

MANUAL PRISON OFFICERS

Radicalisation and how it's relevant to you

A MANUAL FOR PRISON, PROBATION AND PAROLE OFFICERS

This manual includes information about signs that a prisoner or former prisoner may be radicalising, some tips about how you can make contact with them to discuss this sensitive issue, and how you might think about working together with other professionals like law enforcement and social services for prevention and monitoring. It has been produced by TERRA, a European wide network-based learning program. This advice is part of a complete toolkit, created for local and national governments, and for front liners coming into professional contact with vulnerable individuals or groups who may be at risk of radicalising.

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1 AIMS AND BACKGROUND: DEALING WITH RADICALISATION

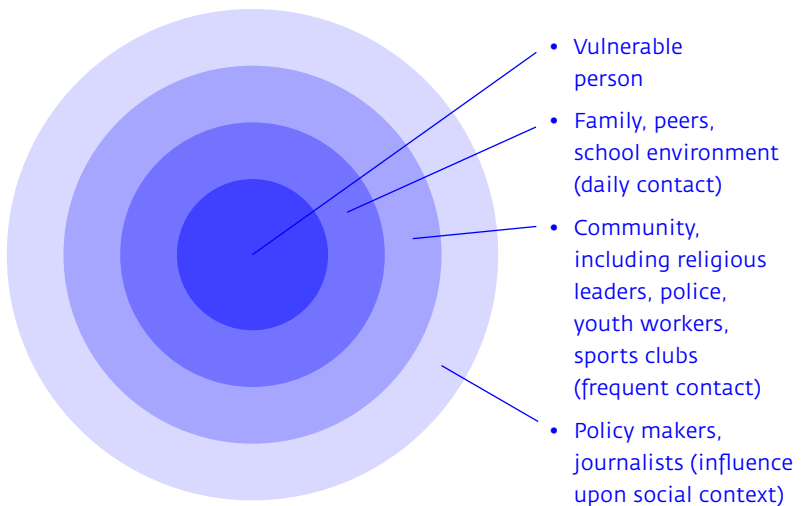
This manual is about radicalisation, and has been written for **prison, probation or parole officers**.

We hope that, when you have read it, you might:

- Be more aware of the possibility that someone within your target group is at risk of radicalising;
- Know what some of the causes of this process might be;
- Know what some of the possible signs of this process are;
- Be aware of the other professional groups which could help you with your concerns about this, and perhaps help to prevent someone radicalising;
- Feel able to take action by making contact with those groups and by approaching the person you are worried might be radicalising.

2 WHY YOU?

Radicalisation is a process of change. In your job, you come into frequent or even daily contact with a target group which might be vulnerable to radicalisation. This puts you in a perfect position to notice it. You might see changes in their behaviour, appearance or the way they talk and socialise with you or with their peer group. This model shows the context of someone who is radicalising.



The people in each circle have their own type of contact with and influence on the vulnerable person involved. Changes in behaviour, peer group or ideology are more obvious to people in the circle closest to the person who is radicalising. For example, parents can see that their son has made drastic changes to his appearance and has a new set of friends. A police officer, who is seeing the boy for the first time will not be able to see how much he has changed within the last year – and this change is crucial.

That's why it's so important to realise that in order to really grasp what might be going on, contact, communication and transparency between the circles is vital.

3 WHAT COULD BE YOUR ROLE?

Prison, probation and parole officers are in the first or second ring, seeing the person who may be radicalising on a daily or other very frequent basis. You see them hang out and talk with you and others. Maybe you hear what's on their mind, and see their emotions when they talk about others or about the world around them. You know who their friends are, and you can see if there is a change amongst a friendship group.

In some cases, prisoners have access to education. For some inmates, this might be the first time they have had this opportunity. This, and meeting other prisoners with political views, can influence how they look at the world, or at themselves. They may take a political stand, or become friends with like-minded people. They may tell you about it, or you could see it happen.

We don't want to suggest that you have to become an expert on terrorism – but you are already an expert on the people you are dealing with professionally, and through that expertise you may be able to play a vital role.

