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[Department
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Guidance

Managing risk of radicalisation in your education setting

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Applies to England

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Radicalisation risk indicators

There is no single route to radicalisation. However, there are some behavioural traits that could indicate that a child, young person or adult learner is vulnerable to radicalisation.

Radicalisation is not a linear process. Children, young people and adult learners may express a combination of behaviours at different times. Designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) should consider an individual's behaviour in the context of wider influencing factors and vulnerabilities.

In most cases, you should speak with the child, young person or adult learner and their parents or carers (if under 18). You should also consider contextual, vulnerability and protective factors to make a comprehensive assessment of risk and harm.

Keep a written record of all concerns, discussions and decisions made, and the reasons for those decisions.

Tell the police immediately if you think a child, young person or adult learner:

- is about to put themselves or others in immediate danger
- appears to be involved in planning to carry out a criminal offence

Risk assessment framework

Identifying radicalisation

[Counter-terrorism strategy \(CONTEST\) 2018](#) defines 'radicalisation' as the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorists.

This guidance is designed to help you consider indicators of risk and decide what response is appropriate. These indicators are a guide to help you make professional judgements. If in doubt, [make a Prevent referral](#).

The levels of risk are:

- low risk
- at risk
- medium risk
- high risk

A child, young person or adult learner can move very quickly between the risk categories. You should deal with any escalation of risk immediately and record this in their file.

If you're unsure about the level of need, you should ask for advice from:

- your local children's social care team (find contact details at [report child abuse to a local council](#))
- your local authority Prevent team
- other Prevent partners

If you're in doubt, you must share your concerns and [make a Prevent referral](#).

Low risk

Low risk means there's no evidence to suggest the child, young person or adult learner is vulnerable to radicalisation. Low risk behaviours, when seen alone, would not necessarily need to be explored further.

Low risk behaviours include:

- holding strong opinions or values (non-violent or non-extremist)
- criticising government policies
- adopting visible signs, for example wearing clothing (non-violent or non-extremist), to express identity or sense of belonging
- being active on social media
- taking a keen interest in national and international affairs
taking a stand and supporting causes, for example animal rights (non-violent)

- showing new interest in a political ideology or religion
- holding or expressing conservative values or practices, whether traditional, cultural or religious (unless they cause harm to a child or others, for example female genital mutilation)

Low risk: what to do

Where there is low risk, you should think about:

- talking informally to the child, young person or adult learner about the changes in their behaviour
- providing an opportunity to debate controversial issues in a safe space
- offering information about how to keep safe online

Educate Against Hate has [resources for schools to safeguard students](#) and Education and Training Foundation has [resources for FE providers](#).

The [Prevent duty guidance](#) says that schools and FE providers should be safe spaces in which children, young people and adult learners can understand and discuss sensitive topics, including terrorism and the extremist ideas that are part of terrorist ideology, and to learn how to challenge these ideas.

Regular Prevent training will help staff understand what radicalisation means and why children, young people and adult learners may be vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism.

For an example of managing a low risk concern, see [case study 4: responding to extremism concerns in the classroom](#).

At risk

A child, young person or adult learner at risk may be showing behaviours that could increase their risk and vulnerability to radicalisation.

If a child, young person or adult learner is showing at risk behaviour, you should explore this further to see if you need to make a Prevent referral.

At risk behaviour includes:

- being drawn to conspiracy theories
- beginning to isolate themselves from family and friends
- viewing or engaging with inappropriate online content and having uncontrolled or unsupervised

access to the internet

- expressing concerns about being victimised, for example feeling under attack
- discriminating against other individuals or groups of people
- a sudden change in behaviour
- showing interest in extremists or extreme groups
- expressing views that divide us, for example talking about 'us' and 'them'

At risk: what to do

If you think a child, young person or adult learner is at risk, you should look at their behaviour and gather all the information you need to make a full assessment of risk and harm.

You should ask yourself:

- if you have enough information to make a comprehensive assessment
- what's happened in the past to trigger the incident
- if this is an isolated incident or a pattern of behaviour
- what else you know and if there any relevant vulnerability factors
- if there are any relevant contextual factors - for example, previous safeguarding concerns, behaviour, attendance, attainment, general wellbeing
- if there are any protective factors - for example, supportive personal relationships with peers and family, environmental factors such as school, college, provider or home life

You should:

- talk to the child, young person or adult learner in a safe space - see [how to speak to a child, young person or adult learner vulnerable to radicalisation](#)
- talk to the parents or carers (if under 18) about your concerns - see 'informing the child, young person, parents or carers' in [making a referral to Prevent](#)
- make a holistic assessment of vulnerability, examining risk and protective factors as set out on page 15 of [working together to safeguard children](#)

If you need to make a Prevent referral, you can ask Prevent partners for advice and support.

