London Borough of Redbridge

Advice to Parents and Carers

Keeping Children and Young People Safe Against Radicalisation and Extremism

Keeping Children and Young People Safe Against Radicalisation and Extremism

The parent/child relationship is the foundation to keeping children safe and 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 leaflet sets out information to help parents keep their children safe and explains 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, 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?

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 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.

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 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 see different points of view

ADVICE TO PARENTS AND CARERS 5

- 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 can trust, this could be your imam, extended family members such as cousins who may be peers of your children or outside help.

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 think 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: **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.

Confidential helpline

The Active Change Foundation (ACF) provide a confidential helpline to prevent British nationals from travelling to conflict zones.
ACF Confidential helpline telephone number is **020 8539 2770**
You can also contact Crimestoppers anonymously on **0800 555 111**

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

Redbridge Children's Social Care telephone number: **020 8708 3885**
Email: **cpatreferrals@redbridge.gov.uk**

Imminent threat of harm to others contact:

Police **999**
or Anti-terrorist Hotline **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
- Internet Safety Sessions are available for parents to increase their knowledge and confidence to help keep their child safe on-line, ask your child's school if sessions are available
- An interactive workshop to explore ways to keep young people safe from the risks they may face as they grow

Useful websites

- **www.internetmatters.org**
  Website has lots of information, advice and resources which can be used to help children stay safe online

- **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

- **http://www.bbc.co.uk/webwise/0/**
  Information and support for safe use of the internet

- For more advice on cyber safety visit:
  http://www.childline.org.uk
  http://www.cybersmile.org
  http://www.childnet.com/