



UNIVERSITY OF
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Guidance for Identifying People Vulnerable to Recruitment into Violent Extremism

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Identifying Vulnerable People Guidance (IVP guidance)

This guidance is intended to support practitioners' level of awareness and decision-making in identifying individuals who are vulnerable or 'at-risk' of being recruited or involved in violent extremism.

USING THIS DOCUMENT - **ESSENTIAL READING**

- It is **not** an actuarial measure of risk.
- It **cannot** tell the user whether someone is a violent extremist or not.
- It is **not** to be used to determine or construct a legal charge against any individual, either civil or criminal.
- It is **not** to be used as a surveillance tool.
- It **must** be followed up by longitudinal evaluation studies in order to empirically validate its theoretical bases.
- It does **not** include referral mechanisms for the variety of agencies for which it is intended; instead those agencies **must** rely upon and develop their own responses to violent extremism in line with current best practice.
- It is to provide and enhance practitioners' knowledge of factors that are theoretically linked to violent extremism.
- It should be made available to senior representatives of those agencies who intend to rely on that interface.
- We recommend a limited print run of this document for those agencies, such that the review may be consulted by interested senior parties.

The criteria contained within the IVP guidance have been drawn from the existing literature on extremism and violence. The criteria have also been matched against a sample of 89 individuals known to have participated in or committed acts of violent extremism (Cole & Cole, 2009).

The criteria have **not** been validated as a psychometric measure of the risk of violent extremism. They are presented to provide useful and relevant information to practitioners about issues they should consider when they are concerned about an individual's potential vulnerability to, or involvement in, violent extremism. Decisions about risk should be made based on the information provided in conjunction with practitioners' professional judgement and expertise, and consultation with line management and agency policy.

This format is well-established in the risk assessment literature and is similar to the design of existing risk assessment tools, such as the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment (SARA, Kropp, 2000) and the Level of Service Inventory – Revised (LSI-R, Andrews & Bonta, 1995). This guidance will require validity and reliability testing to establish its utility through piloting and reassessment. Without such follow through, the utility of the guidance will remain unknown and practitioners will be unable to respond dynamically to accurately identifying 'at risk' individuals.

This guidance has been designed as part of the PREVENT strand of the Government's CONTEST agenda to reduce the risk posed by international terrorism. This principle should be at the forefront of its use - it is designed to identify people who are at risk of being targeted or recruited by violent extremists.

Through such identification, people who are vulnerable can be supported and offered positive strategies for engaging with their families, peers, communities, and religious organisations.

The goal of the IVP guidance is to allow agencies to equip people in Britain with those skills needed to protect themselves from the influence of those wishing to recruit them to violence.

Use of the IVP guidance to negatively label a person as a 'violent extremist' or 'terrorist' is completely INAPPROPRIATE and UNETHICAL and is a misuse of this guidance. Its use should be monitored by agency managers to ensure that it is being used correctly by participating agencies. Individuals must complete the accompanying information and training package before they are allowed to use this guidance to support their decision-making.

Understanding Violent Extremism

This project is part of the PREVENT strand of the Government's CONTEST strategy to address the threat of international terrorism (HM Government, 2006). There are four strands: PREVENT, PURSUE, PROTECT, and PREPARE. It is important to highlight the focus on PREVENT within this document and the fact that it is not focused on the other three strands of action. However, there is clearly a point at which PREVENT will engage with individuals who should be under the PURSUE strand.

This guidance document has been designed to allow practitioners to identify those people most in need of support. Practitioners should view this guidance tool as the first stage in the development of referral pathways and interventions with people at risk of engaging in violent extremist behaviour. This fits into the aims of the PREVENT agenda through 'target hardening' (i.e. making it more difficult for extremist recruiters to draw vulnerable people to their cause).

To more fully understand this agenda, it is critical to understand the processes that lead to individuals becoming involved in violent extremism. It is also essential that practitioners understand the nature of preventative work and feel confident engaging with and challenging people about extremist ideologies and the use of violence to further those ideologies.

Research demonstrates that in the overwhelming majority of cases violent extremism is not a product of psychiatric disorders. Most individuals who engage in violent extremism are for all intents and purposes functioning, rational members of society. Similar to other functional acts of violence (e.g. robbery and organised gang activity) it often evolves through an individual deciding that it is the best way available to solve their particular issue or problem. This decision is influenced by a wide range of factors (e.g. social skills, lateral thinking, and economic opportunities).

