

PREVENT BULLETIN



Introduction

Coventry City Council's Prevent Team aim to **safeguard** people of all ages from the **risk of radicalisation**, becoming involved in terrorism, or supporting extremist ideologies.

We provide **support, guidance, education and training** to help people better understand the vulnerabilities, indicators and risks of radicalisation, and ensure everyone is aware of the **early intervention** support that is available.

In September 2022, the team hosted the first annual 'Week of Action to Prevent Radicalisation', a city-wide focussed campaign to raise awareness around tackling extremism. Here follows a round-up of the fantastic week!



Coventry Prevent Team

We had...

An incredible five days of free activities accessible resources and workshops

A tailored approach to a range of audiences

An opportunity to pilot newly developed learning content for communities, professionals, and young people

Guest speakers with a host of partners supporting us



Special Acknowledgements ✨

We recognise the importance of having the support and valuable input from all our partners, colleagues, and participants to make our Week of Action a success.

For their time, expertise and willing contributions, we extend a very special thank you and appreciation to:

- ✦ Figen Murray OBE
- ✦ Nicola Benyahia MBE
- ✦ Travis Frain
- ✦ Mike Haines
- ✦ Nick Daines and John
- ✦ Picture News
- ✦ Facing History and Ourselves
- ✦ Votes for Schools
- ✦ Safen3t
- ✦ StandUp! Education Against Discrimination
- ✦ West Midlands Counter Terrorism Policing
- ✦ Grace Academy School
- ✦ Lyng Hall School
- ✦ John Gulson School
- ✦ St Elizabeth's School
- ✦ Cardinal Newman School
- ✦ Caludon Castle School
- ✦ All colleagues and community members



Families for Life



The Resilience in Unity Project



FACING HISTORY & OURSELVES UNITED KINGDOM



COVENTRY COLLEGE

SAFEN3T



What is Radicalisation?

What is Radicalisation?

Over the past decade, our understanding of how and why individuals engage in violent extremism and terrorism has significantly evolved. Radicalisation is the psychological and emotional process of being groomed into supporting extremism and terrorism, most often by a third party who have their own agenda.

It is very similar to being groomed into other forms of exploitation. Extremists deliberately build trusting and heavily influential relationships with vulnerable individuals, who are ultimately drawn into dangerous and harmful situations.

Radicalisation is a fluid and highly individualised process. The drivers of radicalisation include:

- Individual psychological and emotional characteristics
- Push and pull factors that include structural conditions, such as poverty, grievances and the lack of access to political processes or justice.
- Influences of group dynamics and relationships
- Active recruitment which includes extremist messaging that incites violence

What does radicalisation look like?

Radicalisation can happen over a few weeks, months, or years. It can happen both in person and online, and it can be driven by a range of ideologies. Throughout the process, individuals will adopt increasingly extreme and intolerant views and behaviours which can manifest in different ways. This may include changes to their appearance, language, online behaviour, interactions with friends and family, and engagement with the world around them. Learn more about the signs of radicalisation you can look out for on our website.

Who can be radicalised?

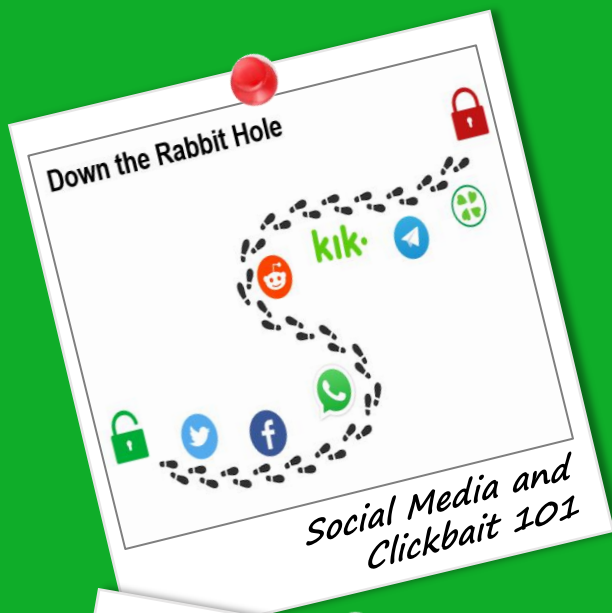
Anyone can be radicalised, regardless of their age or background. However, there are certain factors that can make people more vulnerable to radicalisation, which extremists intentionally prey upon. You can read more about the how vulnerabilities are exploited on our website.

What support is available?

