

Safeguarding Children from Radicalisation and Extremism

SCOPE OF THIS CHAPTER

The guidance provides advice on how the Home should manage and respond to concerns when children and young people are identified as being vulnerable to non-violent and violent extremism and/or affected by the radicalisation of others. It should be read in conjunction with the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Children Procedures.

RELEVANT REGULATIONS

[The Protection of Children Standard](#)

AMENDMENT

This chapter was significantly updated in January 2025.

[January 3, 2025](#)

[1. Introduction / Definitions](#)

Radicalisation is defined as the process of a person subscribing to extremist ideology, by which people come to support terrorism or use terrorist violence. The majority of people who commit terrorism offences do so of their own agency and dedication to an ideological cause. Radicalisation is a personal and individual process, which will look different from person to person. When talking about the 'risk of radicalisation', it is therefore challenging to describe exactly what it looks like. Various signs or indicators may signal a person is at risk of being radicalised into terrorism. See also [Section 2, Understanding and Recognising Risks and Susceptibility to Radicalisation and Extremism](#).

Terrorism: the [Terrorism Act 2006](#) defines 'terrorism' as an action or threat designed to influence the government or intimidate the public. Its purpose is to advance a political, religious or ideological cause.

In summary, terrorism is an action that:

- Endangers or causes serious violence to a person or people;
- Causes serious damage to property, or seriously interferes with or disrupts an electronic system;
- Is designed to influence the government or to intimidate the public.

Extremism is the vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. The government definition of extremism also includes the call for the death of members of the armed forces, whether in the UK or overseas. Settings should not only be alert to violent extremism but also non-violent extremism, including certain divisive or intolerant narratives which can reasonably be linked to terrorism. Some individuals may appear to be at risk or susceptible to radicalisation into terrorism without showing a clear

ideology. Individuals increasingly adopt a mix of ideas from different ideologies into their grievance narratives.

This could include individuals who:

- Show an interest in multiple extremist ideologies at the same time;
- Switch from one ideology to another over time;
- Target a 'perceived other' of some kind (perhaps based on gender or another protected characteristic), but do not otherwise identify with one particular terrorist ideology or cause - for example, involuntary celibates (incels) who direct their anger mainly at women;
- Are obsessed with massacre, or extreme or mass violence, without specifically targeting a particular group - for example, high school shootings;
- Show an interest in conspiracy theories which can act as gateway to radicalised thinking, common themes include:
 - Religious or ethnic superiority;
 - Antisemitism;
 - Misogyny;
 - Anti-establishment and anti-LGBT grievances.
- May be susceptible to being drawn into terrorism out of a sense of duty, or a desire for belonging, rather than out of any strongly held beliefs.

Prevent is a strand of the UK Government's Counter-Terrorist Strategy known as 'CONTEST' and the purpose of Prevent is to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. All schools and childcare providers in England and Wales must have regard for the Prevent duty statutory guidance issued under section 29 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (CTSA) 2015.

Staff who engage with the public should understand what radicalisation means and why people may be susceptible to extremist ideologies used to encourage people into participating in or supporting terrorism. They should be aware of the terms 'radicalisation', 'terrorism' and 'extremism'.

Staff should know what measures are available to prevent radicalisation into terrorism and how to recognise the extremist ideologies that drive people to become terrorists or support terrorism. Staff should have awareness of the signs of radicalisation and should understand how to escalate and refer concerns to Prevent. In some cases, this may mean contacting their Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or equivalent, who would then be able to assist with referring onwards to Prevent, either by contacting the police or local authority. See [Section 3, Referral and Intervention Processes](#).

For more information, read 'How Children, Young People and Adult Learners Become Susceptible to Radicalisation' in '[Understanding and Identifying Radicalisation in your Educational Setting](#)'.

All terrorist groups seek to radicalise and recruit people to their cause, including children and young people.

The [Government Prevent Duty Guidance](#) focuses on three key objectives to reduce the likelihood of terrorist incidents.

These are:

1. Tackle the ideological causes of terrorism;
2. Intervene early to support people susceptible to radicalisation;
3. Enable individuals who have already engaged in terrorism to disengage and rehabilitate.

Early intervention work is at the heart of Prevent and aims to protect and divert people away from being drawn into terrorist activity. The **Channel programme** is also a key element of Prevent. It is a multi-agency approach to protect people at risk from radicalisation and uses existing collaboration between local authorities and statutory agencies as well as the police and local community. Once accepted, the Channel panel agree a tailored package of support to be offered to the person.

2. Understanding and Recognising Risks and Susceptibility to Extremism and Radicalisation

Since the publication of the Prevent Strategy, there has been an increased awareness of the specific need to safeguard children and young people from radicalisation and extremist ideology. Keeping children safe from these risks is a safeguarding matter and should, in the first instance, be approached in the same way as any other safeguarding concern.

