

IO1 - Simulation Resources

Guidelines for Parents



HEADS-UP



Table of Contents

Introduction to the Guidelines for Parents.....	3
Introduction to the HEADS-UP Project	3
Guidelines for Parents	4
What is radicalisation?	4
Why are young people vulnerable to radicalisation?	4
What are the warning signs of radicalisation?	5
What is the process of radicalisation?	6
What is the role of the radicaliser?	7
What kind of person becomes a terrorist?	7
What kind of individual may be vulnerable to radicalisation?	7
How important is the influence of ideology in the radicalisation process?	8
What is the influence of online propaganda?	8
What are the dangers of Social Media in Radicalisation?	8
What do you do if you think someone is being or has been radicalised?	10





Introduction to the Guidelines for Parents

This set of guidelines have been produced to support parents to better understand the issue of radicalisation, to raise awareness of the characteristics of someone who may be susceptible to radicalisation and to identify the warning signs of when a young person has been radicalised. The content of these Guidelines is presented below in the format of 'Frequently Asked Questions'.

These guidelines have been developed by Future in Perspective, as part of the HEADS-UP project, and are linked to the Simulation Resources – How radicalisation Happens (IO1). Specifically, these guidelines help to explain the theory behind what we have presented in the simulation videos which show Jasmine and Kyle's stories. Both videos, and some additional resources, are available to access and download from the HEADS-UP website, which you can view at: www.heads-up.online.

Introduction to the HEADS-UP Project

The HEADS-UP Project: 'Raising awareness of how radicalisation happens for greater individual safety and country security' was funded through the Erasmus+ Programme in 2017 and will run until August 2019.

HEADS-UP is an innovative project which aims to raise awareness among front-line educators, parents and young people across Europe, of the process involved in radicalisation, and the vulnerability of young people in becoming radicalised through today's ubiquitous online and social media environments. This project is currently being developed and delivered by a team of education providers and digital media professionals working in Croatia, the Czech Republic, Finland, Ireland, Spain, Portugal and the UK.





Guidelines for Parents

The following section provides some of the most 'frequently asked questions' when introducing the topic of radicalisation for young people in Europe.

What is radicalisation?

At the most basic level radicalisation is the process whereby people become radical. Radicalisation is not usually an event; rather it is a process in which individuals are drawn into terrorist-related activity. In many cases this process is related to the search for identity, meaning and community.

It is a social process, in which peer relationships (friendships) are likely to be significant in persuading an individual that terrorism is a legitimate course of action.



Why are young people vulnerable to radicalisation?

The teenage years are a time of great change and young people at this stage are often searching for a sense of identity and belonging in social groups. It is also a time when young people can become vulnerable to other's influences, such as radicalizers. Issues with finding identity, not feeling like they fit in with their peers, seeking a connection with a social group, for example can all lead to young people having low self-esteem and confidence, and seeking meaning in their lives; and this is what can make them vulnerable to radicalisation.

There is a stereotype of a moody teenager in their room, listening to loud music and rebelling against their parents, and we are all familiar with this stereotype because it happens to most young people during their teenage years. This is typically the time when they want to be on their own, easily become angry and often mistrust authority. This makes it hard to differentiate between normal teenage behaviour and attitudes that indicates that a young person may have been exposed to radicalising influences. It is important to know the warning signs of radicalisation so that you know if you need to intervene as a parent.



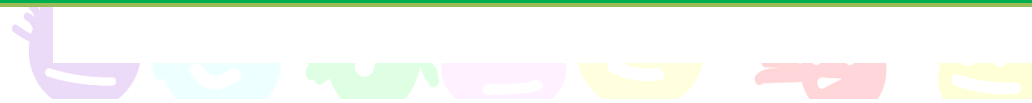


What are the warning signs of radicalisation?

In general, radicalisation in young people can happen over a long period of time. However, there have been some cases when radicalisation has been triggered by a specific incident or news item, and has happened much quicker. Similarly, sometimes there are clear warning signs of radicalisation, in other cases the changes are less obvious.

