



# **Children's MARS Guidance**

**Working with Children, Young People and  
Adults who are Vulnerable to Radicalisation**

**April 2021**

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## Introduction

The current threat from terrorism in the United Kingdom is severe and can involve the exploitation of vulnerable people. This threat can extend to children and young people to draw them into extremist ideology and behaviours. Prevent caters for vulnerabilities connected to any form of extremism including messages espoused by recognised groups such as DAESH (ISIL), Al-Qaeda, Far Right Groups who target ethnic communities as well as Far Left and Animal Rights activists.

This guidance is designed to provide a clear framework for professionals with which to respond to safeguarding concerns for those children and young people who may be vulnerable to the messages of extremism. In addition, it provides details of the local inter agency process and expectations in respect of safeguarding children and Channel process.

Radicalisation is defined as the process by which people come to support terrorism and extremism and, in some cases, to then participate in terrorist groups.

‘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. We also include in our definition of extremism calls for the death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas’ (*HM Government Prevent Strategy 2011*)

## Equality and diversity

All developments are intended to ensure that no-one is treated in any way less favourably on the grounds of race, colour, national or ethnic or social origin, race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, age, religion/ belief or political/ other personal beliefs.

## National guidance

CONTEST is the Government’s counter terrorist strategy, its aim to reduce the risk to the UK and its interests overseas from terrorism.

The [Prevent duty guidance](#) outlines the duties on authorities to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

Prevent is a key part of the overall counter terrorism strategy CONTEST. It aims to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. Early intervention is at the heart of Prevent in diverting people away from being drawn into terrorist activity. Prevent happens before any criminal activity takes place. It is about recognising, supporting and protecting people who might be susceptible to radicalisation. The Prevent Strategy objectives focus on the following core areas:

- Ideology – responding to the ideological challenge of terrorism and the threat we face from those who promote it
- Individuals - preventing people from being drawn into terrorism and ensure that they are given appropriate advice and support.
- Institutions - working with sectors and institutions where there are risks of radicalisation which we need to address

Channel Duty Guidance outlines the responsibility on agencies to safeguard children and young people at risk of radicalisation. The duty guidance also outlines the channel programme which uses a multi-agency approach to protect people by:

- identifying individuals at risk of being drawn into terrorism
- assessing the nature and extent of that risk
- developing the most appropriate support plan for the individuals concerned

Channel is about safeguarding children and adults from being drawn into committing terrorist-related activity. It is about early intervention to protect and divert people away from the risk they face before illegality occurs.

## **Partnership working**

Within North Lincolnshire, there is a Prevent Multi-Agency Partnership Board who are responsible for coordinating work on this agenda.

In line with [Channel Duty Guidance Protecting vulnerable people from being drawn into terrorism statutory guidance 2020](#), the Channel process is established in North Lincolnshire, and it consists of a referral process and processes for responding to identified risk and need, and for providing appropriate support.

Channel referrals should therefore be prioritised by the local authority and other statutory partners in all their work to safeguard vulnerable individuals. Channel should be considered alongside other early intervention measures such as work undertaken to support and divert young people from anti-social behaviour, gangs or drugs.

Both an awareness of Prevent and an understanding of the risks it is intended to address are vital to effectively manage risk to vulnerable people of getting involved with terrorism and or extremism. Professionals can help to identify, and to refer to the relevant agencies, children whose behaviour suggests that they are being drawn into terrorism or extremism. Schools can help to protect children from extremist and violent views in the same ways that they help to safeguard children from drugs, gang violence or alcohol. Schools' work on Prevent needs to be seen in this context.

The purpose must be to protect children from harm and to ensure that they are taught in a way that is consistent with the law and our values.

All organisations should have an awareness of the Prevent agenda and the various forms radicalisation takes in being able to recognise signs and indicators of concern and respond appropriately. Awareness training is available across organisations in North Lincolnshire.

