



Radicalisation and the Prevent Duty – all you need to know

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Prevent duty is a law which was introduced back in 2015 and is part of the UK Government's wider counter-terrorism strategy.

The law asks for all employers, including schools and registered early years providers, to have due regard to the need to prevent vulnerable people from being drawn into terrorism.

As part of this strategy, the Government requires staff to be vigilant and spot any issues, such as changes in normal behaviour, or any other concerns about a child's wellbeing, which may indicate that they are susceptible to radicalisation. The statutory guidance on the Prevent duty summarises the requirements on schools and childcare providers in terms of four general themes: risk assessment, working in partnership, staff training and IT policies. The government first published its Prevent duty guidance in 2015 and updated it in 2021 - you can find it here on the government's official website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance>

As early years practitioners, you are ideally placed to be able to flag any concerns about the children you spend time with. To fulfil your duties under the Prevent duty, you must be able to identify children who may be vulnerable to radicalisation and know what to do when they are identified. We'll cover this in more depth later in the guide.

What's the difference between extremism and radicalisation?

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 and beliefs'.

Extremists accept violence as a legitimate way of achieving political goals without necessarily exercising violence themselves. E.g. Calling for the deaths of members of British armed forces.

Radicalisation is a process whereby a person is drawn into supporting terrorism and extremist ideologies.

One of the most widely known terrorist organisations which has gained increasing media attention in recent years is Daesh (also known as ISIS or ISIL). However, the UK also faces terrorist threats from extreme right-wing terrorism, including those who idolise Adolf Hitler and Nazism (Neo-Nazis) and also Northern Ireland related terrorism (NIRT).

On 3rd June 2017, we were reminded that the threat of terror on UK soil is ever-present when three attackers used a van as a weapon to plough into pedestrians on London Bridge. They fled on foot before launching a knife attack in nearby Borough Market. Eight people lost their lives that day and many more were injured. The men responsible for the attack were shot dead by police, who arrived on the scene within 8 minutes.

Responsibility for the attack was claimed by the so-called Islamic State and the men were reported to have been shouting "This is for Allah" as they carried out their violent rampage. Unfortunately, this is just one example of the many terror attacks that the UK has faced in the past few decades.

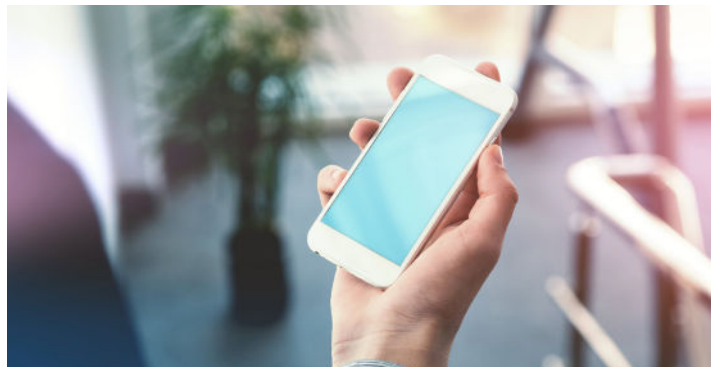
How does it start and who may be at risk of being radicalised?

Terrorists have many different means to persuade people to join their cause and it's important to note that this can happen both online and offline. Social media sites provide a platform to contact people who may be useful in furthering the organisation's goal. Propaganda videos posted online idealise their terrorist group's lifestyle and give false promises about what will happen once a person joins.

Through a combination of peer pressure, 'bonding' and indoctrination, terrorists can convince people that violence is the right way to respond to perceived wrongdoings.

As part of their recruitment process, terrorist groups may target those who:

- Feel discriminated against in some way
- Feel an aspect of their identity is under threat, such as their culture or religion
- Have a personal grievance
- Are looking for excitement



Studies have shown that those who have been radicalised are often looking for a sense of belonging, or searching for identity and meaning in their lives. This is why children and young people are particularly vulnerable to this process.

