Safeguarding People who are vulnerable to being drawn into Extremism and / or Terrorism in Staffordshire (Prevent / Channel Referral Guidance)

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1. Introduction

The current threat from terrorism in the United Kingdom can involve the exploitation and radicalisation of vulnerable people, including children of all ages, young people and adults to involve them in terrorism or activity in support of terrorism.

This guidance is intended to provide a clear framework for all professionals working with people (or those around them) for whom there are concerns that they are at risk of becoming radicalised and involved in extremist activity. It is intended to support decision-making about when, how and where to make a Prevent referral.

It includes the link between safeguarding procedures and the Channel programme and provides a mechanism for supporting those who may be vulnerable to extremism by assessing the nature and the extent of the potential risk and, where necessary, providing an appropriate support package.

2. Definitions

The Government has defined extremism as: "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"[1].

The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board and the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Adult Safeguarding Partnership Board recognise the need to protect people against the messages of all violent extremism including that linked to Far Right / Extreme Right Wing (e.g. Neo Nazi / White Supremacist), Al Qaeda and ISIS ideologies, Irish Nationalist and Loyalist paramilitary groups, those linked to Animal Rights movements and others.

3. Legislative and Policy Framework

The following legislation and policies have provided the framework for this guidance:

- Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015;

- The Children Act 1989; as revised by the Children Act 2004;

- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018;

- Care Act 2014; Care Act Guidance October 2014;

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[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance

- Mental Capacity Act 2005;

- Channel Duty Guidance: Protecting vulnerable people from being drawn into terrorism 2015;

- The revised national CONTEST (Counter-Terrorism) Strategy 2018.

4. Information Sharing and Confidentiality

There is a statutory duty for workers to share information where there are concerns about the safety or wellbeing of an adult at risk of abuse or neglect or a child. Numerous pieces of legislation place a duty on local authorities to share information safely and actively in specific circumstances including:

- The Data Protection Act 1998;

- The Human Rights Act 1998;

- The Common Law Duty of Confidence;

- The Crime and Disorder Act 1998;

- The Children Act 2004 Sections 10 and 11;

- The **Caldicott Principles**;

- Local Government Act 1972 and 2000.

All information sharing must be conducted in accordance with a relevant legal power of duty and be proportionate and relevant to the circumstances presented.

5. Identification

There is no such thing as a 'typical extremist' and those involved in extremism come from a range of backgrounds and experiences. Most individuals, even those who hold radical views, do not become involved in violent extremism.

Numerous factors can contribute to and influence the range of behaviours that are defined as extremism. It is important to consider these factors in order to develop an understanding of the issue. It is also necessary to understand those factors that build resilience and protect individuals from engaging in violent extremist activity.

It is important to be cautious in assessing these factors to avoid inappropriately labelling or stigmatising individuals because they possess a characteristic or fit a specific profile. It is vital that all professionals who have contact with vulnerable individuals are able to recognise those vulnerabilities and help to increase safe choices. Research shows that **indicators of vulnerability** can include:

- Identity Crisis - Distance from cultural / religious heritage and uncomfortable with their place in the society around them;

- Personal Crisis - Family tensions; sense of isolation; adolescence; low self-esteem; disassociating from existing friendship group and becoming involved with a new and different group of friends; searching for answers to questions about identity, faith and belonging;

- Personal Circumstances - Migration; local community tensions; events affecting country or region of origin; alienation from freedom, tolerance of others, and accepting personal and social responsibilities; having a sense of grievance that is triggered by personal experience of racism or discrimination or aspects of Government policy; being easily led and desperate to please or impress others;

- Unmet Aspirations - Perceptions of injustice; feeling of failure; rejection of civic life;

- Criminality - Experiences of imprisonment; poor resettlement/reintegration; previous involvement with criminal groups.

