



## **Advice to parents and carers**

# **Keeping children and young people safe against radicalisation and extremism**

The parent / child relationship is the foundation to keeping children safe, as well as 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. This document sets out information to help parents keep their children safe and explain how they should respond if they have a concern.

## **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 cred'
- 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. **There are no typical characteristics of young people who may be more at risk than** others; 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. It is important for parents to keep an open channel of communication that involves listening to their children's views and concerns. You may not always agree with your child, but you should want the best for them in life. If you are concerned about your child, you may want to talk to a local faith or community leader, person of influence or teacher.

### 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.

## **Recognising extremism in your child**

Signs of extremism may include:

- 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 can parents support children and young people to stay 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
- 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 to 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
- 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

**If you have any concerns that your child may be being influenced by others get help.** Talk to someone you 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. To obtain an official photo ID for the UK visit: <http://www.validateuk.co.uk> For more information telephone: 01434 634996.

You should also consider what access your child has to savings accounts or gifts of money from family and friends. You may wish to suggest that gifts are made in kind and not in cash.

## Support and Information

The **Active Change Foundation (ACF)** provide a confidential helpline to prevent British nationals from travelling to conflict zones. The ACF confidential helpline telephone is 020 8539 2770. You can also contact **Crimestoppers** anonymously on 0800 55 111.

Anyone with concerns for the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person can contact **Sutton Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)**:

1st Floor  
Sutton Police Station  
6 Carshalton Road  
Sutton  
Surrey SM1 4RF

Tel: 020 8649 0418/ 0419/ 0420

Out of hours: 020 8770 5000

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Imminent threat of harm to others: contact the Police on 999 or the Anti-Terrorist Hotline on 0800 789 321

## Further sources of support and information

- School - if you have a concern please talk to your child's class teacher or another person in the school that you trust as soon as possible. They will be able to help and can access support for you and your child
- Parenting Programmes are available to all parents in Sutton. The programmes help parents build and maintain positive relationships and manage children's behaviour  
[https://www.sutton.gov.uk/info/200242/families\\_and\\_childcare/812/families\\_matter\\_service/7](https://www.sutton.gov.uk/info/200242/families_and_childcare/812/families_matter_service/7)
- Internet Safety information is available for parents to increase their knowledge and confidence to help keep their child safe on-line  
<http://www.suttonlscb.org.uk/esafety.php>
- Family Information Services provides up to date information on a range of services for children, young people and families:  
020 8770 6000  
[familyinfo@sutton.gov.uk](mailto:familyinfo@sutton.gov.uk)  
[www.sutton.gov.uk/familyinfo](http://www.sutton.gov.uk/familyinfo)

## Useful websites

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

Website has lots of information, advice and resources which can be used to help children stay safe online

[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.bbc.co.uk/webwise/0/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/webwise/0/)

Information and support for safe use of the internet.

For more advice on cyber safety visit:

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

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

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