It is very important to underline that we DO NOT suggest that every conversion to a new religion or political group during or immediately after prison should be seen as a cause for concern. A prison term can, in some cases, be a time of change anyway. It may be a moment of personal crisis. Also, the need for physical safety makes membership of a group seem attractive. It may even be one of the first times that an individual is exposed to education on a structural level.

But it is crucial that if you are in doubt, you share your observations with other professionals who are working on radicalisation, or who are also working closely with the person you are worried about. This way, you can see if other people share your concerns about them, you can work out a way to approach them, and you don't have to deal with your concern on your own.

In this way, a process of radicalisation can be stopped or checked, thereby increasing security around the person you believe may be radicalising, and perhaps even the safety of that person too.

You should be aware of three issues¹ which are specific to the prison system:

1 Influence from outside

Most prisons screen the resources which are being sent to prisoners, but there have been a few cases in which prisoners have been contacted with radical books, videos or websites. It is vital to stick to screening procedure and to investigate any instances where this has been a problem. Report that the prison and its inmates are being targeted by radical groups to law enforcement services.

2 Influence from inside

If known terrorists are kept within a prison, there is a higher risk factor within it. Terrorist prisoners can in some cases enjoy a "hero" status and use their influence to convert and convince their fellow inmates. Keep an eye on the social interactions of any such prisoners housed within your institution.

3 Radical Gangs

Gang culture has a long history within the prison system and seems to stem from a variety of factors, including the need for group protection of physical safety. In some instances these gangs have assumed a political identity which can take a radical form.

In case you notice any of these three factors, it is important that you pay attention to them, and discuss them with the network around you, including the police, social workers, and religious leaders who provide care within your prison.

¹ These three factors were identified by Peter Neumann in his 2010 report Prisons and Terrorism: Radicalisation and De-radicalisation in 15 Countries

As soon as you block someone out of a dialog or conversation, they will go and talk to someone who agrees with them instead.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR?

First of all it is very important to underline that there is no checklist of "symptoms" which, if all the boxes are ticked, definitively say that someone is radicalising.

But there are some signs which might indicate that a radicalisation process is underway. A radicalisation process can go very fast, taking place in a matter of weeks, or be a gradual development spread over years, or anything in between. Some people may display all of the characteristics in this manual, others just a few of them. Usually, just one of these changes or characteristics is not really a cause for concern. Be especially alert to change.

4 RISKS AND RESILIENCE

This chapter points out some background factors that may increase the risk someone may explore the path of radicalisation. We would like to emphasize that those background factors don't automatically direct someone in a dangerous direction. A quest for identity for example is quite normal at a certain age. It's nevertheless important to be aware of those factors. It will help you to take a more focused approach to building resilience and offering protective factors.

Individuals who may be vulnerable to the influence of radical groups may be:

- Searching for an identity. Radical groups, which deliver clear rules on how to behave and dress, and even what kind of music to listen to, can be very attractive to someone who is seeking a way to belong.
- Brought up in an environment where violence is an accepted means to solve problems or display power.
- Connected to someone within a radical group. If a sibling, parent, close friend or fellow inmate is known to be a member of a radical group, the influence on the individual within your group will be much stronger. Be aware that this person runs a higher risk of becoming radicalised.
- The victim of discrimination. If someone has experienced racism or seen that another ethnic, religious or political group has received preferential treatment, they are likely to feel resentful.

DO

- Show an interest in hobbies and talents of the individual. Sporting, artistic or musical talents can all provide a positive identity, and a potential social group. Be extra alert to someone who has social or familial connections to a radical group. Where possible, discuss their family or social situation with them. Discuss this case with other professionals– social workers, other youth workers and law enforcement personnel may be especially relevant.
- Respond pro-actively to any reports of racism or discrimination. Again, discuss these cases with other members of the community approach framework.
- In cases in which you agree that discrimination has taken place, make it clear to the person reporting it that legitimate means to redressing the balance are available, and make sure that these are followed through. People who have experienced discrimination sometimes have the tendency to feel that the negative emotions expressed by the person who discriminated against them are common to their entire social group. Ensure that you underline that the discrimination they have experienced is a one off, individual action.