Children and young people can be drawn into violence or they can be exposed to the messages of extremist groups by many means. These can include through the influence of family members or friends and/or direct contact with extremist groups and organisations or through online content in particular via social media that can normalise radical views or promote violent extremism.

The Government Channel Guidance assesses vulnerability using a framework to guide decisions about whether someone needs support to address their risks of supporting terrorism or committing terrorist acts as a consequence of radicalisation and the kind of support that they need. It is built around three dimensions

- Engagement with a group, cause or ideology;
- Intent to cause harm; and
- Capability to cause harm.

Radicalisation is a process rather than an event. There is no single profile or pathway by which a person can be drawn into violence or exposed to extremist messages. It can take place over a long period, or it can be very quick.

Individuals who are vulnerable to grooming for sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation or county lines, may also be vulnerable to radicalisation. Factors could include things like being a victim or witness of crime, abuse or bullying, or having personal or emotional difficulties.

Adverse childhood experiences, combined with specific influences from family and peers or online connections, may make someone more susceptible to radicalisation.

Extremist influences could include, but are not limited to:

- Family members having direct contact or involvement with extremist or terrorist groups;
- Staff members of an education or community setting promoting an extremist ideology;
- Peers promoting an extremist ideology or sharing extremist material;
- Access or exposure to online extremist material via social media or the internet - for example, propaganda including pictures, videos, blogs and fake news;
- Exposure to extremist, terrorist or other violent activity in overseas settings;
- Access or exposure to extremist leaflets, magazines or stickering;
- Exposure to extremist groups hosting marches, protests or stalls.

Potential indicators of the risk of radicalisation include:

- General changes of mood, patterns of behaviour, secrecy;
- Changes of friends and mode of dress;
- Use of inappropriate language;
- Spending an increased amount of time online;
- Possession of violent extremist literature;
- The expression of extremist views;
- Planning to take long term holidays and visits out of the UK;
- Advocating violent actions and means;
- Association with known extremists;
- Seeking to recruit others to an extremist ideology.

The above list is not exhaustive and there may be other indicators that the child or young person is at risk of violent extremism and radicalisation. In all cases, professionals should ensure that judgements consider individual circumstances and place the behaviour of an individual in their whole family and social context.

There a clear difference between espousing radical and extreme views and acting on them. Holding radical or extreme views is not illegal, what is illegal is the act of committing an offence or inciting others to do so in the name of that belief or view.

A common feature of radicalisation is that the individual often does not recognise the exploitative nature of what is happening and does not see themselves as a victim.

3. Referral and Intervention Processes

If staff have any concerns, for example as a result of observed behaviour, incidents or reports of conversations to suggest the child supports terrorism and/or violent extremism,

they must report these concerns to the registered manager and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) immediately. The social worker for the child must also be informed of the concern as soon as possible. It will be their responsibility to respond to the concerns, and they should exercise their professional judgment about whether a referral should be made to seek support under Prevent and act proportionately as they do for all other safeguarding risks.

If there is a concern about potential radicalisation or a reason to believe that someone is at risk of becoming involved in terrorism or supporting it, a Prevent referral should be made to police, who will assess whether the person is suitable to be considered by a Channel panel for support. Further guidance on making a referral and how to apply the notice, check, share procedure can be found by completing the [GOV.UK Prevent duty training](#).

If someone is at immediate risk of harm due to radicalisation or violent extremism, or if there is information that a terrorist act is being committed or planned, alert the police using 999.

If the threshold for raising a safeguarding concern has been met, a concern should also be raised to the local authority in line with safeguarding children procedures the [Safeguarding Children and Young People and Referring Safeguarding Concerns Procedure](#) should be followed.

Also see: [Get Help for Radicalisation Concerns – Guidance](#).

[4. Online Safety](#)

Social media can be used to promote extremist ideas and radicalise young people. Often social media glorifies violence. Staff should be vigilant and seek advice from a manager if they are concerned about material a young person has accessed online. [Click here to report suspected online terrorist content](#).

Content of concern can also be referred directly to social media platforms – see [UK Safer Internet Centre](#).

[5. Further Information](#)

Legislation, Statutory Guidance and Government Non-Statutory Guidance

[Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 \(the Act\)](#)

[Get Help for Radicalisation Concerns](#)

[Prevent Duty Guidance: for England and Wales](#)

[The Prevent duty: safeguarding learners vulnerable to radicalisation](#)

[Safeguarding Advice for Schools and Childcare Providers – Radicalisation](#)

[Working Together to Safeguard Children](#)

Useful Websites

[Act Early for Signs of Radicalisation - What to Look For](#) - website offers advice and guidance, including signs of radicalisation to look out for, case studies and information on how to share those concerns

[Educate Against Hate](#) - learning materials and resources for schools and further education providers on how to challenge radical views

[Report Online Material Promoting Terrorism or Extremism](#)

[Prevent duty training](#) – learn how to support people susceptible to radicalisation

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