The Prevent Team aim to intervene as early as possible to safeguard and support people of all ages who may be drawn into supporting terrorism. If you are concerned that someone may be at risk of radicalisation, you can always contact us to share your concerns, or you can complete our referral form.

We took the opportunity to introduce and pilot some new training offers, covering the most requested topics. Over 80 participants attended the 101 sessions...

101 Sessions



Social Media and Clickbait 101

- The session gave participants an overview of the overt and covert tactics used by extremist groups on social media platforms.
- Examining the complex, dangerous, and dynamic nature of online radicalisation.
- Exploring Extremist groups who use an array of tactics such as clickbait, memes, echo chambers, and brand building, to attract and recruit new members.



MUU and Incel Ideology 101

- Explored how the ideological drivers of terrorism can appear to be Mixed, Unstable or Unclear (MUU).
 - A particular focus on the Incel (Involuntarily Celibate) ideology.
 - An online subculture of men who believe they are incapable of having romantic and sexual relationships as they do not meet society's standards of masculinity.
 - How some online spaces nurture radical elements of Incel ideology, such as extreme misogyny and racism.



Eco-Terrorism 101

- Took a deep-dive into how some Far-Right extremists seek to exploit environmental and climate concerns, adopting xenophobic, racist ideas as the cause of climate change.
 - Exploration of the world of 'eco-fascism' – an ideology predominantly growing online, pairing environmentalism with white supremacy.

Thinking Critically

Article

The internet and digital media have been exploited by those who wish to promote hatred and recruit followers to cause and encourage violence. Social networks operate on a more personal basis than mass media and can be targeted at a particular age group, audience or individual. The need to be aware of the harm that unbalanced media reports can cause and the knowledge to evaluate sources of online information is so important.

Why should we think critically?

In a world of misinformation, fake news and conspiracy theories, it is more important than ever to critically engage with media. Although a piece of information may have been published in print, verbalised by a recognisable figure on the television or radio, or shared from a verified social media account, this does not necessarily mean it is true.

Engaging with a certain point of view online causes the algorithms to present more of the same material on people's feeds and timelines. It is therefore extremely easy to fall in to so-called 'echo-chambers', where the same pool of opinions is reinforced, leaving little room for wider discussion and debate. Over time, this can make it harder to accept differences in opinion and can trigger a descent into more intense and extreme outlooks.

This partially reflects how online radicalisation occurs, which relies heavily on indoctrinating people by exposing them to very specific viewpoints which are presented as 'fact' and 'reality'. One of the best ways to combat this is through thinking critically about the information we consume.

How can we think critically?

Here are some questions we can use and share to ensure we all actively and consciously think critically about the media we engage with:

WHO

Who published it? Who will benefit from it? Who is sponsoring it? Who are using these sources?

WHERE

What are they not telling me? What would the opposition say? What more would I like to know?

WHAT

Where is the evidence to support this? Where can I validate this information? Where have I seen similar arguments?

WHY

Why was this published? Why am I seeing this? Why are they using certain language to describe the topic?

WHEN

When did this happen? When was this written? When was this updated?

Top Tips!

- Diversify your news outlets to gain a broader perspective on issues, even if that means consuming media going against your personal values and opinions.
- Verify images by doing a reverse Google search – simply click the camera logo on Google and upload the image to find its original source.

Workshops

Picture News

A fun, informative and practical session with Year 6 at both St Elizabeths and John Gulson Primary schools.

This looked at how to have engaging debates on current affairs, and discussed how the children can deal with social media and fake news.



Picture News

Q&A with a Former Extremist and Mentor

A unique opportunity to meet and personally hear from a former Extremist, who has been supported through the Channel Programme. They shared an insight into their mindset in joining an Extreme Group, their involvement and role within the group, and their journey from the point of referral to Prevent and beyond. Accompanied by their Specialist Mentor, who shared their approach to the intervention that changed both of their lives.



