

HAWKSWOOD GROUP

REPORT

WLI PREVENT ASSESSMENT

SEN Prevent Project

London Borough of Waltham Forest and West London Initiative

February 2020



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ABOUT WEST LONDON INITIATIVE

West London Initiative (WLI) specialises in work that aims to understand and address violent extremism, and the multiple conditions that contribute to it. Values enshrined in Human Rights legislation are the guiding principles that underpin the work of WLI and we believe that together, we have a collective responsibility to ensure these rights are attained.

WLI has an established track record of delivering evidence-based solutions to foster positive change. We have expertise in frontline delivery, research and policy development that focus on countering extremism. Our staff and associates have a combined experience of more than 35 years dedicated to the prevention of violent extremism which includes delivering projects across the UK and Europe. WLI is well-regarded for the innovative work it undertakes, maintaining high fidelity to the need to appropriately contextualise all of its work in the area of preventing violent extremism and counter-terrorism.

A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

Throughout this document the term ‘Prevent’ is used as a point of reference in a general manner to describe issues pertaining to the UK government’s Prevent strategy. This is discussed in the background section on page 3. For the purposes of this document the term Prevent is also inclusive of factors relating to preventing violent extremism (PVE) and counter terrorism (CT).

The document also regularly refers to the term ‘staff’. This does not mean that any remark is reflective of the views of all of the school employees who participated in the assessment process described. Rather it is to indicate that this was the view expressed by at least one member of the school’s workforce.

PROJECT INFORMATION

INTRODUCTION

In December 2019, assessment days were carried out by WLI at the Hawkswood group. The Hawkswood group provides local authority provision within the London Borough of Waltham Forest. Four distinct schools, which are part of the Hawkswood group, were visited as part of the needs assessment process. This report has been informed by the assessment and also the expertise of staff working at WLI. This document illustrates why this work was carried out and the process that was followed. It is however the main aim of this action plan (AP) to provide a summary description of the findings from the assessment day and the recommendations from this to strengthen the existing work at Hawkswood group schools. Training will be delivered to the school workforce based on the findings from the assessment days.

REPORT STRUCTURE

This report is set out in the following order. The first two pages provide a background to project and illustrate the assessment process. A summary of the findings is then provided. The main report follows and is broken into three sections: general safeguarding, prevent, and understanding vulnerability. The former two sections are further subdivided into smaller sections looking at the schools' safeguarding policy, training and processes and procedures. Each of these main sections is concluded with an insert

referring to the advisory remarks. Following this there is a breakdown of the training that will be delivered, and then a table that compiles a condensed version of the advisory remarks.

BACKGROUND

From 1 July 2015ⁱ all schools, registered early years childcare providers and registered later years childcare providers are subject to a duty under section 26 of the Counter-

“...due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism”

Terrorism and Security (CTS) Act 2015. This duty requires the aforementioned bodies, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

This duty is known as the Prevent duty. The Prevent Duty means that schools have a legal responsibility to identify and assess the risk that children are exposed to and take action where necessary.

Various forms of Prevent training have been available across the UK, which help schools to demonstrate they are consciously thinking about their duty. However, in November 2015 there were deadly terrorist attacks in Paris. Unfortunately, students of SEN provision in Greater London attended school the next day and described the events as positive encounter. The school requested assistance from the borough’s Prevent team, noting specifically that the current guidance and training was inadequate, as it was not sufficiently tailored, to deal with the unique context often presented within

SEN schools. It was agreed that Prevent support should be contextualised more closely to the different profiles of SEN schools. The Prevent SEN project was borne out of these discussions and WLI were enlisted to design and deliver a bespoke package.

Waltham Forest Community Safety Team made a request for WLI to deliver the Prevent SEN Project in Waltham Forest. Whilst some of the schools within the Hawkswood group are not specifically a SEN school, within these schools many of the learners are sub-threshold for a developmental disorder, there are conduct-related challenges, and they can be situated in a social environment outside of school in which they are susceptible to grooming.

