

## What is Extremism and Radicalisation?

**'Extremism' is where someone holds views that are intolerant of people who are of a different belief, ethnicity, culture, religion, gender or sexual identity. Britain is a democratic country where the principles of tolerance and mutual respect for people of all faiths and beliefs, including non-belief, are upheld by the law. Those who hold extremist views and advocate violence go against these fundamental principles.**

Radicalisation is a process by which a person comes to support terrorism or forms of extremism leading to terrorism. Typically, the radicalisation process includes exposure of an individual to extremist viewpoints that may eventually influence the person to carry out an act of terrorism. This could take weeks, months or even years.

It is possible to intervene during this process and stop someone becoming a terrorist or supporting terrorism.

For young people, a key part of growing up is exploring new ideas and critically questioning the world around them, and this should be encouraged in order to help them develop their understanding of the world and learn the values of tolerance and acceptance. However, this needs to be balanced against the need to protect young people from radicalisation and extremism.

## Why might a child or young person be drawn towards extremist ideologies?

- They are trying to make sense of world events
- They may be searching for answers to questions about identity, faith and belonging
- They may be driven by the desire for 'adventure' and excitement
- It makes them feel a sense of identity or belonging or being part of something
- They feel that their culture or religion is under threat
- They may be drawn to a group or individual who can offer identity, social network and support

Please be aware that this list is not exhaustive and all or none may be present in individual cases of concern. Nor does it mean that vulnerable people experiencing these factors are automatically at risk of exploitation for the purposes of violent extremism.

## How are children and young people radicalised?

Young people may come into contact with adults and peers with extremist views both online and in everyday life. Contact online may be through social media such as Facebook, Twitter or YouTube but young people may be invited to join discussions on less well-known sites such as Kik, Whisper, Messenger, Yik Yak or Omegle. Extremists often use these sites because they are harder to monitor and they can hide their identity.

Extremists often manipulate young people by using emotional triggers to engage with them, and may target them when they are experiencing difficulties such as bereavement, emotional trauma, mental health issues or social isolation.

What are the signs to look out for?

- Out of character changes in dress, behaviour and beliefs
- Changes in their friendship group or associating with people who hold extremist beliefs
- Losing interest in previous activities
- Changes in use of social media with increased secrecy
- Owning additional mobile phones or devices
- Showing sympathy for extremist causes
- Advocating extremist messages
- Glorifying violence
- Accessing extremist literature and imagery.

## How can parents and carers support children and young people to stay safe?

- Know where your child is, who they are with and check this for yourself
- 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
- 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.

## Where to get help if you are worried that your child may be in contact with people who are trying to radicalise them, you can call the following people for information and advice:

1. If you think a child or young person is in immediate danger telephone 999
2. Sandwell Children Safeguarding Board Advice and Referral Team 01215693100 / Walsall 03005552866
3. NSPCC Helpline - 0800 800 5000
4. School – If you have a concern please talk to Mrs Bailey or Mrs Smith. They will be able to help and can access support for you and your child
5. There is a new website launched by the government to help support schools and parents in the prevention of radicalisation of young people in their care. The link to the website is below. Please familiarise yourself with the parents section. It may take half an hour to go through but there are some valuable pieces of information and resources which may be of use to you, and certainly a good refresher for what is a major safeguarding concern for the UK. <http://educateagainsthate.com/parents/>

## Safety alerts- websites / apps to be aware of:

**Blue Whale Challenge** - The Blue Whale Challenge is a hoax, or fake news that came from Russia and has been making its way through social media and news reports and in fact on our briefings. The hoax/fake news issue has happened before, such as 'white van kidnappings' 'Talking Angela' and the Ask.fm suicide. It's important when spotting fake news that we are looking for times, dates and specific locations.

However, the bigger point here is that regardless of the app or site that is deemed to be dangerous, we must ensure all our parents/ carers students and staff have appropriate privacy settings on; follow age restrictions; don't participate in anonymous chat; block, delete and report users or posts that worry you.

**SayAt.Me** This is an app that seems to be gaining in popularity with children and young people. Essentially this is an app where you can 'get honest and anonymous feedback about yourself'.

**What is it?** Similar to Askfrank and ask.fm Sayat.me is an anonymous website on which you can 'say almost anything' and which helps people 'be more open in their opinions'. Released in 2010, it has recently had a revival in the UK due to its share feature with Instagram, Twitter and Facebook. Questions like 'What do you think of this picture?', 'What would you like to ask me?' and 'What do you think is my worst quality?' are offered by sayat.me as starter examples. You can also add a picture to your question eg 'What t-shirt should I wear?' You can then create a survey to your questions, which even has a multiple choice feature. Despite being an Over 18's app there is no age verification.

## What to look out for

- Firstly it may possibly be very difficult to pin down the originator of an abusive post as your email address is not required for entry.
- Secondly it's possible that a child or young person may share private information such as mobile numbers after being flattered or receiving attention.
- Thirdly there is no encouragement to discuss or debate issues, topics of interest etc. It is solely focused on giving and receiving personal critique.

Despite the somewhat naïve aim of the app to encourage 'sincere and honest' feedback for 'your self development', it could be a fairly neutral platform. However similar apps of this type have consistently shown that children and young people tend to ask questions online for affirmation – leaving themselves vulnerable to hurtful comments and abuse.

**Wrapping Up Sayat.me** is rapidly gaining traction in the UK due to its' sharing feature with Facebook and Instagram. Based on comments from worried parents there many 12 year olds (and younger) using it and sharing responses with Instagram. Again as the website is for Over 18's there may be inappropriate content or contact with adults.

**Film: Thirteen Reasons Why** (available on Netflix) 'Thirteen Reasons Why' is a controversial film aimed at older teenagers on the popular streaming service, Netflix and is based on a book by Jay Asher published in 2007. The story concerns a high-school student who takes her own life, and has left 13 cassette tapes she has recorded explaining why. The film has become controversial because of its explicit portrayal of the character's death and that this could lead to other similar deaths. In the UK there are strict guidelines about suicide in drama, but Netflix operates outside those rules. Young people in school may well have watched and be talking about 'Thirteen Reasons Why'...it's important you remind them of the age restrictions of this film and its nature.

Parents are rating this as 15+ viewing due to explicit language, rape scenes and the graphic nature of the suicide itself, common sense media is rating this as 16+. It's probably advisable that if you permit your child to watch it, that you watch it with them and discuss the topics involved.

**Games: Roblox Age:** Rated 12+ 'ROBLOX' is a multiplayer online game platform and also a games creation website for budding young developers and gamers. It's been around for a while now (founded in 2005) but has recently become popular with 6-16 yr olds in much the same way as MineCraft was and has grown to over 48 million monthly active users.

**What to watch for:** Like any other multiplayer online game there are always going to be risks from strangers, opportunists, peers and older gamers. Membership is maintained by direct debit, so check the accounts privacy and security settings, as well as making sure it's secured with a strong password. Many of the games also frequently feature weapons - so there can be some mild realistic violence and mild cartoon or fantasy violence. Final heads-up on ROBLOX for parents. Please remember 'Safe chat' isn't really 'Safe chat'. It's extremely easy for adults or older teens to register as under 13. So keep an eye on younger children's conversations when on this. ROBLOX does offer a parental login - this is a useful tool to keep an eye on things. Reinforce that ROBLOX is a virtual world especially regarding weaponry in gaming. Apple App Store rates ROBLOX as '12'. Google Play rates it as 'Parental Guidance'.