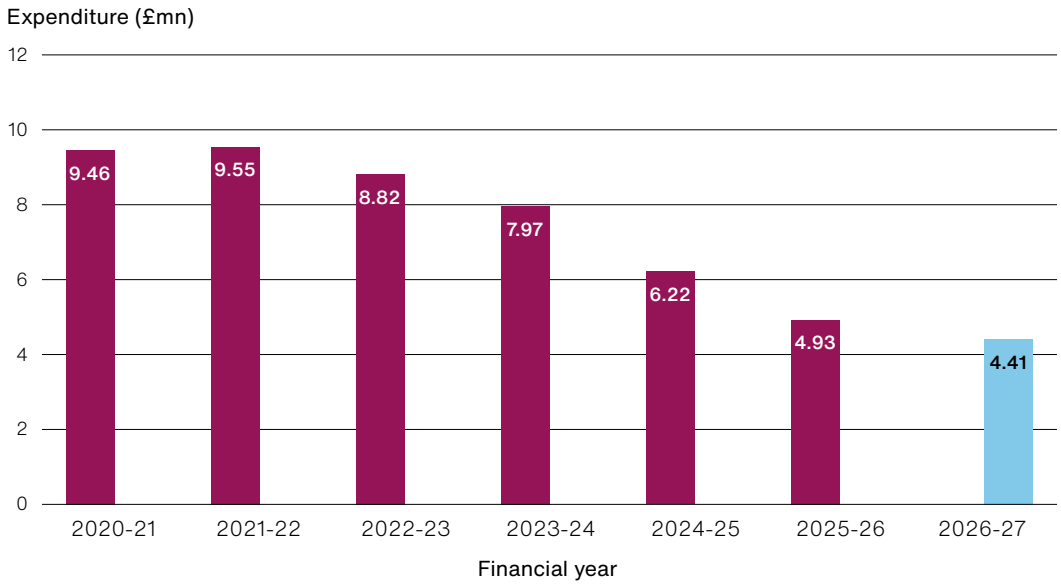
1.25 The Home Office provides some priority area funding to a minority of authorities, that, in its assessment, face the highest Prevent-related risk. The total value of Home Office priority area funding has declined in recent years. Between 2020-21 and 2026-27, funding fell by 54% in real terms, from around £9.5 million (supplied to 45 local authorities) to £4.4 million (supplied to 27 local authorities) (**Figure 7**). It is up to local authorities how to spend the funding they receive, provided they spend it on Prevent delivery roles. The Home Office provides additional funding to local authorities through its preventing radicalisation grants. In 2025-26 the Home Office awarded £1.9 million to 68 local authorities that bid for projects. The Home Office has allocated a further £1.8 million in 2026-27. In 2025-26 and 2026-27, the Home Office has ring-fenced £1 million of the preventing radicalisation grants for high-priority funded areas. The Home Office collects quarterly, in-arrears returns about local authority expenditure. Prior to 2022-23, it did not assure these returns. Since 2022-23, it has used dip-sampling audits, which have identified some historic ineligible claims. The Home Office audited all financial returns from priority areas during 2025-26.

18 We estimated the annual cost of operating a Channel panel using self-reported salary and staff time data collected from 35 participants across our six Channel panel case studies. Average salaries and time spent preparing for, attending and following up Channel meetings were used to derive an indicative annual cost for a typical panel. The estimate is based on a small sample of local Channel panels and should be treated with caution. The estimate excludes police staff (including Counter Terrorism Policing Case Officers and sergeants) and Intervention Providers. It does not reflect variations in local operating models, caseloads, or wider panel activity and Prevent-related work outside Channel meetings, and it excludes employer on-costs and overheads. As a result, it may understate the full cost of local delivery.

Figure 7

Home Office funding to local authority priority areas to support delivery of the Prevent duty, 2020-21 to 2026-27 in real terms

Home Office funding to local authorities fell from around £9.5 million in 2020-21 to a forecasted £4.4 million in 2026-27, in real terms



Notes

1 Financial data have been adjusted to 2025-26 prices using inflation and deflation indices. Indices are based on Office for National Statistics Quarterly National Accounts, June 2026.

2 Home Office funding is intended to supplement local authority delivery of the Prevent duty rather than meet its full cost. Local authorities are expected to deliver this work primarily from existing budgets.

3 The 2026-27 figure is based on Home Office funding estimates as of January 2026 and represents forecast, rather than actual, expenditure.

4 In addition to the funding represented in the figure, in 2025-26 the Home Office awarded £1.9 million to 68 local authorities who bid for projects under the preventing radicalisation grants. The Home Office has allocated a further £1.8 million in 2026-27. This funding was available to both priority and non-priority areas.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Home Office financial data and documentation

1.26 The Home Office told us that it is reviewing the priority area funding structure for 2028-29 onwards and is considering options for an alternative funding model. The Home Office is considering the change partly in response to annual performance monitoring, which found no notable difference in performance between funded and non-funded local authorities. In June 2026, it began a consultation with local delivery bodies on the future delivery model for Prevent. It expects to decide on the approach by November 2026.

Spending by other government departments

1.27 As well as costs funded by the Home Office and local authorities, other central government departments and arm's-length bodies carry out work related to Prevent. In particular, the Department for Education (DfE) funds those aspects of the programme that relate to schools and universities in England, and NHS England funds those aspects relating to health trusts. The Home Office does not routinely track this cross-government expenditure on Prevent.

1.28 As part of its 2025-26 capability mapping exercise, the Home Office identified around £38 million of spending on Prevent's second objective, including £12 million from the Home Office, £21 million from CTP, £4 million from the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, and £1 million from DfE. The exercise did not produce specific costs from some departments with roles in delivering Prevent, such as the Department of Health & Social Care, or the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (the lead department for online safety). The exercise also excluded the intelligence agencies. The calculation was based on departments' self-reported data. While the Home Office provided some guidance as part of the exercise, it is possible the data were calculated on different bases.

External scrutiny

1.29 In recent years, Prevent has been subject to heightened external scrutiny. In 2023, the Shawcross Review made 34 recommendations regarding Prevent, all of which the Home Office accepted.[19] Among other changes, the review recommended a stronger focus on extremist ideology and changes to the language used by the programme.

1.30 In 2025, the then-Interim Independent Prevent Commissioner, Lord Anderson, published the Lessons for Prevent report, examining the Prevent histories of those responsible for the murder of Sir David Amess MP and the Southport attack.[20] The report recommended, among other things, that Prevent should continue to consider non-ideological violence-fascinated individuals within its scope, but also that alternative approaches should be explored in the future. The Home Office accepted all Lord Anderson's recommendations and published an update on progress in implementing them in 2026.

1.31 Also in 2026, phase one of the Southport Inquiry reported its analysis of the events leading up to the attack.[21] The government accepted all its recommendations, seven of which related explicitly to Prevent and CTP. Phase two of the Inquiry is expected to complete in 2027. It will examine the adequacy of arrangements in England and Wales for managing the risk from violence-fascinated individuals, including the role of the internet in enabling these individuals to prepare and carry out attacks.

19 Sir William Shawcross, *Independent Review of Prevent*, February 2023.
20 Office of the Independent Prevent Commissioner, *Lessons for Prevent*, independent report by Lord Anderson, July 2025.
21 The Southport Inquiry, *The Southport Inquiry: Phase 1*, volumes 1 and 2, April 2026.

Part Two

The local delivery of Prevent

2.1 This part covers:

- the local delivery of Prevent, including the process of local assessments and data on regional demand;
- analysis of local decision-making and service delivery based on observations of six Channel panels and interviews with their members; and
- analysis of outcomes for individuals who have been referred to, or received support from, the Prevent programme.

Local assessment and decision-making

2.2 Once a Prevent referral is made, it is entered onto the Prevent Case Management Tracker (PCMT), a joint system shared by the Home Office and Counter Terrorism Policing (CTP). Counter Terrorism Case Officers (CTCOs) then assess referrals using the Prevent Assessment Framework (PAF), a structured risk assessment tool for considering an individual's susceptibility to radicalisation and determining whether they should be referred to Channel.

2.3 CTCOs rely on information from a range of local partners to complete the PAF. They might also review material the individual has publicly shared online.

2.4 In May 2024, CTP introduced a new way to record the presence of mental health issues or neurodiversity on the PCMT. In year ending (YE) September 2025 CTCOs marked 36% (3,633) of individuals referred to Prevent as diagnosed with or thought to have mental health issues or believed to be neurodivergent. The Home Office believes this may be an underestimate of the true incidence of mental health issues or neurodiversity among Prevent caseload. The Department of Health & Social Care was not originally consulted on the new recording approach but is now working with the Home Office and CTP with the aim of improving its usefulness. CTP began recording referrals related to mental health and neurodiversity separately from one another in September 2026.