The foundation of this decision is the individual's 'belief' that it is acceptable to use violence against others to achieve their goals. Therefore, the decision to engage in violent extremism and commit acts of terror is a rational one that is the outcome of a cost/benefit analysis of the options available to the individual. This decision making process involves three distinct phases.

The first phase is passive recruitment. Passive recruitment occurs through events that occur in the lives of people living in the UK that lead them to desire radical changes to the UK. These events are not actively sought out by the individual but are encountered by them in their day to day lives. Many of these events are real or perceived grievances that the individual has with either the state, society, or specific groups within society. At some point, individuals within the community who are exposed to passive recruitment may decide that they need to participate in violent acts in order to resolve these grievances. This decision could be considered the point at which the individual becomes radicalised. ***For the purposes of this model radicalised***

individuals are motivated by political reasons (to achieve an outcome) rather than violence for the sake of violence.

The second phase is active recruitment. Active recruitment occurs when an individual actively seeks out and/or is sought out by violent extremists. During an individual's engagement with these violent extremists they may decide that violence is the only answer to the problems facing them. ***The decision to use violence to attain political goals defines the violent extremist for the purposes of this model. The core element in preventing violent extremism is therefore the prevention of violent behaviour.***

The third phase is the act of terror itself. Terrorist violence is best described as instrumental behaviour that is used to coerce the state or groups and individuals within it. The majority of violent extremists do not engage in terrorist violence because they are psychiatrically impaired or prone to aggressive behaviour. Terrorism is used to attain ideological goals and therefore the acts of terrorist violence are justified by an extreme and perverse rationale. However, the willingness to kill other people is not a universal human trait and there is evidence that even in combat there is a reluctance to kill. Despite this, there are some psychological factors that facilitate the use of extreme violence (Grossman, 1996; Cole and Cole, 2009).

Prevention

The key aim of any prevention intervention is to prevent the recipients from engaging in a target behaviour, such as violence or drug use. ***Therefore, prevention interventions are delivered to individuals who are not already engaging in the target behaviour. By their very nature prevention interventions will generate a large number of 'false positives', i.e. individuals who do not go on to display the target behaviour will be treated as if they will.*** This raises legitimate ethical concerns that prevention of certain social behaviours carries the potential for unfairly labelling or stigmatising those targeted for intervention who may not pose a genuine risk. Actions that label or target individuals as negative, criminal, or dysfunctional serve to alienate and ostracise them from the rest of society and may actually strengthen an anti-social identity (Muncie, 1999).

In order to understand how to manage these concerns, practitioners should have some awareness of striking a balance between individual rights and protecting the rights of the community. Communitarianism is the socio-political agenda that the rights of the individual must be balanced against the social responsibilities each individual has to their community (Burke & Morrill, 2004; Hopkins Burke, 1998; Etzioni, 1993). This supports the idea that we do not live as completely autonomous individuals but that we are influenced by, and accountable to, the communities in which we live.

The idealised prevention intervention would have evidence-based risk factors that can be used to identify vulnerable individuals and then an evidence-based method of protecting those vulnerable individuals. ***The aim of prevention is to protect the vulnerable.***

Universal prevention interventions are designed for the general population or specific populations, such as schools or communities. A universal prevention is delivered regardless of the perceived risk so all the intended recipients are exposed. A common example of a universal prevention strategy would be drug education in schools. There are many reasons why young people choose to use drugs and it is almost impossible to predict with a high degree of certainty who will not become a drug user. Therefore it is necessary to support all young people in making the right decisions about using drugs.

Selective prevention interventions are designed to protect specific groups who may be considered 'at risk' as opposed to vulnerable (as one could argue that everyone is technically vulnerable).

Indicated prevention interventions are designed for individuals who may be considered 'high risk' because they are likely to engage in the target behaviour.

Reactive strategies to the identification of the target behaviour evolve into a system where resources are poured into a small number of individuals, only once they have been identified, often after the maladaptive or destructive patterns have already become established. Therefore, the prognosis for any intervention is poor while their capacity for harm to the wider community is high. Tackling problems at their 'root causes' means investing in people who are vulnerable and/or 'at risk', not those who are already 'high risk'. Reactive policies involve a system of high-stakes risk taking, analogous to the rail service only putting money into those tracks that have failed safety testing and pose a clear risk, while spending no resource on general track maintenance to avoid such faults occurring in the first place. Such a strategy gambles that you will find all of the faults before an accident can occur. Early intervention models must move beyond this to a holistic structured approach that tackles the root causes of the problem behaviour before it expresses itself.

