Parents' FAQs: extremism and radicalisation

What is extremism? How does it differ from terrorism?

The main difference is that terrorism is defined as a **violent** action, whereas extremism doesn't always lead to violence.

Not all extremist groups, whether Islamist, far-right or other, will commit terrorist or violent acts. However, some groups pose threats, both online and offline.

Counter Extremism Strategy 2015 defines extremism as vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values: democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and respect and tolerance for different faiths and beliefs. They also include any calls for the death of members of our armed forces as extremism.

The UK definition of terrorism is given in the *Terrorism Act 2006*. We can define it as a **violent** action that:

- Endangers a person's life, other than that of the person committing the action
- Involves serious violence against a person
- Causes serious damage to property
- Creates a serious risk to the public's health and safety
- Interferes with or seriously disrupts an electronic system

What is radicalisation?

According to the Government Prevent Duty Guidance, radicalisation is "the **process** by which a person comes to **support** terrorism and extremist views that are associated with terrorist groups."

Children and young people are vulnerable to being exposed to extremist content and *radicalised* both online and offline.

How are children and young people targeted?

- Extremist groups often use the internet and social media to radicalise young people into holding extreme views. These groups will often offer solutions to feelings of being misunderstood, not listened to, or being treated unfairly, in a way to attract young people to hold these views.
- Encrypted messaging apps like Snapchat mean people can exchange views with like-minded people without being monitored.
- Videos online can incite hatred against groups of people or ideologies.
- Personal contact. Young people who know someone who has already gone to join in the war in Iraq and Syria, for example, are more likely to become radicalised themselves

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What are the warning signs that I can look out for in my child?

There are sometimes clear warning signs of radicalisation, but not always.

Teenagers, for instance, go through many changes and it can be hard to differentiate between 'normal' teenage behaviour and signs that your child may be exposed to extremist views and being radicalised.

Educate Against Hate, a website set up by the Government Department for Education and the Home Office lists the following signs that can be used as a guide.

Your child may display one or more of these signs, but this doesn't necessarily mean they are being radicalised. It is important to trust your instincts if something feels wrong.

Outward appearance

- Becoming increasingly argumentative
- Refusing to listen to different points of view
- Unwilling to engage with children who are different
- Becoming abusive to children who are different
- Embracing conspiracy theories
- Feeling persecuted
- Changing friends and appearance
- Distancing themselves from old friends
- No longer doing things they used to enjoy
- Converting to a new religion
- Being secretive and reluctant to discuss their whereabouts
- Sympathetic to extremist ideologies and groups

Online behaviour

- Changing online identity
- Having more than one online identity
- Spending a lot of time online or on the phone
- Accessing extremist online content
- Joining or trying to join an extremist organisation

What is Prevent Duty?

The government's official definition of Prevent Duty is the legal obligation of schools to provide "due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism". Prevent has a helpline which allows members of the public to express concern about people who have been subject to and embracing of extremist opinions.

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What is the Channel programme?

Channel focuses on providing support at an early stage to people who are identified as being vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. It provides a mechanism for schools to make referrals if they are concerned that an individual might be vulnerable to radicalisation. An individual's engagement with the programme is entirely voluntary at all stages.

What are schools doing to tackle extremism and radicalisation?

All schools are subject to the Prevent 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". This is part of a school's wider safeguarding obligations.

Schools must follow guidelines laid out in the government's Prevent Duty, if pupils show signs of being influenced by extremism of any kind, including non-violent behaviour likely to 'create an atmosphere conducive to terrorism.'

Schools should have a Designated Safeguarding Lead and deputies that are obliged to report any concerns they may have. Staff should also receive training so that they can spot the signs that a child is being radicalised. There should also be filtering and monitoring systems in place within the school's IT network to avoid exposure to extremist content online. However, it is acknowledged that many children own their own smartphones and can also access 3G and 4G networks.

How do I talk to my child about extremism?

It can be hard to know where and when to start when it comes to bringing up a serious issue such as extremism and radicalisation.

What you say will depend upon your child's age. The important thing is to ensure your child feels comfortable and that you know you won't be interrupted when having a discussion.

Be prepared to listen to what they have to say and if necessary explore the definitions of extremism and radicalisation together.

If they are not comfortable opening up to you then try to encourage them to speak to another trusted adult or support organisation.

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How can I keep my child safe from radicalisation online?

Extremist groups use the internet and social media to spread their ideology. However, trying to stop your child using the internet and mobile devices is not an effective way of keeping them safe. Instead, it is important for them to understand that just because something appears on a website, it doesn't mean it's factually correct.

It is important for your child to understand why groups may try to radicalise young people. Encourage your child to think critically about anything they come across online or in social media groups. Can they recognise when they are being manipulated?

Younger children may need help understanding that not everything they come across online is true and sometimes people exaggerate, lie or spread hate online.

I'm worried about my child. What can I do?

- Talk to your child. If they express extremist views, listen to them but encourage them to think critically about their beliefs. Why are people trying to make them feel this way? Suggest they look at a number of sources for news rather than relying on social media 'echo chambers' that reinforce already held beliefs for information.
- Speak to your child's school, particularly if you think they are being influenced by other pupils or are influencing them. Your child's teacher(s) may have noticed changes in your child's behaviour at school. Schools also have access to support and specialists who can help.
- If you find your child has been accessing online content promoting extremism of any form, or they have stumbled across it by mistake, you can report the content anonymously at www.gov.uk/report-terrorism.

Where can I get further support and information?

The government's Educate Against Hate website has a parent hub with lots of useful resources and it can direct you to the support you need. If you visit the parent hub you can filter by category and choose 'extremism and radicalisation'. This website also signposts lots of other relevant organisations and resources for parents.

educateagainsthate.com/parents/

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018

This is statutory guidance for schools and colleges on safeguarding children and safer recruitment. It includes up to date information on schools' duties when it comes to radicalisation and extremism.

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2

Prevent Duty guidance

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

Terrorism Act 2006

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/11/contents

Counter Extremism Strategy 2015

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/counter-extremism-strategy