

SAFEGUARDING INDIVIDUALS AGAINST RADICALISATION OR VIOLENT EXTREMISM: PRACTICE GUIDANCE

INTRODUCTION

The Prevent strategy, published by the Government in 2011, is part of an overall counter-terrorism strategy called CONTEST

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/counter-terrorism-strategy-contest-2018#full-publication-update-history>). It has four strands, which are:

- Pursue: to stop terrorist attacks
- Protect: to strengthen protection against terrorist attacks
- Prepare: where an attack cannot be stopped, to mitigate its impact
- Prevent: to stop people becoming terrorist or supporting terrorism

The aim of the Prevent strategy is to reduce the threat to the UK from terrorism by stopping people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. In addition, the [Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 \(the CT and S Act\) Sections 36 to 41](#) set out the duty on local authorities and partners to establish and cooperate with a local Channel programme of 'Channel panels' to provide support for people, children and adults, vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. It is essential that Channel panel members, partners to local panels and other professionals ensure that children, young people and adults are protected from harm.

[Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 \(P9\)](#) specifies, "Children may be vulnerable to neglect and abuse or exploitation from within their family and from individuals they come across in their day-to-day lives. These threats can take a variety of different forms, including sexual, physical and emotional abuse; neglect; domestic abuse, including controlling or coercive behaviour; exploitation by criminal gangs and organised crime groups; trafficking; online abuse; sexual exploitation and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation.

[Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 Chapter 1 \(P23 – 24\)](#) goes on to say;

Assessment of risk outside the home

As well as threats to the welfare of children from within their families, children may be vulnerable to abuse or exploitation from outside their families. These extra-familial threats might arise at school and other educational establishments, from within peer groups, or more widely from within the wider community and/or online. These threats can take a variety of different forms and children can be vulnerable to multiple threats, including exploitation by criminal gangs and organised crime groups such as county lines; trafficking; online abuse; teenage relationship abuse; sexual exploitation and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation. Extremist groups make use of the internet to radicalise and recruit and to promote extremist materials. Any potential harmful effects to individuals identified as

vulnerable to extremist ideologies or being drawn into terrorism should also be considered.

Assessments of children in such cases should consider whether wider environmental factors are present in a child's life and are a threat to their safety and/or welfare. Children who may be alleged perpetrators should also be assessed to understand the impact of contextual issues on their safety and welfare. Interventions should focus on addressing these wider environmental factors, which are likely to be a threat to the safety and welfare of a number of different children who may or may not be known to local authority children's social care.

Assessments of children in such cases should consider the individual needs and vulnerabilities of each child. They should look at the parental capacity to support the child, including helping the parents and carers to understand any risks and support them to keep children safe and assess potential risk to the child.

[Channel panels](#), established under the [Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015](#), assess the extent to which identified individuals are vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism, and, where appropriate, arrange for support to be provided. When assessing Channel referrals, local authorities and their partners should consider how best to align these with assessments undertaken under the Children Act 1989.

The Children Act 1989 promotes the view that all children and their parents should be considered as individuals and that family structures, culture, religion, ethnic origins and other characteristics should be respected. Local authorities should ensure they support and promote fundamental British values, of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

The [Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015](#) contains a duty on specified authorities in England, Wales and Scotland to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

Channel is about ensuring that vulnerable children and adults of any faith, ethnicity or background receive support before their vulnerabilities are exploited by those that would want them to embrace terrorism, and before they become involved in criminal terrorist related activity.

DEFINITIONS

There are varying definitions of the following, however UK government in statutory guidance ([HM Government Prevent Strategy 2011](#)) states:

- **Radicalisation** is defined as 'a process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism leading to terrorism'. It is recognised the very definition of 'radicalisation' suggests that it is a 'process of change'; this can be a gradual process, or a very quick one.
- **Extremism** is defined as a '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'. It also includes 'calls for death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas'
- **Violent extremism** is seen as an 'endorsement of violence to achieve extreme ends. The percentage of people who are prepared to support violent extremism in this country is very small. It is significantly greater amongst young people.
- **Terrorism** is summarised as an 'action which endangers or causes serious violence to a person/person; causes serious damage to property; or seriously interferes or disrupts an electronic system. The use or threat must be designed to influence the government or to intimidate the public and is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause' (Summarised in [Prevent Strategy, 2011](#). Full definition in [Terrorism Act 2000](#)).
- **Proscribed organisation:** Under the Terrorism Act 2000, the Home Secretary may proscribe (ban in law) an organisation if they believe it is concerned in terrorism, and it is proportionate to do. A list of proscribed organisations can be found [here](#)

It is important to remember that holding extremist views does not mean that a person is being radicalised or that they will engage in terrorist activity.

