

The PREVENT Strategy, Radicalisation and Extremism - Advice for parents

As a parent you may be worried about how extremism and radicalisation might affect your child.

We have put together this advice page to help you understand more about extremism and radicalisation, and how you can deal with these issues.

What is 'Extremism'?

Any idea can be taken to an extreme, but the type of extremism that the PREVENT Strategy is concerned with is when ideas and opinions lead on to violence. We often hear on the news of young people that have been radicalised and drawn into terrorist groups, but what does that mean? In simple terms, radicalisation is the process of someone developing extremist views.

Should you be worried?

Despite the high levels of media attention given to these issues, the chances of them affecting you as a parent are very low. It is important to remember that the vast majority of people will never support terrorism and that the amount of young people that become involved in violent extremism is very small.

What are the signs that I should look for?

You know your child better than anyone else, and are best placed to notice any changes in their behaviour. Talk to someone if you have concerns. It is the job of everyone to prevent the radicalisation of young people. Parents, teachers, friends and family all have a part to play in making sure that extremist ideas are challenged. Unfortunately, there isn't a checklist of what makes someone become an extremist; every individual is unique.

- Recognising extremism - things to look out for:
- Out of character changes in dress, 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.

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, social network and 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?

Online

The internet provides entertainment, connectivity and interaction. Children may need to spend a lot of time on the internet while studying and they 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 mixing with other children who behave badly but this is not always the case.

Sometimes those at risk may be encouraged, by the people they are in contact with, not to draw attention to themselves. As part of some forms of radicalisation parents may feel their child's behaviour seems to be improving: children may become quieter and more serious about their studies; they may dress more modestly and mix with a group of people that seem to be better behaved than previous friends.

TV and media

The media provide a view on world affairs. However, this is often a very simple version of events which are in reality very complex. Therefore, children may not understand the situation fully or appreciate the dangers involved in the views of some groups.

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 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.

Remember:

- Young people want to push the boundaries. They are searching for an identity in a confusing world.
- Encouraging young people to learn about and understand alternative points of view is an essential role of a parent.

How does The Windsor Boys' School support parents and students?

At The Windsor Boys' School we pride ourselves on celebrating and promoting our diverse community with its many different ethnicities and religions.

We also recognise however that in today's world young people are faced with many pressures as they grow up and can often be influenced by strong feelings expressed by others in connection with a range of complex issues. Our overriding concern is that all our students feel safe and also express tolerance towards all cultures and religions even when personal views may be different.

The PREVENT strategy incorporating one organisation called "Channel", is designed to protect people potentially at risk of being radicalised.

There are a number of indicators that may possibly indicate that an individual may be being adversely targeted by an extremist group or cause, such as:

- Suddenly changing how they dress or their appearance.
- High absence rate from school with no clear reason.
- Losing interest in friends or activities not associated with a particular ideology, with their behaviour becoming focused on an extreme idea or cause.
- Possessing or being associated with material or symbols associated with an extremist cause, being in communication with suspected extremists, use of internet or other social media sites associated with extremism.

The Windsor Boys' School fully endorses the PREVENT strategy that: "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. Their 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 ... Colleges have an important role to play in Prevent, particularly in ensuring balanced debate as well as freedom of speech. They also have a clear responsibility to exercise their duty of care and to protect the welfare of their students. Staff can identify and offer support to students who may be drawn into extremism."

Please be reassured that all of our students are given information on staying safe in the school and wider community and are told about appropriate behaviour in terms of their day to day conduct and when using technology.

We do follow up and refer any inappropriate or concerning behaviour and work closely with a range of other agencies, such as the Police and Social Care. Our Safeguarding Team are always available to discuss any issue you as parents/carers may be concerned about.

For further information about PREVENT and Radicalisation please click on the links below:

<http://www.bucks-lscb.org.uk/professionals/prevent-radicalisation/>

<http://www.bucksec.gov.uk/about-your-council/community-cohesion-and-equalities/preventing-extremism/>

<https://www.victvs.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Victvs-Parents-Guide-to-Extremism-and-Radicalisation-PRINT-Ver2.pdf>

<http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Documents/Children-and-families-services/Child-protection/TH-Advice-to-Parents-WebVersion.pdf>

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