

# Advice to Parent and Carers

## Keeping Children and Young People Safe from Radicalisation and Extremism



[www.safermk.com](http://www.safermk.com)



## **Parents have the most important role in keeping their children safe**

The parent/child relationship is the foundation to keeping children safe and supporting their social development and educational attainment.

Parenting can be a challenging task. Maintaining a positive relationship can sometimes be difficult as children grow and develop and seek an identity that may be different from their own family.

Children and young people have a natural curiosity, which as parents we want to encourage. However, as our children grow up we have to take different steps to ensure their safety.

Currently a number of young girls and boys have been persuaded to leave the country against the wishes of their families, or in secret, putting themselves in extreme danger.

## **You may not agree with the Government, the Council or the media**

In a democracy, people often disagree. We need to encourage our young people to speak out, to find appropriate channels to encourage change and work with them to have their voices heard even when we disagree.

We also need to be committed to building an integrated, cohesive community with equal opportunities for everyone.

## **Why might a young person be drawn towards extremist ideologies?**

- They may be searching for answers to questions about identity, faith and belonging
- They may be driven by the desire for 'adventure' and excitement
- They may be driven by a need to raise their self-esteem and promote their 'street credibility'
- They may be drawn to a group or individual who can offer identity, a social network or support
- They may be influenced by world events and a sense of grievance resulting in a need to make a difference

## How might this happen?

### *On-line*

The internet provides entertainment, connectivity and interaction. Children may need to spend a lot of time on the internet while studying and they may use other social media and messaging sites such as Facebook, Youtube, Twitter, Instagram, Vine or Whatsapp.

These can be useful tools, but we need to be aware there are powerful programmes and networks that use these media to reach out to young people and can communicate extremist messages.

### *Peer Interaction*

Young people at risk may display extrovert behaviour, start getting into trouble at school or on the streets and may mix with other children who behave badly, but this is not always the case.

### *TV and media*

The media provide a view on world affairs. However, this is often a very simple version of events, which in reality are very complex. Children may not understand the situation fully or appreciate the dangers involved in the views of some groups. They may see things in simple terms and not have the whole picture.

## What are the signs that a child is at risk?

There are no typical characteristics of a person at risk. However, a sudden change in behaviour could be a potential indicator. Sometimes those at risk may be encouraged, by the people they are in contact with, not to draw attention to themselves. If you feel there is a change in your child's behaviour, parents are encouraged to inquire about their children's wellbeing. In particular, when you observe:

- Out of character changes in behaviour and peer relationships
- Secretive behaviour
- Losing interest in friends and activities
- Showing sympathy for extremist causes
- Glorifying violence
- Possessing illegal or extremist literature
- Advocating messages similar to illegal organisations such as "Muslims Against Crusades" or other non-proscribed extremist groups such as the English Defence League

## How best can parents help?

Children need their parents to be open and communicate with them. This involves listening to their children's views and concerns. You may not always agree with your child, but you should convey to them that you have understood his or her point of view and you want the best for them in life. However, if you are concerned about your child, you may want to talk to a local faith or community leader, person of influence or teacher.

### Do you have concerns?

If you have any concerns that your child may be being influenced by others get help – talk to someone you can trust, this could be your faith leader, family members who are peers of your children, or outside help.

If you feel there is a risk of a child leaving the country, consider what safeguards you could take to avert travel. You might want to consider taking the precaution of securing their passport in a safe place. Some young people do not need a passport for confirming their age, they can apply for an identification card as an alternative (details below).

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If you have any concerns that your child may be being influenced by others, please talk to your child's class teacher or another person in the school that you trust, as they will be able to help and can access support for you and your child. Alternatively, there are many others who can offer support and guidance such as a faith or community leader, person of influence or outside help.

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## Ways a parent can support children and young people to stay safe

### *Know they are safe*

- Know where your child is, who they are with and check this for yourself
- Know your child's friends and their families
- Keep lines of communication open, listen to your child and talk to them about their interests
- Encourage them to take up positive activities with local groups that you can trust

*Know their interests*

- Talk to your child about what they see on the TV or the internet and explain that what they see or read may not be the whole picture
- Allow and encourage debate and questioning on local and world events and help them see different points of view
- Encourage your child to show an interest in the local community and show respect for people from all faiths and backgrounds
- Help your child to understand the dangers of becoming involved in situations about which they may not have the full information
- Teach them that expressing strong views and trying to change things for the better is fine but they should not take violent action against others or support those that do

*Know what influences them*

- Be aware of your child's on-line activity and update your own knowledge
- Know what social media and messaging sites your child uses
- Remind your child that people they contact over the internet may be pretending to be someone else or telling them things that are not true
- Explain that anyone who tells them to keep secrets from their family or teachers is likely to be trying to do them harm or put them in danger

## Contact details and confidential help lines

Alongside those previously mentioned, there are several dedicated teams who support vulnerable individuals and their families;

Your local Prevent team can be contacted on the Police non-emergency number 101 or email [PreventReferrals@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk](mailto:PreventReferrals@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk)

Anonymous Anti-Terrorist Hotline 0800 789 321  
For imminent threats contact the Police on 999

Children's Social Care Services 01908 253169/253170 or the Emergency out of office hours 01908 265545

You can also contact Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111

The Active Change Foundation (ACF) provide a confidential helpline to prevent British nationals from travelling to conflict zones.  
ACF Confidential helpline telephone number is 020 8539 2770

## Further Sources of Support and Information School

[www.ltai.info](http://www.ltai.info)

Let's Talk About It has been created to provide a greater understanding of the support Prevent can offer and to challenge division and negativity in our communities through positive and effective attitude changes. By highlighting the issues and initiating discussions around the potential threats we face as a community, we can create greater understanding and wider awareness.

[www.preventtragedies.co.uk](http://www.preventtragedies.co.uk)

This website was created due to the increasing concern about the worrying numbers of young people who are putting themselves at risk by travelling to Syria and other conflict zones and to help the numbers of families that have been torn apart by fear when their loved ones travel.

## How can we make the web safer?

[www.direct.gov.uk/reportingonlineterrorism](http://www.direct.gov.uk/reportingonlineterrorism)

This is a dedicated webpage where you can report online content you think might be illegal, or which you find offensive.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/webwise>

Information and support for safe use of the internet

[www.ceop.gov.uk](http://www.ceop.gov.uk)

CEOP works with child protection partners across the UK and overseas to identify the main threats to children and coordinates activity against these threats to bring offenders to account, protecting children from harm online and offline

[www.internetmatters.org](http://www.internetmatters.org)

Website dedicated to ideas to make the internet safe





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