A variety of risk factors (see below) have been identified which not only impact violent extremism but also other key aspects of health and well being. It is therefore important to consider preventing violent extremism within a broader context of social and personal development. This broader context would link preventing violent extremism with other related educational and social issues, such as disengagement from education/training, unemployment, and drug use.

Identifying Vulnerable People (IVP)

The identification of vulnerable people may be complicated by practitioners' reluctance to raise seemingly controversial or cultural issues they feel unsure of discussing. A recent study (Dash, 2006) examining practitioners' preparedness to routinely screen for domestic violence issues (even when such screening was a mandatory part of their service protocol), found that they failed to do so in a high percentage of cases. When asked to explain this reluctance, they often reported that they felt too embarrassed or unsure of

their own knowledge base to raise the issue with a client, and therefore simply avoided it.

The current guidance carries similar, if not more elevated, risks. Practitioners are likely to feel uncertain and uncomfortable raising issues around such a sensitive, culturally and politically charged issue as violent extremism. The solution to this is **not** for all screening practitioners to have an in-depth knowledge of the ideological complexities of current and future violent extremist groups and individuals. The achievement of such a knowledge base is practically impossible.

This guidance document highlights those behaviours or characteristics that practitioners should be on the lookout for and on what evidence this is based. This should help increase their confidence to ask appropriate and timely questions of individuals in the communities that practitioners serve.

The risk factors outlined as the IVP guidance criteria below are based on research into the open source background material on convicted violent extremists. The risk factors indicate vulnerability, however, violent extremists will not necessarily display all of these factors, and the presence of even a single risk factor should prompt the practitioner to seek advice from their line manager. This vulnerability is based on statistical associations and probabilities. Therefore, it is not static and is not a cast-iron prediction of future behaviour.

Practitioners must feel confident raising such issues even when there are gaps in their own knowledge about particular issues and/or events that give cause for concern. They must feel able to ask difficult questions and identify key information which emerges from the participant's responses that should indicate what action (if any) to take.

Criteria for Identifying Vulnerable People (IVP) Guidance

Cultural and/or religious isolation

The core element of this risk factor is a low tolerance for other communities and religious beliefs. Contributing factors to low tolerance may include separate education, community and voluntary bodies, employment, places of worship, language, and social and cultural networks allow communities to operate in isolation without any 'meaningful interchanges'.

At its most extreme this will be manifested as limited contact with anyone outside of the individual's ethnic and/or religious group. There will be active avoidance of socialising with a diverse range of ethnic and religious groups. This may result from no involvement with education or employment that brings them into contact with a diverse range of ethnic and religious groups.

There is some evidence that experience of migration might exacerbate an individual's vulnerability to being drawn into violent extremism. The main issue seems to arise from problems that migrants might face in having to integrate

into UK society. The vulnerability is the same whether the individual is born in the UK or abroad, it is simply that for the foreign born the cause of the isolation could be their migration to the UK.

Isolation from family

The family can be considered both a risk and a protective factor in the field of prevention. Through social learning we all learn the norms and values that govern our behaviour and the family is the most salient source of that social learning. Some familial environments are clearly pathogenic to the extent that it is in the best interests of young people to be removed from their family for their own protection. On the other hand, estrangement from the family removes a core buffer against negative influences and a key source of social support.

Conflict with and estrangement from the family over life choices, such as marriages and religious beliefs, leaves the individual vulnerable to recruitment from violent extremists who offer the individual solutions to this conflict and estrangement. Leaving the familial home can also make the individual extremely vulnerable, particularly if they are then thrust into new and challenging environments.

A consequence of migration could be that an individual becomes geographically separated from their immediate family, and therefore distanced from its potentially protective influence.

Risk taking behaviours

Many young people engage in 'hedonistic' risk taking behaviours, such as alcohol/drug use and risky sexual behaviour, which puts them at risk of a variety of negative outcomes, such as (sexual) assault, injury, criminality, unwanted pregnancy, and sexually transmitted infections. Risk taking behaviours are a major prevention target in the field of health promotion and seeking to identify vulnerable and 'at risk' young people is commonplace. In the development of violent extremism a period of engaging in risk taking behaviours (which may be linked to criminality or hedonism) is often observed. Many young people engage in risk taking behaviours without truly understanding the consequences of their behaviour.

