

Safeguarding Children and Young People Vulnerable to Radicalisation and Extremism

Practice Guidance

1 Introduction

The current threat from terrorism in the United Kingdom can involve the exploitation of vulnerable people, including children, young people and vulnerable adults to involve them in terrorism or activity in support of terrorism.

It is universally agreed that this exploitation should be viewed as a safeguarding concern.

This guidance is intended to provide a clear framework for all professionals working with children for whom there are concerns that they are at risk of becoming involved in violent extremist activity.

It includes a link between safeguarding procedures and the Channel programme, and provides a mechanism for supporting those who may be vulnerable to violent extremism by assessing the nature and the extent of the potential risk and, where necessary, providing an appropriate support package.

2 Definitions

Violent extremism is defined by the Crown Prosecution Service as:

"The demonstration of unacceptable behaviour by using any means or medium to express views, which:

- *Encourage, justify or glorify terrorist violence in furtherance of particular beliefs;*
- *Seek to provoke others to terrorist acts;*
- *Encourage other serious criminal activity or seek to provoke others to serious criminal acts;*
- *Foster hatred which might lead to inter-community violence in the UK."*

The Government has defined extremism in the *Prevent* strategy as:

“...vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also include in our definition of extremism calls for the death of members of our armed forces.”

There are a number of offences that can be considered when dealing with violent extremism. They include offences arising through spoken words, creation of tapes and videos of speeches, internet entries, chanting, banners and written notes and publications.

It is recognised that the current Government position that Violent Extremism inspired by an Al Qaeda ideology, which advocates a distorted version of Islam, is considered to be the greater threat to the UK by the security services. However, it is recognised that children and young people need protection against the messages of all violent extremism including that linked to a Far Right / Neo Nazi / White Supremacist ideology, Irish Nationalist and Loyalist paramilitary groups, and that linked to Animal Rights movements.

Channel

Channel is a key element of the *Prevent* strategy

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(<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/counter-terrorism/prevent/prevent-strategy/>). It is a multi-agency approach to protect people at risk from radicalisations.

Channel uses existing collaboration between Local Authorities, statutory partners (such as the Education and Health sectors, Social Care services, Children’s Youth services and Offender Management services), the Police and the Local Community to:

- Identify individuals at risk of being drawn into terrorism;
- Assess the nature and extent of that risk; and
- Develop the most appropriate support plan for the individuals concerned.

Channel is about safeguarding children and adults from being drawn into committing terrorist-related activity. It is about early intervention to protect and divert people away from the risk they face before illegality occurs.

Referral

Most children and young people do not become involved in violent extremism. Numerous factors can contribute to and influence the range of behaviours that are defined as radicalisation and extremism. Therefore, in many cases interventions identified through the safeguarding process and Channel process may not appear to be specific under the threat of radicalisation / extremism. For example, they might relate to other needs of the individual

such as in respect of mental health support, housing, relationships, offending behaviour or drug and alcohol issues. There may, however, sometimes be a need for specialist interventions in relation to de-radicalisation and disengagement and the appropriate referrals should be made at this time, either by safeguarding services to Channel, from Channel to safeguarding services or both / either to other specialists services. It is anticipated that any case going through the Channel process will give due consideration to safeguarding children and young people and the appropriate referral made.

CAF

The Common Assessment Framework remains the primary vehicle for assessing vulnerable children and young people, including those who may be vulnerable to violent extremist messages.

Prevent Single Point of Contact

Each agency has been asked to identify a *Prevent* Single Point of Contact (SPOC) who is the lead within the organisation for safeguarding in relation to protecting individuals from radicalisation and involvement in terrorism. Good practice indicates that the SPOC should be notified at the point of referral.

Assessment

Where a referral is made to Children's Social Care, given the complexity of this issue and the need to access materials that may only be available within Channel, cases will be subject to an initial Vulnerability Assessment as identifying vulnerabilities is necessary for effective intervention and the understanding of individual risk management. Good practice and effective multi-agency working implies that the Channel assessment should be combined with a Social Work assessment, using this practice guidance.

The following assessment considerations are a combination of the Channel vulnerability assessment and social work assessment areas specific to safeguarding children vulnerable to extremism and radicalisation. **The list is not exhaustive and all or none may be present in individual cases of concern. Nor does it mean that vulnerable people experiencing these factors are automatically at risk of exploitation for the purposes of violent extremism.**

Identification

There is no such thing as a 'typical extremist' and those involved in extremism come from a range of backgrounds and experiences. Numerous factors can contribute to and influence the range of behaviours that are defined as violent extremism. It is important to consider

these factors in order to develop an understanding of the issue. It is also necessary to understand those factors that build resilience and protect individuals from engaging in violent extremist activity. It is necessary to remember that violent behaviour operates on many levels in the absence of protective factors and that individuals largely act within the context of their environment and experiences.