## **Understanding and recognising risks and vulnerabilities of radicalisation**

### **Principles**

A child is defined in the Children Acts 1989 and 2004 as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday.

Children and young people can be drawn into violence or they can be exposed to the messages of extremist groups by many means. These can include through the influence of family members or friends and/or direct contact with extremist groups and organisations or, increasingly, through the internet. This can put a young person at risk of being drawn into criminal activity and has the potential to cause significant harm. Children and young people are vulnerable to exposure to, or involvement with, groups or individuals who advocate violence as a means to a political or ideological end. Examples of extremist causes that have used violence to achieve their ends include animal rights, the far right, internal terrorist and international terrorist organisations.

Most individuals, even those who hold radical views, do not become involved in 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 extremist activity.

Safeguarding children and young people from radicalisation is no different from safeguarding them from other forms of harm.

Indicators for vulnerability to radicalisation are the same as those you are already familiar with:

- family tensions
- sense of isolation
- migration
- distance from cultural heritage
- experience of racism or discrimination
- feeling of failure etc.
- being excluded from social and peer networks

Those in the process of being radicalised may:

- become involved with a new group of friends
- be searching for answers to questions about identity, faith and belonging
- possess extremist literature or advocate violence actions
- change their behaviour and language

- seek to recruit others to an extremist ideology

It is important to note that children and young people experiencing these situations or displaying these behaviours are not necessarily showing signs of being radicalised. There could be many other reasons for the behaviour including those you are already familiar with alcohol or drug abuse, family break down, domestic abuse, bullying etc or even something more minor.

Caution should be exercised 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.

The risk of radicalisation is the product of a number of factors and identifying this risk requires that practitioners exercise their professional judgement, seeking further advice as necessary. It may be combined with other vulnerabilities or may be the only risk identified.

Some children may be at risk due to living with or being in direct contact with known extremists. Such children may be identified by the police or through Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) processes.

## **Vulnerability and risk indicators**

The following lists are not exhaustive and all or none of indicators may be present in individual cases of concern. Nor does it mean that vulnerable people/ young people experiencing these factors are automatically at risk of exploitation for the purposes of extremism. The accepted view is that a complex relationship between the various aspects of an individual's identity determines their vulnerability to extremism.

Over-simplified assessments based upon demographics and poverty indicators have consistently demonstrated to increase victimisation, fail to identify vulnerabilities and, in some cases, increase the ability of extremists to exploit, operate and recruit.

There is no such thing as a 'typical extremist' and those involved in extremism come from a range of backgrounds and experiences. The following indicators have been provided to support professionals in North Lincolnshire to understand and identify factors that may suggest a child, young person or their family may be vulnerable or involved with extremism.

### **Vulnerability**

- **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 UK values; having a sense of grievance that is triggered by personal experience of racism or discrimination or aspects of Government policy

- **Unmet Aspirations**

Perceptions of injustice; feeling of failure; rejection of civic life

- **Criminality**

Experiences of imprisonment; poor resettlement/ reintegration, previous involvement with criminal groups

### **Access to extremism / extremist influences**

- Is there reason to believe that the child/young person 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 child/young person is the partner, spouse, friend or family member of someone believed to be linked with extremist activity)
- Is there evidence to suggest that the child/young person are accessing the internet for the purpose of extremist activity? (e.g. use of closed network groups, access to or distribution of extremist material, contact associates covertly via Skype/email etc)
- Is there reason to believe that the child/young person has been or is likely to be involved with extremist/ military training camps/ locations?
- Is the child/young person 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 child/young person sympathise with, or support illegal/illicit groups e.g. propaganda distribution, fundraising and attendance at meetings?
- Does the child/young person have connections with support groups with links to extremist activity but not illegal/illicit e.g. propaganda distribution, fundraising and attendance at meetings?

