

TOWER HAMLETS **GUIDANCE**

Supporting Vulnerable Children: **Preventing Violent Behaviour** **and** **Violent Extremism** **in Tower Hamlets**

Supporting Vulnerable Children and Preventing Violent Behaviour and “Violent Extremism” in Tower Hamlets

Vulnerable Children

Vulnerable children can sometimes be drawn into a range of risky or extreme situations which may include drug or alcohol abuse, offending or exploitation by others or becoming victims or perpetrators of violent behaviour. Often we have no way of knowing what risks they may be vulnerable to or could come across, so it is important we deal with their needs holistically to protect them and provide them with the necessary skills and positive avenues of support to enable them to be able deal with these hazards and resist negative influences.

Therefore concerns about an individual child or group of children being drawn into extreme violence or being vulnerable to this in future should be treated initially using the same procedures we use for all vulnerable children. Sometimes the support we provide for them may be similar to that provided for other vulnerable children and sometimes more specifically focussed interventions may be appropriate.

Prevention and Early Intervention.

Prevention and early intervention are those steps we take to ensure all children get the best possible start in life and achieve to their full potential and in particular to protect vulnerable children, increase their resilience to exploitation or abuse, and improve their life chances.

Part of this requires us to be alert to risk factors and some of these are very difficult to identify, especially as the nurturing environment we try to provide in schools can sometimes actually mask them.

It is even harder to predict what these risk factors may say about the future for our pupils: we cannot know how they will respond in future. We do not want to “label” children, we want to believe they can and will overcome these challenges. Indeed none of these risk factors mean things will inevitably end up badly for a child but on the other hand we should not ignore them if we want to ensure this is not the case. It is better to identify potential risk factors early and take preventative action regardless of what we think may or may not happen - because we cannot predict the outcome - only reduce the risks and/or give pupils the skills, knowledge, support networks and resilience to deal with them.

The Common Assessment Framework provides a means to assess risks and plan to counteract them. It is holistic and ensures that all elements of concern (not just the ones immediately presenting to you) are identified. It does not label children or push them into a particular category or type of problem – it identifies strengths and weaknesses and concerns and risks across a spectrum of key areas for child development and provides a context for finding actions to address issues collaboratively and preventatively.

What is “Violent Extremism”?

One outcome that we want to avoid is children becoming involved in violent extremism. This is any situation in which views are translated into violent action.

Currently people will often assume this means a terrorist threat linked to religious fanaticism and Al Qaida-associated extremists in particular. But this is far wider than one particular issue and it is nothing new: throughout history religious or political extremism has led some people to take violent action to harm or kill others in pursuit of furthering their beliefs.

Another example of violent extremism is people who have strong views on particular issues, such as abortion or harming animals for scientific investigation but who also feel this gives them the right to act violently against those who do not share their views. Some people may believe their perspective entitles them to seek by violent force to control or restrict the behaviour of others such as in homophobic attacks or “honour killings”.

Having extreme or strongly held views is not in itself necessarily a bad thing: the views of the Suffragettes, which, at the time, some thought were “extreme”, eventually led to votes for women. It is preventing the translation of strongly held views into deliberate violence against others that is the concern of this document.

Although extremely rare one outcome of high levels of risk is that children may become more susceptible to this sort of activity and more easily persuaded by others via personal interaction or through the media (including the internet) that violence is legitimate.

Violent Behaviour

Other examples of extreme violence may include forms of domestic violence, hate crimes, gun and knife crime, other forms of fighting, assault and bullying. Sometimes individuals or groups may seek to take violent revenge on those against whom they have a real or perceived grievance e.g. there have been high profile cases of young people turning guns on other pupils or teachers in their schools to address what they see as injustice.

These examples may not always have their roots in strongly held or well thought out belief systems, and sometimes are more obviously linked to lack of personal self-control and difficulties in managing anger, but nevertheless they indicate that those involved feel they can indulge in extreme violence against others regardless of the mores and laws against this in our society.

Extracts from the DCSF Learning Together to be Safe A toolkit to help school to contribute to the prevention of violent extremism.

What can make a young person susceptible to adopting extremist views and supporting violence?

The key conclusion from available evidence is that there is no single profile of a person likely to become involved in extremism, or single indicator of when a person might move to adopt violence in support of extremist ideas.