Although risk taking behaviour increases vulnerabilities to various potential hazards, it is when young people seek to change their risk taking behaviour that they are vulnerable to the influence of violent extremists. When they seek to "repent", motivated by guilt, they can be easily led. In the context of the development of violent extremism a period of engaging in risk taking behaviour is often the precursor to re-engaging with their religion, or engaging with religion for the first time (see below). However, it should be noted that religious observance is a strong protective factor against engaging in risk taking behaviour for many young people and a strong understanding of religion will protect an individual being drawn in by abusive narratives and misinterpretations of religion.

Sudden change in religious practice

It is common for violent extremists to undergo sudden and rapid changes in religious practice. Coupled with this increase in religious observance is a limited understanding of the religion. This lack of religious knowledge is exploited by extremist ideologues and recruiters in their rhetoric (see above and below). ***The key feature of this criterion is the increase in religious observance coupled with a limited theological understanding that originates from violent extremist ideology.*** This criterion is particularly important for individuals who are recent converts or are re-engaging with their religion after periods of living a more 'hedonistic' lifestyle characterised by risk taking behaviour (see above).

Violent rhetoric

Exposure to violent rhetoric and media (such as the internet and DVDs) is linked to the development of violent behaviour by establishing pro-violence norms and values within the individual. In the Rational Choice Model, 'low-level' violent media will act as passive recruitment factors. Vulnerable young people will seek out or be exposed to images and rhetoric that discuss their real and perceived grievances, such as immigration, animal experiments, or the suffering of civilians in conflict zones.

This exposure is not the criterion and should not be treated as such. The key element is extensive engagement with violent rhetoric that promotes the use of violence against specific groups and the justification for the use of violence against those groups. Exposure to this rhetoric will influence the decision to actively engage in violent extremism as the solution to real and perceived grievances. This criterion will be manifested in both casual conversation and the seeking out or possession of material containing violent rhetoric.

Negative peer influences

Social status is an important element of both individual and group social identity and seemingly trivial challenges to this social status can lead to violent behaviour. For young people the main source of social status will be their immediate peers. Real and perceived inter group conflict is common within society. In order to counter threats directed towards their community, some individuals are taking it upon themselves to defend it.

This can lead to the formation of gangs for the purpose of fighting real and perceived threats from outside. To a certain extent the existence of these gangs is a reflection of young people's disillusionment with the way that their elders handle issues affecting the younger generation. These gangs are not necessarily ideologically driven.

However, some gangs are ideologically driven. Some young people are more prepared than their parents' generation to confront injustice and racism; the

confrontational ideology of militant groups could be perceived to reflect the reality of the situation in which they live and offer solutions to it. These gangs have wider agendas than just community defence and tend to reject mainstream society and enforce separatism between communities (see above).

One of the initial ways that individuals can be socialised into the use of violence is through engaging in public disorder and street violence, particularly through these street gangs. Gang involvement can develop, reinforce and reward pro-violence cognitions and behaviour.

Acts of criminality are common among violent extremists, particularly petty fraud and drug dealing. Vulnerable individuals can rationalise their criminal behaviour through adopting violent extremism.

It is important to stress that street gangs are not necessarily a breeding ground for violent extremists and individuals who engage in street violence will not necessarily go on to become involved in violent extremism. Nevertheless, membership of a gang often reflects alienation from their own communities as much as it does from wider society, and these are exactly the kind of individuals that violent extremists will try to recruit.

Isolated peer group

Most individuals seek to affiliate themselves with an 'in-group' as it is an integral part of our social status. In this context, we can better understand the nature of peer pressure. Peer pressure is often cited as a rationale for the deviant behaviour of young people as it provides a mechanism for explaining why young people act 'out of character'. The most common definition of peer pressure is the peer group applying pressure to the individual to act in a way that they do not want to.

This definition serves a useful purpose for everyone concerned. Young people are able to displace the blame for their behaviour onto others and thus protect themselves from censure. Parents are able to continue in the belief that their children are essentially 'good kids' who are influenced by the 'wrong crowd'. The reality is that young people seek to affiliate with specific peer groups and their behaviour is a conscious effort to gain the approval of that peer group.

