



Leeds
Safeguarding
Children Board

Safeguarding Children and Young People from the Threat of Violent Extremism

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1. Introduction

The UK faces a very real and ongoing threat from violent extremism. A small minority of individuals and groups continue to present false arguments and reasoning that seek to justify attacks on innocent civilians and the Government is taking tough measures to prevent extremist voices and messages reaching those who are most vulnerable to these radical views.

The current threat from terrorism in the United Kingdom can involve the exploitation of vulnerable people, including children, young people and vulnerable adults in terrorism or activity in support of terrorism. This exploitation should be viewed as a safeguarding concern.

There is no obvious profile of a person likely to become involved in extremism or a single indicator of when a person might move to adopt violence in support of extremist ideas. The process of radicalisation is different for every individual and can take place over an extended period or within a very short time frame.

There are a range of extremist groups and narratives that promote the use of violence, which affect individuals and communities right across the country. These include the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS); Al Qaida influenced groups, extreme Right Wing, and Left Wing groups. There are also other groups that promote the use of violence to achieve their aims. We need to address the underlying issues that can attract children and young people to all of these causes.

Global events and conflicts are also playing an ever increasing role within local communities. These can sometimes lead to community tensions, fuel suspicion, and create divisions between people from different cultures and backgrounds. Early intervention to prevent individuals being drawn into extremist activity is crucial in order to safeguard them from the risks of being involved in such activity.

2. National Policy and Strategies

In response to this considerable challenge, the Government has developed a counter-terrorism strategy, known as CONTEST. The aim of CONTEST (an abbreviation of **COUNTER TERRORIST STRATEGY**) is to reduce the risk to the UK and its interests overseas from international terrorism to that people can go about their lives freely and with confidence. The current threat from International Terrorism to the UK is 'severe' which means an attack is highly likely.

The CONTEST strategy has 4 key strands of work that have a different role to play in tackling the threat from extremism:

- **Pursue** – to stop terrorist attacks;
- **Prepare** – where an attack cannot be stopped, to mitigate its impact
- **Protect** – to strengthen the overall protection against terrorist attacks;
- **Prevent** – to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.

Further information about the CONTEST strategy can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/counter-terrorism-strategy-contest>

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 specifies that Local Safeguarding Children Boards, local authorities and their partners should be commissioning and providing services for children who are likely to suffer, or may have suffered significant harm, due to radicalisation and extremism. (Chapter 1, Section 17).

From 1 July 2015 all schools and child care providers must have regard to the statutory guidance issued under section 29 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015. Paragraphs 57-76 of the guidance are concerned specifically with schools and childcare providers, registered early years childcare providers and registered later years childcare providers are subject to a duty under section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, in the exercise of their functions, to have “due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism”.

This duty is known as the **Prevent duty**. It applies to a wide range of public-facing bodies which are listed in schedule 6 of the Act as specified authorities in England and Wales, and Scotland. The specified authorities are those judged to have a role in protecting vulnerable children, young people and adults and/or the national security.

3.0 Prevent

The Prevent agenda is regarded as the most challenging strand of the CONTEST strategy as all the work undertaken within this area of work sits within the non-criminal space i.e. before any criminal activity has taken place. It is crucial to recognise that our work in Leeds to protect vulnerable individuals from violent extremism and the threat of radicalisation falls within the safeguarding arena and is no different to safeguarding individuals from a range of other forms harm and abuse.

The Prevent strategy has 3 key objectives (also known as the 3 i's). These are:

- **Ideology** – Challenging the ideology that supports terrorism and those who promote it;
- **Individuals** – Protect vulnerable people from being drawn into terrorism and ensure they are given appropriate advice and support; and
- **Institutions** – Supporting sectors and institutions where there are risks of radicalisation.