### **Experiences, behaviours and influences**

- Has the child/ young person encountered peer, social, family or faith group rejection?
- Is there evidence of extremist ideological, political or religious influence on the child/ young person from within or outside UK?
- Have international events in areas of conflict and civil unrest had a personal impact on the child/ young person resulting in a noticeable change in behaviour? It is important to recognise that many people may be emotionally affected by the plight of what is happening in areas of conflict (i.e. images of children dying) it is important to differentiate them from those that sympathise with or support extremist activity

- Has there been a significant shift in the child/ young person's behaviour or outward appearance that suggests a new social/political or religious influence?
- Has the child/ young person come into conflict with family over religious beliefs/lifestyle/ dress choices?
- Does the child/ young person vocally support terrorist attacks; either verbally or in their written work?
- Has the child/ young person witnessed or been the perpetrator/ victim of racial or religious hate crime or sectarianism?

## **Travel**

- 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 child/ young person travelled for extended periods of time to international locations known to be associated with extremism?
- Has the child/ young person employed any methods to disguise their true identity?  
Has the child/ young person used documents or cover to support this?

## **Social Factors**

- Does the child/ young person have experience of poverty, disadvantage, discrimination or social exclusion?
- Does the child/ young person experience a lack of meaningful employment appropriate to their skills?
- Does the child/ young person display a lack of affinity or understanding for others, or social isolation from peer groups?
- Does the child/ young person demonstrate identity conflict and confusion normally associated with youth development?
- Does the child/ young person have any learning difficulties/ mental health support needs?
- Does the child/ young person demonstrate a simplistic or flawed understanding of religion or politics?
- Does the child/ young person have a history of crime, including episodes in prison?
- Is the child/young person a foreign national, refugee or awaiting a decision on their immigration/ national status?
- Does the child/ young person have insecure, conflicted or absent family relationships?
- Has the child/ young person experienced any trauma in their lives, particularly any trauma associated with war or sectarian conflict?
- Is there evidence that a significant adult or other in the child/young person's life has extremist view or sympathies?

## **Other critical risk factors**

- Being in contact with extremist recruiters
- Articulating support for extremist causes or leaders
- Accessing extremist websites, especially those with a social networking element

- Possessing extremist literature
- Using extremist narratives and a global ideology to explain personal disadvantage
- Justifying the use of violence to solve societal issues
- Joining extremist organisations
- Significant changes to appearance and/or behaviour

## **Referral and intervention process**

Professionals should refer to the [One Family Approach – Helping Children and Families in North Lincolnshire document 2020-24](#) to determine the level of need of the child which correlates with the concerns identified.

If you have a concern about an individual and want to make a referral use the Channel referral form and/or send your concerns through to the dedicated Prevent inbox at: [Prevent@humberside.pnn.police.uk](mailto:Prevent@humberside.pnn.police.uk)

Where a child is considered at risk of significant harm a referral to Children’s Services should be made as outlined in the One Family Approach – Helping Children and Families in North Lincolnshire document 2020-24 as well as a referral to Channel.

Where there are concerns that a child may be at risk of / potential risk of being involved/ potentially involved in supporting or following extremism, further investigation by the police will be required.

Any professional who identifies vulnerability concerns as outlined above, should discuss their concerns with the named or designated safeguarding professional in their organisation or agency. However, this should not prevent immediate action being taken where a child is at immediate risk or at risk of significant harm. In these circumstances a referral should be made to Children’s Services and in an emergency a 999 call made to the police.

The named or designated safeguarding professional should consider whether a situation may be so serious that an emergency response is required. Professionals should exercise professional judgement and common sense to identify whether an emergency situation applies.

### **Channel Referral Process**

If you have a concern about an individual and want to make a referral use the Channel referral form and/or send your concerns through to the dedicated Prevent inbox at: [Prevent@humberside.pnn.police.uk](mailto:Prevent@humberside.pnn.police.uk)

It is important to remember that any information you give to the police at this stage will be investigated in the pre-criminal space. It does not assume that any criminal activity has taken place and the police will be looking to support rather than arrest.

