
What every parent needs to know about radicalisation





Radicalisation and the Internet

The Internet brings marvellous opportunities to children and young people with the ability to learn new skills and visit websites which engage and enrich their lives. However, the Internet also brings dangers such as online predators who will try and contact children through websites and software applications ('apps').

More recently, there has been an increase in groups and individuals trying to approach young people to recruit them for political or religious ideas. This is known as online radicalisation and can be described as;

"The actions of an individual or group who use the Internet and digital technology to groom a young person into following their extremist ideas."

There have been cases in the news over recent years of groups like Islamic State (ISIS) using the Internet and social media to recruit young people to fight in the conflict in Syria. In addition, there are examples of right-wing groups such as Britain First and the English Defence League using Facebook and Twitter to engage with Internet users.

As a parent and carer, you need to be aware of the dangers of your child being targeted by online extremists. Here is some information to support you with the issue of online radicalisation.

CONTEST



This is the government strategy to target terrorist groups in the UK and abroad. The main focus is to prevent repeats of terrorist acts such as the devastating attacks in London and Manchester. There are four strands to the strategy:

- **Pursue** – to stop terrorist attacks
- **Prevent** – to stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism
- **Protect** – to strengthen our protection against a terrorist attack
- **Prepare** – to mitigate the impact of terrorist attacks

Since 1st July 2015, schools have had a duty to safeguard children from radicalisation and staff should be trained to ensure that they know the signs and report any information to the designated officer.

PARENTAL/CARER SUPPORT

Here are some suggestions to support your child with the threat of online extremism:

Filter What They Can View

Schools and home broadband connections all have settings that can block out extremist sites. Your Internet service provider e.g. BT, Sky, Virgin all have tools which can minimise the ability to access specific sites. Mobile phone providers also have similar services which mean that they limit access to sites.

However, it is important that your child can talk to you if they come across information that they find disturbing or controversial. You can then support them with evaluating ideas or issues that are discussed on the Internet.



Make Them Judge Internet Content

There is a vast array of information on the Internet and it is important that young people know that many groups will use it to spread propaganda about their views and opinions. Schools are focussed on making learners critical thinkers and at home you should look at ways to help your child evaluate an Internet site. Sites such as 'Whois.net' (<https://www.whois.net/>) enable users to look at who has set up an Internet site and assess whether the creators have a particular bias.

Different Types Of Extremism

It is useful to note that there are different types of extremist behaviour on the Internet. Much of the focus recently has been on religious and political radicalisation through Islamic State and the Far Right. However, young people can be radicalised in other ways including self-harm websites and pro-ana (anorexia) sites. It is important to monitor your child's behaviour and if they have issues around self-esteem and emotional well being, then visit a health professional.



Challenge Narratives

As young people progress through their teenage years, they will develop their opinions and ideas. Many develop political ideas based on views that they have of the world and issues that concern them. There is nothing wrong with this, but if you feel that your son or daughter is becoming excessive with their views, it might be that they are engaged with others promoting extremist ideology. The important role for a parent is not to panic and to talk to the school or others in the community.

Social Networking – Privacy Settings

Sites such as Facebook and Twitter are common ways for extremists to target young people. By making contact with them, they can easily brainwash vulnerable users by linking to other sites which support their biased views. It is important that parents and carers discuss issues around privacy settings on social networking sites. Many individuals that target young people use grooming techniques and it is important that settings are enabled to reduce easy contact. Further information on using privacy settings on social network accounts can be found at Internet Matters (<http://www.Internetmatters.org/>).

Report Extremism

If you come across extremist material on the Internet, you can report it to a dedicated government website (<https://www.gov.uk/report-terrorism>). This can include articles or speeches promoting terrorism or information to help individuals or groups commit acts of terror. All reports to the site are treated anonymously.

British Values

Many groups will set out to try and divide communities and alter the views of children and young people by highlighting disunion. Britain is a very cohesive society and schools now educate students about the five important principles of:



- Democracy
- Rule of law
- Tolerance of those from different faiths
- Individual liberty
- Mutual respect



Channel

If a young person is being radicalised through the Internet or by other means, the government has a scheme called 'Channel' which supports them in a variety of ways to disengage with their extremist views. The programme offers the individual alternative activities and provides them with a mentor to help them channel their energies in different ways.

We must remember that the Internet provides many opportunities to support people and communities. In many ways it reflects society and that whilst the majority of people using technology and the web for positive reasons, there will be those that use it for criminal purposes.

Whilst parents and carers may not be as 'tech-savvy' as their children, it is important that they talk to them about their digital lives, so that they can share any worries or concerns.

Useful Links

(CEOP) Think U Know: <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

Prevent Tragedies: <http://www.preventtragedies.co.uk/>

Get Safe Online: <https://www.getsafeonline.org/>

Glossary

Online radicalisation – method of using websites and social media to encourage an individual or group to adopt extremist political, social or religious views

Social media – websites and applications that enable users to create and share or to participate in social networking

Channel - multi-agency approach to identify and provide support to individuals who are at risk of being drawn into terrorism

CONTEST - government counter-terrorism strategy aiming to reduce the risk to the UK and its interests overseas from terrorism.