FIND THIS VIDEO ON
TerRaToolkit.eu

MORTEN HJØRNHOLM
SOCIOLOGIST/CRIMINOLOGIST
SSP (SCHOOLS, SOCIAL WORK AND POLICE)
ADVISER, DK

His first memory is of his father hitting him in the face. His mother struggled with addiction and could not protect him from his father's violence. He grew up in a home where violence was the solution to any problem which arose. "I was so full of hate. I didn't know how to do anything but hate." When he became friends with some members of an extreme right wing group he felt accepted and protected for the first time in his life. "I followed their views but it could have been any group, any views. It would have been the same.

(Former member of an extreme right wing group)

5 DEALING WITH YOUNGSTERS DEVELOPING SYMPATHY FOR RADICAL IDEAS

A first step on the path of radicalisation is often caused by feelings of frustration. People feel stuck in their situation, and they try to find out how to get better hold of their lives. This implies moving away from the mainstream, looking for groups which do provide a feeling that they are able to address their troubles in a powerful way. They are open for radical ideas.

They may:

- Feel that they have not achieved goals or successes they wanted because of racism or discrimination.
- Show a loss of sense of legitimacy in authority (police, government, etc.)
- Show strong feelings about group identities and develop a sense of competition between groups. You may hear them talking strongly in terms of "us" versus "them".
- Be especially receptive to ideas from people or groups who share their negative experience of the wider society. Others who recognise the sense of being disadvantaged and who talk about fighting it, will be especially attractive. You may be able to see new friendships develop.
- Look for a group which provides a very clear identity. You may already see some changes in their dress, haircut, tattoos etc. This will only be very clear in the next phase, when they have definitely chosen a group and become a member.

DO

- As far as possible, keep talking with the person. The processes at stake here, are mainly psychological ones, not yet really resulting in any action. Your support and help at this moment could be really important in stopping the process.
- If appropriate to the situation, connecting the person with role models he can easily identify with, can be a very positive step. This can challenge the idea that a lack of success can be attributed to discrimination.
- Challenge a sense of "us versus them." Always focus on the common ground between groups. Lay emphasis on the positive aspects of the group which the person feels is discriminated against. Support critical thinking, especially about radical groups which the person may come into contact with, for example on the internet.

*If we de-humanise people,
make them into the enemy and don't listen,
then we are going to keep the conflict going.*

*When I was young, no matter what we did, it didn't help.
Violence seemed like the only way to bring attention to our community
and the problems we had.*

(Former member of the Irish Republican Army)

6 WHAT IF THEY REALLY JOIN A RADICAL GROUP?

The person may come into contact with groups who are actively seeking new recruits. At this point in the process the demand – for a group which provides a clear identity and a means to address the perceived unfairness of society – is met with supply – groups actively recruiting. This is a very crucial point in the process. Once they get involved with a group, it will become harder to go back. You might notice new faces in the community, if the individual is no longer in the prison itself.

At this point, several changes may come to the surface:

- Change in appearance. Once a group has been selected, the recruit tends to make his support of it really visible. This might include adopting a certain style of dress, growing a beard, or indeed shaving off all hair, displaying flags or stickers, getting tattoos which show their membership. These changes may be visible in someone within the prison system as well, even though in some prisons the inmates wear uniforms. Using vocabulary typical to the group is also common, for example names for certain ethnic or religious groups.
- Change in identity, even in name, can take place.
- Change in behaviour. In an attempt to affirm membership of the group, changes in behaviour such as giving up drinking and smoking, and changing diet, may be noticeable. They may be very expressive in support of the ideology of the group, and even challenge non-members who do not follow the behaviour suggested by the group.
- Change in friendship group. Individuals who have become involved with a radical group tend to withdraw from the social and leisure activities they used to do, becoming increasingly involved in activities connected with the group. This may include forming a new group of friends.
- They are very clear in the definition of their own group in comparison to others. Sometimes they speak or behave in a threatening way about other groups.

