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TO: CCG Accountable Officers

CC: CCG Executive Nurse

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22nd August 2016

Dear [CCG Accountable Officer],

Mental Health representation on Channel Panels

The recent terrorist attacks in Europe are a reminder of the continued threat that we face from terrorism and the important role that individuals and organisations play in helping to keep the country safe.

The Government's Prevent strategy aims to reduce the threat to the UK from terrorism by stopping people becoming radicalised or supporting terrorism. The Counter Terrorism and Security Act, which came into force in March 2015, includes a duty which places a general requirement on specified authorities to 'have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism'. This applies to NHS Trusts and NHS Foundation Trusts.

The purpose of this letter is to seek CCG support for the Government's Prevent programme by ensuring that your NHS mental health providers fully engage with the Channel process and are represented on Channel panels.

Channel Panels - Legal requirement for health representation

Channel is a programme which focuses on providing support at an early stage to people who are identified as being vulnerable to being radicalised. Channel Panels are multi-agency groups chaired by the Local Authority and made up of members from relevant local organisations, such as the police, NHS and children and adult social care services. Channel Panels consider referrals of individuals that have been identified as at risk of being radicalised and, where appropriate, the agencies on the Panel will work together to mitigate those risks by providing bespoke support. Contribution to the Channel process is part of the broader safeguarding responsibilities for health organisations.

NHS Trusts and NHS Foundation Trusts are required under the Act to cooperate with the Channel panel in carrying out their functions and to agree to sit on the Panel as a member if requested to do so. Vulnerable individuals referred to Channel panels for assessment often have complex needs, which can include mental health aspects, and assistance on the panel by the NHS is critical for understanding the mental health needs alongside the available provision of NHS services.

A national review into the NHS contribution to Channel Panels has found significant variation in NHS membership. The survey found that whilst some Channel Panels have good health representation, mainly from CCGs and mental health services, others do not have consistent NHS participation on the core Panel. As a result, the Channel panels that are lacking appropriate NHS representation are not in a position to assess the health needs of the individuals referred, which may result in these individuals vulnerable to radicalisation not receiving the most appropriate NHS support.

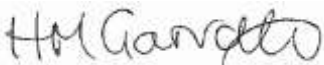
Support in ensuring mental health representation

It is essential that the NHS is appropriately represented on Panels. The evidence from Channel Panels indicates a number of referrals are for people with mental health concerns. In view of this it is recommended that the health representative be a core member of the Panel and is a senior mental health professional who has an understanding of the nature of mental illness and what services are available within the local system, and who would be able to liaise with other health partners to ensure delivery of the health element of the support plan decided at the Panel.

We are grateful for the support that CCGs and health professionals from other organisations have so far provided to the Channel process. **We would value your help in ensuring that your NHS mental health providers fully engage with the Channel process and that this engagement is monitored via normal contract monitoring arrangements e.g. yearly safeguarding audits.**

Throughout August the Home Office are conducting, via Local Authorities, a further survey of Channel Panel chairs to gather additional information on mental health representation. In addition, Regional Prevent Coordinators in NHS England will be contacting CCGs that sit within Home Office priority areas to check that this letter is being actioned and to seek assurance that health representation on Channel panels has improved. Contact your Prevent lead if you wish to check the level of NHS representation on your local Channel Panels.

Yours sincerely



Hilary Garratt
Deputy Chief Nursing Officer
England