Peer pressure is therefore best understood as pressure from the individual to the group rather than from the group to the individual (Bauman and Ennett, 1996). In this process the individual is not a passive recipient of instructions from outside actors but is an agent with free will who consciously chooses to behave as they see fit. If the social identity of an individual is important to them then they will act in a manner that is consistent with the stereotype of a typical group member.

The psychology of social influence indicates that (peer) groups which isolate themselves from outside influences are at risk of a variety of cognitive distortions, normally referred to as "groupthink". Groupthink occurs when a

highly cohesive in-group of individuals becomes so concerned with finding consensus amongst the members that they lose touch with reality.

This process of group polarisation is not immediate and develops over time. In the context of violent extremism, the emergence of attitudes and beliefs consistent with violent, hate, and death rhetoric will be reinforced by other members of the peer group. These peer groups will sever ties with out-groups. It is from these peer groups that acts of violent extremism are most likely to emerge.

The threat or use of violence to enforce group membership indicates that there is a high risk of groupthink and engaging in acts of violent extremism.

Hate rhetoric

Hate, specifically 'hatred of the other' (i.e. the target group), sustains violent extremism. Hatred in the context of violent extremism is not an impulsive, chaotic emotion as it is constructed and directed toward a particular target to achieve ideological aims, it is functional. Hate strengthens and enforces the sense of separation between the target group and the violent extremists. The target group's humanity is gradually eroded to the point at which violence towards them becomes acceptable.

Sternberg (2003) suggests that this 'instrumental hatred' is generated through a series of stages:

- 1) The generation of hatred and disgust for the target group. Disgust is especially prone to violations of purity and sanctity (Rozin et al., 1999) so this often involves rhetoric around how the target group is immoral, corrupt, or evil and threatens the purity and morality of the in-group.
- 2) The second element is the creation of anger and fear towards the target group. This is achieved by highlighting the target group as an attacker and a threat to the in-group's values/life/morals, producing an 'us or them' mentality.
- 3) The third aspect is contempt for the target group, often by highlighting violations of the in-group's communal codes for dress, behaviour, and life choices.
- 4) The final aspect of hate involves the punishment of any members of the in-group that do not support negative views of the target group. Individuals are branded 'sympathisers' or even as 'collaborators' unless they demonstrate their commitment to the in-group. Within certain groups, absolute obedience to the 'hate policies' of the group is demanded on penalty of harm or death.

The use of language by an individual or group that generates hatred and dehumanises any other individual and/or group within society indicates an increased threat of violent behaviour by that individual or group. The use of such language will create the impression that such beliefs are normal and

morally acceptable. This criterion will be manifested in both casual conversation and the seeking out or possession of material containing hate rhetoric.

Political activism

The individual demonstrates an increased political awareness, specifically on issues that are championed by extremist groups, as well as a motivation to act on that awareness, but not necessarily through extremist groups.

Increased political awareness and criticism of any Government's policies is not the criterion for assessing an individual's vulnerability to recruitment by violent extremists. Association with individuals and groups known to have links with violent extremists (see below) indicates that the individual is at risk of being targeted for recruitment. Attendance at meetings, demonstrations, rallies, and/or protests with these individuals or groups is an indication that the individual is becoming more politically active. ***Seeking information from these individuals or groups is not the same as being actively involved. This criterion for vulnerability to recruitment is explicitly based on active participation.***

Basic paramilitary training

Numerous activities that are completely innocent, harmless fun can be used by violent extremists for basic paramilitary training. This criterion for assessing vulnerability to recruitment is not taking part in these activities for fun but their use for basic paramilitary training.

During basic paramilitary training sessions in the UK the recruiters are looking out for individuals who meet the criteria they hold for suitable candidates. Training is available throughout the world although it is easier to acquire specific terrorist training in certain places, such as Afghanistan or Pakistan. Paramilitary training is also available through commercial companies around the world, in particular companies training close protection operatives.

In addition, non-specific paramilitary training (e.g. physical conditioning for the rigours of advanced paramilitary training) can occur in any country during the pursuit of legitimate hobbies and sporting activities. Most terrorist cells are small tight knit groups of individuals with a common purpose.

