



VIOLENT EXTREMISM

January 2011

1.1 Exposure to, or involvement with, groups or individuals who condone violence as a means to a political end is a particular risk for some children. Children and young people can be drawn into violence themselves or they can be exposed to messages if a family member is involved in an extremist group.

1.2 Experience suggests that young people from their teenage years onwards can be particularly vulnerable to getting involved with radical groups through direct contact with members or, increasingly, through the internet. This can put a young person at risk of being drawn in to criminal activity and has the potential to cause significant harm.

1.3 The cross-Government strategy to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting violent extremism is known as 'Prevent'²⁵⁴. One of Prevent's primary objectives is to support individuals who are vulnerable to recruitment or have already been recruited by violent extremists. There are a number of local projects across the country that contribute to this aim. All local authority areas should have an agreed process in place for safeguarding vulnerable children and young people susceptible to violent extremism. All staff should understand the nature of the risk and how to respond.

1.4 Levels of risk vary across different areas so LSCBs, safeguarding adults boards and children's services practitioners should ensure they are informed of the particular risks in their area. Most local authority areas have a Prevent partnership group that is responsible for co-ordinating work on this agenda across all agencies. Children's services departments should be involved in this partnership group to ensure services that support children and young people are contributing to Prevent.

1.5 All children and young people's partnerships should have an agreed process in place for safeguarding vulnerable individuals, including children's, transition and vulnerable adult services. In some areas there is a bespoke multi-agency process known as 'Channel', which is an agreed mechanism for referring those at risk and providing support. Channel guidance states that if a referred individual is under the age of 18²⁵⁵ the Channel co-ordinator must liaise with the common assessment framework (CAF) co-ordinator/manager or social care office in children and young people's services (who should be represented on the Prevent partnership and multi-agency Channel panel) to agree how best to handle the case. Following initial discussion a decision needs to be made on how to progress the case (for example, as a safeguarding issue, under Channel, CAF, or another support process) and establish how this will be reviewed. This decision can be taken on a case by case basis or a decision can be made by all local partners to use one particular system for the referral of all under 18s. If an area does not have Channel, local areas should incorporate referrals of under 18s within safeguarding procedures.

²⁵⁴ For more information on the Prevent Strategy, visit www.dcsf.gov.uk/violentextremism

²⁵⁵ The Channel guidance also makes clear that children and young people's services may have responsibility for care beyond the age of 25 if additional vulnerabilities are present such as for children in care, care leavers or disability