Radicalisation

There's a chance that your child may meet people online or visit websites that could lead them to adopting what you consider to be extreme views, and becoming radicalised. Curiosity could lead your child to seek out these people, or they could befriend your child in order to encourage them to adopt beliefs or persuade them to join groups whose views and actions you as a parent would consider extreme.

Concern

32% of parents are concerned about radicalisation [1]

Interest

308% increase in Google searches related to 'radicalisation' between Dec 14 and Jan 15 [2]

Networks

1 in 10 children knows a gang member [3]

How could my child become radicalised?

Young people may be vulnerable to a range of risks as they pass through adolescence. They may be exposed to new influences and potentially risky behaviours, influence from peers, influence from older people or the internet as they may begin to explore ideas and issues around their identity.

There is no single driver of radicalisation, nor is there a single journey to becoming radicalised. The internet creates more opportunities to become radicalised, since it's a worldwide 24/7 medium that allows you to find and meet people who share and will reinforce your opinions. Research tells us that the internet and face-to-face communications work in tandem, with online activity allowing a continuous dialogue to take place.

Why could social networking be a concern?

Your child may actively search for content that is considered radical, or they could be persuaded to do so by others. Social media sites, like Facebook, Ask FM and Twitter, can be used by extremists looking to identify, target and contact young people. It's easy to pretend to be someone else on the internet, so children can sometimes end up having conversations with people whose real identities they may not know, and who may encourage them to embrace extreme views and beliefs.

Often children will be asked to continue discussions, not via the mainstream social media, but via platforms, such as Kik Messenger, Whisper, Yik Yak or Omegle. Moving the conversation to less mainstream platforms can give users a greater degree of anonymity and can be less easy to monitor.

People who encourage young people to do this are not always strangers. In many situations they may already have met them, through their family or social activities, and then use the internet to build rapport with them. Sometimes children don't realise that their beliefs have been shaped by others, and think that the person is their friend, mentor, boyfriend or girlfriend and has their best interests at heart.

What are the signs I should look out for

There are a number of signs to be aware of (although a lot of them are quite common among teens). Generally parents should look out for increased instances of:

- A conviction that their religion, culture or beliefs are under threat and treated unjustly
- A tendency to look for conspiracy theories and distrust of mainstream media
- The need for identity and belonging
- Being secretive about who they've been talking to online and what sites they visit
- Switching screens when you come near the phone, tablet or computer
  Possessing items – electronic devices or phones – you haven't given them
- Becoming emotionally volatile.

What can lead young children to become radicalised?

Political and religious groups can provide a sense of family or support that children may feel is lacking in their lives. This desire for security could also be due to poverty, unemployment, social isolation or feelings of rejection by their own faith, family or social circle.

In some cases the trigger may be an event, either global or personal, such as being a victim or witness to a race or religious hate crime. Young people may also join these groups as a result of peer pressure and the desire to 'fit in' with their social circle.

However, it should also be remembered that not all young people that experience these factors adopt radical views.

Talking about radicalisation with your child

This is a difficult topic to broach with your child and needs to be dealt with sensitively if you're concerned about their behaviour. Here are some tips to help you raise the subject and information to give your child to prevent them being unintentionally exposed to radical ideas:

● **Be approachable**

Let them know you're there to help them if they get into trouble online – and if they're concerned about something they can come to you.

● **Be calm and don't get angry**

Your child is far more likely to be open and honest with you if you remain calm about the situation.

● **Tell someone**

Make sure your child is aware that if something them worried or uncomfortable online their best course of action is always to talk to an adult they trust.

● **Talk to them about their online friendships**

Find out what sites they go to, where they met their online friends, how they communicate and what information they share. Talk to them about being cautious about what they share with people online. Remind them that even though people they've met online might feel like friends they may not be who they say they are, and that they may have ulterior motives for befriending them.

