

Research briefing

The Prevent agenda, young people and radicalisation

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Statutory duties

This summer, the government made Prevent, a statutory duty ¹for schools along with prisons, local authorities and NHS trusts. It means that these organisations are now under a legal obligation to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. Teachers and nursery staff now have responsibility for being able to spot children who might be vulnerable to radicalisation and referring them to the anti radicalisation programme Channel².

Channel

Channel³ is a programme which 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 a young person might be vulnerable to radicalisation. Engagement with the programme is however voluntary. Between 2010 and 2013 2,653 individuals ⁴across England and Wales were referred to the Channel programme – 645 of these were under the age of 16. 587 individuals were assessed as in need of Channel interventions.

Channel activity is co-ordinated by the police who also are responsible for requesting relevant information from panel partners (such as a school or local authority) about a referred individual. The police will use this information to make an initial assessment of the nature and extent of the vulnerability of the referred young person. The information will then be presented to a panel chaired by the local authority. Channel assesses vulnerability using a consistently applied vulnerability assessment framework built around three criteria. The three criteria are:

- a. **Engagement** with a group, cause or ideology;
- b. **Intent** to cause harm; and
- c. **Capability** to cause harm.

¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/439598/prevent-duty-departmental-advice-v6.pdf

² http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2015/9780111133309/pdfs/ukdsiod_9780111133309_en.pdf

³ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/425189/Channel_Duty_Guidance_April_2015.pdf

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<http://www.npcc.police.uk/documents/FoI%20publication/Disclosure%20Logs/Uniformed%20Operations%20FOI/2013/117%2013%20ACPO%20Response%20-%20Channel%20Project%20Referrals.pdf>

The three criteria are assessed by considering 22 factors that can contribute to vulnerability (13 associated with engagement, six that relate to intent and three for capability). Together, these form a holistic view of the vulnerability of a young person that will inform decisions on whether this person needs support and what kind of intervention package may be appropriate. The following kinds of support might include:

- a. **Mentoring**⁵ – work with a suitable adult as a role model or providing personal guidance, including guidance addressing extremist ideologies;
- b. **Life skills** – work on life skills or social skills generally, such as dealing with peer pressure;
- c. **Anger management** – formal or informal work dealing with anger;
- d. **Cognitive/behavioural contact** – cognitive behavioural therapies and general work on attitudes and behaviours;
- e. **Constructive pursuits** – supervised or managed constructive leisure activities;
- f. **Education support** – activities focused on education or training;
- g. **Careers support** – activities focused on employment;
- h. **Family support** – activities aimed at supporting family and personal relationships, including formal parenting programmes;
- i. **Health awareness** – work aimed at assessing or addressing any physical or mental health issues;
- j. **Housing support** – activities addressing living arrangements, accommodation provision or neighbourhood; and
- k. **Drugs and alcohol awareness** – substance misuse interventions.

The panel is collectively responsible for ensuring delivery of the overall package of support, but not for managing or funding the support providers. Where support is provided by a person other than a panel partner, the Channel Police Practitioner is responsible for liaison with the support provider and for funding and monitoring the delivery of that element of the support package.

Little is known of the specifics regarding local intervention activities for young people at risk of extremism and similarly, official evaluation activities of local Channel interventions are scarce. It is therefore crucial that intervention activities under the Channel programme are evaluated in order to find out what works and share best practice.

⁵ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/05/uk-mentors-steer-youth-away-from-radicalisation>