To: Home Secretary 26.01.2025
From: ACSO, Head of CT Policing

Counter Terrorism Policing (CTP) Response to Southport Murders

1. I committed to write on our immediate next steps following our meetings last week. Thank you for taking time to continue those conversations on Friday.

2. Police leaders and the NCA will also write with our perspective on the connections between the horrific Southport murders, and the wider context of sexual, interpersonal and public violence, that is increasingly legitimised and fuelled online.

3. Those interconnected concerns need our attention, and our purpose in writing collectively is to propose areas of action and new tools, that go beyond Prevent. However, given the Home Office and CTP ownership of Prevent, this note is principally about sharpening the tools we have (at paragraphs 9 to 12). But I also believe in re-booting the Prevent Duty to drive urgency across the whole system that the public can recognise and agencies respond to (paragraphs 26 to 34). A potential interim model for the core of Prevent emerges and is covered at paragraph 32.

4. **Prevent Learning Reviews (PLRs):** Before moving into more detail, I wanted to confirm our actions on three specific topics. The first, PLRs. I would welcome Lord Anderson being commissioned to independently propose a two-stage process that ensures consistent and transparent triggers for rapid internal debriefing, and sets standards for subsequent reviews for publication. I repeat this later, but reviewing AMR's history has shown us that we also need a framework that binds other organisations into participation in timely, comprehensive and candid reviews. This work should not stand in the way of publication of the findings of the PLRs for AMR (Southport) and AHA (Sir David Amess MP).

5. **CBRN protocol:** Secondly, we discussed the engagement of local partners with national bodies. In this case, the Police took early advice from Government scientists (Dstl). Engagement with UKHSA (Health Security) followed. There is a task between scientific experts to point the Police to other specialist functions, but we agree that the distinct roles of Dstl and UKHSA should be understood, and the operational protocols for engaging both embedded with incident commanders in forces.

6. I have asked the Senior National Co-ordinator (Protect and Prepare), Jon Savell, to review the progress of testing and updating joint procedures, and present his findings to the Chief Medical Officer and CEO of the UKHSA. He will complete his work by the end of February 2025.

7. Your officials have the chronology of initial actions. I can confirm, that question of information being released publicly prior to charge was resolved through rigorous consideration by the senior Police commander (in MerPol), and CPS. As you know, I would like us to challenge the existing constraints on communication within the Criminal Justice System (working with the AGO and Law Commission).

8. **Precursors, knives and other weapons:** Finally, you have flagged that as well as online harms, online marketplaces are delivering weapons into the hands of dangerous people. This includes knives, sources of poison (such as ricinus seeds), and parts to augment 3D-printed guns. We are already using robotics to deal with the thousands of disclosures we receive. We would welcome the support of DSIT, industry and UKIC around online marketplaces, and instructional material to test whether more can be done to detect and disrupt these purchases. You are separately considering legislation on knife sales, and officials are also working on cross-bows and ricin.

Part A: Accelerated Audit and Assurance of CTP Prevent
Part B: Legislation, Communication and Trust
Part C: Extreme Youth Violence: Lessons from Southport

Part A: Accelerated Audit and Assurance of CTP Prevent (HO Workstream = Lord Anderson Review)

9. An internal assurance exercise was commissioned last year to examine Prevent within CTP. I have asked HMICFRS and College of Policing to support me in accelerating this work. They have agreed to work with CTP to examine changes to policy and training since 2019 and in response to the Southport PLR. My aim is to form rapidly an expert audit team that has access to CT expertise but is not built out of past experience of current practices ('the way things are or were').

10. We are currently setting the terms of reference for this work, and I would welcome your views. I want specifically for this audit to address these questions:

    i. Whether the actions underway, and the plans set out are complete and sufficient to respond to **the findings of the PLR, other reviews**, and the assessment of current risks?
    ii. How effective the steps taken to implement them have been? Have those interventions had practical effect, i.e. **are they embedded** and making a difference?
    iii. Specifically, is the current **training, policy and guidance** leading to a better response to multiple referrals (following new guidance in 2023) and those with no clear ideology?
    iv. How effectively is **performance** being managed, and what metrics could add to our understanding of progress and effectiveness?
    v. What does our data tell us about the **cohorts of concern**, and where further development may be required? What are the dominant characteristics? What is the scale?
    vi. Can we use data to take a **'cold case' approach** to any cohorts, revisiting assessment and outward referrals? How much of this can feasibly be done, set against cumulative, current demand?
    vii. As a focus, can cases related to clear interest in **targeted public violence ('school massacres')**, be highlighted and re-examined, and can any further actions be taken with individuals?
    viii. Before we get to 'big data', how effective is the use of **automation and flagging** to identify Prevent subjects when they appear in the casework of other agencies?
    ix. What is our confidence in the **response of partners to the Prevent Duty**, particularly when outward referrals are made?
    x. How are **staff and officers** experiencing this work, and how should they be supported and led?