Picture News

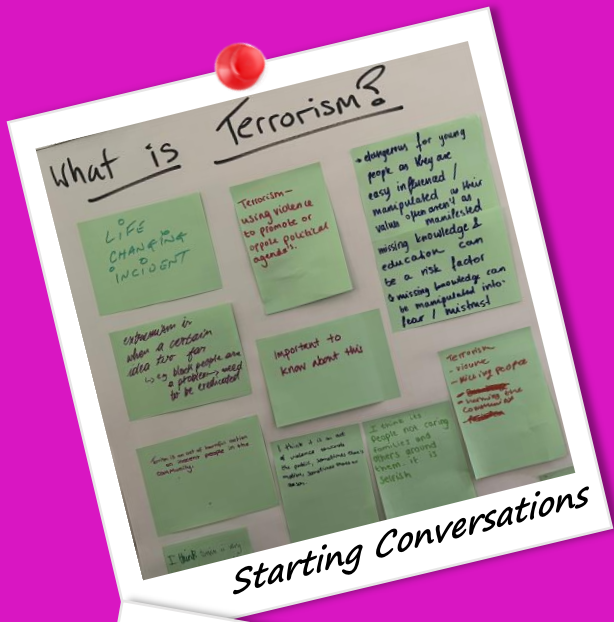
Youth Café

An interactive workshop with students at Grace Academy, hosted by West Midlands Police Counter-Terrorism. Focused on engaging students in discussions and activities around three areas of exploitation: knife crime, drugs & county lines, and radicalisation in an informative, engaging and relaxed environment.



Youth Café

Workshops



Starting Conversations
An audience with survivor of the Westminster Bridge terror attack and PhD student, Travis Frain, in the format of open dialogue to encourage engagement and discussion on how we can all be a part of the solution to extremism. Young people from across Coventry schools had this special opportunity to learn about Travis' experience and how he has launched a project to give a voice to the victims and survivors of terrorism to combat the rise of extremist activity.



Solutions Not Sides
Educational session with students at Coventry College that tackled Antisemitism, Islamophobia, and polarisation around the issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the UK. Provided humanising encounters, diverse narratives and critical-thinking tools to empower young people with the knowledge, empathy and skills to promote dialogue and conflict resolution, and to challenge prejudice in the UK.



Facing History
A brilliant session that encouraged students to think about their identity, and their relationship to one another and to wider society. Included activities to foster students' critical thinking and media literacy skills to boost resilience, to be more conscious of 'doom-scrolling', and to better equip them to discern between fact, bias, misinformation and fake news.

Workshops

Safeguarding Against Radicalisation

An interactive beginner's guide for members of the public to understand radicalisation. Included up-to-date information, and engaging practical elements based on real life case studies to aid knowledge and understanding on the risk and threat in Coventry, vulnerabilities to exploitation, indicators of radicalisation, and where to access support.

Votes for Schools

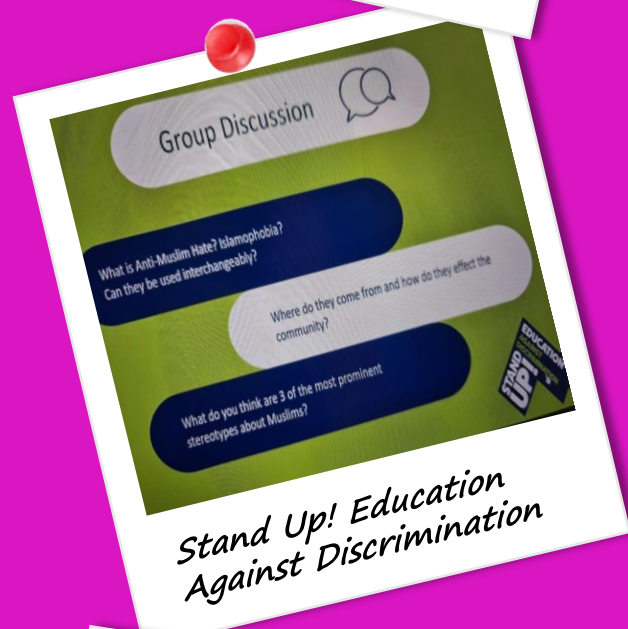
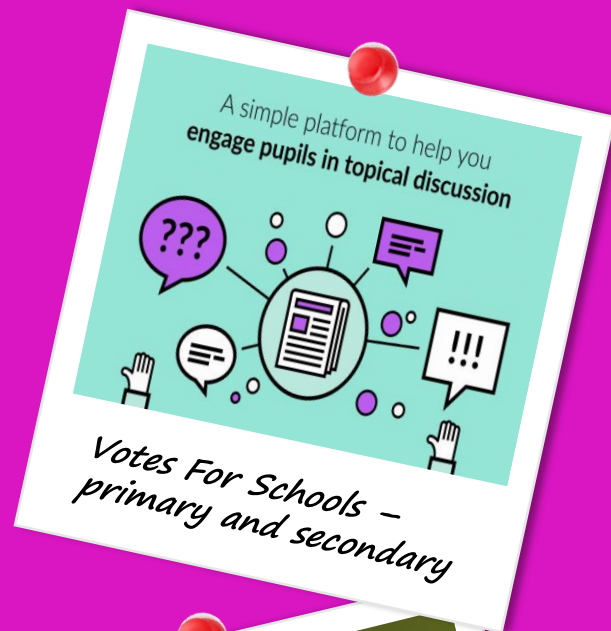
A session for teachers to learn how to create safe spaces for students to have informed discussions on topical or controversial issues. Resources provided give students a chance to vote and comment on issues, data is then shared with the school and wider world, ensuring the pupil voice goes on to have an impact on practice and policy.