However it does appear the decision by a young person to become involved in violent extremism:

- may begin with a search for answers to questions about identity, faith and belonging
- may be driven by the desire for 'adventure' and excitement
- may be driven by a desire to enhance the self esteem of the individual and promote their 'street cred'
- is likely to involve identification with a charismatic individual and attraction to a group which can offer identity, social network and support
- is likely to be fuelled by a sense of grievance that can be triggered by personal experiences of racism or discrimination

Lessons from recent case histories about factors that may make young people susceptible to exploitation by violent extremists:

Identity crisis

Adolescents exploring issues of identity can feel both distant from their parents' cultural and religious heritage and uncomfortable with their place in society around them. Extremist ideas can help provide a sense of purpose or feeling of belonging.

Personal crisis

This may for example include significant tensions within the family which produce a sense of isolation of the young person from the traditional certainties of family life.

Personal circumstances

The experience of migration, local tensions or events affecting families in countries of origin may contribute to alienation from UK values and a decision to cause harm to symbols of the community or state.

Un- or underemployment

Young people may perceive their aspirations for career and lifestyle undermined by limited school achievement or employment prospects. This can translate to a generalised rejection of civic life and adoption of violence as a symbolic act.

Criminality

A young person may have been involved in group offending or, on occasion, linked to organised crime and be drawn to engagement in extremist, potentially criminal, activities

There is some similarity between the factors that may make young people susceptible to exploitation by violent extremists with those that are likely to contribute to young people joining racist or far-right groups or with those who use violence to resolve conflict or try to control others by force.

The Quilliam Foundation, an independent UK-based think tank created by former activists who have rejected extremism, has compiled advice on understanding approaches to engage young people to help make them less likely to follow a path of extremism.

Key points

1. Extremists use persuasive narratives to attract people to their cause based on a particular interpretation or distortion of history, politics or religion.

Education can play a powerful role in encouraging young people to challenge ideas, think for themselves and take responsibility for their actions.

2. There is no obvious profile of a person likely to become involved in extremism, or single indicator of when a person might move to adopt violence in support of extremist ideas.

The starting point for schools, as in all learning, is knowing their pupils, listening and responding to their changing needs.

If members of staff do have concerns about behaviour patterns, they should seek advice from other partners and use their professional judgement to consider whether a young person might be at risk.

3. The particular risks to pupils and for school communities from extremist groups will vary across the country.

Schools should seek advice from their local authorities and the police (via their school liaison police officer or safer neighbourhood team) on their local context and make sure mechanisms are in place to keep abreast of local issues. Local authorities can help individual schools to become involved in local partnership working and understand what resources and projects are available locally.

Much of the work all schools will already be doing already will help contribute to the goal of preventing violence. For example, schools can build on work they already do in:

- promoting the full range of positive outcomes for all pupils
- promoting pupil wellbeing, equalities and community cohesion
- building the resilience of the school, working with partners, to prevent pupils becoming the victims or causes of harm
- working with other agencies and parents to build community networks of support for the school

In a school context the five strands that support the prevention of violent extremism are to:

1. understand how an extremist narrative which can lead to harm can be challenged by staff in schools; and model to pupils how diverse views can be heard, analysed and challenged in a way which values freedom of speech and freedom from harm
2. understand how to prevent harm to pupils by individuals, groups or others who promote violent extremism, and manage risks within the school
3. understand how to support individuals who are vulnerable through strategies to support, challenge and protect
4. increase the resilience of pupils and of school communities through helping pupils acquire skills and knowledge to challenge extremist views, and promoting an ethos and values that promotes respect for others
5. use teaching styles and curriculum opportunities which allow grievances to be aired, explored and demonstrate the role of conflict resolution and active citizenship

Examples of work that a school might do that contribute towards prevention are:

- Work on community cohesion, tolerance and anti-violence addressed throughout curriculum. Alternative positive narratives.
- Open discussion and debate of issues and the law in a supportive environment.
- Critical appraisal of sources / internet resilience / propaganda – all subjects
- Citizenship programmes – British Values
- Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning
- Anti-bullying work including homophobia and violence against women.
- Rewarding positive behaviour
- Pastoral and induction support
- Positive in and out of school hours programmes
- Access to youth clubs and holiday programmes
- Opportunities for channelling positive engagement e.g. charities / community work
- Parenting programmes to ensure consistent messages between home and school.
- Work on safety, risk and crime prevention

Some links / other contacts:

Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning

This programme was rolled out across all primary school in Tower Hamlets and variations of the work it promoted have been adopted by most secondary schools. The SEAL themes address issues of identity, community cohesion, friendship, dealing with change, conflict, bullying and build social and emotional skills.

Contact Susan Head, Behaviour Support Team for more information

susan.head@towerhamlets.gov.uk tel 020 7364 6440.