UNDERSTANDING AND RECOGNISING RISKS AND VULNERABILITIES

Children and young people can be drawn into violence, or they can be exposed to the messages of extremism groups by many means. These can include the influence of family members or friends, and/or direct contact with extremism groups and organisations and increasingly through the internet via social media, gaming and other websites. On-line content in particular may pose a risk in normalising radical views and can promote content that is shocking and extreme, and this could include gaming. Social media and gaming can be used to "groom" those who are vulnerable and can lead to being drawn into groups that adopt extremism views.

This can put a young person at risk of being drawn into criminal activity and has the potential to lead to the child or young person suffering significant harm. Since the publication of the Prevent strategy, there has been an awareness of the specific need to safeguard children, young people, adults and families from violent extremism. This may take the form of a "grooming" process where the vulnerabilities of a person are exploited to form an exclusive friendship that draws the young person away from other influences that might challenge the radical ideology. The risk of radicalisation may develop over time or can occur in a short time span and may relate to a number of factors in the person's life.

Keeping children safe from these risks is a safeguarding matter and should be approached in the same way as safeguarding children from other risks such as risk to sexual exploitation, youth violence and gang activity. Children should be protected from messages of all violent extremism including, but not restricted to, those linked to Islamist ideology, or to Far Right / Neo Nazi / White Supremacist ideology, various paramilitary groups, and extremist Animal Rights movements.

Since the publication of the Prevent Strategy, there has been an awareness of the specific need to safeguard children, young people and families from violent extremism. There have been attempts to radicalise vulnerable children and young people to develop extreme views including views justifying political, religious, sexist or racist violence, or to steer them into a rigid and narrow ideology that is intolerant of diversity and leaves them vulnerable to future radicalisation.

SPOTTING THE SIGNS

There is no one sign or indicator that a person is vulnerable to radicalisation or extremism. However, there are similar factors that make people vulnerable to grooming or exploitation and these may or may not include:

Expressed opinions – such as support for violence and terrorism or the values of extremist organisations, airing of political or religious based grievances, unaccepting of other nationalities, religions or cultures.

Material – possession of extremist literature; attempts to access extremist websites and associated password protected chat rooms; possession of material regarding weapons, explosives or military training.

Behaviour and behavioural changes – such as withdrawal from family and peers; hostility towards former associates and family; isolation, low self-esteem, grievances and injustices. Association with proscribed organisations and those that hold extremist views (Under the Terrorism Act 2000 the Home Secretary has the power to proscribe – forbid by law – an organisation believed to be concerned in terrorism).

Personal history – Claims or evidence of involvement in organisations voicing violent extremist ideology and identifying with their cause.

REFERRAL AND INTERVENTION PROCESS

The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (the CT and S Act) Sections 36 to 41 set out the duty on local authorities and partners to establish and cooperate with a local Channel programme of 'Channel panels' to provide support for people, children and adults, vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. It works within a "non-criminal space" and requires:

- Local authorities to ensure that a multi-agency Channel panel exists in their area;
- That local authorities chair that panel;
- That panel meetings develop a Support Plan for individuals accepted as Channel referrals;
- The panel considers alternative forms of support, including health and social services, where Channel is not appropriate; and

All panel partners, so far as appropriate and reasonably practicable, co-operate with the local authority and panel in the carrying out of their functions. In Bedfordshire, Luton Borough Council chair a pan-Beds Panel for the three Local Authorities and incorporates members from teams and services from within social care, education, probation, police, youth offending, health, mental health etc.

Existing referral routes are used for every partnership using Notice, Check, Share used in general safeguarding arenas and sent to the Local Authority safeguarding teams before sending onward to the Channel Team. Thresholds adopted by local authorities do not apply to Channel referrals, and a referral can be made, regardless of where the case sits in terms of safeguarding.

As participation in Channel remains voluntary, section 36(4) (b) of the CT&S Act requires consent to be given by the individual (or their parent/guardian in the case of a child¹⁵) in advance of support measures being put in place. All individuals who receive support through Channel must be made aware that they are receiving this as part of a programme to protect people from being drawn into terrorism; what the aims of the process are; and what to expect. Where someone does not wish to continue with the process, it may be appropriate to provide alternative support through other mainstream services, such as Children or Adult Social Care Services.

In the case of a child, there may be certain circumstances when a parent/guardian does not give consent for their child to be supported through Channel, particularly if some of the vulnerabilities present are in the home environment. If the child is thought to be at risk from significant harm ¹⁶, whether that is physical, emotional, mental, intellectual, social or behavioural harm (as defined by section 31(9) of the Children Act 1989), then social services for the relevant local authority area must be involved in decisions made about the child.