The first objective is challenging the **ideology** that supports terrorism and those who promote it. This includes:

- being proactive in promoting values such as: democracy, the rule of law, equality of opportunity, freedom of speech, and the universal right to freedom from persecution;
- the need to focus on the few people who are most susceptible to terrorist propaganda. It should not be assumed people of any one particular faith are any more vulnerable to radicalisation than other faith or ethnic groups;
- the need to involve credible voices, local communities and organisations in challenging extremist narratives and ideologies that seek to divide communities.

The second objective is concerned with protecting vulnerable **individuals**. Local safeguarding procedures are a central part of this. Some key points to note are:

- radicalisation is a process and not an event, and it is possible to intervene in this to prevent vulnerable people being radicalised;
- there is a need to ensure that activities are proportionate, and focused upon people at risk;
- activity needs to address all forms of extremism. The **Channel** programme aims to support people who are at risk of being drawn into extremist activity. This involves several agencies working together to give individuals access to services such as health and education, specialist mentoring and diversionary activities - more information on Channel can be found in section 4 of this policy.

The third objective is supporting sectors and **institutions** where there are risks of radicalisation. The strategy highlights that:

- a wide range of sectors can provide routes through which people are radicalised to become terrorists or support terrorism. Priority areas for intervention include: education, faith, health, criminal justice, charities and the internet (which is identified as a key risk which cuts across all sectors);
- Prevent work in schools is key, but needs to be proportionate. Priorities are: to ensure that all school staff know what to do if they see signs of radicalisation; reducing risks of exposure to extremist views in out of school hours provision; and collaboration between agencies to identify children at risk of radicalisation and protect them from harm;
- in universities and colleges, freedom of speech and academic freedom, are key principles, but they also have a legal and moral duty of care for staff and students;
- people with mental health issues or learning disabilities may be vulnerable to radicalisation, and it is important that all staff working in health and social care are aware of possible signs of radicalisation and how to refer people for further support; and;
- work with young offenders and people vulnerable to offending has a particularly critical role in ensuring the future success of Prevent.

Further information on the Prevent strategy can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-strategy-2011>

4.0 Definitions and vulnerability factors

The Prevent Strategy defines extremism as follows:

*“**Extremism** is 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, whether in this country or overseas.”*

The Prevent Strategy defines radicalisation as follows:

*“**Radicalisation** refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism leading to terrorism.”*

Radicalisation is usually a process not an event. During this process, there will inevitably be opportunities to intervene in order to reduce the risk of the individual being attracted to

extremist ideology and causes and safeguard him/her from the risk of radicalisation. It is important to be able to recognise the factors that might contribute towards the radicalisation of an individual. Indeed, some of the factors that lead an individual to becoming radicalised are no different to those that might lead individuals towards involvement with other activity such as gangs, drugs, sexual exploitation, etc.

Those involved in extremist activity come from a range of backgrounds and experiences. There is no single profile of what an extremist looks like or a 10 point plan of what might drive an individual towards becoming radicalised. Therefore, the importance of staff using their skill, expertise, and professional judgement is crucial in not stigmatising individuals that may display some of these factors.

5.0 Vulnerability factors

Below are some of the factors that might contribute towards an individual becoming radicalised. This is not an exhaustive list and the presence of any of these factors does not necessarily mean that he/she will be involved in extremist activity. However, a combination of many of these factors may increase the vulnerability to extremist activity.

- 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
- Being at a transitional time of life
- Being influenced or controlled by a group
- Relevant mental health issues
- 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

A further explanation of the above factors can be found [here](#).

Where there are signs of significant harm to a child or young person in relation to violent extremism, such as the potential of travel to a conflict zone, access to known extremists, extremist networks and funding and equipment, and intent to cause harm to self and others then a referral should be made to the duty and advice team on 0113 376 0336.

6.0 Local support and protocols

As with other safeguarding issues, where a worker has any concerns that a person or their family may be at risk of radicalisation or involvement in terrorism, they should speak with the organisation's safeguarding lead and the Prevent SPOC if this is not the same person. If the concerns about an individual are not serious enough to be escalated or where there is no evidence that the individual is vulnerable to radicalisation the safeguarding lead / Prevent SPOC may decide that they can be addressed by action within the organisation. In this case, the organisation should take the appropriate action to address any concerns, and review whether the concerns remain after this.

