

NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP

YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE VULNERABLE TO EXTREMISM

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1. INTRODUCTION

The current threat from international terrorism in the United Kingdom is severe and can often involve the exploitation of vulnerable people. This threat incorporates the threat posed by individuals and groups intent on exploiting those vulnerable to radicalisation, encouraging them to commit terrorist acts.

This guidance is designed to provide a clear framework for professionals with which to respond to safeguarding concerns for those children and young people who may be vulnerable to the messages of extremism. In addition, it provides details of the local inter-agency process and expectations in identifying appropriate interventions based on the North East Lincolnshire Child Concern/Threshold of Need and Intervention model, and the Channel process. (See **Thresholds of Need Guidance 2020.**)

Radicalisation refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups .

“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, cultures and beliefs. In our definition of extremism, we also include calls for the death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas” (HM Government Prevent Strategy 2011.)

2. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

All developments are intended to ensure that no-one is treated in any way less favourably on the grounds of race, colour, nationality or ethnic or social origin, disability, gender, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, age, religion/belief or political/other personal beliefs.

3. NATIONAL GUIDANCE AND STRATEGIES

CONTEST is the Government’s counter terrorist strategy, its aim being to reduce the risk to the UK and its interests overseas from terrorism.

PREVENT is a key part of the CONTEST strategy, its aim being to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. Early intervention is at the heart of “Prevent” in diverting people away from being drawn into terrorist activity. “Prevent” happens before any criminal activity takes place. It is about recognising, supporting and protecting people who might be susceptible to radicalisation. The Prevent Strategy objectives focus on the following core areas:

- Tackle the causes of radicalisation and respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism.
- Safeguard and support those most at risk of radicalisation through early intervention, identifying them and offering support.

- Enable those who have already engaged in terrorism to disengage and rehabilitate.

CHANNEL is a key element of the “Prevent” strategy. Channel identifies individuals at risk, assesses the nature and extent of that risk and develops the most appropriate support plan for the individuals concerned. Channel provides early support for anyone who is vulnerable to being drawn into any form of terrorism or supporting terrorist organisations, regardless of age, faith, ethnicity or background. Individuals can receive support before their vulnerabilities are exploited by those who want them to embrace terrorism, and before they become involved in criminal terrorist-related activity. 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.

4. PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships, 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.

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**. 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”.

Within North East Lincolnshire, there is a Prevent Multi-Agency Partnership board that is responsible for coordinating work on this agenda.

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.

Channel has been established in North East Lincolnshire and consists of a referral process, a procedure for responding to identified risk and need, and a route for providing appropriate support. The Channel process is closely aligned to the NEL Safeguarding Children Partnership.

A Channel pre-meet takes place a week before the Channel Panel in order to notify the chair of new referrals and to review progress of ongoing cases. When a referral is made the Counter-Terrorism Case Officer (CTCO) will conduct an initial assessment of the referral, if identified as suitable for Channel an information request form is sent to relevant partner agencies, who are required to submit details of any involvement they have with the individual. The Channel process has a case tracking and review register, whereby closed cases are reviewed at six and twelve month intervals in line with statutory review requirements.

For more detail see: “**Channel: Protecting Vulnerable People from being drawn into terrorism; A guide for local partnerships**”. See also **Channel Guidance Summary (Safer NEL website)**.

Since Channel is designed to support and prevent young people and adults most vulnerable to being radicalised or involved in extremism, Channel referrals should therefore be a priority for the local authority and other statutory partners in all their work to safeguard vulnerable individuals. Channel should be considered alongside early intervention measures such as work undertaken to support and divert young people from anti-social behaviour, gangs, alcohol/substance misuse and diversion from offending.