Any questions or concerns find out more how to help someone via [Actearly](#)

Worried about someone, call the national police Prevent advice line 0800 011 3764, in confidence, to share concerns with their specially trained officers.

This advice line is available every day 9:00am to 5:00pm. Calls outside of these hours will be transferred to specialist Counter Terrorism officers.

For more information visit [Bedfordshire Police website - Terrorism in the UK](#)

The Anti-Terrorist Hotline can also be contacted on 0800 789 321 to report anything. (different number to Prevent advice line)

Members of public sector staff such as a teacher, GP, police officer or social worker are encouraged to continue to use their designated safeguarding route to make referrals to Prevent or seek further advice. The advice line is designed for members of the public to use, especially friends and family, or those who work with vulnerable or young people in volunteering roles. Remember in an emergency always call 999.

If material is seen online material promoting terrorism or extremism then report concerns anonymously - [report it online](#)

Any further queries or concerns do not hesitate to contact the relevant Local Authority Prevent team by emailing prevent@luton.gov.uk

What support Channel can offer:

- Education, training and mentoring opportunities
- Access to services and activities that offer support tailored to an individual's needs
- Access to people with specialist set knowledge of just someone to talk with
- Open and honest conversations about issues of concerns
- Support for family member and loved ones
- All adopted cases to Panel will be reassessed at 6 and 12 month intervals post exit from Channel, so that vulnerabilities can be reviewed before final exit from the process.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND SECURITY

All partners involved in the Channel programme commit to confidentiality. Agencies respect that at least one partner organisation considers vulnerabilities presented are important enough to outweigh the duty of confidence to the individual. Agencies agree that no information will be shared outside of Channel Panel meetings without express consent of the agency providing it. Channel Panel members will all sign a confidentiality statement for each Channel case. Failure to comply will be considered a breach of subject confidentiality and confidentiality of the agency concerned.

INFORMATION SHARING

Panel partners commit, on behalf of their organisations, to present all relevant information relating to an individual referred and information to be provided as soon as practicable possible. An Information Sharing Agreement is in place with partners and services across Bedfordshire so that information can be shared. There are expectations that referrers attend the initial Panel to discuss their referral with Panel Members and Social Workers to attend each Panel to update Members and discuss the support plan agreed at Panel.

Information should only be shared where it is necessary to achieve the intended outcome and is relevant and proportionate to it. Information should be selected for sharing on the basis that the agencies involved need to know that information in

order to make informed assessment and decisions. Key to determining this will be the professional judgement of the risks to an individual or the public.

LOCAL SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

Any practitioner who believes a crime is being committed or planned, or is aware of any terrorist activity, should contact Bedfordshire Police immediately on 101. If you want advice from the Channel team regarding concerns about an individual please email prevent@luton.gov.uk or call 01582 548231.

If you see online material promoting terrorism or extremism, you can report concerns anonymously - [report it online](#)

If you have any further queries or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact your Local Authority Prevent team by emailing prevent@luton.gov.uk

Low-level concerns of radicalisation should be shared with Bedfordshire Police, and where children involved, the Intake and Assessment Team using the **Multi-agency Submission Form**.

Online Prevent training:

Access training courses [here](#) on the Prevent duty, threat from terrorism and extremism in the UK and how to support people vulnerable to radicalisation.

How to report suspicious activity or behaviour in confidence.

Educate against hate: Website for teachers, parents and school leaders giving practical advice and information on protecting children from extremism and radicalisation.

Me and you: The Skinhead and The Scholar provide extremism and radicalisation training, seminars and workshops for students and staff.

Connect Futures: Training and research for the prevention of extremism and exploitation.

JAN Trust: A non-profit organisation founded in 1989 supporting vulnerable women to lead better lives.

NSPCC: Advice for adults worried about a child being radicalised.

Since 9/11: Educational charity teaching younger generations about 9/11 and terrorism in order to help prevent future atrocities. Free teaching resources.

Families for Life: Supporting and empowering families to combat radicalisation.

SAFE: Independent, community led support service for families affected by any form of extremism.

Tim Parry, Johnathan Ball Peace Foundation: Creating safe places for difficult conversations and on formal learning projects designed to create networks of agents for change, breaking the cycle of violence.

Extreme Dialogue: Aims to build resilience to radicalisation among young people through a series of open access educational resources and short films that foster critical thinking and digital literacy skills.

Channel and Prevent Multi-Agency Panel (PMAP) guidance: Protecting people vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism (2021)

ACT (Action Counters Terrorism): An initiative designed to provide practical help and guidance to the public in order to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. ACT has been created to provide a greater understanding of the support Prevent can offer.

See **Appendix A: PREVENT Referral Process - Flowchart for Children and Adults with Concerns of Radicalisation or Extremism (Pan Bedfordshire)**