However, where it is deemed that there is a risk to an individual in the context of radicalisation to extremist ideology and causes, the individual should be referred to the **Channel** programme.

Channel Programme

Channel is a key element of the Prevent strategy. It is a multi-agency approach to protect people at risk from radicalisation. Channel uses existing collaboration between local authorities, statutory partners (such as the education and health sectors, social services, children's and 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 young people from being drawn into extremist activity leading to violence against others. It is about early intervention to protect and divert people away from the risk they face before they are involved in any type of illegal activity.

The Channel process identifies those most at risk of radicalisation, and refers them via the local authority or police for assessment by a multi-agency panel. The panel, chaired by the local authority, considers how best to safeguard them and support their vulnerability through a support package tailored to individual needs. This is similar to the way in which individuals at risk from involvement in crime, drugs and other social issues are supported.

Partnership involvement ensures that those at risk have access to a wide range of support ranging from mainstream services, such as health and education, through to specialist mentoring or faith guidance and wider diversionary activities. Each support package is monitored closely and reviewed regularly by the multi-agency panel.

Further information about the Channel programme can be found here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118194/channel-guidance.pdf

The link to an e-learning module below provides further information on the Channel process and its purpose and will assist in identifying factors that might make children and young people vulnerable to radicalisation. The module takes 25 minutes to complete and describes

your responsibilities and role in relation to the Channel process. A certificate of achievement can be printed once the module has been completed.

http://course.ncalt.com/Channel_General_Awareness/01/index.html

Referrals

Referrals to the Channel process are coordinated by the police but come from a wide range of sources, including members of the public, social services, youth offending teams and health and education practitioners. If you work for a partner organisation and want to know more about Channel or have a concern about an individual and want to make a referral, contact your organisation's safeguarding lead or Prevent SPOC. Where your organisation requires further support or guidance, you can contact the local authority's Prevent Coordinator, Nadeem Siddique, on 07891 275424 or at nadeem.siddique@leeds.gov.uk.

When a referral is received, a risk assessment of the individual being referred will be undertaken. If there is evidence of potential vulnerability to radicalisation then a multi-agency panel will meet to consider the risks identified and develop a programme of support and intervention to mitigate those risks. Consent is required from the individual being referred to share their information with the panel. Members of the panel are from a range of statutory partners such as Children's Social Work Services, Education & Early Years Child Protection Team, Safer Leeds, the NHS, youth offending service, and others as appropriate.

The plan will be shared with the child and family. All partners are responsible for contributing to progressing the plan and this is reviewed by the panel on a regular basis. The plan can be amended to meet any need, identified through a review of the assessment, until such time when the panel agrees to end the plan. At this time, the referral's notes and plan are prepared for final sign off by the Chair of the panel as well as the Chief Officer of Safer Leeds.

Wherever possible the response should be appropriately and proportionately provided from within the normal range of universal provision of the organisation working with other local agencies and partners. Responses could include curriculum provision, additional tutoring or mentoring, additional activities within and out of school and family support.

Where a Child in Need plan or Child Protection plan is already in place for the child or young person, the Channel Coordinator will link into these processes to ensure there is no duplication of activity and that Prevent concerns are also considered and addressed within those existing plans.

The flowchart below outlines the process to be undertaken when making a referral.

7.0 Concerns about adults and professionals

Prevent works with people of all ages and all backgrounds. If you have concerns about an adult or professional in relation to radicalisation, please refer to existing procedures such as the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) procedure or the Adults Safeguarding Board.

8.0 Further information

If you are interested in finding out more about Prevent and to discuss any training needs for your organisation please contact Nadeem Siddique, Prevent Coordinator, Leeds City Council at nadeem.siddique@leeds.gov.uk.

Summary of procedures to follow where there are potential radicalisation concerns about a child/member of staff

