ACT for Local Authorities

Protect & Prepare Group - Example Terms of Reference

ACT ACTION COUNTERS TERRORISM
LOCAL AUTHORITIES

NaCTSO NATIONAL COUNTER TERRORISM SECURITY OFFICE

Introduction

The UK Government's Counter Terrorism Strategy (herein, 'CONTEST') seeks to 'reduce the risk from terrorism to the UK, its citizens and interests overseas, so people can live freely and with confidence'. The CONTEST strategy was most recently updated in 2023, and is composed of four distinct strands:

- **Protect:**
  To strengthen our protection against a terrorist attack
- **Prepare:**
  To mitigate the impact of an attack
- **Prevent:**
  To stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism
- **Pursue:**
  To stop terrorist attacks happening in this country or against UK interests overseas

The Protect strand seeks to reduce physical risks to people, to reduce the vulnerability of public venues, transport, and critical infrastructure, and to reduce terrorist access and use of materials.

Given the significant number of high-profile venues and public spaces in the local authority area, questions about counter terrorism measures frequently emerge across a variety of teams within the Council. However, at present, there is no established board or assurance process to provide authoritative assistance with these questions and challenges. It is this problem that the Protect & Prepare Group seeks to address.

Mission Statement

The aim of the Protect & Prepare Group is to support the Protect and Prepare strands of the UK Government's Counter Terrorism Strategy (CONTEST) within the local authority area.

To achieve this, the Protect & Prepare Group will:

1. Bring together representatives of relevant local authority departments, external stakeholders, and Protect & Prepare subject matter experts to facilitate the sharing of updates, advice, and guidance relating to protective security and preparedness.

2. To identify and utilise opportunities to embed protective security and preparedness through the local authority's legislative and regulatory responsibilities.

3. To engage with local venues, landowners, and other relevant stakeholders regarding protective security and preparedness.

4. To engage with sector representative groups and forums at a local level regarding protective security and preparedness.

5. To engage with local communities regarding protective security and preparedness.

Roles & Responsibilities

The Protect and Prepare Group's roles and responsibilities may include:

- Ensuring that the local authority and its partners understand and comply with relevant legislation including the Civil Contingencies Act (2004), the Counter Terrorism and Security Act (2015), and the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act (2025).
- Disseminating information and raise awareness of training and development opportunities.
- Developing, delivering & reviewing a dynamic action plan designed to mitigate risk and increase protective security measures within the place associated with a potential terrorist attack, through identification, assessment, prioritisation, mitigation and management of threats, risks and vulnerabilities to public spaces, assets, and community infrastructure within their geographical area.
- Supporting local businesses, organisations, and communities on protective security matters in accordance with current threats, national guidance, and best practice to mitigate risk.
- Coordinating and promoting a security culture within the Council to ensure protective security arrangements are considered at the earliest opportunity.
- Holding partners to account for the delivery of agreed outcomes.
- Organising and distributing clear public safety messaging to key stakeholders including the community relating to the threat of terrorism.
- Creating and managing an audit trail of key decisions made in relation to counter terrorism response and delivery in the Council's geographical area.
- Setting out the responsibility of all partners to draw upon the advice of their own legal services, whenever necessary.

Membership

The group will be chaired by a senior member of the local authority. A Deputy Chair from an appropriate partner organisation will be identified. The Chair and Deputy Chair are expected to compel attendance from those within their organisation and will act as a ‘critical friend’ to ensure accountability between organisations.

All members must nominate a deputy who will be expected to provide continuity and resilience in the absence of a primary member.

Members will be required from the following local authority departments:

1. Community Safety
2. Emergency Planning
3. Licensing
4. Planning & Development
5. Transport & Highways

If the council officers responsible for the following work streams are not covered by the above five local authority functions, then please also consider inviting those responsible for managing:

6. The local authority CCTV control room
7. Events Officer/Safety Advisory Group (SAG) coordinators
8. The local authority facilities/building management

External membership should be considered from the following:

9. Counter Terrorism Security Advisors (CTSAs)
10. Counter Terrorism Prepare Officers (CTPOs)
11. Designing Out Crime Officers (DOCOs, or local equivalents)
12. CT Security Coordinators (CT SecCos)
13. Neighbourhood Policing Teams
14. Fire & Rescue Service
15. Ambulance Service
16. Representatives of Business Improvement Districts, Chambers of Commerce, or other business engagement forums which sit within the local authority area
17. Representatives of local venues with whom the local authority would be expected to engage regarding protective security and preparedness

Membership Etiquette

- No content of the Protect & Prepare Group, including minutes and agenda items, should be circulated beyond the Group, unless prior approval is granted by the Chair.

- No information about the Protect & Prepare Group should be shared online, including on social media (e.g. LinkedIn). Any media communications regarding the Group must be approved by the Chair.

- Members must inform the Secretary of any foreseen absence and suggest a deputy, in advance of the meeting. Any deputies must be advised of this etiquette list.

Information Security Arrangements

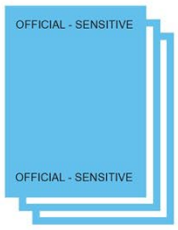
Information disclosed by any party must be kept secure by the partner to whom it has been provided. Each party must be satisfied that adequate arrangements are in place and that those parties have sufficient guarantees to protect the confidentiality and security of the information requested prior to a disclosure. The parties undertake that information will only be used for the purpose for which it was requested or disclosed, will be securely stored and will be destroyed when no longer required.

UK Government guidelines indicate OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE markings should be considered when 'Compromise or loss could have particularly damaging consequences for an individual (or group of individuals), an organisation, or for HMG more generally'. Therefore, in addition to following the Council's existing information-sharing and data protection policies, the groups' information security arrangements will follow guidance set out by central government regarding the management of OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE information.

Steps that the Protect and Prepare Group will take to safeguard this information includes:

- Marking all sensitive documents and emails in ways that make it clearly visible to recipients that the information is official-sensitive. Examples of how this could be done are provided in central government guidance below:

The top and bottom of documents



The subject line or body of emails

The front of folders or binders

- The Chair should remind group members of the importance of information security arrangements at the beginning of every full meeting of the group.

- Documents, such as minutes of meetings, will be circulated to all group members via the dedicated distribution list. Due to their sensitive content, these documents will not be distributed by members to individuals who are not members of this group without express permission from the Chair.

- Minutes will not form part of public records.
- As an additional layer of security, documents that contain highly sensitive content will be password-protected.
- Any concerns should be discussed with the Council's Head of Information Governance (or equivalent)

Meeting Schedule

Meetings will be held on a quarterly basis and should be organised 12 months in advance to ensure availability of the group's members. Attendance is compulsory and, in the event, a primary member is unable to attend they will be expected to send an appropriate deputy.

Suggested Agenda

An agenda will be circulated no less than 7 days ahead of meetings. Standing items will include:

1. Reminder of security processes and membership etiquette
2. Minutes of previous meeting and review of Action Plan (Chair)
3. Threat update (CTSA)
4. Further to be added as identified by the Protect & Prepare Group

Minutes and Actions will be circulated no more than 14 days after the meeting.