Research shows that indicators of vulnerability can include:

- Identity Crisis - Distance from cultural / religious heritage and uncomfortable with their place in the society around them;
- Personal Crisis - Family tensions; sense of isolation; adolescence; low self-esteem; disassociating from existing friendship group and becoming involved with a new and different group of friends; searching for answers to questions about identity, faith and belonging;
- Personal Circumstances - Migration; local community tensions; events affecting country or region of origin; alienation from UK values; having a sense of grievance that is triggered by personal experience of racism or discrimination or aspects of Government policy;
- Unmet Aspirations - Perceptions of injustice; feeling of failure; rejection of civic life;
- Criminality - Experiences of imprisonment; poor resettlement/reintegration; previous involvement with criminal groups.

The following areas should be considered when identifying and individuals access to extremism:

- Is there reason to believe that the subject has been or is likely to be involved with extremist / military training camps / locations?
- Is the subject known to have possessed or is actively seeking to possess and / or distribute extremist literature / other media material likely to incite racial /religious hatred or acts of violence?
- Does the subject sympathise with or support proscribed groups, e.g. propaganda distribution, fundraising and attendance at meetings?
- Does the subject support groups with links to extremist activity but not proscribed, e.g. propaganda distribution, fundraising and attendance at meetings?
- Have international events in areas of conflict and civil unrest had a personal impact on the subject resulting in a noticeable change in behaviour?
- Has there been a significant shift in the subject's behaviour or outward appearance that suggests a new social / political or religious influence?

The following social factors should also be taken into consideration when identifying vulnerabilities in those involved in extremism:

- Does the subject have experience of poverty, disadvantage, discrimination or social exclusion?
- Does the subject suffer a lack of meaningful employment appropriate to their skills?
- Does the subject display a lack of affinity or understanding for others, or social isolation from peer groups?
- Does the subject demonstrate identity conflict and confusion normally associated with youth development?
- Does the subject have any learning difficulties/ mental health support needs?
- Does the subject demonstrate a simplistic or erroneous understanding of religion or politics?
- Does the subject have a history of crime, including episodes in prison?
- Is the subject a foreign national, refugee or awaiting a decision on their immigration/national status?
- Does the subject have insecure, conflicted or absent family relationships?
- Has the subject experienced any trauma in their lives, particularly any trauma associated with war or sectarian conflict?

More critical risk factors could include:

- Being in contact with extremist recruiters;
- Articulating support for violent extremist causes or leaders;
- Accessing violent extremist websites, especially those with a social networking element;
- Possessing or accessing violent extremist literature;
- Using extremist narratives and a global ideology to explain personal disadvantage;
- Justifying the use of violence to solve societal issues;
- Joining or seeking to join extremist organisations;
- Significant changes to appearance and/or behaviour;
- Has the subject travelled for extended periods of time to international locations known to be associated with extremism?
- Is there a pattern of regular or extended travel within the UK, with other evidence to suggest this is for purposes of extremist training or activity?
- Has the subject employed any methods to disguise their true identity? Has the subject used documents or cover to support this?

Engagement with a group, cause of ideology

Engagement factors are sometimes referred to as “psychological hooks”. They include needs, susceptibilities, motivations and contextual influences and together map the individual pathway into terrorism. They can include:

- Feelings of grievance and injustice;
- Feeling under threat;
- A need for identity, meaning and belonging;
- A desire for status;
- A desire for excitement and adventure;
- A need to dominate and control others;
- Susceptibility to indoctrination;
- A desire for political or moral change;
- Opportunistic involvement;
- Family or friends involvement in extremism;
- Encountering peer, social, family or faith group rejection;
- Being at a transitional time of life;
- Being influenced or controlled by a group;
- Relevant mental health issues

Intent to cause harm

Not all those who become engaged by a group, cause or ideology go on to develop an intention to cause harm, so this dimension is considered separately. Intent factors describe the mind-set that is associated with a readiness to use violence and address what the individual would do and to what end. They can include:

- Over-identification with a group or ideology;
- 'Them and Us' thinking;
- Dehumanisation of 'the enemy';
- Attitudes that justify offending;
- Harmful means to an end;
- Harmful objectives.

Capability to cause harm

Not all those who have a wish to cause harm on behalf of a group, cause or ideology are capable of doing so, and plots to cause widespread damage take a high level of personal capability, resources and networking to be successful. What the individual is capable of is therefore a key consideration when assessing risk of harm to the public. Factors can include:

- Individual knowledge, skills and competencies;
- Access to networks, funding or equipment

Further Reading

Prevent Duty Guidance: A Consultation:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/388934/45584_Prevent_duty_guidance-a_consultation_Web_Accessible.pdf

Prevent Strategy:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf

Channel: Vulnerability Assessment Framework:

<http://www.acpo.police.uk/documents/TAM/2012/201210TAMChannelVulnerability-Assessment-Fra.pdf>

CONTEST: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97995/strategy-contest.pdf

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