2.5 Channel panels, typically chaired by senior safeguarding, community safety or youth justice officials, meet monthly to discuss new referrals and review existing cases. CTCOs present cases to panel members and remain involved throughout discussions and decision-making.

Local variation in demand

2.6 The number of referrals to Prevent varies across England and Wales. In YE September 2025, there were 166 Prevent referrals for every million people in England and Wales, but this varied from 105.2 per million in the East of England to 226.7 per million in the West Midlands. Almost all local authorities – 148 out of 172 – have experienced an increase in Prevent referrals over the last two years.[22] Comparing the period April 2024 to January 2025 with the period April 2025 to January 2026, 19 local authorities saw the number of referrals they dealt with increase by 100% or more. A further 66 local authorities saw an increase of 50% or more.

2.7 Rising demand has put pressure on those charged with local delivery. CTCOs we spoke to told us that they had high workloads following the increase in referrals, and reported consistently working evenings and weekends to manage their caseload. As of September 2026, CTCO caseload varied regionally between an average of five to 12 cases at a time. In some regions, CTCOs have introduced triage stages to remove out-of-scope cases as early in the assessment process as possible. While innovations like these can improve efficiency, there is a risk that potentially relevant cases will be closed before sufficient information has been gathered to substantiate them.

2.8 Many Channel panels are also feeling pressure. Cases being discussed at Channel doubled between the YEs September 2024 and 2025 (Figure 3). This also varies regionally; in YE September 2025, there were 34.8 cases discussed at a Channel panel per million people, ranging from 17.9 per million in the South West to 73.7 per million in the North West (**Figure 8**). Panellists fit their Prevent responsibilities around other busy roles. The time devoted to individual cases varies, but panellists are understandably reluctant to rush their discussions. The panels we observed varied between two and seven hours in length, with one having to extend to a second day to manage demand.

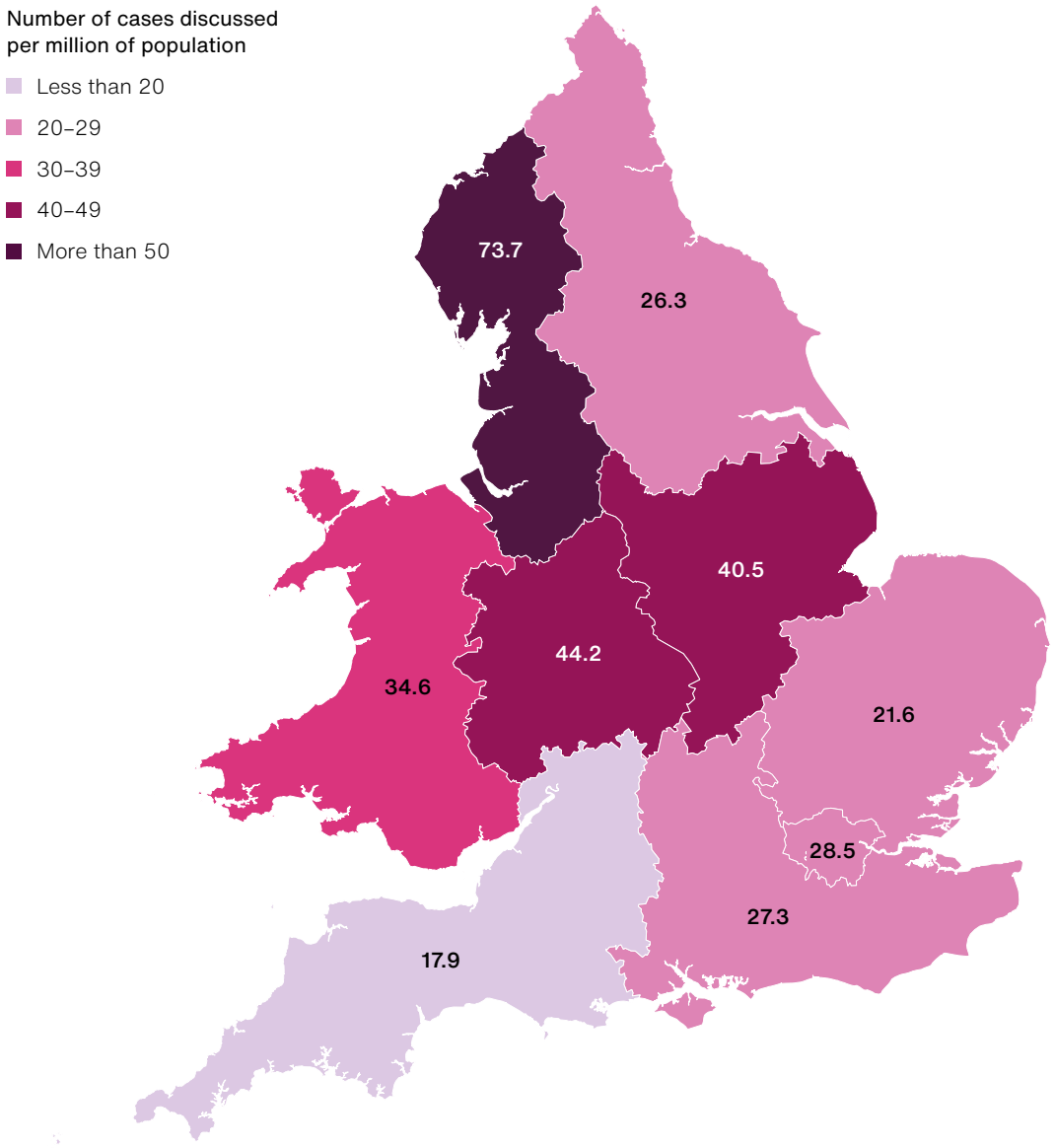
2.9 In addition to the pressure felt by CTCOs and Channel panels, practitioners felt that there was a shortage of Intervention Providers (IPs), people registered to provide specialist one-to-one ideological and theological support for individuals within Channel.

22 The Home Office data include 172 local authorities. There are 175 local authorities in England and Wales subject to the Prevent duty.

Figure 8

Regional variation in demand for Channel in England and Wales, October 2024 to September 2025

Between October 2024 and September 2025, demand for Channel varied regionally, ranging from 17.9 cases discussed per million of the population in the South West to 73.7 per million of the population in the North West



Notes

1 Regions are based on International Territorial Level 1 (ITL1) geographies; however, Yorkshire and the Humber, and North East regions have been combined due to Home Office data availability.

2 The minimum value is 17.9 cases discussed at Channel panels per million of population (South West), the maximum value is 73.7 (North West).

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Home Office statistics, *Individuals referred to and supported through the Prevent Programme*, October 2024 to September 2025 and Office for National Statistics, *Mid-Year Population Estimates, United Kingdom, June 2025*. Office for National Statistics licensed under the Open Government Licence v.3.0. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2025

2.10 In YE September 2025, 969 individuals were recorded as consenting to Channel support.[23] As of July 2025, the Home Office had 82 registered IPs, equivalent to around 12 individuals consenting to support for each registered IP. This had improved from 14 individuals per IP in YE September 2021 (**Figure 9**). The Home Office has not set targets for the number of IPs required to meet demand. The availability of IPs is affected by the specialist expertise required and regional availability.

2.11 IPs' specialisms have changed to align with the changing needs of those who are supported by Prevent. For example, between June 2020 to March 2026, the Home Office has increased the number of IPs specialising in Extreme Right-Wing ideology from 17 to 44. In July 2025, the Home Office introduced two new specialisms: practical mentoring and supporting violence-fascinated individuals (VFIs).[24] An individual IP can have multiple specialisms, and it is up to the IP to disclose their own areas of expertise. For example, as of March 2026, there were 59 IPs registered as Practical Mentors, and 28 IPs specialising in supporting VFIs.

Decision-making and service delivery in practice

2.12 Between May and July 2026, we observed six monthly Channel panels. Our approach to selecting the case study areas is set out in our methodology appendix.

2.13 The individuals considered by the panels we observed were striking for the complexity and range of problems that they suffered from. In addition to any signs of extremist ideology or fascination with extreme violence, cases regularly included evidence of everyday violence, absence from education, alienation from family, and having experienced, and perpetrated, sexual abuse. **Figure 10** on pages 36 and 37 provides, by way of example, two illustrative case examples which resemble some of those we saw discussed.