The Channel Referral form can be found on the [Children's MARS website](#).

The Channel Police Practitioner is responsible for coordinating Channel in the area.

As a result of receiving the information the Prevent team will:

- manage referrals and cases through the Channel process in accordance with the Channel Statutory guidance and safeguarding procedures
- ensure that referrals are dealt with swiftly and where appropriate brought to the attention of the Channel panel as soon as possible
- increase understanding of Channel amongst panel partners and others
- establish effective relationships with panel partners, individual and organisations who can deliver support
- manage any risk associated with the individuals potential involvement with terror related activity.

Where a Channel Panel is held multi agency involvement is essential to ensure that a vulnerable child has access to a wide range of support and services.

Information sharing is an essential part of the process to determine whether an individual requires support and if so what it should consist of.

Information sharing is undertaken in line with legislation and relevant guidance including:

- The Human Rights Act 1998
- Common Law Duty of Confidentiality
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Common Law Powers
- Local Government Act 1972
- Local Government Act 2000
- National Health Service Act 2006 and Health and Social Care Act 2001
- Offender Management Act 2007

In addition, information should be shared in line with the [Children's MARS information sharing guidance](#).

Section 36 of the Counter Terrorism and Security (CT&S) Act places a duty on local authorities to ensure that Channel panels are in place.

A case referred to Channel will be considered as to whether a panel meeting should be held. Where this is determined by the police a Vulnerability Assessment will be completed by the police and sent to panel members invited in advance of the meeting so that they can contribute their knowledge, experience and expertise.

The purpose of the Channel panel meeting is to collectively assess the risk and decide if:

- a) the person is vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism
- b) should be referred to a different support mechanism

c) should exit the process

In assessing the risk, consideration should be given to:

- a) the risk the individual faces of being drawn into terrorism
- b) the risk the individual poses to society if they get drawn into terrorism

The panel must fully consider all the information available to them to make an objective decision on the support provided, without discriminating against the individual's race, religion or background.

A record of decisions and actions are kept. The Chair should be provided with a copy following each meeting. An audit trail of decisions should be kept as decisions may need to be referred to at a later date. The records should be retained whilst the case is live and for the appropriate data retention period thereafter.

Each case is handled separately. People deemed appropriate to receive support will have a tailored package developed for them, according to their identified vulnerabilities. Using the initial vulnerability assessment and their professional expertise, the panel should develop a package to support the needs of the individual and use the information to inform the assessment and mitigation of any risk posed to potential support providers.

Section 36(4) of CT&S Act requires panels to:

- a) prepare a plan for an individual whom the panel considers appropriate to be offered support
- b) make arrangements for support to be provided as described in the plan where consent is given
- c) keep the support given under review
- d) revise or withdraw a support plan if considered appropriate
- e) carry out further assessments, after such periods as the panel considers appropriate, of an individual's vulnerability to being drawn into terrorism
  - where the necessary consent to the provision of support is refused or withdrawn
  - the panel has determined that support should be withdrawn and
- f) prepare a further support plan if considered appropriate.

Risk is a theme that runs through the entire Channel process, i.e. risk to the individual, risk to the public and risk to partners or organisations providing support to the individual, including any intervention providers. The panel is responsible for managing the risk in relation to the vulnerable individual.

Support offered for some individuals could span several agencies and each agency involved will own the element of risk they are responsible for addressing through the support plan.

The risk of involvement in terrorism lies with the police. This is the risk posed by the individual to themselves and society through their potential active involvement in

criminality associated with terrorism. The police are the most appropriate agency throughout the entire life of each Channel case to assess and manage this risk.