ASSESSMENT PROCESS

A member of the WLI team carried out a needs assessment at four Hawkswood group schools. Burnside PRU and Forest Pathway were visited on 2nd of December 2019, and Hawkswood primary and Hawkswood therapeutic the following day. The purpose of the assessment was to speak with a range of school employees to understand how different elements of safeguarding and Prevent are understood and managed. This part of the assessment was carried out based on a checklist in order to assess their level of competence and awareness of all forms of extremism and how these relate to the school and students. Finding out whether the school workforce was aware of relevant matters in the wider community was also an important feature of the process. This would help to form part of a context assessment that helps to ensure that trends in relation to extremism are known and where necessary addressed. A review of current practices, activities and training was also included.

A further component of the assessment involved reviewing the schools Prevent-related policies in advance of the assessment. This activity is carried out to obtain a more developed picture about how well informed employees are in relation to the school processes when dealing with issues which may be related to extremism or radicalisation.

The remaining sections of this report identify the findings that emerged from the assessment and where appropriate how any areas of identified need can be addressed. The next part of the report provides a summary of the schools that were visited.

SCHOOL SUMMARY

Burnside, Hawkswood Primary, Hawkswood therapeutic and Forest Pathway (hereafter Hawkswood group), are very well placed to deal with any immediate concerns relating to their general safeguarding duties.

The Hawkswood group have a strong emphasis on safeguarding and this is clearly embedded in the working culture of the schools; and which is appropriate to the profile of the school's learners. The schools have a dedicated and conscientious leadership team that promotes this way of working. A common understanding prevails about the benefits of sharing information and discussion is promoted amongst staff when incidents arise, facilitating a positive way of dealing with safeguarding matters. Very effective systems of reporting and managing causes of concern are operational. Electronic systems of reporting have simplified this process and added efficiency, whilst the electronic reporting systems provide immediate access about the demographic profile of each learner.

Hawkswood's workforce is also well positioned to understand and respond to future changes in trends relating to Prevent. During the assessment day the workforce demonstrated a strong awareness about the different risks that their learners are likely to be exposed to. They had a strong appreciation of the importance of factors that are likely to have the greatest influence on learners and how these could be external to the school environment. This is particularly important at Burnside given the prevalence of gang-related crime and violence in the surrounding area.

Although some teachers felt there were areas that they were less confident in dealing with (such as Islamist extremism), the overarching impression is that they are adequately capable, and indeed extremely aware of a broad range of

issues that can be precipitating factors to a young person being radicalised. Due to the nature of the teaching arrangements, their small class sizes, and more importantly their confidence and willingness to address matters relating to radicalisation and extremist ideology, Burnside, and Hawkswood Primary and therapeutic are particularly well positioned to be able to ensure those who are vulnerable are identified, cared for, and appropriately challenged.

SCHOOL REPORT

CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION AND STUDENT PROFILE

The Hawkswood group schools provide an alternative to mainstream education in the London Borough of Waltham Forest. They each have a unique role tailored to the varied needs of learners. Burnside and Hawkswood primary have learner profile where there tends to be a history of conduct-related challenges, with 39 and 28 learners, respectively, at the time of the visit. Many of their learners have struggled to cope in mainstream schools, and Burnside and Hawkswood primary offer an opportunity for learners to re-engage in education rather than be victims of permanent exclusion.

Forest Pathway plays a unique role in supporting learners, in year 11, who are predominantly new to the UK. Many of the learners need support with their English language communication skills, and in some cases the learners may have had no formal education in their country of origin. Forest Pathway had 39 learners at the time of the visit.

At the time of the needs assessment Hawkswood therapeutic had 38 learners. This school serves all secondary schools in Waltham Forest with short term (i.e two terms) interventions. Learners within this school have established mental health needs (CAMHS tier 2/3); there are a range of social and emotional challenges, including self harming and a history of traumatic experiences.

SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PROCEDURES

This section covers feedback on the general safeguarding, looking at the policy, training and procedures. It illustrates that Hawkswood group schools have an established way of working that is conducive to safeguarding the needs of its learners.