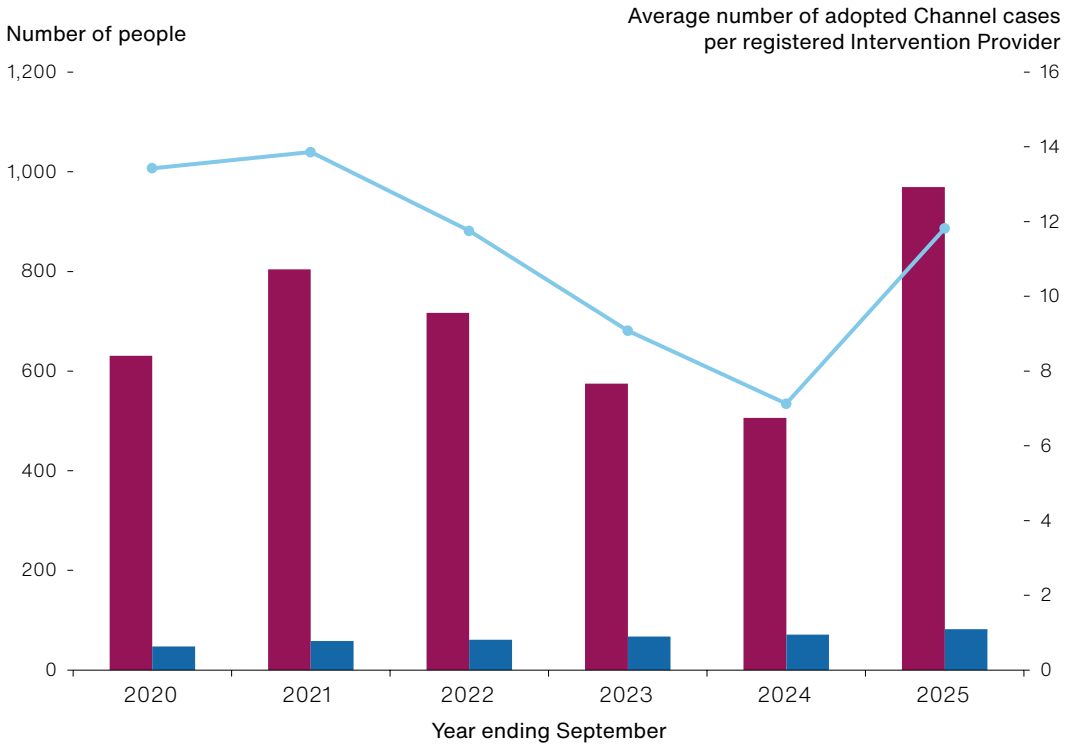
23 In the Home Office statistics release *Individuals referred to and supported through Prevent*, August 2026, Figure 2: 'Number of referrals discussed at a Channel panel and adopted as a Channel case, between year ending September 17 and year ending September 25', 1,003 referrals were recorded as initially consenting to channel support in year ending September 2025. The difference of 34 referrals will include referrals who had once consented but later changed their decision, and the referrals where consent is not required. Cases where consent is not required comprise those that were adopted by the Channel panel but are no longer suitable for Channel support.

24 Practical mentors address wider vulnerabilities associated with radicalisation rather than primarily challenging ideology. Their work aims to support individuals to develop practical life skills, engage in education or employment, and establish healthy daily routines and behaviours.

Figure 9

Availability of Intervention Providers compared with the number of individuals consenting to receive Channel support, between year ending September 2020 and 2025

In year ending September 2025, 969 cases adopted by Channel panels consented to receive support; as of July 2025, the Home Office had 82 registered Intervention Providers, equivalent to around 12 individuals needing support per registered provider



	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Number of adopted Channel cases	631	804	717	575	506	969
Number of registered Intervention Providers	47	58	61	67	71	82
Average number of adopted Channel cases per registered Intervention Provider	13	14	12	9	7	12

Notes

1 The number of registered Intervention Providers may vary across the period of a financial year. The data above show the total number of registered Intervention Providers at the point the register was compiled for each year ending September. The corresponding dates are June 2020, July 2021, May 2022, July 2023, April 2024 and July 2025. For example, for year ending September 2020, the reported total reflects the position as of June 2020.

2 The number of adopted Channel cases excludes individuals eligible for support, but who did not consent to receive it.

3 In the Home Office statistics release *Individuals referred to and supported through Prevent*, August 2026, Figure 2: 'Number of referrals discussed at a Channel panel and adopted as a Channel case, between year ending September 2017 and year ending September 2025', 521 and 1,003 were recorded as initially consenting to Channel support in the year ending September 2024 and September 2025, respectively. The difference between these data and that which is reported in this figure is due to the Home Office statistics release including individuals who had once consented but later changed their decision, and the referrals where consent is not required. Cases where consent is not required references those that were adopted by the Channel panel but are no longer suitable for Channel support. The graph above includes only those individuals who had maintained consent through to the end of September in each respective year.

4 The calculation of adopted Channel cases per registered Intervention Provider assumes that cases were distributed evenly across all providers. In practice, cases are allocated according to individual needs and Intervention Provider specialisms, meaning caseloads are likely to vary between providers.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Home Office documentation and Home Office statistics, *Individuals referred to and supported through the Prevent Programme*, October 2024 to September 2025

Figure 10

Illustrative case examples of individuals considered and offered support by Channel panels

These case examples illustrate the wide range of circumstances that can result in a Prevent referral and the multi-agency approach used to identify, assess and support individuals

WARNING: These case examples contain descriptions of violence that some readers may find distressing.

Case	Illustrative case #1: Ideological extremism referral by school	Illustrative case #2: Fascination with extreme violence referral by housing services
Referral	**Referrer:** Secondary school safeguarding lead. Teachers became concerned after A repeatedly accessed and shared extremist content online, including conspiracy material, and made hostile comments about a specific group during lessons. The school's designated safeguarding lead spoke to A, where A reiterated extremist comments. The school submitted a Prevent referral.	**Referrer:** Supported housing support worker. The Supported housing support worker raised concerns that they had seen B watching gore videos. B had previously described seeing a dead animal and had brought the topic of death back up multiple times. The support worker asked B about the videos. B stated that they enjoyed them and wondered what attacking and killing people would feel like. B went on that some people did not deserve to live, and if they killed them, it would be a good act. The support worker submitted a Prevent referral.
Channel panel adoption	Following the referral, a Counter Terrorism Policing Case Officer (CTCO) gathered information including from local partners such as the school, children's services, and health services: • A was discussing and engaging with extremist narratives online. • A had previously seen their GP about anxiety and low self-esteem. • The school had noticed that A was socially isolated. The CTCO determined the case met the Section 36 threshold. It was presented at a Channel panel, where the case was discussed. After clarifying some information, the panel decided to adopt the case. The panel discussed which services should ask A and their parents for consent. A was not open to other services, so the local authority Prevent lead supported by a CTCO asked for consent. As A was under 18, their parents were asked to consent and to sign the form.	A CTCO gathered information from policing and health services: • B had a negative relationship with their family and had lived in supported housing from 17. • B had previous involvement with children and adolescent mental health services, but referrals to get support with B's mental health in adulthood had not met thresholds. • B had previously been on the waiting list for an autism assessment, but it was not completed. • B had previous arrests for carrying a knife and for grievous bodily harm. No evidence suggested B subscribed to a specific ideology. However, the panel believed there was a risk that should be managed by Prevent, and adopted the case. The panel discussed B's troubled history with the police. As B had a positive relationship with the housing support worker, they sought consent along with a CTCO. B gave consent after discussing their concerns.

Figure 10 *continued*

Illustrative case examples of individuals considered and offered support by Channel panels

WARNING: These case examples contain descriptions of violence that some readers may find distressing.

Case	Illustrative case #1: Ideological extremism referral by school	Illustrative case #2: Fascination with extreme violence referral by housing services
Support plan	The panel created a support plan, which included: • **Commissioning eight sessions with an Intervention Provider** (IP) with a specialism in ideological extremism. The IP discussed and challenged A's views. Key updates from the IP reports were fed back to the panel, highlighting that A's views were shifting over time. • Offering A's parents places on a **local-authority run online safety course**. • Trying to engage mental health support, but A did not meet the thresholds for most services. However, the panel offered A an **online mental health support course,** which they completed. The school safeguarding lead attended Channel panels as a guest and provided updates on how A was acting in school to flag any concerns.	The panel created a support plan, which included: • **Commissioning 12 sessions with a practical mentor** with expertise in working with individuals fascinated by violence and those with mental health needs. The mentor focused on building resilience, critical thinking, media literacy, and built a trusted relationship with B, and updated the panel through reports and attending the monthly panel meetings. • B told their mentor that they were frustrated they never attended college and felt pessimistic about the future. The panel **explored education options**, which the mentor discussed with B. The local authority Prevent lead met with B's chosen college to explain Prevent, and B was offered a place. • **Getting mental health support in place**, referring B to different services until one accepted. As B was being supported, they stayed on the waiting list for their autism assessment and completed the assessment. They were diagnosed with autism and got support in place.
Closure	**Decision** The IP reported that they were no longer concerned about A being susceptible to radicalisation. The panel felt that the risk had reduced, and A no longer needed Channel interventions. **Review** • Six- and 12-month reviews were conducted with information gathering, and new susceptibility assessments completed by the CTCO. No concerns were identified. A's case was closed with a recorded outcome of no further radicalisation concerns.	**Decision** The panel decided that risk had reduced. However, they were concerned that other services may withdraw, and that B still needed support. They decided to add a three-month review for reassurance. **Review** • In the three-month review, B was still supported and was doing well at college. • The six- and 12-month reviews revealed no further concerns. B's case was closed with a recorded outcome of no further radicalisation concerns.