Stand Up! Education Against Discrimination

An interfaith project where Muslim and Jewish educators created a safe space to empower professionals to learn about and act against racism and discrimination. A specific focus on Antisemitism and anti-Muslim hate. Provided knowledge and skills to understand and recognise racism and learn how to proactively tackle it.

Exploring Extremism in the Digital World

An eye-opening exploration into the ways in which online social media and gaming platforms are being infiltrated and exploited by extremists to recruit and spread extremist content, and what can be done to safeguard people from this in the online space.



Staying Safe in the Digital Space

Article

Did you know..

- We spend an average of 6hrs and 54 minutes on the internet each day meaning roughly 42% of our waking lives are online.
- Mobile phones are the dominant digital device, and we spend an average of 4hrs 10mins on them each day
- Staying up to date with news and current events is the top reason for using social media
- 81% of internet users agree that blogs are trusted sources of information and advice
- The average age of a gamer in the UK is 35
- Instagram has over 1 billion monthly users
- Brains release dopamine when 'likes' are received online
(Source: DataReportal (2021))

Digital technology is no longer just a tool, it is part of everyday life. There are many positive aspects to the digital space, such as how it can be used for educational purposes, communication, socialising, entertainment, and learning technical skills. However, many digital spaces can be extremely toxic environments, with issues such as grooming, sexting, radicalisation, and chat forums nurturing extreme ideas, including misogyny, racism, and extremist ideologies.

One aspect of digital literacy is the need to safeguard children and young people from dangers they are likely to encounter in their own use of digital technology, whether that be the use of the internet, apps or gaming. Here are some House Rules you may find useful to implement around technology use in your household to help keep children and young people safe online:

- Ensure all apps are age appropriate
- Keep all accounts on private with the location off
- Ask permission before downloading apps
- Don't exceed the agreed amount of time spent online
- No access to devices 30 minutes before bedtime to help the brain synthesise information in a healthy way
- Don't talk to people you have never met in real life
- Normalise talking about internet activity (what games they play, who they talk to, etc.) to make it easier for them to disclose any worries or concerns

Apart from E-safety there also needs to be an emphasis on respect and the responsible use of digital technology. The guiding principles for this would be:

Safe (Protect Yourself/Protect Others)
Savvy (Educate Yourself/Educate others)
Social (Respect Yourself/Respect Others)

(M. Ribble, 2015)

For more free support and resources on keeping children and young people safe in the digital space, you can take a look at our [resource pack](#).

Personal Video Stories

We were incredibly fortunate to have the opportunity to collaborate with some inspirational people to create a video series giving a platform to share how terrorism has affected them personally. Watch the videos below to learn more about their stories, they are still available to view on our website.



Figen Murray OBE

Figen's life changed forever in 2017 when her son, Martyn, attended the Ariana Grande concert in Manchester Arena at the time a terrorist detonated a suicide bomb.

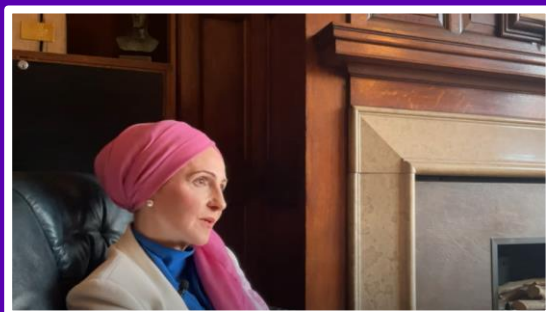
[Figen Murray OBE talks about losing her son](#)



Travis Frain

Travis is a survivor of the terrorist attack at Westminster Bridge in 2017. He and his friends were severely injured during the attack.

[Travis Frain discusses why he got involved with Counter Terrorism](#)



Nicola Benyahia MBE

Nicola's son was radicalised by ISIS in 2015 at the age of seventeen.