Both an awareness of Prevent and an understanding of its aims are vital to the effective management of risk to vulnerable people of getting involved with terrorism and/or extremism. Professionals can help to identify, and to refer to the relevant agencies, children whose behaviour suggests that they are at risk of or being drawn into terrorism or extremism. Schools can help to protect children from extremism and extremist views in the same ways that they help to safeguard children from drugs, gang violence, bullying or alcohol, and the work schools undertake on the Prevent agenda needs to be seen in this context. The purpose must be to protect children from harm and to ensure that they are taught in a way that is consistent with the law and our values.

All organisations should have an awareness of the Prevent strategy and the various forms radicalisation takes in order to be able to recognise the signs and indicators and respond appropriately. Workshops to Raise the Awareness of Prevent (WRAP) training is being delivered across a range of organisations in North East Lincolnshire (for details email safer.communities@nelincs.gov.uk).

5. UNDERSTANDING AND RECOGNISING RISKS AND VULNERABILITIES OF RADICALISATION

PRINCIPLES

A child is defined in the Children Acts 1989 and 2004 as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. For the purpose of this guidance, reference to child or children includes all children and young people up to the age of 18.

Children can be drawn into violence or exposed to the messages of extremism by many means. These can include the influence of family members or friends, direct contact with extremist groups and organisations or, increasingly, through the internet; placing the child at risk of being drawn into criminal activity and the potential to cause Significant Harm. Circumstances can make some children more vulnerable to being drawn into groups or being influenced by individuals who advocate violence as a means to a political or ideological end. Examples of groups that have used violence to achieve their aims include animal rights, the far right, internal and international terrorist organisations and some fundamentalist faith groups.

Most individuals do not become involved in extremism but a range of factors can increase and influence those behaviours that are defined as extremism. It is important to consider these factors in order to develop an understanding and recognise the risk factors alongside those factors that build resilience and protect individuals from extremist activity.

Many factors that increase a young person's likelihood of becoming radicalised are from the same as those seen in mainstream safeguarding and include:

- Family tensions.
- Sense of or experience of social isolation.
- Migration and distance from cultural heritage.
- Experience of racism or discrimination.
- Feeling of failure.
- Being excluded from social and peer networks etc.
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- Those in the process of being radicalised or drawn into extremist behaviour may be Involved with a new group of friends.
- Be searching for answers to questions about identity, faith and belonging.
- Be searching for a sense of belonging.

- Possess extremist literature or advocate violent actions.
- Change their behaviour and language.
- Seek to recruit others to an extremist ideology.

It is important to note that children experiencing these situations or exhibiting such behaviours are not necessarily showing signs of being radicalised and could be signs indicative of alcohol or drug misuse, family breakdown, domestic abuse, bullying etc. or something more minor such as peer conflict. Caution should therefore be exercised when assessing these factors to avoid wrongly labelling or stigmatising individuals. Professionals who have contact with vulnerable individuals must therefore be able to recognise those vulnerabilities and help promote young people making safe choices.

Some children may be at greater risk due to living with or being in close contact with known extremists or adults with extreme views. Such children may be identified by the police or through Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) processes, allegations against professionals, police enquiries or via Safeguarding Investigations and Child Protection Conference systems.

6. VULNERABILITY / RISK INDICATORS

NB - The following lists are not exhaustive and vulnerable children experiencing these factors are not automatically at risk of exploitation for the purposes of extremism. The complex relationships between circumstances and aspects of an individual's identity may however combine to increase vulnerability to extremism. Over-simplified assessments, e.g. based upon demographics and poverty indicators, tend to increase victimisation, fail to identify vulnerabilities and, in some cases, increase the potential for extremists to exploit, operate and recruit.

There is no such thing as a 'typical extremist' and those involved in extremism come from a range of backgrounds and experiences. The following indicators have been provided to support professionals in NEL to understand and identify factors that may suggest an individual is more vulnerable to extremism.