Notes

1 These case examples are developed from themes, circumstances and support pathways observed across multiple Channel panels during our case study fieldwork. They do not represent any individual referred to Prevent and instead are a combination of elements similar to cases we observed, to protect anonymity.

2 The examples are intended to illustrate how referrals progress through Channel process, the types of factors considered by Channel panels, and the range of support that may be offered.

Source: National Audit Office analysis based on Channel panel observations

2.14 The panels observed were meaningfully multi-agency in nature, with between nine and 22 attendees representing services including police, adult and children's social care, mental health, education, drug and alcohol, and housing support. Panels considered referred individuals carefully, interrogating written case information and oral updates from attendees. It was common for panels to invite professionals who knew the individual better, such as teachers or mental health consultants, to provide additional context. Representatives updated panels on individuals' engagement with services and suggested further avenues for support. While discussions in some cases focused on wider safeguarding risks and gave limited consideration to terrorism risk, in others, decisions were driven by the assessments of CTCOs and IPs regarding changes in individuals' susceptibility to radicalisation.

2.15 There was also strong accountability during panel meetings we observed. Previous actions were discussed and follow-up actions were delegated to relevant members and guests. These were usually for further referrals or follow-ups with wider services. Some local authorities fund dedicated Prevent leads to coordinate Channel activity, while in other areas CTCOs reported carrying a disproportionate share of case management and follow-up activity.

2.16 Practitioners told us that delays in receiving information can significantly slow Channel discussions. Although the standard protocol requests responses within five working days, CTCOs reported waiting significantly longer than this in some cases. Some panels adopted cases despite outstanding information requests but identified a need for further enquiries to understand the severity of terrorism risks. This creates a risk that decisions are made without a complete understanding of an individual's circumstances.

2.17 The panels observed included positive updates on cases, including those where individuals had made significant progress in rejecting extremist ideologies, overcoming mental health challenges, and pursuing education or employment opportunities. In some cases, closure was considered due to a lack of terrorism risk but not agreed due to fear of the case not being picked up by wider safeguarding agencies. In other cases, panels closed cases and felt satisfied that wider agencies would provide support and would escalate Prevent concerns if needed. Keeping cases open despite the absence of a terrorism risk could unnecessarily stretch Prevent resources and reduce the capacity available to manage higher-risk cases.

2.18 In some of the panels we observed, we saw debates about the current scope of Prevent and how this should be applied in individual cases. We discuss this further in Part Three.

Prevent outcomes

2.19 Prevent practitioners, and those who oversee the programme nationally, feel confident that it has a positive impact on many of the individuals who receive support. Nevertheless, it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of Prevent in a robust, quantifiable way; the programme aims to prevent something from happening, but it is impossible to know whether it would have happened without intervention.

2.20 Since May 2024, CTP has recorded standardised outcome data for Channel cases through the PCMT. Between April 2024 and March 2025, 58% of individuals who exited Channel were assessed by a CTCO as no longer presenting with the terrorism concern identified at referral, after receiving Channel support (**Figure 11** overleaf). Meanwhile, 7% of individuals left Channel with some counter-terrorism concern remaining. Individuals who present a counter-terrorism concern may be monitored by other parts of the counter-terrorism system.

2.21 These data have significant limitations. Channel panels review cases six and 12 months following closure. Where necessary, panels can seek to re-admit individuals to the programme. As a result, these data do not capture cases which are reopened or where an individual gets re-referred. In exceptional cases where an individual abruptly cuts off contact, practitioners may be unable to determine accurately the level of residual risk.

2.22 We identified other data available to the Home Office and CTP that could provide alternative indicators of Channel's effectiveness. Changes in re-referral rates could be helpful as an indicator of whether Prevent is having more success with individuals when it first encounters them. It could also provide useful information about relative performance across different local authority areas. CTP data show that the number of individuals re-referred to Prevent for a second or subsequent time decreased from 34% of all referrals in 2015-16 to 21% in 2025-26.

2.23 CTP works to identify individuals with a Prevent footprint (including from being referred to receiving support) who later commit or attempt a terrorist offence or other serious offence (Figure 13). Between April 2022 and July 2026, 67 individuals referred to Prevent committed a terrorist offence and a further 89 committed or attempted to commit other serious offences out of a total of 32,588.[25,26] Of those who committed a terrorist offence, 20 had been in the Prevent system at the time of the offence: five were being assessed by CTP; 11 were in Channel; and four were in Police-Led Partnerships. The length of time between Prevent involvement and an offence occurring ranged from while an individual was still in Channel to seven years post-case closure.

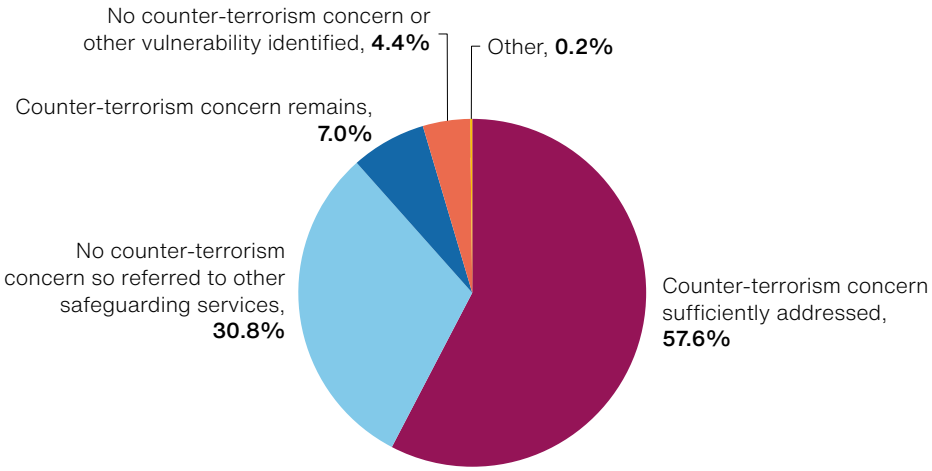
25 Terrorist offences include offences connected to the preparation, encouragement, support, financing or commission of terrorism, including membership of proscribed organisations, possession of terrorist materials, and collecting information useful for terrorism.

26 Serious offences include murder, attempted murder, serious violence, other violence, public order offences, grievous bodily harm, arson, sexual offences, and offences involving weapons, firearms or explosives.

Figure 11

Outcome categories of cases closed after receiving support from Channel between April 2024 and March 2025

Between April 2024 and March 2025, 58% of individuals from the 1,046 who exited Channel were assessed by a Counter-Terrorism Case Officer as no longer presenting with the terrorism concern identified at referral, after receiving Channel support



Notes

1 These data are collected when an individual exits Channel, so they provide only a snapshot at that point in time. They cannot be used to assess the long-term effectiveness of support, as an individual's risk may change over time. For example, in some cases the risk could increase again, leading to criminal activity or re-referral to the programme.

2 Although Channel panels review cases six and 12 months after closure, this dataset does not capture cases that are subsequently reopened due to renewed risk.