There are additional factors that may have a bearing on someone becoming vulnerable to radicalisation such as: being bullied, domestic violence in the family, emotional trauma such as bereavement, low self-esteem, substance abuse or mental health issues.

Children at risk of radicalisation may display changes in behaviour which are unique to them and may even seek to hide their views. You should use your professional judgement to identify children who might be at risk of radicalisation and act accordingly.

Even very young children may be vulnerable to radicalisation by other (for example, if their family unit exposes them to extremist views) and can display concerning behaviour.

How are young people radicalised?

One of the most disturbing factors with young people being radicalised is that the process is different for every individual and can take place over a varying time frame. The internet and social media have become key tools in helping terrorist groups make contact and recruit people to their cause.

How does the Prevent duty tie into Ofsted inspections?

During an Ofsted inspection, a judgement is made on the effectiveness of leaders and governors in raising awareness of radicalisation and keeping children safe. As part of this, all staff members are expected to know how to identify children who may be at risk of radicalisation and what steps to take if they believe a child is at risk.

An inherent part of Prevent is promoting British Values, which are implicitly embedded within the EYFS. These values are fundamental in helping young children become compassionate adults who are able to form part of a fair and equal society.

These values are:

- Democracy
- Individual Liberty
- The Rule of Law
- Mutual Respect and Tolerance

It is not necessary for childcare settings to have distinct policies on how they implement the Prevent duty. However, they must be able to demonstrate the ways in which they are actively promoting British values through the delivery of the EYFS.

You can read our guide [here](#) on how you can promote British Values in your setting, what's involved and how you can make sure you are meeting the legislation.

What should you do if you have a concern?

Your setting should already have a clear safeguarding policy in place for raising any concerns or worries you may have regarding a child. In the first instance, you should follow the process laid out in this policy and speak to your Designated Safeguarding Lead. Even if you feel silly or the worry seems to be small or insignificant, it's much better to report it than say nothing at all.

Additionally, The Department for Education has a helpline (020 7340 7264) to enable staff to raise concerns relating to extremism or, in non-emergency situations, they can be emailed to counter.extremism@education.gov.uk

If you feel a person is in immediate danger or you see/hear something that you think may be terrorist-related, call 999 or the Anti-Terrorist Hotline on 0800 789 321.

How can you promote good practice in your setting?

The Prevent duty does not require early years providers or staff to carry out unnecessary intrusion into family life, and it should not be burdensome, over and above your normal safeguarding duties. However, it does place a responsibility on you to take action if you see behaviour which is worrying or a cause for concern.

Assess the risk of children being vulnerable to radicalisation. Your local authority and the police will be able to provide further contextual information to help you understand the risks which are specific and relevant to your area.

Explore and find ways to actively promote the British values of democracy, rule of law, mutual tolerance and respect, and individual liberty. As part of this, work directly with children to help build their resilience to radicalisation by enabling them to challenge extremist views.

Help children to help themselves by teaching them how to identify and manage risk, make safer choices and recognise when peer pressure may threaten their safety and wellbeing or that of others.

Do not be discouraged to let young people debate controversial issues. You should instead provide a safe space in which children can understand the risks associated with terrorism and develop the skills/knowledge to be able to challenge extremist views.

Where children have access to the internet in a school or setting, ensure they are safe from being exposed to extremist and terrorist material by having clear IT policies in place and a suitable filtering system.

Keep safeguarding at the forefront of everyone's minds with posters and further information about the Prevent duty displayed in all areas of the setting including toilets, staff rooms, entrance ways etc.

Provide information on the Prevent duty to parents as well as staff. It's crucial that early years providers are able to assist families who raise concerns about radicalisation and point them in the right direction to get more support.

Further resources:

Visit the '[Educate against hate](#)' website which gives parents, teachers and school leaders practical advice about protecting children against extremism and radicalisation.

Read the [Government's guide on the Prevent duty](#)

Go to the "[Let's talk about it](#)" website which offers resources and practical guidance to stop people supporting terrorism.

[Channel Duty Guidance](#)

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