### **Consent prior to support**

As participation in Channel remains voluntary, section 36(4)(b) of the CT&S Act requires consent to be given by the individual (or their parent/guardian in the case of a child) in advance of support measures being put in place. All individuals who receive support through Channel must be made aware that they are receiving this as part of a programme to protect people from being drawn into terrorism, what the aims of the process are, and what to expect. Where someone does not wish to continue with the process, it may be appropriate to provide alternative support through other mainstream services, such as Children or Adult Services.

As part of the programme, information about an individual will be shared with multi-agency partners, including the police. Individuals (or their parent/guardian) must give their consent prior to this information being shared for that purpose.

### **When parental consent cannot be obtained**

In the case of a child, there may be certain circumstances when a parent/guardian does not give consent for their child to be supported through Channel, particularly if some of the vulnerabilities present are in the home environment.

If the child is thought to be at risk from significant harm, whether that is physical, emotional, mental, intellectual, social or behavioural harm (as defined by section 31(9) of the Children Act 1989), then Children's Services must be involved in decisions made about the child. There may be circumstances where the Channel panel and Children's Services determine that a child is in need as defined by section 17 of the Children Act 1989. In such a case, statutory assessments may need to be carried out by Children's Services under section 17, or section 47 if the child is thought to be at risk from significant harm.

The type of activities that are included in a support package will depend on risk, vulnerability and local resource. To illustrate, a diversionary activity may be sufficient for someone who is in the early stages of being drawn into terrorism as a consequence of radicalisation, whereas a more focussed and structured one-on-one mentoring programme may be required for those who are further along the path towards embracing terrorism.

The following kinds of support might be considered appropriate:

- **Mentoring support contact**  
Work with a suitable adult as a role model or providing personal guidance, including guidance addressing extremist ideologies
- **Life skills**  
Work on life skills or social skills generally, such as dealing with peer pressure
- **Anger management session**  
Formal or informal work dealing with anger

- **Cognitive/behavioural contact**  
Cognitive behavioural therapies and general work on attitudes and behaviours
- **Constructive pursuits**  
Supervised or managed constructive leisure activities
- **Education skills contact**  
Activities focused on education or training
- **Careers contact**  
Activities focused on employment
- **Family support contact**  
Activities aimed at supporting family and personal relationships, including formal parenting programmes
- **Health awareness contact**  
Work aimed at assessing or addressing any physical or mental health issues
- **Housing support contact**  
Activities addressing living arrangements, accommodation provision or neighbourhood and
- **Drugs and alcohol awareness**  
Substance misuse interventions

Where the individual has a need for theological/ideological support, Home Office approved intervention providers must be commissioned to mentor them. The mentoring aims to increase theological understanding and challenge extremist ideas where they are used to legitimise terrorism.

Reviews of the support plan must be carried out at the agreed intervals, or sooner if a change in circumstances indicates this is appropriate. All reviews should be documented appropriately and records retained by services and agencies working with the child or young person. Unless it is deemed appropriate to end the agreed response, each review meeting should agree dates of further reviews, along with the person responsible for convening the review meeting and the people who should be involved in this.

All those involved with the child or young person should continue to monitor the situation and consider modifying the response if circumstances change. If the risk is perceived to diminish, it may be appropriate to end the response. However, if the risk is perceived to increase, an escalation of the response may be required and may take the case outside of the Prevent strand of the CONTEST strategy. If this does happen, early contact with the Channel Coordinator is key.

Where the Channel intervention ends it may be that the child or young person still has outstanding needs being met through early help or statutory support processes. These processes should continue to be reviewed until all needs are met. Every Channel case that has ended will be reviewed 6-12 months after exiting the process to ensure there are no new risks or intelligence that require a response.

Where new risks or intelligence suggest a repeat of concerns the assessment process can be restarted at any point. Where agencies become aware of new or repeat risks

they should not wait for the 6-12 month review and must discuss the concerns immediately with the Prevent Channel Coordinator.

The contacts for making a Channel Referral are:

**Humberside Prevent Team**

South bank 101 ext. 1879 / 4661 / 3750

## Appendix 1 Referral process flowchart