- Mental ill health, learning disability and /or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) - There should be no conflation of mental ill health and terrorism. There should be no assumption that an individual who carries out a terrorist attack is suffering from mental ill health, nor that someone with poor mental health is likely to carry out a terrorist act. However, mental ill health may contribute to the risk of making an individual susceptible to exploitation. Existing evidence suggests and several studies now highlight that whilst there is no direct link between mental disorder and group-based terrorism, terrorists who act alone may be more likely to have a background that includes mental ill health or ASD.

However, this list is not exhaustive, nor does it mean that everyone who is experiencing the above are at risk of exploitation for the purposes of violent extremism.

More **critical risk factors** could include:

- Being in contact with extremist recruiters;

- Articulating support for violent extremist causes or leaders;

- Accessing violent extremist websites, especially those with a social networking element;

- Possessing or accessing violent extremist literature;

- Using extremist narratives and a global ideology to explain personal disadvantage;

- Justifying the use of violence to solve societal issues;

- Joining or seeking to join extremist organisations;

- Significant changes to appearance and/or behaviour.

Practitioners who work with young children may also see behaviours which could be linked to extremist influences and give them cause for concern. These behaviours might include, for example:

- Refusal to co-operate with other children / staff and indicating that this refusal is based on a dislike of the person's ethnicity or religion;
- Acting out violent role play (e.g. beheadings);
- Use of racist language;
- Use of extremist rhetoric.

Parents can also be vulnerable to extremism, and as such practitioners need to be aware of parental behaviour in relation to the indicators of vulnerability.

See **Appendix 1**: For more information about Vulnerability Factors.

6. Referral

How do I make a referral?

Concerns that an individual may be vulnerable to radicalisation does not mean that you think the person is a terrorist; it means that you are concerned that they are prone to being exploited by others. Radicalisation of vulnerable children (including young children) and adults is a safeguarding issue.

It is important to use your professional judgement - **if you are concerned that someone is at risk of getting involved in extremism, contact the Staffordshire Prevent Team**.

The Staffordshire Police Prevent Team can be contacted via:

Tel: 01785 232054

Email: prevent@staffordshire.pnn.police.uk

In organisations where a Prevent lead has been identified, practitioners should discuss the person with the Prevent lead prior to making a referral.

See **Appendix 2**: For more information about the Prevent Referral Process

The Prevent Team will, in partnership with other professionals including those involved in Safeguarding, investigate further to assess the nature and extent of the risk and the Channel Panel will develop the most

appropriate support package for the individual concerned.

See **Section 8** and **Appendix 3**: For more information about the Channel process.

If at any stage, it is felt that the individual poses an immediate danger to themselves or any other person, the police should be called immediately (via 999).

7. Assessment

When an individual is referred to Prevent, Staffordshire Police Prevent Team will complete an initial risk assessment for the individual. The risk assessment will be used to inform a decision about how to ensure the most suitable outcomes for the individual, including whether the person needs to be referred to Channel. If the person is referred to Channel a vulnerability assessment will be completed prior to the Channel Panel.

If the person is not accepted into the Channel process at this stage, the majority of cases will be signposted for further support elsewhere, where appropriate. Where required, the case will be referred into a statutory process.

The person making the referral will be kept informed and, in many cases, will be involved in decision-making going forward.

See **Section 8** and **Appendix 3**: For information about the Channel process.

8. Support (Channel)

What support is available for people at risk of becoming involved in extremism?

Channel is a multi-agency safeguarding programme run in every local authority in England and Wales. Both Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent have established Channel Panels, which allow joint working between local authorities, Staffordshire Police and their partners to offer help and guidance to people who may be at risk of becoming involved in extremism.

Most people do not become involved in violent extremism. Numerous factors can contribute to and influence the range of behaviours that are defined as violent extremism. Therefore, in many cases interventions identified through the Channel process may not appear to be specific to the threat of radicalisation. For example, they might relate to other needs of the individual such as mental health support, housing, relationships, offending behaviour or drug and alcohol issues. There may however sometimes be a need for specialist interventions in relation to de-radicalisation and disengagement. These will be commissioned by the Channel Panel as required. There are a range of activities which can

be included in a Channel intervention e.g. support with life skills, mentoring, family support etc. Support is always tailored to the specific needs of the individual following assessment by the multi-agency panel.