The following behaviours listed here are intended as a guide to help you identify possible radicalisation:

Outward Appearance



- Becoming increasingly argumentative
- Refusing to listen to different points of view
- Unwilling to engage with students who are different
- Becoming abusive to students who are different
- Embracing conspiracy theories
- Feeling persecuted
- Changing friends and appearance
- Distancing themselves from old friends
- No longer doing things they used to enjoy
- Converting to a new religion
- Being secretive and reluctant to discuss their whereabouts
- Sympathetic to extremist ideologies and groups
- Changing online identity
- Having more than one online identity
- Spending a lot of time online or on the phone
- Accessing extremist online content





- Joining or trying to join an extremist organisations

You know your children very well, so you are in a prime position to recognise if they are acting out of character. Trust and have confidence in your judgement, and get advice if something feels wrong.

What is the process of radicalisation?

There are varies different models and approaches used to describe the radicalisation process. The following describes a four stage radicalisation process, which emphasises specific times that are thought to be key moments in the radicalisation process. These four stages include:

1. Pre-radicalisation – the individuals’ life before radicalisation
2. Self-identification – the individual starts to become influenced by radicals and to slowly move away from their former identity
3. Indoctrination – the individual comes to identify with radicals on a deeper level – becoming committed to helping or supporting the radical cause
4. Radicalisation – the individual is willing to act on their new beliefs and ideals

Others also categorise this vulnerability to extremism as being a balance of vulnerabilities and opportunities, or ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors. The following presents some of the key push and pull factors involved in the radicalisation process.

Push Factors	Pull Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of grievance or injustice • Need for identity, meaning, belonging and/or comradeship • Desire for excitement, challenge, adventure • Need for status 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideology gives meaning to life • Identification with a noble cause • Becoming a member of a new social group – like a new family • Gaining social status





<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Desire to feel needed and significant• Criminality• Attraction to authoritarian ideologies• Certain mental health problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to excitement, challenge, adventure• Empowered by extremist identity• Outlet for criminal capability• Opportunity to be an authoritarian leader or follower• Extremist ideologies can make sense of a confusing world
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What is the role of the radicaliser?

We use the term ‘radicalisation’ to describe the process of an individual engaging with an extremist ideology – a ‘radicaliser’ is therefore someone who influences others to engage in, maintain and deepen their involvement in violent extremist and terrorist activity. A radicaliser’s influence can act as a catalyst to terrorist involvement for many individuals who become terrorists. Whilst radicalisers may be skilled manipulators, often they may also be polite, sociable, likeable and self-disciplined. Such individuals may show a range of positive behaviours and characteristics (like Tariq and his friends in the video), and it is often these positive characteristics that give these individuals their power to influence others.

What kind of person becomes a terrorist?

EU and academic research has consistently indicated that there is no single socio-demographic profile of a terrorist in the EU, and no single pathway leading to involvement in extremism. Terrorists come from a variety of backgrounds and appear to become involved in different ways and for differing reasons.

What kind of individual may be vulnerable to radicalisation?

There is no single archetype of an individual who is vulnerable to radicalisation, but there are certain common factors, specifically individuals with a vulnerable state of





mind, who find themselves exposed to an extremist ideology, and who lack the protective factors (which would include strong family, friend and community networks) that would otherwise help insulate them from radicalisation.

How important is the influence of ideology in the radicalisation process?

Whilst ideology remains central to radicalisation, it needs to be addressed in tandem with psychological needs and vulnerabilities. Often terrorist propaganda appeals to these psychological needs, such as the desire for status or excitement. Ideology acts as a ‘pull’ factor, providing a framework that fulfils a need for identity, and a diagnostic by which to make sense of one’s feelings of grievance or injustice.

What is the influence of online propaganda?

