

## VULNERABILITY FACTORS

“Safeguarding children and young people from radicalisation is no different from safeguarding them from other forms of harm”.

*The Prevent Strategy 2011*

There is significant overlap between the factors that that might make a child or young person vulnerable or susceptible to different types of exploitation or harm, or to being drawn into violence or criminality. The table below shows some of them. As safeguarding professionals, many of these factors are ones that you are experienced in responding to.

Bullying	Child Sexual Exploitation	Substance Misuse	Domestic Violence	Gang Membership
Changes in temperament	Changes in temperament	Changes in temperament	Changes in temperament	Changes in temperament
Change in appearance	Change in appearance	Change in appearance	Change in appearance	Change in appearance
Lack of concentration	Lack of concentration	Lack of concentration	Lack of concentration	Lack of concentration
Individual asks for help	Individual asks for help	Individual asks for help	Individual asks for help	Individual asks for help
Poor attendance/ absence	Poor attendance/ absence	Poor attendance/ absence	Poor attendance/ absence	Poor attendance/ absence
Changes in daily routine	Changes in daily routine	Changes in daily routine	Changes in daily routine	Changes in daily routine
Signs of injury	Signs of injury	Signs of injury	Signs of injury	Signs of injury
Withdrawn/ depressed	Withdrawn/ depressed	Withdrawn/ depressed	Withdrawn/ depressed	Criminality/ Anti-social behaviour
Isolated	Isolated	Isolated	Isolated	Weapons
Fabrication of illness	Fabrication of illness	Fabrication of illness	Fear of family member/ partner	Money/ expensive items that cannot be accounted for
Identity crisis	Inappropriate sexualised behaviours	Identity crisis	Money/ expensive items that cannot be accounted for	Identity crisis
Self-harm	Self-harm	Family breakdown	Family breakdown	Family breakdown
Changes in friendship groups	Money/ expensive items that cannot be accounted for	Changes in friendship groups	Aversion towards communal changing areas	Changes in friendship groups

**The factors that might make an individual vulnerable or susceptible to being drawn into terrorism are no different to those set out above, as the story of Andrew Ibrahim demonstrates:**

When he was 19, Andrew Ibrahim was arrested on suspicion of plotting to detonate a series of devices in a Bristol shopping mall. At that time, his home was found to contain explosive devices, extremist material and a suicide vest.

The son of an English mother and Egyptian father, from a young age Andrew struggled to find and establish his identity. He actively sought acceptance at school, but this was perceived as attention seeking and as a result he was rejected by his peer group.

Although he was intelligent, Andrew did not focus on his studies; instead, he played truant and got himself into trouble on a number of occasions, which resulted in his expulsion from a number of private schools

Andrew began experimenting with drugs age 13, which quickly escalated to heroin use by the time he was 16. He converted to Islam, and initially his family were optimistic about this, having witnessed positive changes in his behaviour. However, Andrew quickly became reclusive and after listening to recordings of radical clerics and accessing extremist material on the internet, he developed a "mindset of martyrdom".

He became forceful with his views and would not listen to other peoples' opinions particularly when it came to religion and politics that related to the Middle East. He downloaded videos of experiments with explosives along with a films of suicide bombers and Al Qa'eda propaganda films.

It was reported that he claimed to admire the 7/7 London bombers and thought the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center was a "justified response" to Western aggression.

At college, he once asked a visiting lecturer in microbiology about the "best" bacteria to kill people with. His use of drugs caused family relations to strain. He descended into poverty and aged 18 he elected to become homeless to support his drug addiction

With the help of a housing group he was able to get hostel accommodation. It was reported that Andrew told people he met in hostels that his parents had disowned him. It was also noted that he appeared to be a devout Muslim but would lapse into Western clothes during times of drug misuse.

At the time of the attacks Ibrahim had been placed on a methadone programme, and had shown his drug counsellor violent footage that he had downloaded onto his mobile phone.

After his trials with explosives went wrong he went to a drop-in clinic seeking medical help for injuries to his hands which had glass in them.

He later met his friend at a mosque and showed him his injuries including injuries to his feet which he had not revealed at the clinic. It was the local Muslim community who contacted the police.

- It is clear from Andrew's story that there were a number of missed opportunities to safeguard him.
- Had appropriate support and intervention been put in place earlier on, it is possible that the outcome for Andrew could have been different.

When any of these factors arise, they could be a sign that a child or young person is in need of support and assistance. Although the chance of these factors indicating radicalisation is slim, Andrew's story should emphasise that this is not a risk that we can afford to ignore.

The bottom line is that frontline practitioners have a duty of care to respond to indicators that suggest an individual might be in need of help or support. Although Prevent may be a new area for many of you to familiarise yourselves with, our collective safeguarding duties should not be. Since radicalisation and extremism are just another facet of vulnerability, concerns relating to them should be treated in the same manner as any other safeguarding concerns.