

**Keeping Children and Young People Safe from Radicalisation and Extremism**

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**Advice to Parents and Carers**

**The dangers of extremism**

Extremism has existed in many forms throughout many societies both in the UK and abroad for centuries.

Legislative changes make it a duty for educational establishments to protect young people from extremism and to report any concerns that are identified. In addition it is important that parents and carers are also aware and able to identify potential radicalisation of those in their care.

As parents and carers, you will no doubt be aware from items in the local and national media that world events have led to an increased threat to the safety of children and young people by extremist groups.

This leaflet is designed to:

* Raise parents’ and carers’ awareness of the danger
* Provide suggestions of how you can look to reduce this risk with your own children
* Signpost parents and carers to appropriate organisation should you have any concerns

**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 or unfairness resulting in a need to make a difference

**How might this happen?**

**Online:**

The internet provides entertainment, connectivity and interaction. Children and young people may need to spend a lot of time on the internet while studying and they often use other social media and messaging sites such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram or Whatsapp etc.. These can be very useful tools but we need to be aware that there are groups and networks that use these forms of media to reach out to young people in order to communicate extremist messages.

**Peer interaction:**

Young people at risk may display extrovert behaviour, start getting into trouble at college or on the streets and mixing with other young people who behave badly. However, 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 or differently and mix with a group of people who 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.

**Recognising extremism – signs may include:**

* 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 or viewing 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 son/daughter is, who they are with and check this for yourself
* Know your son’s/daughters’ friends and their families
* Keep lines of communication open, listen to your son/daughter and talk to them about their interests
* Encourage them to take up positive activities with local groups that you can trust
* Talk to them 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 son’s/daughter’s online activity and update your own knowledge with regards to this area
* Know what social media and messaging sites your son/daughter uses
* Remind them 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 things from their family or teachers is likely to be trying to do them harm or put them in danger

**What to do if you are worried or have concerns**

If you have any concerns that your son/daughter may be being influenced by others seek help. Please contact the Assistant Principal Student Services at Ashton Sixth Form College: **0161 330 2330**.

If you feel there is a risk of a child leaving the country, consider what precautions you could take to prevent travel. You might want to consider taking the precaution of locking their passport in a safe place. Some young people will use the excuse that they need to use a passport for confirming their age – they do not – they can apply for an identification card. To obtain an official photo ID for the UK visit: [**www.validateuk.co.uk**](http://www.validateuk.co.uk).

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.

**Confidential help**

The Active Change Foundation (ACF) provides a confidential helpline to prevent British nationals from travelling to conflict zones. The ACF confidential helpline is **020 8539 2770.**

You can also contact Crimestoppers anonymously and for free on **0800 555 111**.

Keeping children and young people safe against radicalisation and extremism

**Anyone with concerns for the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person can contact:**

Tameside Public Service Hub **0161 342 4101.**

**Imminent threat of harm to others contact:**

Police **999** or Anti Terrorist Hotline **0800 789 321**

**Further sources of support and information**

* **www.educateagainsthate.com** is a government website with lots of useful information for parents and carers
* **www.internetmatters.org** has lots of information, advice and resources which can be used to help children/young people stay safe online
* **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** 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)

*This document has been adapted from Merton Council’s “Keeping Children and Young People Safe against Radicalisation and Extremism” leaflet. (merton.gov.uk)*