● **Don't be confrontational**

Your child's beliefs are a sensitive subject and need handling carefully as you don't want to push them away or shut them out.

● **Be safe in real life**

Teach your child to never arrange to meet someone they only know online without a parent present.

● **Encourage them to share their ideas and opinions**

Many young people are often not aware of the realities and consequences of the radical ideas they have formed or the arguments against them.

What action should I take?

If you feel your child – or another child – may be in immediate danger, a threat to others or there is a risk they may leave the country, contact the police and ensure that their passport is kept in a safe place.

You can report any concerns about online grooming to the National Crime Agency's CEOP Command.

Where to get help

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

The Anti-Terrorist Hotline is where to report any suspicious activity that may be related to terrorism. **0800 789 321**

If your child wants to talk to someone in confidence they can call **Childline** on **0800 1111** or **Get Connected** on **0808 808 4994** (text 80849)

The Home Office provides advice for parents concerned that their child may be involved in a gang

Mothers against Violence offers advice and support to those who may feel their child is at risk or involved in gun/gang/knife crime. Call them on **08450 662 4867**

Muslim Youth Helpline (MYH) is a national award winning charity that provides free and confidential faith and culturally sensitive support services targeted at vulnerable young people in the UK. **0808 808 2008**

Parents can call the **NSPCC**'s free 24/7 adult helpline on **0808 800 5000**, email help@nspcc.org.uk or text 88858. You can also contact the **Stop it Now!** helpline on **0808 1000 900** where you can seek advice anonymously

See it Report it provide information on how to report extremist content through social media channels

If you see any content online related to terrorism, you can report it anonymously to the Counter Terrorism Internet Referral Unit (CTIRU)

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is when someone bullies others over the internet or on a mobile phone by sending abusive emails or texts directly or by posting nasty comments or humiliating images for others to see. Like any form of bullying, cyberbullying can be horrible for the children involved and hard for them to talk about.

Concerns
30% of parents are worried about cyberbullying [1]

Communication
26% of children who encounter cruel behaviour online don't tell their parents [2]

Frequency
87% rise in reports of cyberbullying between 2012 and 2013 [3]

How is cyberbullying different from other bullying?

One of the biggest differences between cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying is that it can be hard to get away from. Young people could be bullied anywhere, anytime – even when they're at home.

Cyberbullying can have a large audience too. Posts on social networks, emails or group chats can be seen by lots of people very quickly.

Cyberbullies can also remain anonymous, by using fake profiles on social networking sites or blocking their phone numbers. This can make it harder to identify the bullies, but texts and other messages can be saved as proof of the bullying.

Preventing your child from cyberbullying

Talking to your children about cyberbullying is as important as talking to them about any other type of bullying. Children who are being cyberbullied usually find it difficult to talk about it and it can be an upsetting, awkward and difficult subject for parents too.

Try to have as open and honest a relationship with your child as possible. Make sure they know they can talk to you if anyone ever upsets them over the internet or on their mobile phone, and give them the space to talk about anything that's upsetting them without being judgemental or getting upset.

If you find it hard communicating with your child about cyberbullying, you're not alone. These tips are a good place to start:

● **Ask obvious questions**

Start conversations with open, honest questions about what they've been doing online and who they've had messages from.

● **Listen without judging**

Your child might worry that you'll think they're weak or will be angry at them or that you might want to talk to the person and make it worse for them. Be sensitive to their feelings and reassure them that it is not their fault.

● **Tell them you can help**

Tell your child that you're there to support them, and that there are things that can be done to help them.

● **Praise them for talking to you**

Let them know that they've done the right thing. It's very hard for children to talk about being bullied.

● **Stay calm**

Be careful not to show any anger you might be feeling. Keep calm, try not to interrupt and ask them to tell you about what's happening in their own words. And do not retaliate by contacting the bully or any other people involved.

How to stop cyberbullying situations

What should I do if my child is being cyberbullied?

