

The Online Risk of Radicalisation



1

Extremists Use of the Internet

The internet and online platforms are utilised in various ways by extremists who aim to normalise their ideologies. They establish rapport by aligning with personal interests, making operational instructions easily accessible. Their messages have an extended reach, and supporter networks often become self-sustaining.



2

Taking Advantage of Vulnerabilities



Extremists exploit vulnerabilities such as social isolation, anxiety, low self-esteem, and troubled home lives that many children and young people face. They target vulnerable individuals by offering opportunities to join a network of like-minded people, providing a sense of belonging, friendship, and acceptance that these individuals may lack in their daily lives.

Those being targeted for radicalisation may be offered:

- Friendship and someone who listens and understands them
- A feeling of being accepted where they are isolated in their offline life
- Gifts, money and online gaming tokens or access to online gaming tournaments
- The opportunity to discuss current affairs, grievances and injustices
- Membership of closed groups through messaging apps

4

Warning Signs that someone is being radicalised online

- Isolation and withdrawal from family and friends
- Particular interest in certain divisive news topics, ideologies or conspiracy theories
- Increased secrecy about online activities
- Internet searches that indicate an interest in an ideology, violence (e.g. gore videos), and/or chemicals and explosives
- Spending excessive amounts of time online
- Joining closed groups on messaging apps following conversations with "friends" online
- New online friends that appear to be influential
- Negative views about certain groups within the community, possibly including violent sentiments towards them

3

Disinformation & Misinformation

A common approach used by extremists is to spread misinformation and fake news to generate anger and outrage, often skewing current affairs and topical national or local issues to play on our emotions, deeply held beliefs and values.



Often, posts from extremist organisations use patriotism, support for popular causes, fear-mongering, grievances and idealistic or shocking imagery in formats such as social media memes, videos, audio clips and images which act as a gateway into more overtly hateful and divisive content distributed through closed groups and private online conversations.

If you have any concerns about someone or are unsure about making a referral then discuss it with your organisation's safeguarding lead/Prevent lead and/or contact the Kent and Medway Prevent Team by emailing prevent@kent.gov.uk