Online propaganda is one platform used by extremists and terrorists to promote ideological material. While formal media releases such as online magazines and propaganda videos are important, the growth of the use of social media platforms such as Twitter or Tumblr has allowed a greater involvement of ‘amateur’ extremist propagandists. While much of this content may be made up of reposted material from established groups, it can often be presented in novel and different ways. We can see this clearly in the flow of propaganda material coming out of Syria, where the formal pronouncements from groups such as ISIS are matched by a parallel stream of material from ‘Western’ recruits on Twitter or other social media sites.

What are the dangers of Social Media in Radicalisation?

Exposure to extremist propaganda through social media is critical to the process of radicalisation and we have seen this demonstrated in recent years. Extremist narratives are effective because of their simplicity, their use of scapegoating, and their emotional appeals to fear, anger, shame and honour. Their messages are crafted to exploit identity issues that many young people may be experiencing. It is upon this scaffolding that their violent and exclusionary ideologies are built. But the manner of transmission is equally vital.





Popular extremist propaganda often includes: high production value, the use of fast-paced editing, music and a charismatic narrator, and a call to action. The professional and sophisticated use of social media by ISIS in particular has been a game-changer.

Since February 2010, over 95,000 pieces of terrorist content have been removed from the internet and the companies' below continue to work with the EU to limit the abuse of their platforms by terrorists and their supporters. However, more content is uploaded all the time and many radicalisers have an established online identity using platforms described below:

- Facebook: ISIS supporters use Facebook to share content, such as news stories and YouTube videos, among their peer groups.
- Twitter: Twitter is another popular social media platform for pro-ISIS accounts and those sharing ISIS propaganda. It is easy to establish an account, stay relatively anonymous and share material with large numbers of people.
- Instagram: Instagram is used by fighters and ISIS supporters to share photosets frequently produced by various ISIS media organisations. ISIS supporters also use Instagram to share pictures of their life in Syria, often showing landscapes and images suggesting they are living a full and happy life.
- YouTube: YouTube is also used to host videos, both of official ISIS output and videos created by users themselves. Multiple 'dummy' accounts will be set up so that when videos are taken down they can be reposted quickly. Users will post YouTube links across their own social media platforms in order to disseminate material, particularly Twitter and Facebook.
- Ask.fm: People considering travel to Syria or Iraq sometimes use Ask.fm to ask British jihadis and female ISIS supporters about travel, living standards, recruitment, fighting and broader ideology. The answers given by ISIS supporters are encouraging, saying all their difficulties will be solved if they travel to the region.





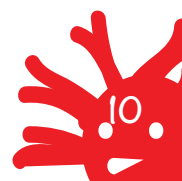
IO1 – Simulation Resources - How Radicalisation Happens

- **Tumblr:** Tumblr, the blogging site, is exploited by fighters to promote longer, theological arguments for travel. Tumblr is popular with female ISIL supporters, who have written blogs addressing the concerns girls have about travelling to the region, such as leaving their families behind and living standards in Syria.
- **Private Messaging:** On social media, ISIS supporters frequently encourage others to message them on closed peer-to-peer networks when asked for sensitive information, such as on how to travel to the region, what to pack and who to contact when they arrive. Popular private messaging apps include WhatsApp, Kik, SureSpot and Viber.

Social media has become an essential and exciting part of how we live. Millions of young people use these platforms daily to share content. But is it also used as a vessel to spread radical ideology. This is in part as a result of how radicalisers use social media to recruit new radical believers, but it is also perpetuated by the algorithms used by social media platforms. For example, once an individual searches for content online, suggestions generated through these algorithms recommend similar content for the user to view next. In this way, people who want to seek this information online can quickly find link after link of material that further fuels their belief in the injustice of certain groups or countries, for example, which further accelerates their radicalisation.

What do you do if you think someone is being or has been radicalised?

If you suspect that your child or family member has been or is currently being radicalised, the first thing you should do is seek professional help. In this situation, you should talk to a youth counsellor to seek help and advice. Discuss this also with your child's teacher and find out what process the school has in place to deal with radicalisation. Finally, if you think that the young person in question is about to act, you would be advised to make contact with the police in your region to report the incident and to allow them to investigate how the radicalisation occurred and to take action to ensure everyone's security.





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