11. The intention is to complete this work in phases, with a first report in 12 weeks from initiation.

Structure

12. In order to take this work forward, I am asking our system to support with fresh eyes and capacity, at two-levels:

    - Senior Challenge Panel. Chief Officer/equivalents from a range of backgrounds (potentially internationally) to test and challenge the methodology and progress of this work.
    - External Senior Practitioners: from outside CT with experience of performance and assurance, strategic and operational change, public protection, and cultural transformation, learning and development.
    - SRO capacity: Recruiting an SRO or other additional support, working to the SNC (Prevent and Pursue), Vicki Evans.

Part B: Legislation, Communication and Trust

(HMG Workstreams = Jonathan Hall KC Review & Law Commission/AGO on Contempt of Court)

13. **Legislating for terrorism and targeted public violence:** We will now begin work to support Jonathan Hall KC, Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation (IRTL) on his review of the UK legal definition of terrorism. We view this as a question of also understanding the phenomena we are seeing (changing terrorism and violent-fixation), and determining where these are best addressed through National Security interventions or other measures.

14. I have proposed that the IRTL should consider in his review whether establishing a **new category of offences** for the purpose of charging and sentencing could better capture instances of terrorising the public (i.e. the **'serious violence' plus 'intimidation of the public'** elements of TACT) without the clear ideological intent of a cause.

15. **Associated legal powers:** As well as defining offences, TACT enables Police to operate specific powers of extended detention, for example. Several features of TACT allow Police intervention at an earlier stage or at different thresholds than in other crimes; the prosecution of preparatory actions, the glorification of terrorism, and holding information useful to a terrorist. We would welcome the IRTL's view on whether an offence of targeted public violence could have similar provisions attached to it. (CTP Legal will work directly with the IRTL and HO on these issues).

16. A challenge within Prevent is its voluntary nature. The fact Prevent is not punitive has been seen as a positive part of encouraging referrals. However, we welcome the proposal for Youth Diversion Orders as a part of Government's response. We see merit in either the IRTL or Lord Anderson reviewing whether it is possible to establish a threshold at which **making participation in Prevent mandatory** for individuals and guardians could be placed into legislation,

17. Practitioners have access to over 20 other forms of restrictive orders, however most are either specific (e.g. concerning forced marriage), focused on known victims (stalking and harassment powers) or operate post-conviction. We would welcome the IRTL reviewing restrictive orders to determine whether there is a gap for some form of **'Violence Risk Order'** that could enable policing to enforce both prohibitions (e.g. not to approach a school or be unsupervised amongst children) and, ideally, positive obligations (e.g. to attend relevant courses, avail themselves of resettlement/diversionary opportunities, etc). At present, most Prevent cases operate through co-operation rather than coercion, which can be challenging with the most anti-social, violently oriented, or radicalised children and young people.

18. There is also concern that not all statutory **MAPPA arrangements** fully extend to Potential Dangerous Persons (PDPs). The Criminal Justice Act (CJA) 2003 provides the legislative framework for the responsible authority to establish arrangements in relation to MAPPA offenders, but this does not extend fully to PDPs. CTP colleagues will provide more detail on their concern here.

Communication and Trust

19. **Initial force communications following incidents** have become increasingly problematic, with more ambiguous events, and the tempo of conventional official updates and social media/misinformation being out of sync. Work in underway to separate the goal of informing the public (e.g. that an incident has concluded without wider threat) from our use of powers, legal definitions, and the deployment of resources (e.g. the decision that follows). I would be grateful for support from HMG Behavioural Science to our Head of Communications, Sarah Shelley, in finalising our options.

20. T1D

21. T1D

Milestones

22. These elements are deliberately described as parts and not phases. They are each underway – at varying stages – and Part C will clearly be the most far-reaching. I would like to have concluded Part A in two phases, with the first assessment completed in 12 weeks.

23. In respect of Part B and the communication and trust issues (as opposed to the Law Commission work), I want to move quickly and have tested our proposals by the end of February 2025.

Resources

24. At the same time as pushing forward these reviews, our resources are principally focused on daily threat mitigation, reflected in our 800 live operations against subjects of interest to CTP and MI5. You are aware of other Police pressures leading to vacancies amongst officers seconded to CTP. As a result of both factors, we will need to bring in additional capacity to accelerate this work. To do this, I would like to reserve funds from 2024/25 to take into the year ahead, working with officials to ensure HO and HMT conditions are met.