VULNERABILITY

The following factors may increase an individual's vulnerability:

- **Identity Crisis** - being alienated from cultural and or religious heritage and uncomfortable with their place in society, their community or their family.
- **Personal Crisis** - family tensions; isolation; adolescence; low self-esteem; disassociating from existing friendship group; becoming involved with a new groups or friends; questioning faith or belonging.
- **Personal Circumstances** - migration; community tension; events in country of origin; rejecting UK values; grievances triggered by experience of racism or discrimination.
- **Unmet Aspirations** - perceptions of injustice; feelings of failure; rejection of civic life; lack of life chances.
- **Criminality** - experiences of imprisonment; poor resettlement/reintegration, involvement with criminal groups.

ACCESS TO EXTREMISM / EXTREMIST INFLUENCES

The following sets of questions are helpful in assessing an individual's vulnerability factors:

- Is there reason to believe that the child/young person associates with known extremists - either through direct association with known individuals or by frequenting key locations? (e.g. in a relationship with someone linked with extremist activity)?
- Does the child/young person access internet sites link to extremist activity? (e.g. Closed network groups, extremist material, contact associates; or does the young person covertly contact risky individuals via Skype/email etc);

- Is it believed that the child/young person has been to or contacted extremist/military training camps/ locations?
- Is the child/young person known to have possessed or sought out extremist literature or other media likely to incite racial/ religious hatred or acts of violence?
- Does the child/young person express sympathy or support for illegal/illicit groups?
- Is the young person involved with propaganda distribution, fundraising, attendance at meetings?

EXPERIENCES, BEHAVIOURS AND INFLUENCES

- Has the child/ young person encountered peer, social, family or faith group rejection?
- Is there evidence of extremist ideological, political or religious influence on the child from within or outside the UK?
- Have international events in areas of conflict and civil unrest impacted on the child/young person resulting in a noticeable change in behaviour? NB we must differentiate between acceptable emotional responses or verbal sympathy being articulated and genuine support for extremist activity.
- Are there noticeable changes in behaviour or appearance indicative of political or religious influence?
- Has the child/young person come into conflict with family over religious beliefs/lifestyle/ dress choices?
- Does the child/young person express support for terrorist attacks; either verbally or in written work?
- Has the child/young person witnessed, perpetrated or been victim of racial or religious hate crime?

TRAVEL

- Is there a pattern of regular or extended travel indicative of links with extremist training or activity?
- Has the child/young person travelled for extended periods outside the UK to locations linked to extremism?
- Has the young person used any ploys to disguise their true identity?
- Has the child/young person used documents or cover to support this e.g. passports, social network ID?

SOCIAL FACTORS

- Does the child/young person have experience of poverty, disadvantage, discrimination, social exclusion?
- Does the child/young person experience a lack of meaningful employment appropriate to their skills?
- Does the young person lack affinity or empathy for others, or is isolated from peer groups?
- Does the young person demonstrate identity conflict or confusion normally associated with youth development?
- Does the child/young person have any learning difficulties/mental health support needs?
- Does the child/young person demonstrate simplistic, skewed or flawed understanding of religion or politics?
- Does the child/young person have a history of crime, including episodes in prison?
- Is the child/young person a foreign national, refugee or awaiting a decision on their immigration/ national status?
- Does the child/young person have insecure, chaotic, conflicted, displaced or absent family relationships?
- Has the young person experienced trauma in their lives, particularly associated with war or sectarian conflict?
- Does a significant adult, friend, role model or other have extremist view or sympathies?

7. REFERRAL AND INTERVENTION PROCESS

The intervention process consists of the local “Channel” framework and **NEL SCP Thresholds of Need Guidance 2020**.

Early identification for support is required, this should be dealt with either through universal service provision **Level 1 Universal Services prevention and self-help or Universal Level 2 early intervention and targeted help**. Where there are identified concerns, support should be provided via targeted interventions at **Level 3 Children and families with complex needs**. Sometimes the concerns identified may have a security dimension, so for this reason it is important that early liaison with the police forms part of all assessments, investigations and analysis.