3 'Terrorism concern sufficiently addressed' includes individuals whose Channel support was completed and whose agreed objectives had been met. 'No terrorism concern so referred to other safeguarding services' includes individuals where no terrorism concern remained but where other safeguarding concerns were identified and referred to an appropriate agency. 'No terrorism concern or other vulnerability identified' includes individuals where assessment found no terrorism concern or other vulnerability requiring support so the case could be closed without onwards signposting. 'Counter-terrorism concern remains' includes individuals where a terrorism concern remained following assessment or support. 'Other' includes outcomes that do not fall within these four categories.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Home Office data

2.24 Limited evidence on the effectiveness of Prevent has contributed to scepticism about the programme's merits. This scrutiny has intensified following high-profile cases in which individuals with a Prevent footprint later committed a terrorist attack or other serious crime, including the Southport attack (2024), the murder of Sir David Amess (2021) and the Parsons Green bombing (2017), negatively affecting public confidence in the programme's value. Charities, think tanks and academics told us that Prevent unfairly targets certain demographics and can unfairly stigmatise people due to their ethnicity, mental health, neurodiversity, or religion. They argued that other bodies with official safeguarding responsibilities should lead efforts to address harmful attitudes rather than rely on Prevent for this. They felt that contact with Prevent impacted young people's trust in public authorities and schools, and more broadly, social and community cohesion. The Home Office recognises the risk of a lack of trust and negative perception of Prevent but has done little to communicate with the public about the positive impact it believes Prevent is having.

Part Three

Ongoing risks to Prevent's effectiveness

3.1 This part covers:

- Prevent's scope;
- training and quality assurance; and
- the Home Office's oversight and evaluation.

Prevent's scope

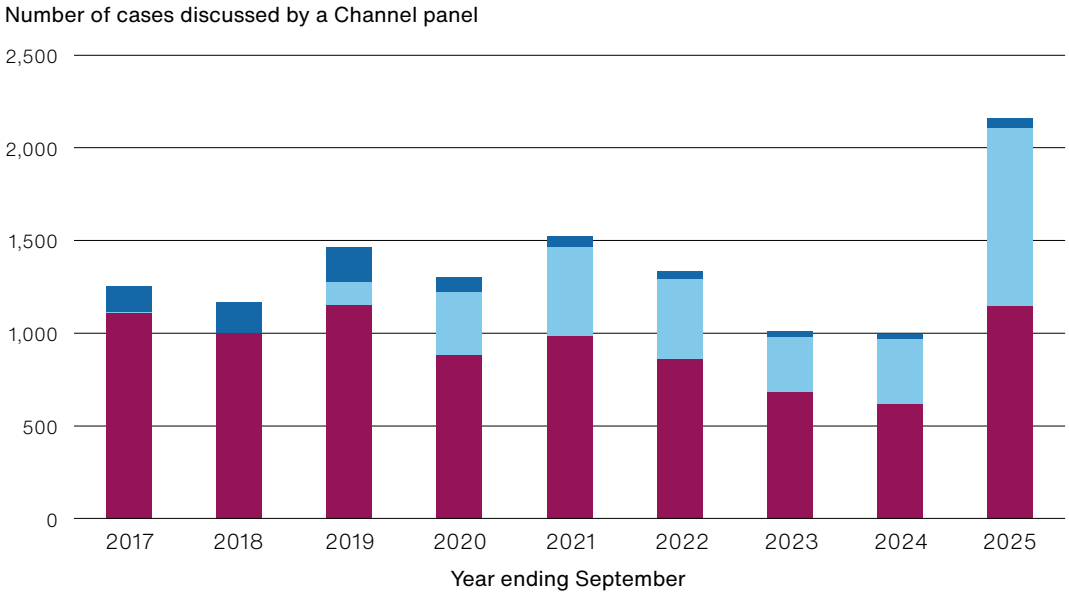
3.2 The ideological composition of Prevent referrals has been changing. Referred individuals increasingly do not exhibit an interest in a clear extremist ideology. In some cases, there is evidence of an interest in a range of extremist ideologies; in others, no ideology is identifiable. Additionally, a small but significant proportion of individuals are now classified as having a fascination with extreme violence or mass-casualty attacks (FEVMCA) without any discernible ideology. FEVMCA is the term Prevent uses for those violence-fascinated or violence-fixated individuals (VFIs) whom it considers in scope of the programme. In the year ending September 2025, 45% of the 2,159 cases discussed at Channel panel did not have a clear, dominant extremist ideology (**Figure 12**). In year ending September 2025, 14% of cases discussed involved individuals classified as FEVMCA.

3.3 The increase in FEVMCA referrals is correlated with recent high-profile acts of violence, whose perpetrators did not espouse traditional terrorist ideologies – most notably the Southport attack in July 2024. The Southport attacker had been referred to Prevent on three occasions, but the case was not referred onto Channel. As a result, the Southport Inquiry is exploring provision for such cases and will make recommendations about which government programme or public service should work with them in future. In February 2026, the Home Office published guidance, called Key Principles of Prevent, confirming that a clear ideology is not needed for Prevent referrals; however, it does not mention FEVMCA or how such cases should be managed within Channel.

Figure 12

The proportion of Prevent cases discussed at Channel panels presenting a clear, dominant extremist ideology, from year ending September 2017 to year ending September 2025

In the year ending September 2025, 45% of the 2,159 cases discussed at Channel panel did not present a clear, dominant extremist ideology



	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Annual cases with a clear, dominant extremist ideology	1,113	1,002	1,156	882	989	864	682	619	1,146
Annual cases without a clear, dominant extremist ideology	1	2	121	343	475	428	299	353	962
Annual cases categorised as 'Other' or 'Unspecified'	139	163	184	81	58	40	31	25	51
Total cases discussed by a Channel panel	**1,253**	**1,167**	**1,461**	**1,306**	**1,522**	**1,332**	**1,012**	**997**	**2,159**

Notes

1 Changes to the type of concern categories in April 2024 mean comparisons in data from before and after April 2024 should be treated with caution.

2 The categories used to classify Prevent cases by type of concern changed in April 2024. Before April 2024, referrals categorised as Extreme Right-Wing, Islamist Extremism and Incel are included within the 'clear dominant extremist ideology' category in the graph above. All other categories are included within 'without a clear dominant extremist ideology' apart from 'Other' and 'Unspecified' which are in the 'Other or Unspecified' category. Before April 2024, 'Other' included other forms of extremism which were not broken down in the public statistics, (such as Left Wing and Northern Ireland-related Dissident Republican Extremism) and prior to the year ending March 2018, 'Mixed, unstable or unclear' referrals were categorised as 'Unspecified'.

3 From April 2024 onwards, the 'clear, dominant extremist ideology' category includes referrals categorised as Extreme Right-Wing, Islamist Extremism, Left-Wing Extremism, Anarchist Extremism, Incel and Northern Ireland-related Dissident Republican Extremism. All other categories are included within 'without a clear, dominant extremist ideology' apart from 'Other' and 'Unspecified' which are in the 'Other or Unspecified' category.

4 Type of concern is initially assigned by a Counter Terrorism Policing Case Officer based on information provided by the referrer. The data shown reflects the classification at the point a case reaches Channel for initial discussion, following information gathering, and may differ from the classification assigned when the referral was first received, or at case closure.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Home Office statistics, *Individuals referred to and supported through the Prevent Programme*, April 2023 to March 2024; April 2024 to March 2025; and April 2025 to September 2025

3.4 In our observations, we saw that Channel panels spend the most time discussing referred individuals without a clearly defined ideology. Debates centred on whether Prevent was the appropriate service for them. In subsequent interviews with local practitioners, Counter Terrorism Policing (CTP) representatives told us that some current cases without a clear terrorism risk were borderline and might be more appropriately managed through other safeguarding services, but that these services were overloaded. The complex, borderline nature of these cases means there continues to be a risk of inconsistent referral and adoption practices across local areas.

3.5 One contributing factor to the inconsistency may be a disagreement between the Home Office and CTP on when cases with a fascination with extreme violence or mass-casualty attacks should be supported by Prevent.[27] CTP developed guidance, based on a definition agreed with the Home Office in April 2024. This includes the word 'committing' by which it means that, for a case to pass the Section 36 threshold and be presented to Channel based on FEVMCA alone, there should be a fascination with **committing** extreme violence and mass-casualty attacks. The Home Office does not agree with this interpretation, saying that **fascination** in itself is sufficient to meet the Section 36 threshold. In practice, very few cases under consideration display only one risk factor. However, on a complex issue which is already the subject of debate within Prevent, such differences can only be unhelpful.

3.6 We saw how panels were often taking a cautious approach at present, adopting borderline cases onto Channel even if there were doubts about their susceptibility to terrorism. Channel panels have increasingly been adopting the cases they discuss, from 46% in year ending (YE) September 2017 increasing each year to peak at 85% in YE September 2024. In YE September 2025, panels adopted 84% of cases they discussed.

3.7 The Prevent system is currently operating under heightened workload pressure. This has arisen at a time when public perception still generally understands the Prevent scope to be for individuals at risk of being drawn into terrorism. If policy were to change in future, or if the understanding of potential referrers continues to change, Counter Terrorism Case Officers (CTCOs) and Channel panels risk being unable to cope with caseloads without additional resources.

