



How can young people become radicalised?

Although there is no single vehicle towards radicalisation we know that young people are responsive to a range of influences and potentially risky behaviours as they move through adolescence and explore different ideas around their identity. These influences could come from peers, older people or relative strangers on the Internet.

What role does the Internet play?

Being a global network with 24/7 access, the Internet provides a significant opportunity for those who wish to promote extremist views. Young people find that the process of finding and 'meeting' people who will share and reinforce their opinions is straightforward, and they may actively search for content that is considered radical, either alone or as a result of peer pressure. Extremists in turn use social media sites to identify and make contact with impressionable young people. Initially such contact will take place on mainstream social media sites such as *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *Ask.fm*, but children are often asked to continue the discussion on other platforms such as *Kik*, *Whisper*, *Yik Yak* or *Omegle*. This makes the conversation more difficult to monitor. It is worth bearing in mind that the contact does not always start online – often the person encouraging young people to engage in discussions on radical topics is someone they have already met, perhaps through family or social activities, who then makes use of the Internet to build a rapport. Thus young people may not be aware that their beliefs are being shaped by another person whom they see as a friend or mentor, even boyfriend or girlfriend. The process can be seen as a kind of grooming.

What are the warning signs?

Although many of these may be seen as normal behaviour among teenagers, parents should be aware of increased instances of the following:

- believing that there is unjust treatment towards their religion, culture or beliefs, or that these are under threat
- a distrust of mainstream media, and an interest in conspiracy theories
- a heightened need for identity and belonging
- increasing secrecy regarding who they are in contact with online and which sites they use
- switching screens when you come near the computer (or other device)
- new, unexplained devices which you know they could not normally afford
- more volatile emotions

What can I do to help?

As with the majority of issues discussed in the e-safety sessions, the most powerful tool we have is conversation. This is a difficult topic and must be dealt with sensitively in order to avoid alienating the young person. Avoiding confrontation, remaining calm and encouraging the young person to share their ideas and opinions are all key strategies, whilst parents can act as positive role models in their own Internet use and by talking openly about online friendships.

What if I have further concerns?

If you are concerned about online contact which could harm your child, report it to the CEOP Command (www.ceop.police.uk). If you feel that there is an immediate threat that your child may be a danger to others or is considering leaving the country, ensure that their passport is in a safe place and contact the police.