25. We will always have choices on priorities but below, I will point to the scale of investment that would be required for Prevent to rely less on stretched external provision, and hold more cases.

Part C: Extreme Youth Violence: Lessons from Southport (HMG Workstream = Public Inquiry)

26. These issues are not new. Prevent *and* Pursue resources are frequently focused on young people of limited ideology or connection to terrorist organisations, who are also neuro-divergent or suffering mental ill-health. I hope that the lack of services and pathways for these subjects can be addressed in the public inquiry (within and beyond Prevent, as per my 7th November 2024 letter).

27. In all that complexity, this tragic case – because a Channel referral could have been made – might leave the public with the sense that 'Prevent = Channel' (in effect, a de-radicalisation programme).

28. However, under the HMG Prevent strategy there is much beyond dedicated Prevent teams that was always intended to be activated in individual cases through referrals to the authorities who are bound by the statutory Prevent Duty. Prevent duty guidance: for England and Wales (accessible) - GOV.UK

29. Dedicated Prevent teams routinely seek to attract support for subjects from health, education, and local authorities. This has been a key activity, reflecting both the capacity and capabilities of the Prevent core, and its deliberate proximity to the wider CT system. It has been a model built on receiving, triaging and assessing inputs for those most needing CT-specific interventions. I will return to our confidence in 'hand-offs' but first, in terms of scale:

- 31,000 referrals have been made to Prevent between 2019-24 (suppressed during COVID);
- Of ca. 7,000 annual referrals, around 500 attract focused Channel support;
- 2,500 (close to 40%) are assessed as having no ideology or terrorist risk;
- Almost all these result in onward engagement with partners with Prevent Duty or safeguarding responsibilities – rather than entering Channel; and
- This outcome (proposing action outside the dedicated Prevent teams) accounts for 65% of the total 7,000 annual referrals into Prevent.

30. The size of that last group - the 65% of referrals onwards – points to the fundamental question of how far Prevent should be holding the co-ordination of more non-CT cases. There is a real risk that if not bounded and resourced, this would dilute conventional CT risk-management. If the risk-appetite was set to hold all cases with vulnerability but no CT risk (2,500) in something akin to Channel (currently 500 p.a.), then we might estimate it needs a **Prevent system five-times larger than now**.

31. All this starts to look more like your proposed **Youth Prevention Partnerships** or part of those. As you note, that scale of response may lie beyond the immediate spending and policy cycle.

32. We need to strategise for that time, but I am also a pragmatist. We need to describe an interim. My position, and our working strategy is that we can and should rapidly explore how we:

- Formalise what is already the case; that **Prevent provides a gateway/referral mechanism for concerns around targeted public violence** ('school massacres'), i.e. explicitly build the de-facto *wider* front-door;
- Behind that door, develop a Channel-type response, **for defined 'school massacre' and similar mindsets**, having tasked an international evidence review by the College of Policing;
- Seek T1D* support for significant **hardening of the system of referrals (hand-offs)** to ensure appropriate prioritisation of those referred, and accountability for the action taken.

33. There are legitimate concerns about overwhelming Prevent as we explore its thresholds. Sadly, many youths carry knives to school or have grievances against individuals. In a world of blurred boundaries, we will therefore have to describe the scope of any interim, and its impact on resources and capabilities. We will work with officials to understand that position better.

34. On 10 December 2024, I shared thoughts on strengthening the system of referrals across Prevent Duty partners. As a minimum, there may be real merit in:

- Placing a **duty to report back** on onward referrals and their outcomes on local authorities, health, education and CJS bodies in scope of the Prevent Duty. Establishing aligned performance data on the outcomes of referrals across departments.

- As per Paragraph 4, establish a duty on all relevant organisations to engage in rapid, parallel and then integrated reviews after serious incidents i.e. an integrated **equivalent to the Domestic Homicide Review**, done at pace to inform learning. At present, this is fractured and too slow.

*** Cross government ministerial meeting**

T1D - Cross government ministerial meeting

35. T1D

36. T1D

37. These are very difficult questions when we take them to their conclusion. Any realistic system, however large, has to start with the goal of harm-elimination but inevitably, is only sustainable at the level of harm-reduction. T1D

T1D

38. T2D

39. T2D

40. T1D

- T1D

Submitted for your consideration, and with appreciation for the opportunity to do so.

Matt Jukes QPM, ACSO. 26.01.2025