3.8 Cases are categorised by 'type of concern' before reaching a Channel panel, but panel discussions often identify additional information that could change how a case is understood. Monitoring how case categorisation changes could provide valuable evidence for future policy decisions on the programme's scope.

27 CTP's definition of individuals with a fascination with extreme violence or mass-casualty attacks is as follows: "Where an individual does not appear to have an ideology, but seems to have an interest in committing extreme or mass violence, which makes them a concern for Prevent. This could include those interested in school massacres but also where violence is targeted at other settings or individuals and is not based on a specific ideological motivation. If an individual is interested in violence in order to further an ideological goal, this ideology should be recorded instead."

Training

Training for potential referrers to Prevent

3.9 Training is mandatory for those subject to the Prevent duty.[28] The Home Office produces online training that allows those subject to the Prevent duty to fulfil this requirement. The training does not address recent developments such as the growth in cases involving mixed or unclear ideologies, and the case studies included have not been updated in four years. However, small revisions have been made to the course content in response to key events. The Home Office introduced supplementary training materials intended for in-person delivery and made them available to specified authorities in November 2024. These materials include information on emerging ideologies.

3.10 The Home Office measures training effectiveness through knowledge checks completed at the end of its online courses. Results from these knowledge checks between September 2025 and March 2026 show that, while general awareness of Prevent was high, and 83% of learners knew what to do if they had a Prevent concern, understanding of the referral process was weaker. For example, the same data show that only 56% of learners correctly identified the first step taken by CTP following a referral, and 59% knew when information about an individual of concern could be shared.

3.11 While the Home Office is able to collect data on the total number of completions of its online courses broken down by region and sector, it cannot link completions to individual participants or employers. As a result, the Home Office cannot identify who has completed its online training or how well they performed. Without more detailed completion data, the Home Office cannot target support to specific local authority areas or specified authorities with low completion rates, increasing the risk of low-quality or out-of-scope referrals, as well as eligible individuals not being referred for Prevent support.

3.12 The Home Office employs Prevent regional advisers to try to improve referral quality through targeted training, guidance and support. It also recognises the importance of Prevent education officers (PEOs) in supporting school and college staff to make appropriate referrals. Those in these roles are employed by local authorities, but their salaries often come from Home Office priority area funding. However, reductions in Home Office funding have resulted in several local authorities cutting PEO roles, which we were told by Channel panels could negatively impact referral quality. The number of Home Office-funded PEO roles fell from 46 in 2021-22 to 22 in 2025-26.

28 Specified authorities are set out in Part 1 of Schedule 6 in the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and include local authorities; prison and probation services; schools and providers of education or training; NHS trusts, Local Health Boards, and the Board of Community Health Councils in Wales; and the police. The Prevent duty guidance states that specified authorities are expected to ensure appropriate front-line staff have a good understanding of Prevent, are trained to recognise where a person might be susceptible to becoming radicalised into terrorism, and are aware of available programmes to provide support.

Training for Channel panel members

3.13 The Home Office provides mandatory training for Channel Panel chairs and deputy chairs. As of October 2026, only 80% of Channel chairs and 60% of deputy chairs had completed the training. Individuals are required to complete the training once, with no requirement for periodic refresher training. The Home Office told us that high turnover among Channel chairs and deputy chairs made it hard to achieve a higher level of compliance with training. Given their key role in risk assessment and decision-making, non-compliance increases the risk of inconsistency, and potentially of incorrect decisions being made, across local authorities.

3.14 CTP Headquarters provides mandatory training which CTCOs must complete before they can assess and manage Prevent referrals. It also shares intelligence on emerging risks and trends with local partners.

Oversight and monitoring

Quality assurance

3.15 In recent years, the Home Office has operated separate oversight arrangements for delivery of the Prevent duty and the operation of Channel. Regional Prevent advisers assess local implementation of the Prevent duty through the Prevent benchmarking framework. Regional Channel quality assurers have separately assessed the delivery of Channel through annual Channel assurance statements. Until June 2026, these arrangements operated independently despite significant overlap. The Home Office has now brought the two teams together.

3.16 The Home Office's oversight arrangements focus on checking that processes are in place in every part of England and Wales, rather than on the quality of local delivery. They also rely primarily on self-assessment by local authorities. Since 2024, the Home Office has conducted its own limited validation of the information provided. This has included observations of Channel panels and dip-sampled reviews of case records. Local authorities we spoke to had mixed views on the process: some described it as a tick-box exercise while others valued the feedback they had been offered following observations.

3.17 In 2026, the Home Office implemented a revised assurance model intended to place greater emphasis on the quality of decision-making and case management. The new model will include thematic reviews of cases in the Prevent Case Management Tracker (PCMT) and competency-based assessments of Channel panels.

3.18 CTP carries out its own assurance of Prevent work through its regional officers. Historically, this focused on dip-sampling cases and running engagement sessions. CTP told us that it intends to implement a new process by the end of 2026 which will focus on identified priority areas.

Learning reviews

3.19 The Home Office and CTP conduct reviews when individuals referred to Prevent go on to commit or attempt terrorist or serious offences (**Figure 13** on pages 48 and 49).[29] For particularly complex or prominent cases, the Home Office and CTP Headquarters commission external Prevent Learning Reviews, including after the Parsons Green attack (2017), the murder of Sir David Amess (2021), and the Southport attack (2024).

3.20 CTP also operates a separate review programme, Dignate. Dignate reviews examine the handling of cases where individuals who have previously had contact with Prevent commit or attempt to commit a terrorist or other serious offence. They examine how cases were handled and identify lessons and recommendations to improve future practice across CTP. There is no automatic way to track when a review is necessary; however, CTP periodically conducts a manual check of all terrorism offenders against the PCMT to track if they have previously engaged with Prevent. As of September 2026, the most recent one of these was in April 2026. However, there is no equivalent check for individuals who commit or attempt other serious offences, meaning CTP has limited assurance that all relevant cases are reviewed. Regional officers are responsible for identifying whether individuals who commit relevant offences have previously been referred to Prevent. For those who have left Prevent, the process relies on manual checks of available records and local knowledge.

3.21 Reviews have identified weak practice by a range of delivery partners across the Prevent system. While findings are shared with relevant organisations and the Home Office, CTP has no formal powers to require statutory partners to conduct their own reviews or demonstrate that they have responded to its recommendations. The Home Office does not consistently share learning from events in one local area with partners in other areas. This reduces the chance that lessons identified through reviews will be translated into improvements across the system.

3.22 In mid-2025, the Home Office, with support from CTP, planned to introduce a new multi-agency Prevent Case Management Review process, intended to strengthen cross-government learning and accountability. As of September 2026, implementation of the new process had still not started.

29 Serious offences include murder, attempted murder, serious violence, other violence, public order offences, grievous bodily harm, arson, sexual offences, and offences involving weapons, firearms or explosives. Terrorist offences include offences connected to the preparation, encouragement, support, financing or commission of terrorism, including membership of proscribed organisations, possession of terrorist materials, and collecting information useful for terrorism.

Figure 13

Existing and planned Home Office and Counter Terrorism Policing learning reviews, as of September 2026

There is substantial overlap between Home Office and Counter Terrorism Policing reviews

Review type	Commissioned by	Trigger	Scope	Outcome and sharing	Number of reviews
Independent Prevent learning review	Home Office, authorised at Director level and/ or Senior Officials in Counter Terrorism Policing, with involvement from the Independent Prevent Commissioner	Prominent terrorist attack, serious violence committed, or suicide or attempt, by individual with prior involvement in the Prevent programme By exception for cases judged as high impact	• Not statutory • Terms of reference agreed for each review • Aims to identify organisational learning opportunities	• Report with recommendations • Ministers must sign off to be made public	3
Prevent rapid reviews	Home Office and Counter Terrorism Policing with involvement from the Independent Prevent Commissioner	Terrorist attack, serious violence committed, or suicide or attempt, committed by individual with prior involvement in the Prevent programme that is deemed to not need an independent review	• Not statutory • Terms of reference agreed for each review • Case review undertaken by the Home Office to identify internal learning • Statutory reviews to take precedence to prevent overburdening the system	• Report with recommendations • Can be shared with statutory partners • Not intended for publication	8
Prevent learning desktop reviews	Home Office and Counter Terrorism Policing	Terrorist attack, serious violence committed, or suicide or attempt committed by individual with prior involvement in the Prevent programme that is deemed to not need an independent review Agreed by Home Office and Counter Terrorism Policing on a case-by-case basis	• Not statutory • Checking policy position, training and guidance • Identify learning points	• Report with recommendations	3
Dignate	Counter Terrorism Policing	Regional officers self-refer individuals who have committed a Terrorist Act or counter-terrorism related offence, a high-harm offence, suicide or attempt, and have a Prevent footprint	• Not statutory • Check policy and guidance compliance • Check commonalities between cases • Identify organisational learning opportunities through high-level themes, trends and good practice	• Report with recommendations • Internal documents • No requirement to share with Home Office for pre-Channel cases • Recommendations for statutory partners must go through the Home Office	206

Figure 13 *continued*
Existing and planned Home Office and Counter Terrorism Policing learning reviews, as of September 2026

Notes

1 Both Independent Prevent Learning Reviews and Prevent Rapid Reviews form part of the broader Prevent Case Management Review (PCMR) framework, which was introduced in November 2025. Since the introduction of the PCMR framework, no Independent Prevent Learning Reviews had been conducted, as of September 2026.