If your child tells you they're being cyberbullied, the first and most important thing to do is give them your full emotional support. Once you've reassured them that you're going to work together to solve the problem, there are some practical steps you should take:

Ask them not to reply

Cyberbullies are looking for a reaction, so make sure your child knows that by deciding not to reply they are making an active choice not to give power to the bully.

Keep the evidence

Sit down with your child and make a written record of what's happened. Gather evidence by saving texts and printing out emails and screen shots of social network activity.

Block the bullies

Use the built-in tools on social networks and mobile services to block anyone who is cyberbullying your child. That might mean removing them from a 'friends' list or blocking their calls or messages. You can also set restrictions on games consoles to prevent them chatting to gamers they don't know.

Don't deny access to technology

One of the main reasons that young people don't report cyberbullying is because they're worried that their devices could be taken away from them. Moderate your child's use of the device instead.

Online Grooming

There's a chance that your child may meet people online who aren't who they say they are. Grooming is a word used to describe people befriending children in order to take advantage of them for sexual purposes. Many parents worry about online grooming so it's important to talk to your children about how to stay safe.

Concern
58%
of parents are concerned about the threats posed by strangers online [1]

Awareness
34%
of parents worry that their children may give out personal details to inappropriate people [2]

Relationships
29%
of the online friends of children aged 12 to 15 are not personally known to them [3]

How does online grooming work?

It's easy to pretend to be someone else on the internet, so children can sometimes end up having conversations with people whose real identities they may not know.

Groomers may go to a social network used by young people and pretend to be one of them. They might attempt to gain trust by using fake profile pictures, pretending to have similar interests, offering gifts and saying nice things to the child.

Once they have the child's trust the groomer often steers the conversation towards their sexual experiences, even asking them to send sexual photographs or videos of themselves. Some may try to set up a meeting, or even blackmail children by threatening to share the pictures or videos with the child's family and friends.

Online groomers are not always strangers. In many situations they may already have met them through their family or social activities, and use the internet to build rapport with them. Sometimes children don't realise they've been groomed, and think that the person is their boyfriend or girlfriend.

Is my child being groomed?

Online grooming may be hard for parents to recognise because it can happen when children are at home. Also, groomers may specifically warn children not to talk to anyone about it. There are a number of signs to be aware of (although a lot of them are quite common among teens), but look out for increased instances of:

- wanting to spend more and more time on the internet
- being secretive about who they are talking to online and what sites they visit
- switching screens when you come near the computer
- possessing items – electronic devices or phones – you haven't given them
- using sexual language you wouldn't expect them to know
- becoming emotionally volatile.

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How do I protect my child from being groomed?

The best way to deal with grooming is to prevent it happening by making sure your child is well-informed, uses privacy settings on social networks and knows that they can talk to you if they feel unsafe or worried. Teach your children how to be safe online:

Keep personal information private

Private details which could identify them in the real world – name, age, gender, phone number, home address, school name, photographs – should only ever be shared with people they know.

Know who their friends are

Talk to them about being cautious about what they share with people online. Remind them that even though people they've met online might feel like friends they may not be who they say they are.

Be safe in real life

Never arrange to meet someone they only know online without a parent present.

Tell someone

If something makes your child worried or uncomfortable online their best course of action is always to talk to an adult they trust.

If you believe your child is being groomed:

Report it to the authorities

If you think your child – or another child – could be in immediate danger tell your local police at once.

You can report any concerns about online grooming to the National Crime Agency's CEOP Command.

Report any child abuse images you find hosted by websites to the Internet Watch Foundation.

Get help

If your child wants to talk to someone in confidence they can call Childline on 0800 1111 or Get Connected on 0808 808 4994 (text 80849).

Parents can call the NSPCC's free 24/7 adult helpline on 0808 800 5000, email help@nspcc.org.uk or text 88858. You can also contact the Stop it Now! helpline (0808 1000 900) where you can seek advice anonymously.