DO

- If someone is already re-integrating into society, bring him or her into contact with other, positive groups or activities which provide a clear identity and can channel this sense of disadvantage in a positive way, for example, a sports club, voluntary organisation, community group or (non-violent) religious organisations. To a more limited degree, these measures could be applied to someone within the prison system too.
- Raise awareness amongst the prison population as a whole about the tactics which radical groups can use to recruit people, especially the use of shocking and biased narratives. These only present one side of the story and it's important to think critically about them.

FIND THIS VIDEO ON
TerRaToolkit.eu

JO BERRY
BEREAVED FAMILY MEMBER FROM TERRORISM
FOUNDER OF BUILDING BRIDGES FOR PEACE, UK

- If you feel that an individual is being targeted by recruiters, involve law enforcement, social workers, other youth workers and religious leaders.

DON'T

- Make the individual feel as though he's being singled out for special attention. His sense of identity at this point may be extremely fragile, and a feeling of threat to it may serve only to alienate him yet further from what he already perceives as a hostile society.

7 IF THEY INTEGRATE INTO THE RADICAL GROUP

Once a group has been selected, the individual tends to feel a strong desire to confirm their membership of it. Most of the indicators mentioned will show themselves more outspokenly, like change in clothing style, using aliases, strong us-and-them terminology, or different word choice.

Other noticeable changes that may point to membership of an extremist group:

- An increased sense of anger at society, and less participation in it. Most individuals at this point will share their views, partly to affirm their group membership and possibly with an indirect goal of finding new recruits.
- Forcing group rules on others, or challenging non-members who do not behave conform to the behaviour suggested by the group.
- Participation in closed meetings.
- Possession of propaganda material.
- Become more extreme in expressions of hate about those who do not share their views.
- Threaten other group members who try to leave the group.

DO

- Take these signals seriously
- Try to prevent the individual from becoming increasingly isolated. Maintain communication as much as possible.
- Where possible, discuss these changes with the recruit's family and friends – the old friends they used to socialise with. They may now be in a better position to speak with this person, and challenge the choices he or she is making.
- Try to re-establish contact with the old group of friends.
- Discuss the costs of membership of the group, for example: losing old friends, getting on the wrong side of the law (again), personal danger, and loss of opportunities for development.
- Make sure that law enforcement personnel are aware of your concerns. It is at this point that genuinely dangerous and violent activities may begin.
- As much as you can, ensure that contact with the vulnerable person is not lost as a result of their reduced presence at meetings, or participation in other activities.

8 IF THEY TURN INTO HARD CORE RADICALS

Once integrated, the individual may become more and more convinced of the legitimacy of the thoughts and actions of the radical group. They are now very sensitive to indoctrination and will become more and more obsessive about the goals of the group and preparation for (violent) action. The indicators for individuals already active on behalf of a radical group are (hopefully) only applicable to those already in the community, and not those in prison, who are prevented from undertaking a terrorist attack by their incarceration. However, these indicators are extremely relevant to individuals already released into the community. Your only role now can be to communicate your concerns and observations to law enforcement personnel. **The radical person may:**

- Abandon a more extreme "look" in an attempt to blend in with peers, so as to escape the notice of law enforcement personnel and other professional groups.
- Make actual preparations for an attack, gathering supplies, carrying out reconnaissance.
- Recruit and train new members of the group.
- Threaten other group members who try to leave the group.
- Produce written or video material about their intentions.
- Express extreme feelings of hate or intentions of violence towards those who do not share their views.