Conflict resolution / Restorative Justice approaches – School attached Police Officers, the Youth Service, Youth Offending team and Behaviour Support Team can all advise on the use of Conflict Resolution and Restorative Justice approaches to working with young people on resolving conflict, discussing grievances, making reparation and re-building constructive relationships.

Anti-bullying work

The lead officer for anti-bullying work in the borough is Liam McQuade.

liam.mcquade@towerhamlets.gov.uk tel 020 7364 6263

Co – exist DVD

The Co – exist DVD provides a video and curriculum materials for teaching staff to work with young people around risks of extremism, prejudice and hatred.

liam.mcquade@towerhamlets.gov.uk tel 020 7364 6263

Prevent Training

Training on recognising and responding to Violent Extremism and the role of professionals is available for school staff and other professionals from the Prevent Education Officer Tom

thomas.llewellyn-jones@towerhamlets.gov.uk tel 07984 277158

TOWER HAMLETS

Procedures for responding to concerns that pupils may become involved in violence or violent extremism in Tower Hamlets

If at any stage you are concerned that a child is at immediate risk of harm you should contact the Child Protection Duty Line. 020 7364 3444

If at any stage you are concerned that there is a threat of violence to an individual or a threat to public safety then you should contact the police.

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Therefore concerns about an individual child or group of children becoming violent or being drawn into violent extremism or being vulnerable to this in future should be treated initially using the same procedures we use for all vulnerable children. Sometimes the support we provide for them may be similar to that provided for other vulnerable children and sometimes more specifically focussed interventions may be appropriate.

If you are concerned that a child/young person may be at risk of being drawn towards violence or violent extremism in future:

1. Talk to the family and other professionals working with the child/young person about your concerns and get their views.
2. Seek consent to complete a CAF assessment to get a holistic perspective on the situation and determine if there are additional needs and if so how these could be met.
3. Contact other relevant agencies and engage them in a Team Around the Child (TAC) approach to supporting the child and their family.
4. If your concerns persist and the TAC approach does not seem to be having a positive impact, then refer to the **Social Inclusion Panel** using the CAF form.

If you have evidence or reason to believe a child/ young person may already be engaged in or drawn towards violence or violent extremism or in contact with others who engage in or promote violence, refer to the Social Inclusion Panel immediately using a CAF form.

In considering such cases the SIP discussion will include a representative from the Met. Police Channel team who will contribute advice and guidance.

Please note: generally, completing a CAF is a participatory and consensual process which should involve the child / young person and parent / carer. However there are circumstances where you can complete a CAF without the consent of the parents. Where you believe the child or others are at serious risk of harm or in order to prevent serious crime are examples where consent is not necessary and may indeed be counterproductive to managing the situation. A referral because you think a child is already becoming drawn towards violent extremism would be a situation where you may conclude that consent is not feasible or appropriate: the LA will provide advice on this.

Appropriate interventions for individuals at risk

Interventions will depend on specific cases and the nature and degree of concern but may include:

- Intensive Family Support Programmes
- Family Therapy / CAMHS programmes
- Police Prevent team support
- Targeted Youth Support
- YISP crime prevention programmes
- Focussed theological / educational programmes
- Parenting programmes with PVE element
- Links with relevant voluntary or religious organisations
- Support from school attached police officer
- 1 to 1 or group counselling
- Behaviour support / anger management programmes
- Attendance support
- Positive activities in and out of school
- Positive buddying programmes
- Increased adult support, supervision and encouragement

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Youth Offending Team,
Social Care and the Police
with multi-agency support

**SPECIALIST INTERVENTIONS
WITH YOUNG PEOPLE
ALREADY ENGAGED IN
EXTREME VIOLENCE**

If concerns are serious or persist then refer to the Social Inclusion Panel which will advise and oversee the programme – if in doubt REFER!

Intensive Family Support Programmes
Family Therapy / CAMHS programmes
Police Prevent team support
Targeted Youth Support
YISP crime prevention programmes
Focussed theological / educational programmes
Parenting programmes with PVE element
Links with relevant voluntary or religious organisations
Support from school attached police officer
1 to 1 or group counselling
Behaviour support / anger management programmes
Attendance support
Positive activities in and out of school
Positive buddying programmes
Increased adult support, supervision and encouragement
If there are concerns, start with an individual CAF action plan and work with Parents to create a diversionary programme.

**PREVENT -
TARGETED
WORK
WITH
THOSE
AT RISK**

Work on community cohesion, tolerance and anti-violence addressed throughout curriculum. Alternative positive narratives.
Open discussion and debate of issues and the law in a supportive environment.
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UNIVERSAL EARLY PREVENT INTERVENTIONS