2 A non-exhaustive list of statutory reviews that can include cases with a Prevent footprint is as follows: domestic homicide reviews, rapid reviews and child safeguarding practice reviews, single unified safeguarding reviews (Wales), safeguarding adults reviews, multi-agency public protection arrangement serious case reviews, offensive weapon homicide reviews, child death reviews, independent investigation reports, individual management reviews, regulation 28 reports.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Home Office and Counter Terrorism Policing documents

Risk and performance monitoring

3.23 The Home Office monitors Prevent performance through six-monthly reports to the Prevent System Board and the CONTEST Board. In April 2024, the Prevent Performance team reported that understanding of Prevent's performance was limited because reporting provided little value, owing to poor access to system-wide data, and reporting formats that failed to link activity, spending, and threat or risk assessments. The department has since introduced additional performance measures including consent and re-referral metrics, but many of the identified weaknesses remain.

3.24 Prevent operates within a wider counter-terrorism risk management system, with risks managed through the National Security Risk Assessment, CONTEST critical risk assessments, and the Homeland Security Group risk assessment. Prevent also engages in risk management through the Prevent Assessment Framework (PAF), which supports local partners, CTP and Channel panels in assessing and managing the risk posed by individuals susceptible to radicalisation.

3.25 It was beyond the scope of this report to examine the architecture of national security risk management. We described how the PAF was used in Part Two. Here, we look at how the Home Office manages the Prevent programme's internal, operational delivery risks.

3.26 We found that the Home Office's risk management was immature given that the Prevent programme had been operating with its current model for over 10 years.

- Some core foundations of effective risk management (such as the Prevent Risk register in October 2025) have only recently been introduced. Despite these developments, we found limited evidence of a structured approach to identifying, assessing, monitoring and escalating risks across the programme, or that risk information had been used to inform programme oversight, prioritisation or decision-making.
- The Home Office has yet to assess the extent to which it can, or should, mitigate some of Prevent's most critical risks. This includes referral volume impacting local delivery, or risks associated with Prevent not reaching people who are being radicalised online.
- Currently, there is no cross-system approach or consolidated view of emerging operational pressures, delivery risks and capability gaps across the Prevent system, limiting the Home Office's ability to identify pressures and manage the risk of programme challenges.

3.27 A mature performance and risk management framework would provide decision-makers with a coherent view of programme outcomes, delivery risks, resources and capabilities. However, Prevent's current arrangements do not consistently bring these elements together, and the Home Office cannot demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the programme's performance, risk landscape or capability requirements. Consequently, it has limited assurance that Prevent is meeting its objectives, that risks are being effectively managed, or that the programme is resilient to future demand, emerging threats and operational pressures.

Information-sharing between partners

3.28 Information held within the Prevent system is sensitive, requiring organisations to restrict access appropriately. This means delivery partners cannot always share information easily.

3.29 Since May 2024, CTCOs have used the PCMT to monitor cases from referral through to exit. The Home Office and CTP jointly operate the system, although CTP owns the system and leads operational improvement work. The current situation is a major improvement on the past, when the Home Office and CTP tracked and managed cases through separate systems. More recent improvements to the PCMT have brought enhanced search functionality and new classifications, which enable better data analysis. In September 2026, CTP introduced a new feature allowing practitioners to check Intervention Provider availability when designing support plans, with the aim of reducing requests to oversubscribed providers.

3.30 Access to PCMT data varies across organisations. Referral data before a case passes the Section 36 threshold (the decision to forward it to a Channel panel) are held by CTP, and the Home Office does not have access to detailed case-level information. However, the Home Office does have access to a live dashboard, including referral volumes by region, referral ideologies and the organisations generating referrals for pre-Section 36 cases. From the point at which a case reaches Channel discussion, the Home Office has access to case-level information, including whether it is adopted and how it is supported subsequently. The Home Office does not, however, have access to case-level information for cases managed through a Police-Led Partnership. The Home Office told us that broader access to case-level data would improve its understanding of out-of-scope referrals and emerging threats.

Research and evaluation

3.31 It is inherently difficult to demonstrate the effectiveness of Prevent. In 2022, the Home Office commissioned University College London and Ipsos UK to undertake a process and outcomes evaluation of Channel to improve its understanding of how well the programme was working. The process evaluation was completed in May 2026, with the outcome evaluation to follow in Spring 2027.

3.32 At national level, a range of bodies and teams conduct ongoing research and evaluation of Prevent. These include:

- the Homeland Security Analysis and Insights team (HSAI), based in the Home Office;
- the Research, Information and Communications Unit (RICU) Knowledge Hub, based in the Home Office;
- the Counter-Terrorism, Assessment and Rehabilitation Centre (CT-ARC), based in His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service, in the Ministry of Justice; and
- the CTP performance team.

3.33 However, Prevent does not have a single, shared evaluation strategy, coordination arrangements are not formalised, and both duplication and gaps exist in the work done by different teams.

3.34 As the landscape of extremism changes, new research requirements regularly emerge, particularly related to online environments. HSAI has begun a comparative study exploring children's digital exposure to violent influences online in both the UK and Australia to understand the impact of different legislative contexts. The UK government announced in June 2026 that it intended to ban social media companies from offering their services to children under the age of 16 and that it aimed to use the same model as Australia. In July, the government made further announcements including default protections for 16- and 17-year-olds on social media. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport is leading this work in the UK and will work with other departments (including the Home Office) to manage any implications on relevant policy areas.[30]

30 The Online Safety Act 2023 established a regulatory framework for online safety in the UK, placing duties on social media platforms and search services to reduce the risk of illegal content and to protect children from harmful content online.

Appendix One

Our audit approach

Our scope

1 The report focuses on the extent to which the Prevent programme is meeting its objective to intervene early and support people susceptible to radicalisation. It looks at Prevent's operation in England and Wales and examines:

- the Home Office's design and implementation of the programme;
- local delivery of Prevent; and
- the Home Office's oversight, monitoring and evaluation activities.

2 Counter-terrorism is a reserved matter, meaning the UK government is responsible for it across the UK. However, Prevent is delivered locally through devolved structures and partners, and its implementation differs across England, Wales and Scotland. Prevent does not exist in Northern Ireland. This report focuses on England and Wales because Prevent operates under a different policing, governance and delivery framework in Scotland.

3 Demand for the Prevent programme has increased significantly, particularly in terms of Prevent referrals and demand for Channel support. As such, we focus on how the Home Office is implementing the Prevent programme's objective to intervene early and support people susceptible to radicalisation, rather than its other objectives, to tackle the ideological causes of terrorism, or the Disengage and Desistance programme.

4 The evaluative criteria that we used to answer our audit questions drew from our good practice guides on improving operational services and overcoming challenges to managing risks in government. We have identified key enablers for the Home Office's delivery of the programme, including financial management, quality assurance, data collection and information sharing, performance monitoring, risk management, and research and evaluation. We also examined local delivery in terms of local capacity and capability.

5 In forming our conclusions, we drew on a range of study methods and a variety of evidence sources, as described in the paragraphs below. We collated and analysed the evidence between March 2026 and September 2026, using our evaluative criteria as a framework. We looked across different sources of evidence to support each of our findings. We triangulated any issues brought to our attention through our interactions with government bodies or other stakeholders against other sources. Where necessary, we asked questions of the relevant parties and asked for more information to ensure that we focused on the highest-priority areas.

