

FOLDER PRISON OFFICERS

Radicalisation *and how it's relevant to you*

FOLDER FOR PRISON, PROBATION AND PAROLE OFFICERS

This folder is a short version of TERRA's manual, "Radicalisation and how it's relevant to you." It contains brief tips on how you might recognize and deal with radicalisation in the population you come into professional contact with, and how you might participate in a community approach.

A prison sentence can be a time of great personal vulnerability. Physical threat within prisons can make it seem very important to become part of a group, for the protection the group provides. Worries about the future and doubts about identity can mean that a religious or political group can also seem very attractive because it provides clear instructions about who to socialise with, what to believe and even in some cases, how to dress. **Conversions to political or religious groups during time in prison are quite common, and are not in themselves any cause for concern.**

Still, some radical groups promote violence, and if you think that one of the prisoners you care for, or one of the people in your case load is becoming extreme in their views, this is a problem which may need to be addressed.

This folder is intended to help you signal radicalisation in someone in your prison or case load, and provide some suggestions about how you might address the problem.

There is no checklist which shows that someone is radicalising. But there are some things which you might be able to observe.

BE ALERT TO CHANGE IN:

- Attitude towards society and authority – less belief that they are effective;
- Sense of belonging; either lack of belonging to the general context, or increased sense of belonging to a specific political group;
- Friendship group or gang membership;
- Clothing and appearance, for example growing or shaving hair, getting tattoos of symbols from groups;
- Vocabulary, especially about ethnic, religious or political groups;
- Way of making contact with you/ social group.

DO

- Be aware that these changes might be caused by radicalisation;
- Make contact with a professional network in your area, such as police and social workers. Often, these exist around other social problems, such as youth criminality;
- Provide support in forming positive identity. Show an interest in hobbies and talents and if you can and if appropriate bring the individual into contact with positive groups and role models;
- Make sure that any reports of racism or other discrimination are dealt with thoroughly and fairly;

- If your prison in general or one specific prisoner or ex prisoner is being targeted by a radical group, for example being contacted with propaganda material, do take this up with law enforcement;
- If your prison houses someone known to have committed crimes which are connected with extremism, monitor them carefully. Communicate with social workers, law enforcement and religious leaders in your prison or community about them and their development;
- Raise awareness about the methods used by extreme groups to recruit new members. Encourage critical thinking;
- Where possible provide support to the family of the radicalising individual.

DON'T

- Assume that conversion to a religious or political cause is automatically a cause for concern.
- Intervene unless necessary – you might make a problem worse.
- Make an individual feel singled out for special (negative) attention.

WORKING WITH A COMMUNITY APPROACH

Some places already have a team of professionals in place who are working to signal radicalisation. Find out if a network is in place in your area. Other networks could also be contacted– those dealing with youth criminality, for example. **If you are worried that someone in your prison or case load is radicalising, there are three crucial decisions which you will have to make;**

1 Should you try to discuss it with them?

This is a very personal decision. Do you have a good relationship with the person? Have you previously talked about personal issues with them? If so, discussing it with them is a good idea. To avoid making the problem worse, it's best not to specifically mention radicalisation, but to address it as a social or developmental issue. This way, you can keep communication open and provide support. If not, now is NOT a good time to start. You might make them feel like they are being singled out, and make the problem worse. Instead, share your concerns with other professionals, like social workers, and law enforcement personnel.

2 When should you share you concerns with other professionals?

Check what the privacy laws in your country are. Are you allowed to discuss those under your care with other professionals? In principle you can share your concerns at any point with this group – you are the expert on the

group under your care, and if you are worried, let the other professionals know. If you observe clear signs of change, do not hesitate, especially if you get the impression that a person may have joined an extremist group or may intend to do so. This may be visible in changes in:

- How they speak: word choice, especially about other ethnic, religious or political groups, us-and-them speech
- Behaviours: identification of or contact with leaders of a group, a change of name, spending time on extremist internet forums, moving away from former friends, possession or distribution of propaganda material
- Appearance: clothing, tattoos, symbols or attributes related to the group. The sooner a group of professionals is aware of the problem and able to share information, concerns and decisions on whether or not to take action, the better.

3 When should there be an intervention?

This is a very important decision. Intervening too early, or unnecessarily, can make a problem worse, or even create a problem where none existed. Any decision to intervene should be taken by the multidisciplinary group and not by one individual alone.

If a person who has been through the prison system and is now on probation or parole has arrived at the point of really planning an attack, intervention is crucial. This should be done by law enforcement personnel – it's vital that they have received all the information they need to take this decision and intervene at the right moment – not too early, and of course, not too late, and in the right way.

This folder is a summary of a short manual which goes deeper into the signs that a person may be radicalising, offers more tips about how to act if you do, how to use your community in building resilience, and how to support parents. It also reflects on the role you could play in a network approach, together with for example social services and law enforcement.

The manual is available on www.terratookit.eu (free of charge).

contact

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Partners in TERRA are Impact, National knowledge and advice centre for psychosocial care concerning critical incidents, partner in Arq Psychotrauma Expert Group, The Netherlands and The Network of Associations of Victims of Terrorism (NAVt) and the Association of Aid to Victims of March 11th (AAVM11) Spain.



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