DO

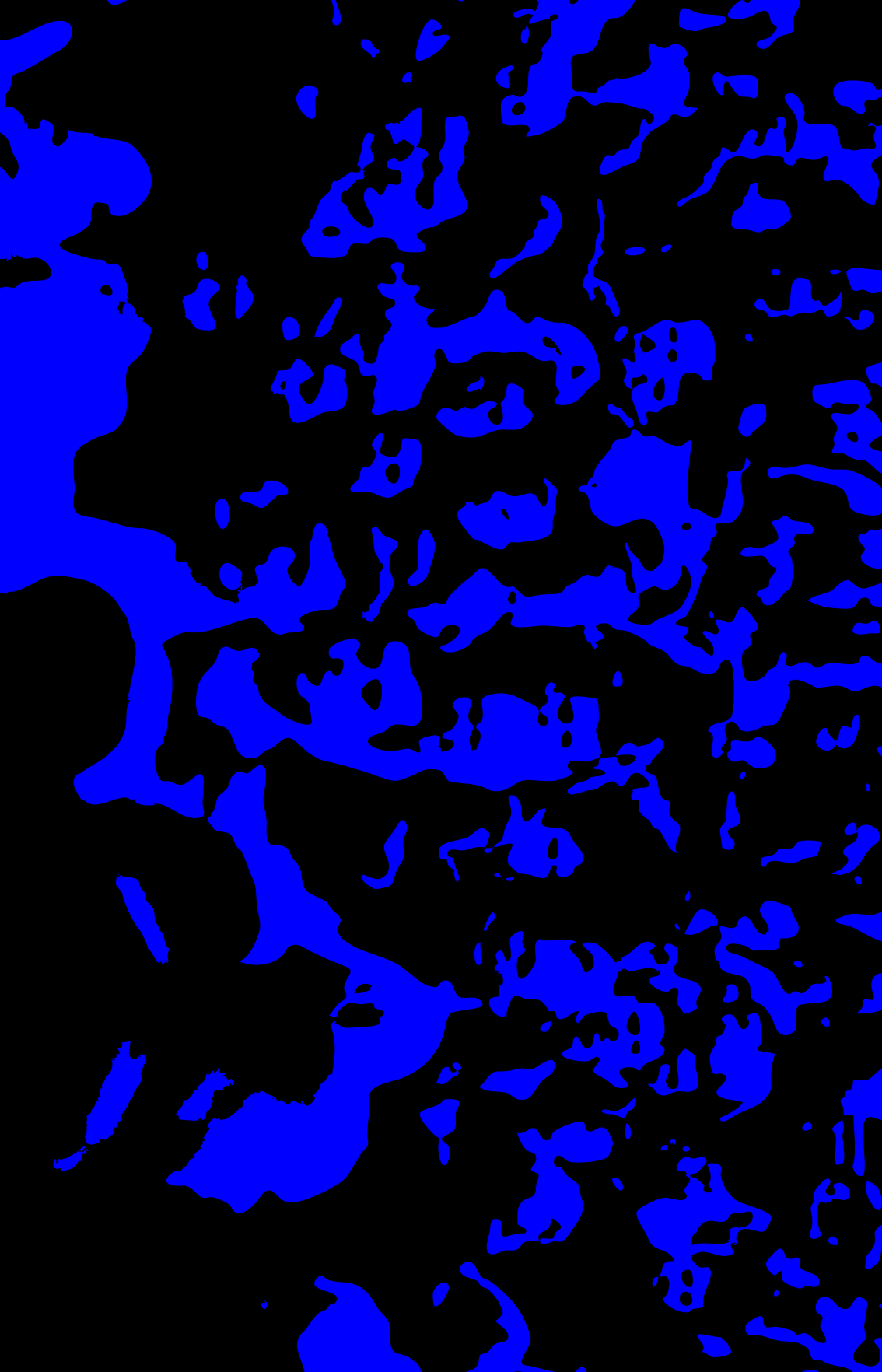
- Make sure that law enforcement personnel are aware of your concerns. It is at this point that genuinely dangerous and violent activities may begin, so it's really crucial to inform the police.

DON'T

- Assume that abandoning of the "look" associated with the group necessarily means that the person is taking a distance from the group and reintegrating. This may in fact be true – but quite the opposite might be happening, too.

I joined the left wing movement because I wanted to stand up for all the groups which the right wing were repressing. Somehow then it felt like if I didn't do that, the right wing would take over the whole country – and what would those groups do then? Who would stand up for them if I did not?

(Former member of an extreme left wing group)



The material you can find in this Toolkit and online on www.terratookit.eu has been designed for professionals who come into contact through their work with a population which may be vulnerable to radicalisation. It explains why this subject may be of relevance to you, how you might notice if this issue was developing, and what you can do about it. Manuals which contain a fuller picture of this problem and an approach to solving it, and short fact sheets, can both be downloaded from the website free of charge.

