

What causes radicalisation and how to spot the signs?



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What is radicalisation?

Radicalisation is the process of causing someone to become a supporter of terrorism, or forms of extremism that lead to terrorism.

The concept of radicalisation is typically closely associated with ISIS (also known as IS or ISIL) but it does have much older origins

ISIS is said to have up to 20,000 “fighters” across Iraq and Syria with an estimated 2,000 Britons becoming radicalised and leaving the UK in the past couple of years. This includes at least 50 girls leaving to become Jihadi brides.

What causes radicalisation?

As yet, there has been no clear link or exact cause identified for someone becoming radicalised. This creates the sense that ‘it could happen to anyone’ which, in turn, increases the fear of radicalisation. The lack of an exact cause doesn’t mean we know nothing and it’s important to focus on what we do know and staying informed of current guidance. Radicalisation is, after all, constantly shifting and changing.

What we know as of now is that the main risk factor identified in victims is vulnerability.

Those who are most vulnerable are (but not limited to):

- Younger people from age 13 upwards;
- Those experiencing an identity or personal crisis;
- Individuals with feelings of unmet aspirations or a sense of injustice;
- People with a need for adventure or excitement;
- Pre-existing conviction that their religion or culture is under threat;
- [Individuals who feel socially isolated, and possibly, suffering from depression;](#)
- Those who have a history of criminal behaviour.

It is thought that, for some, ISIS satisfy that need for identity and/or the sense of belonging. For others, they are taken in by the ‘glory and honour’ of the battle or thrill of the victory.

The radicalisation process

This vulnerability is exploited, in a similar fashion to the way sexual predators groom young people online, with promises of excitement, empowerment, glory and freedom along with more material rewards, such as cash, pets and housing. A personal connection is formed: you can be sat at home in the UK talking directly to an individual fighter in Syria who is bragging about his military accomplishments and offering you help and encouragement to travel to join him. To someone so disaffected, this attention is understandably compelling.

The process of radicalisation is rarely the same for two people and can be anything from slow and gradual, to fast and effective, but underpinning the process is the strong brand ISIS have created via social media. It’s a brand that paints a seductive picture and acts as a compelling recruitment drive that inspires thousands of people to embark on a one-way journey to join their cause. In fact, it has been argued that ISIS’ social media strategy could rival the biggest brands in the world with ISIS holding, at any one time, over 45,000 Twitter accounts.



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Religion and radicalisation

It is important to understand that radicalisation isn't a religious issue: [it's about a state of mind, perception or feeling](#). Some argue that [radicalisation is a consequence of social inequality](#) and it is this that needs challenging, which is what a number of key community groups are attempting to do. These include:

What are the signs that someone might be at risk of radicalisation?

Please take a couple of minutes to watch the following clip:

<https://youtu.be/EWa5GwmQsdM>

- Being overly secretive about their online viewing – this being one of the core ways in which ISIS is known to communicate.
- Displaying feelings of isolation or expressions of an 'us and them' mentality – a sign of the sense of social isolation.
- Becoming more argumentative or domineering in their viewpoints, being quick to condemn those who disagree and ignoring views that contradict their own.
- Questioning their faith or identity.
- Downloading or promotion extremist content.
- Social isolation – losing interest in activities they used to enjoy, distancing themselves from friends and social groups.
- Altered appearance – change in style of dress and/or personal appearance.
- Abnormal routines, travel patterns or aspirations.

Talking to someone you believe is at risk of radicalisation

If you feel that someone is exhibiting one, or more, of these signs, it still doesn't necessarily mean that they are definitely being subjected to radicalisation. The first step would be to talk to the individual; be calm, open, and non-confrontational so that you encourage them to share their ideas and opinions with you. Remember that you're likely dealing with a vulnerable learner who is being groomed or manipulated so show acceptance for their views even if you don't perhaps feel that way.

Radicalisation is a safeguarding issue and should be dealt with in accordance with our organisations safeguarding policies and procedures.

If you have any concerns whatsoever please contact the CSL Safeguarding Officer:

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