If the individual who has been referred to Channel is, or should be, the subject of a statutory process the person will be managed and the individual supported via that statutory process (with appropriate Prevent Team representation, where necessary). Progress will be reported back to the Channel Panel.

Appendix 1: Vulnerability Factors

(To be considered against unique personal circumstances of individual.)

> **The list is not exhaustive and all or none may be present in individual cases of concern. Nor does it mean that vulnerable people experiencing these factors are automatically at risk of exploitation for the purposes of violent extremism**.

Section 1 - Access to Extremism / Extremist Influences

- Is there reason to believe that the individual associates with those known to be involved in extremism - either because they associate directly with known individuals or because they frequent key locations where these individuals are known to operate? (E.g. the individual is the partner, spouse, friend or family member of someone believed to be linked with extremist activity);

- Does the individual frequent internet access locations for the purpose of extremist activity? (E.g. Use of closed network groups, access to or distribution of extremist material, contact associates covertly e.g. Skype/email);

- Is there reason to believe that the individual has been or is likely to be involved with extremist/ military training camps/ locations?

- Is the individual known to have possessed or is actively seeking to possess and/ or distribute extremist literature / other media material likely to incite racial/religious hatred or acts of violence?

- Does the individual sympathise with or support proscribed groups e.g. propaganda distribution, fundraising and attendance at meetings?

- Does the individual support groups with links to extremist activity but not proscribed e.g. propaganda distribution, fundraising and attendance at meetings?

Section 2 - Experiences, Behaviours and Influences

- Has the individual encountered peer, social, family or faith group rejection?

- Is there evidence of ideological, political or religious influence on the individual from within or outside UK?

- Have international events in areas of conflict and civil unrest had a personal impact on the individual resulting in a noticeable change in behaviour? Note it is important to recognise that many people may be emotionally affected by the plight of what is happening in areas of conflict

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(i.e. images of children dying) it is important to differentiate them from individuals that sympathise with or support extremist activity;

- Has there been a significant shift in the individual's behaviour or outward appearance that suggests a new social / political or religious influence?

- Has the individual come into conflict with family over religious beliefs/lifestyle choices?

- Does the individual vocally support terrorist attacks?

- Has the individual witnessed or been the perpetrator/victim of racial or religious hate crime or sectarianism?

Section 3 - Travel

- Has the individual travelled for extended periods of time to international locations known to be associated with extremism?

- Is there a pattern of regular or extended travel within the UK, with other evidence to suggest this is for purposes of extremist training or activity?

- Has the individual employed any methods to disguise their true identity? Has the individual used documents or cover to support this?
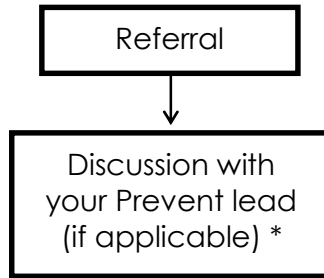
Section 4 - Social Factors

- Does the individual display a lack of affinity or understanding for others, or social isolation from peer groups?

- Does the individual demonstrate identity conflict and confusion normally associated with youth development?

- Does the individual have any learning difficulties/ mental health support needs?

- Does the individual demonstrate a simplistic or erroneous understanding of religion or politics?

- Is the individual a foreign national, refugee or awaiting a decision on their immigration/national status?

- Does the individual have insecure, conflicted or absent family relationships?