[Nicola Benyahia MBE talks about her son](#)



Mike Haines

Mike's family were shattered when his brother, David, was kidnapped by ISIS in 2013 and held captive for 18 months whilst providing aid support in Syria.

[Mike Haines talks about the importance of forgiveness](#)



Building Resilience

In the United States since 9/11 and in the UK since the 7/7 London bombings, we have been aware that something called 'terrorism' is not necessarily a remote event in a far-off country but can happen on our doorstep. The globalisation and advancement in digital technology means that no community is far removed from the threat of terrorism and events in other countries can often have a direct impact and escalate grievances locally. These grievances and a sense of injustice are what extremist groups often exploit and manipulate at the start of their process to groom and radicalise people. Resilience in communities is one of the core foundations in us tackling the issue of violent extremism.

Resilience is about an individual's capacity to overcome challenges that have a negative impact on their emotional and physical well-being and in the context of violent extremism resilience refers to the ability to resist counter violent narratives. Civil society can play a vital role in building resilience in this area and that includes all of us nurturing positive relationships with communities.

How can we build resilience?

- Partnerships are the corner stone of effective prevention targeting violent extremism collaboration with all sectors of society
- Create safe spaces based on trust and respect
- Teaching skills associated with building resilience and resistance such as exploring issues of identity, understanding bias, the ability to think critically,
- By having safe spaces for constructive dialogue and being able to discuss controversial difficult issues
- The need to develop an understanding of complex issues and question one's own assumptions
- Having the ability to have dialogue respectfully, to negotiate, anticipate response, managing one's emotions and to challenge prejudice
- Counter violent narratives by having accurate and relevant knowledge, counteract the views of the world of propaganda propagated by violent groups
- Challenge ideologies, myths, conspiracy theories and exclusionary worldviews
- Nurture social emotional skills such as empathy, compassion and mindfulness
- Being digital citizens

Building capacity amongst local stakeholders is important and developing these approaches are associated with empowering people in building resilience.

What can you do?

By raising your awareness and understanding and taking up opportunities for support and training. Keep in touch with us.



Feedback



What our young people told us...

“Travis’ talk has **widened my understanding** of terrorism and the causes of it.”

“Group discussions like these are **very educational and informative**. It spreads awareness in schools like ours.”

“I **feel very moved** by Travis’ talk today. I’ve learned that you can never know what can happen in life, so try and live life to the fullest.”

“More young people in school should be educated about this because it is a **very important topic**.”

“I think it will educate people on the **signs of someone being involved in radicalisation** and how to try and prevent it.”

“This experience has been really informative and moving forward these talks are **really helpful for spreading awareness**.”



What our communities told us...

“Thank you for the Prevent Week of Action...it has been really helpful. It is useful in schools to **focus our young people’s minds on these issues**. I hope this will be an annual event!”

“Really interesting and useful insight into the behaviours and beliefs of an MUU- Incel. **Excellent, interactive, informative session**.”

“Very interesting, **thought provoking** but also quite scary as to how the social media platforms can be used to get message out there.”

“I didn’t know anything before this and I know I **have learnt so much**.”

“There was not one part that was not informative. The case studies were really helpful. **Brilliant training, very knowledgeable trainers**.”

“I **found all of it useful**, the presenters were knowledgeable and able to address questions really well.”

Feedback



We asked people, who participated in the week, what else they would like to learn more about and receive support with.

These are some of the comments...

“Information around how best to support young people identify disruptive internet content.”

“A session on teenager relationships with peers/boyfriends/ girlfriends.”

“Some printable materials or leaflets that can be made available to the young people we support.”

“Resources which we can provide to teachers who are not experts in this area, which they can use to lead themselves in short tutor sessions.”

“Perhaps logos of groups/organisations to look out for online or when users are online in public/CCC spaces, e.g. watching videos.”

“Continually offering these insightful short webinars as its important we all stay ahead as things are constantly changing.”

A note from Prevent Coordinator, Manjeet Pangli

THE CONVERSATION DOES NOT STOP HERE!

A 'Week of Action' focussed on Prevent - the first of it's kind in Coventry. What a success it was!

But it is not just about one week of engagement. The conversations are continuing, collaborative working is developing further with our partners and relationships with communities have strengthened through them gaining a better understanding of Prevent delivery in the city.

We are listening to the feedback received and will include this in shaping our delivery over the next 12 months and of course are open to fresh ideas for our week of action 2023.



[@CoventryPrevent](https://twitter.com/CoventryPrevent)



prevent@coventry.gov.uk



www.coventry.gov.uk/Prevent