6 Throughout the report, financial years are written as, for example, '2023-24', and run from 1 April to 31 March.

Our evidence base

Interviews

Home Office and Counter Terrorism Policing interviews

7 We conducted 25 interviews with representatives from the Home Office, many of whom work in the Home Office Prevent Delivery Unit, and 12 interviews with representatives from Counter Terrorism Policing (CTP). We selected these individuals based on their job roles and their relevance to the audit. Interviews were largely conducted online and were tailored to individuals' roles. We extracted insights from each of the interviews to identify common trends and key themes. Interviews were designed to provide information regarding:

- the Home Office's design and implementation of the Prevent programme;
- the Home Office's understanding of performance and impact;
- the Home Office's understanding and support for delivery across local authorities and other government departments;
- the Home Office's understanding of costs and financial management;
- the Home Office's management of key risks and challenges facing the programme at both the local and national level; and
- CTP and the Home Office's understanding of data, and any gaps in data collection or availability.

Stakeholder interviews

8 As part of our scoping activities, we spoke with representatives from devolved bodies to understand how Prevent delivery and implementation differ across the devolved nations, and to help define our audit scope. This included:

- Audit Scotland;
- Audit Wales; and
- His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland.

9 We also spoke to stakeholders who play a key role in scrutinising the Prevent duty, to sense-check the scope of our report. These were:

- the Independent Prevent Commissioner;
- the Home Affairs Select Committee; and
- the Southport Inquiry.

10 We interviewed external experts to gain a broader understanding of the work of Prevent, how it has evolved over time, and changing trends and future challenges. Discussions also involved areas to focus on for our audit. Experts we spoke to include:

- Amnesty International;
- Prevent Watch;
- Professor Charlotte Heath-Kelly;
- Dr Sarah Marsden;
- Professor Noémie Bouhana;
- University College London and Ipsos UK Channel Programme Evaluation; and
- the Independent Commission on UK Counter-Terrorism Law, Policy and Practice.

11 During fieldwork, we conducted interviews with other government bodies to understand their role in the design and delivery of the programme, the division of responsibilities for delivery and how well the Home Office is working with them. We spoke to:

- His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service;
- the Department of Health & Social Care;
- the Department for Education;
- the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport; and
- Ofcom.

12 We conducted semi-structured interviews with organisations outside government to understand key challenges and the impact the programme is having. We also sought to understand what the Home Office is doing well and what it could do better, and how well the funding model supports delivery. Organisations we spoke to were:

- the Youth Justice Board;
- the National Police Chiefs' Council;
- the Local Government Association;
- the Association of Directors of Children's Services;
- the Association of Directors of Adult Services; and
- the Office of the Children's Commissioner.

13 Stakeholders were selected through independent research. We analysed the data, reviewing them against the themes identified in our evaluative framework, as well as taking into consideration themes emerging from the data. We used the analysis to:

- inform further lines of enquiry, which were followed up with the Home Office; and
- triangulate evidence from other sources (including our document review and evidence from wider stakeholders).

Document review

14 We reviewed a range of published documents to help refine the parameters of our audit. We then obtained approximately 500 Home Office and Counter Terrorism Policing documents to deepen our understanding of the programme and its delivery. Our review was carried out between April and August 2026. The type of documents we reviewed included:

- business cases;
- theory of change documentation;
- ministerial submissions;
- accountability and governance frameworks;
- board meeting minutes and terms of reference;
- risk registers;
- performance reports;
- delivery partner reporting;
- evaluative work;

- financial monitoring information; and
- training material and guidance.

We reviewed documents against our overarching audit questions. The review also identified further documentation relevant to support our audit.

Case studies

15 We conducted six case studies of local channel panels between May 2026 and July 2026. The aim of the case studies was to understand:

- how Channel panels operate in practice and how delivery varies between local areas;
- how local context can affect programme delivery;
- how well the Home Office works with and supports local authorities;
- how the Home Office identifies and shares best practice among the regions; and
- the impact of the priority funding model.

16 We purposely selected case study areas to ensure we obtained variation in:

- geographic spread;
- priority funded and non-priority funded areas;
- caseload;
- performance benchmarking ranking; and
- rural and urban areas.

17 Case studies involved:

- observations of Channel panels' discussions (six);
- interviews with Counter Terrorism Case Officers (five);
- focus groups with panel members (five);
- interviews with Channel chairs and Channel deputy chairs (four individually, and two as part of the wider focus group with panel members); and
- interviews with Prevent leads (four).

18 Participation for those involved in the case studies was voluntary, so not all planned focus groups and interviews could be completed.

19 The Channel panels used as case studies are anonymous to support confidentiality and reduce the risk of identifying individuals participating in or being discussed in Channel panels.

20 Observations of Channel panels involved observing and making notes on the types of cases discussed and the support they received, attendance, collaboration between panel members and Chairs, the use of and access to information, the use of tools and risk assessments, and discussions and decision-making among panel members regarding case adoption, closure and support.

21 We used a matrix-based approach to analyse case study data to compare across participants and within themes systematically. Findings from our case studies are based on the experiences of the panels we engaged with and cannot be generalised to all Channel panels. However, we sought to capture diverse insights from a range of panel contexts across England and Wales.

22 We created two illustrative case examples to show what sort of referrals are being accepted into Channel and what sort of support can be offered to these individuals. These case examples are high-level and reflect the multi-agency nature of support, as well as some of the considerations Channel panels have, for example over who should seek consent. While inspired by the cases we saw, these cases are illustrative and more straightforward than the complex, messy reality that we observed. The types of concern in the illustrative case examples were the two most common types of concern in year ending September 2025.

Quantitative analysis

23 We conducted quantitative analysis of the Home Office's published Prevent referral data. These included data on referrals, cases discussed at and adopted by Channel panels, and exits from the Channel process. We also analysed referral characteristics, including type of concern, demographics, regional trends and consent. To identify trends over time, we reviewed data published by the Home Office between 9 November 2017 and 6 August 2026.

24 We also analysed unpublished data including:

- Home Office data on referral outcomes;
- data on Intervention Provider availability;
- Prevent referral numbers including numbers adopted and discussed at Channel panel by local authority;
- Counter Terrorism Policing data on types of concern categorisation;
- data on multiple referrals; and
- data on the Home Office's internal business assurance processes.

25 We analysed Home Office financial data between 2020-21 and 2025-26 to understand how the department's budget and expenditure have changed over time and how it has responded to financial management challenges.

Estimated annual cost of Channel panels

26 We estimated the annual staff costs of administering and participating in Channel panels. These do not represent the full cost of delivering Prevent locally.

27 To develop the estimate, we collected information from participants involved in the delivery of six Channel panel case studies. We asked panel members to provide details of:

- their role on the panel;
- salary information;
- the estimated time spent preparing for a typical Channel panel meeting;
- the estimated time spent attending a panel meeting; and
- the estimated time spent undertaking follow-up actions after meetings.

28 We received 35 responses from a range of Channel participants including chairs, deputy chairs, Prevent coordinators, Prevent support officers, education representatives, youth justice representatives, mental health professionals, and adult and children's social care representatives.

29 Using these responses, we calculated indicative hourly rates by dividing reported salaries by an assumed working year of 1,924 hours (37 hours per week over 52 weeks). We then calculated the estimated annual cost of participation for each respondent based on the time they reported spending on preparation, attendance and follow-up activities across 12 Channel panel meetings per year. Where respondents provided ranges for salary or time spent, we used the midpoint.

30 We grouped respondents into panel-member categories and calculated the average cost of participation for each category. Because panel composition varies between local areas, we developed low- and high-cost scenarios based on different combinations of panel members observed at the panels we attended. We estimated that a single meeting would cost approximately £2,124 under the low scenario and £5,115 under the high scenario. Assuming that panels meet monthly, we multiplied these figures by 12 to estimate an annual cost of between £25,484 and £61,386 for an individual Channel panel. These are illustrative scenarios rather than predictions of the costs incurred by every panel.

31 This estimate should be treated with caution. It is intended to provide an indication of the scale of staffing costs associated with Channel panel delivery rather than a precise measure of expenditure. Key limitations include the following.

- The estimate is based on information provided by participants from a small number of case study areas and may not be representative of all Channel panels.
- For some panel-member categories, the average is based on only one or two responses, meaning individual responses can have a significant influence on the estimate.
- The assumed low- and high-cost panel compositions were developed by the study team based on observations and do not capture the full variation in panel membership, seniority, meeting length, caseload or operating arrangements between local areas.
- Salary and time estimates were self-reported by participants and may be subject to recall error or differences in interpretation.
- The calculation is based on gross salary costs only. It excludes employer pension contributions, National Insurance contributions, overheads, accommodation, IT costs, training, annual leave, sickness absence and other non-pay costs. As a result, the true economic cost of delivery is likely to be higher.
- The estimate focuses on Channel panel administration and participation. It does not include wider Prevent-related activity undertaken by delivery partners outside Channel meetings, such as responding to information requests, delivering interventions, providing safeguarding support, undertaking assessments or broader Prevent duty activity.

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