- Has the individual experienced any trauma in their lives, particularly any trauma associated with war or sectarian conflict?
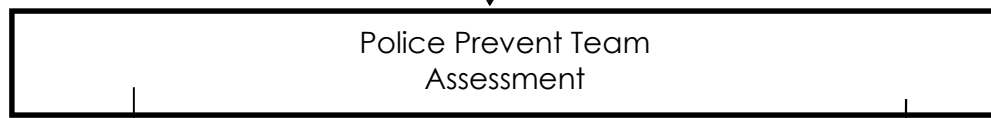
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Appendix 2: Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Prevent Referral Route

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                    ┌─────────────┐
                    │  Referral   │
                    └──────┬──────┘
                           │
              ┌────────────▼────────────┐
              │ Discussion with your    │
              │ Prevent lead            │
              │ (if applicable) *       │
              └────────────┬────────────┘
                           │
       ┌───────────────────▼───────────────────┐
       │      Police Prevent Team Assessment    │
       └──────┬──────────────────────────┬──────┘
    Channel threshold              Channel threshold
       not met                        met
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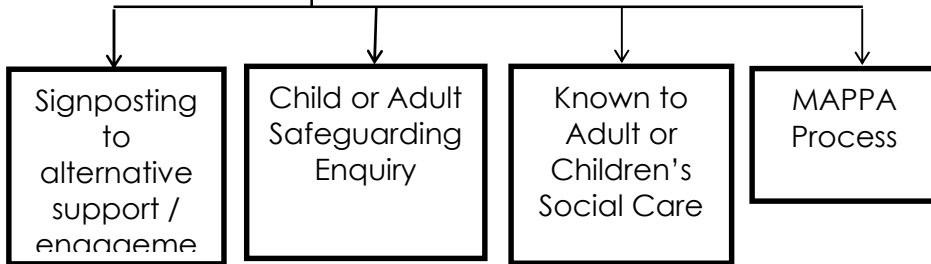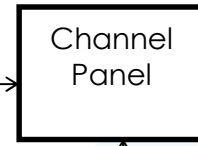
When an individual is identified as a potential cause for concern in relation to Prevent, a referral will be made to the Prevent Team.
*In organisations where a Prevent lead has been identified, practitioners may wish to discuss the person with the Prevent lead prior to making a referral.

Alternative Response ◄──────► **Channel Panel**

- Signposting to alternative support / engageme...
- Child or Adult Safeguarding Enquiry
- Known to Adult or Children's Social Care
- MAPPA Process

The Channel Panel will agree how the person will be supported i.e. through existing statutory processes or through a Channel intervention.

Even if the threshold for Channel is not initially met, if the subsequent response (either statutory or non-statutory) discovers additional information which raises further concerns regarding radicalisation or extremism, the case should be referred back to the Prevent Team for reassessment.

The Channel Panel is responsible for monitoring the Channel intervention and regularly reviewing progress.

Channel Intervention

No further action

Support

- Exit
- Continue
- Escalatio...
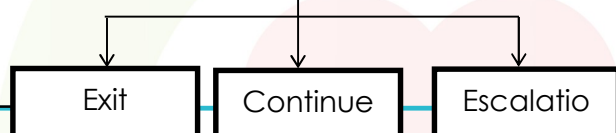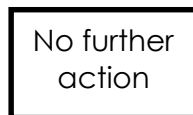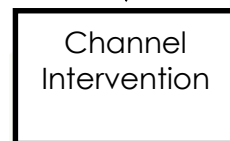
Appendix 3: Channel

Channel is a multi-agency approach, led by Staffordshire County Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council, with support provided by Staffordshire Police, to provide support to individuals who are at risk of being drawn into terrorist related activity.

Channel seeks to:

- Establish an effective multi-agency referral and intervention process to identify vulnerable individuals;

- Safeguard individuals who might be vulnerable to being radicalised, so that they are not at risk of being drawn into terrorist related activity;

- Provide early intervention to protect and divert people away from the risks they face and reduce vulnerability.

It is known that violent extremists exploit vulnerabilities in individuals to drive a wedge between them, their families and their communities.

As a minimum there must be information evidencing a concern that the individual is either moving towards support for terrorism, or an attraction to terrorism or a vulnerability to radicalisation.

Learn more about Channel via this online learning resource - https://www.elearning.prevent.homeoffice.gov.uk/channelawareness