When asking for advice, you do not need to identify the child, young person or adult learner. Keep a written record of all concerns, discussions and decisions made, and the reasons for those decisions.

If you're in any doubt, [make a Prevent referral](#).

The best person to speak to a child, young person or adult learner is any professional, parent or

carer (if under 18) who has a good relationship with them.

If you think the risk is escalating, follow your Prevent referral procedures and read the guidance for medium or high-risk cases.

Medium risk

Medium risk means a child, young person or adult learner is at heightened risk of radicalisation. There may be several indicators of risk.

If the child, young person or adult learner is at risk of harm, you must [make a Prevent referral](#) immediately.

Medium risk behaviour includes:

- legitimising the use of violence to defend ideology or cause
- accessing extremist or terrorist websites, forums and publications
- expressing dehumanising views
- expressing an interest to travel to a conflict zone
- being in contact with a group or individuals known to support a violent extremist ideology, either online or in real life
- targeting a 'perceived other' of some kind (perhaps based on gender or another protected characteristic), but not otherwise identifying with one particular terrorist ideology or cause
- being obsessed with massacre, or extreme or mass violence, without targeting a particular group (for example, high school shootings)

Medium risk: what to do

If you suspect a child, young person or adult learner is at medium risk, you should assess their vulnerability and examine the risk and protective factors as set out in the statutory guidance on [working together to safeguard children](#).

You should ask yourself:

- if there's reasonable cause to suspect that the child, young person or adult learner is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm
- what the risks are and what would happen if these needs are not met - what the impact will be on the child, young person or adult learner - what you're worried about
- what else you know and if there are any relevant vulnerability factors

- if there are any relevant contextual factors - for example, previous safeguarding concerns, behaviour, attendance and attainment records and general wellbeing
- if there are any protective factors - for example, supportive personal relationships with peers and family, environmental factors such as school, college, provider or home life

If the child, young person or adult learner is suffering from or is at risk of harm, you must [make a Prevent referral](#) immediately. This is a statutory requirement.

Your Prevent partners may give you advice or forward the referral on to Channel as appropriate.

Channel is a multi-agency partnership that supports people identified as at risk of being drawn into terrorism. Channel focuses on early intervention to provide support at an early stage. To find out more, read 'Channel support' in [making a referral to Prevent](#).

You should also carry out an assessment to identify whether any needs should be met by more than one agency, for example child and adolescent mental health services. If you're not sure if you should do this, your local authority may suggest this when you make the Prevent referral.

When you share information about a child or young person who is under 18, you should try to get parental consent but only if it is safe to do so. Do not put the child or young person in more danger. For more guidance, read 'informing the child, young person, parents or carers' in [making a referral to Prevent](#).

To find out more, read the [case studies](#), which involve different ideologies, issues, age ranges and examples of interventions.

High risk

High risk means a child, young person or adult learner is at significant risk. There's evidence that they're currently exposed to terrorist or extremist activity and there's a significant risk to their safety.

If they're showing high risk, criminal behaviour, tell the police immediately.

High risk, criminal behaviour includes:

- verbally or physically attacking someone due to their race, religion, sexuality and so on
- committing violent acts guided by a violent extremist ideology or group
- taking part in any proscribed violent extremist group (financing, sharing material online, recruiting others and so on)
- having a 'kill list' or detailed plan to carry out mass violence

- producing or sharing terrorist material offline or online
- recruiting others to a proscribed terrorist group or organisation

High risk: what to do

You should ask yourself if the child, young person or adult learner:

- needs support from more than one agency
- is about to put themselves or others in danger
- is at risk due to actions of their parents or carers, or wider family members
- has made violent threats to your setting

Tell the police immediately if you suspect a child, young person or adult learner:

- is about to put themselves or others in danger by travelling to join a proscribed organisation, or
- appears to be involved in planning to carry out a criminal offence

If you suspect a child, young person or adult learner is likely to commit an attack on your setting, contact the police and local authority for immediate support.

To find out how to keep your setting safe, read the [school and college security](#) guidance.