Team building and/or training of any description will prove useful to these cells as this will reinforce group cohesion (see **isolated peer groups** above). Some sports, such as paintball, airsoft, and target shooting, can provide rudimentary paramilitary training, with some clubs and commercial enterprises deliberately selling such training to the public. Historical re-enactment societies can also provide some elements of paramilitary training and differ from sporting activities by also associating this training with specific ideologies, e.g. Waffen SS re-enactors.

Travel/residence abroad

Some areas of the world are conflict zones where it is possible for vulnerable people to come into contact with violent extremists who are engaged in combat operations. Some immigrants to the UK are here specifically because their country of origin is a conflict zone. Some of these immigrants have also experienced abuse at the hands of either insurgents or security forces and/or have lost family members to the conflict.

Many proscribed organisations (see **extremist group membership** below) are transnational in that they are present in numerous countries around the world and whilst the local versions may slightly differ, the ideology is basically the same. It is common for violent extremists to visit each other in order to maintain this extended network. In addition, paramilitary training (see above and below) is often easier to obtain overseas from these networks and organisations.

Exposure to violent extremist ideology is possible in other countries where proscribed organisations are able to operate openly. Educational and religious institutions linked to proscribed organisations are clearly identifiable risk factors.

Some individuals who travel to the UK are already violent extremists and/or members of proscribed organisations. The purpose of their travel may be to gain new recruits (see **contact with known recruiters/extremists** below) and/or to commit acts of violent extremism.

Travel to, or residence in, other countries is not the criterion. This criterion is based on (often multiple) journeys to, or residence in, known conflict zones or areas where proscribed organisations operate. It is essential to ascertain the purpose of the journey or experiences of residence overseas before raising concerns based on this criterion. It is important to note that the vast majority of travel or residence in these areas will not raise any concerns.

Red Category Behaviours

Those individuals who are engaging in the actions in the red category are displaying strong behavioural indicators that they may already be on the way to becoming involved in violent extremism. They are clearly aligning themselves with known violent extremist individuals/groups and/or they have received training for/participated in violent conflict. Rehearsal or actual use of violence greatly increases the likelihood of further participation in violent activity. Therefore, individuals displaying the risk factors in this category require reporting to the relevant authorities for further information gathering and monitoring.

Death rhetoric

The diffusion of responsibility for violent behaviour reduces the individual's inhibitions for violent acts, in particular killing (Grossman, 1996). Therefore individuals, groups, and/or institutions that provide justification for violent behaviour will make the individual feel less responsible for their violent behaviour. This justification will most likely take the form of revenge or retribution for wrong doing by the target of the violent behaviour (e.g. 'martyrdom' videos).

Martyrdom is a common theme in many cultures and religions and the martyrs are venerated by those cultures and religions. Achieving the status of a martyr will therefore attract some individuals. As it is the wider community that assigns the status of martyr to the individual rather than the individual themselves the mainstream discourse within a community creates the conditions for martyrdom. If the wider community does not support the actions of violent extremists, the groups and networks from which the violent extremist emerged may provide sufficient social support for the act of martyrdom.

As with violent and hate rhetoric, this criterion will be manifested in both casual conversation and the seeking out or possession of material containing death rhetoric.

Being a member of an extremist group

This criterion concerns itself with membership of certain groups. Groups that either conduct or actively support the use of violence are normally illegal and are proscribed under counter terrorism legislation. These are terrorist or violent extremist groups. There are other groups that do not conduct violent acts or overtly support violence but they reject the shared values of this country, such as democracy and equality, and seek to promote intolerance and disharmony in communities. For the purposes of this criterion we have called these extremist groups. ***These are not terrorist groups, but in some cases they share similar ideologies, beliefs and goals.*** Membership of these groups is not illegal and is not usually indicative of radicalisation, but consideration needs to be given to the aims of a particular groups and the methodology which is pursued to achieve those aims.

Joining such groups and networks is a significant act for an individual in moving from passive support to active involvement in extremism. It demonstrates both a heightened level of commitment and also a willingness to act on their beliefs.

These groups and the individuals associated with them form an amorphous nationwide network. The same people are often linked to a range of different groups, which often tend to be loose associations rather than organisations in the traditional sense. It is these loose networks of radicalised individuals that violent extremist recruiters and facilitators tap into, and within which smaller terror cells and networks exist.

