**Indicators of vulnerability to radicalisation**

Staff must be alert to the risk of children being drawn into terrorism and extremism. This section provides an overview of key terms and indicators of vulnerability, which must be read alongside the statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026 and the latest Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales.

**Key Definitions**

**Radicalisation** refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism leading to terrorism.

**Extremism** is the promotion or advancement of an ideology based on violence, hatred or intolerance, which aims to:

- Negate or destroy the fundamental rights and freedoms of others; **or**
- Undermine, overturn, or replace the UK's system of liberal parliamentary democracy and democratic rights; **or**
- Intentionally create a permissive environment for others to achieve those results.

This encompasses opposition to Fundamental British Values (democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs) as well as using, excusing or calling for violence against public officials, police forces or British armed forces.

**Core Safeguarding Principles**

- **No "Typical Extremist":** Those who become involved in radicalisation come from diverse backgrounds and experiences. Most individuals who hold radical views do not engage in violent action.
- **Professional Curiosity:** Staff must exercise professional curiosity and look for underlying vulnerabilities that perpetrators exploit to drive a wedge between children, their families and their communities.
- **Integrated Safeguarding:** Radicalisation concerns must be treated as primary safeguarding concerns—managed through the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and reported via standard referral processes (e.g., Channel referrals).

**Indicators of Vulnerability**

Susceptibility to radicalisation often arises from a combination of social, personal and environmental factors.

**1. Identity, Personal Crisis, and Belonging**

- Distance from cultural/religious heritage, creating discomfort about place in society.
- Feeling isolated, having low self-esteem or experiencing family tensions.
- Sudden dissociation from existing friendship groups and adoption of a new, distinct peer group.
- Searching for answers to intense questions about identity, faith and belonging.

**2. Grievance and Environmental Factors**

- Personal experiences of racism, discrimination or perceived systemic injustice.
- Strong emotional impact from global conflicts, international events or local community tensions.

- Unmet aspirations, feelings of personal failure and a rejection of civic life or democratic participation.

**3. Vulnerability and Exploitation (SEND & Neurodiversity)**

- Pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or neurodivergent profiles may experience difficulties with social interaction, understanding subtle social cues, evaluating others' motivation, or foreseeing consequences.
- *Note:* Online extremist recruiters specifically target these traits to manipulate and groom individuals.

**4. Digital, AI and Online Engagement**

- **Exposure to Harmful Content:** Exposure to extremist literature, violent websites or online groups with social networking elements.
- **Misinformation & Ideological Echo Chambers:** Exposure to online misinformation, disinformation (fake news) conspiracy theories and radicalising narratives.
- **Generative AI & Algorithms:** Interaction with extremist chatbots, AI-generated radicalising media, deepfakes or algorithmic "rabbit holes" that promote misogynistic, incel or extremist ideologies.

**High-Risk / Critical Indicators**

Staff must act immediately if any of the following critical indicators are observed:

- **Direct Contact:** Being in direct contact with extremist recruiters or visiting extremist forums/chat groups.
- **Family Links:** Family members convicted under terrorism legislation or undergoing a Channel intervention.
- **Ideology & Violence:** Using global extremist narratives to explain personal disadvantage or justifying the use of violence/terrorism to achieve political, religious or ideological goals.
- **Affiliation:** Joining, attempting to join or actively supporting banned or extremist organisations.
- **Behavioural Shifts:** Significant, sudden and unexplained changes in appearance, speech, dress or daily behaviour.
- **Extreme Isolation:** High levels of social withdrawal accompanied by intense radicalisation risks.

**Action required:** This list is not exhaustive. If you have any concerns regarding a child’s vulnerability to radicalisation or exposure to extremist materials, report it immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) in accordance with the school's safeguarding and Prevent procedures.