The named or designated safeguarding professional, in discussion with relevant others (including the local CTCO or Channel Chair), as appropriate, will need to work together and share information to determine the most appropriate level and type of support to offer the child and its family.

Early discussion with the local CTCO or Channel Chair will allow the designated safeguarding professional to decide if a Prevent referral is required.

In some cases, the concerns around the child may extend beyond being vulnerable to extremism to concerns around actual involvement in terrorist activity. This should result in responses at Level 3 or 4 (children with acute specialist needs, significant harm), particularly if safeguarding or criminality becomes an issue.

Further advice can be obtained from the local authority Channel chair or CTPNE | Humberside Prevent Team. (via prevent@humberside.pnn.police.uk)

CHANNEL REFERRAL PROCESS

Some concerns identified may also have a security dimension to them. For this reason, it is important that early liaison with the police forms part of all investigations and vulnerability assessment. Humberside Police will conduct an initial assessment and, if appropriate, progress the referral into the Channel framework. The police will seek further information as required and present the case at the multi-agency Channel panel. If concerns relating to a vulnerability to radicalisation remain the Channel panel will agree a support package to be offered to the individual. Written consent from the individual or their parent/carer will then be sought.

If it is deemed that there are no concerns relating to radicalisation or extremism, but that there are other ongoing needs, then support will be arranged for the individual through other means such as social care or another relevant organisation best placed to meet those needs.

It is important to remember that any information provided to the police in the Channel stage happens in the non-crime space. The police along with relevant partners have a duty to assess all new information and measure whether that escalates any concerns but the over-arching role of Channel is to support and safeguard the individual and prevent them becoming involved in terrorist activity.

For all types of response, a clear plan must be developed and documented setting out how the needs of the child will be met, who will be responsible for doing this and when it will be done. North East Lincolnshire council utilise the national Prevent referral form to be used when making a Prevent referral. Awareness training and promotion of Channel within all organisations explains how to make a referral and the local CTCO can also advise on how a referral can be made if required.

The Channel referral process should be used to guide the named or designated safeguarding professional when making a referral.

The Channel process will identify each new referral to determine where a coordinated multi-agency response, is beneficial. Also, at each meeting, all Channel cases will be reviewed to determine if services remain effective in safeguarding the child or young person and reducing the risks of radicalisation and/or extremism. All services, provided at any tier, will be required to regularly report on progress being made. The local authority remain responsible for co-ordinating responses and ensuring appropriate invitations are made and attendance at meetings monitored.

Reviews must be conducted at the agreed 6 and 12 month intervals, or sooner if a change in circumstances indicates this is needed. All reviews will be documented, and records retained by services and agencies working with the child or young person..

All those involved with the child should continue to monitor the situation and consider modifying the plan or response if circumstances change. If the risk is perceived to have diminished, it may be appropriate to end the Channel intervention, but this remains a decision for the Channel chair and will be appropriately discussed and minuted at the Channel panel. However, if the risk is perceived to have increased, an escalation of the response may be required and may involve taking the case outside of the 'Prevent' strand of the CONTEST strategy. If changes of this nature occur - then early contact with the CTCO is essential.

Where the Channel intervention ends it may be that the child or young person still has outstanding needs being met through Early Help Assessment Framework, Child in Need, Child Protection or Youth Offending Service processes. These interventions or services should continue in the normal way until all needs are met. Every Channel case that has ended will be reviewed at 6-12 monthly intervals after exiting the process. This is to ensure there are no new risks or information requiring a Prevent or Channel response.

Where new risks or information suggest a recurrence of concerns the assessment process can be re-started at any point. Where agencies become aware of new or repeat risks, they should not wait for the 6-12 month review, and must discuss the concerns immediately with the CTCO via Prevent@humberside.pnn.police.uk

North East Lincolnshire Council have fully adopted the newly updated national [Channel Guidance](#) (2020) and the Channel Panel meeting is chaired and coordinated by the local authority in line with national guidance.