Interest in targeted violence

If a child, young person or adult learner supports the use of violence but is not particularly interested in an extremist ideology, or is interested in lots of ideologies, you should:

- follow your usual safeguarding arrangements
- ask your local authority or Prevent team for support or advice

If you need to, [make a Prevent referral](#).

This includes if the child, young person or adult learner is interested in:

- multiple ideologies, such as white supremacy and involuntary celibates (incels)
- targeted violence - wanting to kill members of staff or other learners

How to speak to a child, young person or adult learner

vulnerable to radicalisation

If you've received concerns about a child, young person or adult learner's behaviour, in most cases you should speak to them as soon as possible.

Create a safe space

The Prevent duty states that having a safe space to discuss controversial topics is crucial to give children, young people and adult learners a chance to share their views and understand the views of others.

Speaking about these issues can help build resilience to challenge extremist narratives. It may also prompt them to raise concerns that staff may not otherwise be aware of.

The [Educate Against Hate](#) and [Let's Talk About It](#) websites have resources to support you with this.

Focus on the child, young person or adult learner

When recording the conversation, make sure you use the child, young person or adult learner's own words and describe any actions clearly.

If you're speaking to the child, young person or adult learner alone, reassure them that you want to clarify something they said or did.

Be responsive and inclusive

Ask open and specific questions. Do not add details to your report, but ask the child, young person or adult learner to clarify if you need to. For example, you could say: 'Can you explain what you mean by that as I did not understand?'

Do not make assumptions about the child, young person or adult learner's behaviour based on any aspects of their background or identity.

Be proactive

Do not promise confidentiality. Be clear with the child, young person or adult learner about your next steps or actions.

If you see, hear or are worried about anything, think about making a Prevent referral.

Build a rapport

Build on your knowledge of the child, young person or adult learner by asking about some neutral topics.

Get them talking

Use TED:

- T - tell
- E - explain
- D - describe

For example: 'Tell me what happened in maths today.'

Avoid direct confrontation of opinions or attitudes

Do not say: 'You're wrong.' The child, young person or adult learner could become defensive, agitated or withdrawn. Instead, you could ask: 'What made you feel like this?'

Redirect them

If you're finding it hard to discuss the child, young person or adult learner's behaviour because they feel angry or emotional, try to redirect them. You could say: 'Tell me something funny that happened last week.'

Start by raising concerns about their behaviour, not their beliefs

Do not say: 'You've been expressing some concerning beliefs and ideas.' Do say: 'I'm concerned because I've noticed you've become [angry or disengaged]. What's going on?'

Make observational comments about their emotional or behavioural state

For example, you could say: 'You look exhausted or agitated or angry. What are you doing to relax?' This may lead to: 'Where do you go? Who do you see?'

Do not ask leading questions

Do not ask questions like: 'Did you hear this at home?' Instead, start your questions with who, what, when, where, how. For example: 'How do you feel about...?', 'What do you understand by...?', 'Where did you hear...?', 'What would you do if...?'

Ask questions

Get them to explain. Ask them: 'What made you think about these things?' or 'Can you give an example of that?', 'Can you explain that further?', 'Is there another point of view on that issue?'

The child, young person or adult learner might not be able to see other points of view and have a fixed view of the world.

Get them to think about what they're saying

You could ask: 'I still don't understand. Explain it differently for me', 'What is fact and opinion in this statement?', 'How do you know that....? What are you basing your judgement on?'

Ask them to clarify

If you're not sure what the child, young person or adult learner has said, ask them to clarify and check their understanding of certain words. You could ask: 'What does X mean?'

Find ways to understand the concerns

Handling difficult or controversial discussions can be challenging.

You could say: 'I don't know much about this. Shall we research it together?' or 'Shall we find someone who does know more about this? I would like to learn more.'

Or could say: 'I need to speak to someone to see if we can find anyone who knows a lot about this. They could talk to you and help you understand more about X.'

Communication difficulties

Special provision should be put in place to support conversations with children, young people or adult learners who:

- have communication difficulties
- are too young
- are unable to communicate
- cannot or will not explain

You should refer to the child, young person or adult learner's behaviour plan and the information available from any assessments. This may include visual cues to help facilitate discussion, such as picture exchange communication cards.

As a DSL, you should seek support from the special educational needs co-ordinator.

Mencap has published further information on [communicating with people with learning difficulties](#).

The National Autistic Society has also published [tips to communicate more effectively with an autistic person](#).

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