Involvement with such organisations does not automatically indicate that the individual is vulnerable to recruitment by a violent extremist. This criterion is the active participation in known violent extremist groups, such as al Muhajiroun, the International Sikh Youth Federation, or Combat 18. (A list of proscribed terrorist organisations is available in Schedule 2 of the Terrorism Act (2000) available on the Home Office website. Membership, support or promotion of these organisations is a criminal offence.)

Contact with known recruiters/extremists

The security services have built a picture of violent extremist activity in the UK that consists of tight cells or networks, often overlapping, that exist within broader networks of radicalised individuals. Extremist propagandists, as well as terrorist recruiters and facilitators operate within these broader networks. These figures play significant roles in drawing individuals into violent extremism. There appear to be two distinct but interconnected processes at work. At one level, individuals are indoctrinated with an extremist political and/or religious ideology. This ideology justifies the use of violence for religious and/or political ends, but adherence to the ideology does not in itself mean that an individual is necessarily willing to commit an act of violence. At another level therefore, individuals need to make the step change to being prepared to commit an act of violence.

The role of the propagandist is to spread the ideology of the violent extremist networks and provide religious and ideological justification for acts of terror conducted by violent extremists around the world. Race, culture, and religion have been used throughout history by extremists to advocate violent behaviour. In particular, religious texts, which are often open to interpretation and selective quoting (often out of context), have been exploited by extremists to create a religious justification for violent behaviour.

Some individuals are active recruiters either for networks of violent extremists and transnational terrorist organisations, or else for specific terrorist cells. These individuals typically have extensive experience of operating within existing networks of violent extremists, and some have direct experience of previous conflicts.

Individuals who want to engage in terrorist violence but are not recruited into terrorist groups or cells by experienced terrorists, can form their own cells. These individuals rely on facilitators to arrange training, or arrange access to a conflict zone, and possibly access to weapons or funds. Facilitators are enablers who enable individuals who are intellectually and emotionally committed to violent extremism to take the next steps to active involvement in terrorism. Without the services of a facilitator an individual may not get an opportunity to engage in terrorism.

This criterion is not based on casually meeting people who happen to be violent extremists. The assessment of this criterion must be based on the nature of the contact between the vulnerable person and the

recruiter/propagandist/facilitator. As the amount of contact increases so does the risk to the vulnerable person and those around them.

Advanced paramilitary training

Violent extremists do not necessarily require specialist training in order to carry out acts of terrorism but most terrorists are trained. Training defines the potential operations that a terrorist can conduct. The acquisition of skills is considered to be a key step in the incremental process towards engaging in violence through providing an increased sense of control and power.

Any evidence of advanced paramilitary training, such as weapons handling skills, should be immediately reported to the appropriate authorities.

Overseas combat

Prior to 9/11 an unknown number of British Muslims had fought in *jihad* overseas. The radicalisation of British Muslims with a *jihadi* ideology was first manifest at the time of the war in Bosnia in the early to mid 1990s. Since then, there has been a steady flow of British Muslims going to fight in *jihad* overseas, the numbers who have done so are unknown but there have been a number of reports of casualties from Bosnia, Chechnya, Kashmir, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Somalia. Some groups engaged in violent *jihad*, particularly those that operate in Kashmir, have established links to Muslim communities in the UK.

Empathy or sympathy for the suffering of people overseas is a positive human reaction and efforts through charitable and political means to end suffering reflect well on an individual. However, there are cases where the suffering of people in conflicts overseas has acted a key driver for British citizens to fight in *jihad* overseas. At a superficial level their motivation was their desire to support the *ummah* in conflicts where Muslims are fighting non-Muslims, particularly if it also reflects their ethno-nationalist background, (for example, individuals of Pakistani descent going to fight in Kashmir). For some this could be driven by a simple sense of idealism generated by heightened politicisation over these conflicts.

For others however, there could be deeper ideological motivations. Consequently, some may be fighting for narrow political objectives, such as “liberating” Kashmir from Indian rule, others may have wider agendas in seeking to establish Islamist regimes. Therefore, whilst these individuals clearly believed in the concept of violent *jihad*, it does not necessarily mean that they adhered to an Islamist ideology, and neither does it necessarily mean that all those who fight in overseas *jihad* will return to engage in terrorist violence in the UK.

Any evidence of active involvement in overseas combat should be immediately reported to the appropriate authorities.