Policy

Hawkswood group schools share a common safeguarding policy. This is a comprehensive document that covers all key areas, and provides the necessary links to associated information. There is a separate induction document for staff that provides a list of policies which all new starters must become familiar.

The majority of employees had a developed awareness of the contents of the safeguarding policy and the responsibilities it placed upon them. In a small number of cases employees could not recall looking at the policy, however they were fully aware of the procedures that must followed. Newer staff noted how it was overwhelming when joining the workforce due to the large content of information that needs to be covered, which made it difficult to remember key information.

Training

Structured online training must be completed at the outset of each academic year and in-house training is also provided. At a less formalistic level, the different schools receive safeguarding updates daily via briefings, and

questionnaires are distributed amongst the workforce in an effort to improve and test awareness. The leadership are energetic and show a willingness and desire that allows the schools to positively evolve with regards to its safeguarding duties.

Generally, most staff felt that the content of the Safeguarding training was sufficient. However there were a small number of concerns that delivering several training sessions consecutively at the outset of the academic year can be too much, and that an approach that involves more regular and shorter training could be more favourably.

Processes

Hawkswood group has an electronic safeguarding reporting system for documenting any cause for concern. The DSLs encourage referrals to be made and this understanding transcends across working practice.

As a result of the ongoing emphasis of safeguard leads, for the vast majority of employees it is evident that the threshold for logging a cause for concern is set extremely low. This is beneficial to ensure no issues are overlooked, and it is part of a wider positive culture within which safeguarding is viewed seriously, and effective reporting is the norm — providing the means for a complete picture of each learner's behaviour to be captured. Teachers expressed how they worked cooperatively and shared information where necessary to make decisions about a learner's welfare. The combination of these processes is necessary so safeguarding processes are contextualised to the profile of the schools' learners.

Most staff expressed the opinion that due to the small staff to pupil ratio that they had sufficient time to get to know the personal characteristics of each learner. They felt it was unlikely that any safeguarding concerns would escalate without intervention, and supported this with sound knowledge of a wide number of safeguarding warning signs (e.g. withdrawal from peers, increased aggressiveness etc).

Advisory Remarks on Safeguarding

- In Hawkswood therapeutic some staff members felt that it was difficult to take home 'key messages' from training at the beginning of the academic year due to the large content that is covered. Consideration could be offered to shorter follow up refreshers sessions that recap on the content from safeguarding training and policies.
- Staff (one member) at Forest Pathway expressed feeling less confident in making the right decision to escalate a safeguarding issue. This was mainly the situation for staff who were less familiar with the UK safeguarding context.

PREVENT POLICY AND PROCEDURES

This section covers various factors looking at the way Prevent is managed within the Hawkswood group, covering policy, training and procedures followed by advisory remarks.

Policy

As with many school policies, the Prevent Policy is critical as it typically forms the main introduction to this area of information for new employees starting at the school. It is also considered to be the main point of reference if employees need information.

A common, standalone, Prevent policy, last amended in Sept 2019, exists for all schools within the Hawkswood group. There is also a section within the overarching safeguarding policy that covers Prevent. The policy provides a helpful definition of extremism. The risk assessment procedures, the school's approach to tackling radicalisation by building resilience and through partnership working, and the links between the Prevent policy and other policies pertinent to Prevent (e.g. equality) are also useful and contained within the Prevent policy.

Areas that could be added to the Prevent policy include a definition of radicalisation, which would include reference to the scope of activities that learners can be radicalised into. Connecting to this, information on some of the push and pull factors which have been linked with radicalisation may also be helpful. Should the need emerge through the school's own data analysis, there is the opportunity to associate the Prevent policy more fully

with the equality policy, by setting an equality objective linked more broadly or specifically to the area of Prevent or community safety.

Training

The school's Prevent policy states that the workforce received online and face to face training, each within the last 12 months. Prevent training takes place at the same time as safeguarding training (once at the start of every school year) with staff completing the Home Office DVD-based training package: Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent (WRAP).

Whilst the majority of employees could recall participating in the Prevent training and commented on its content, there were mixed responses. Some staff found the Home Office online training unhelpful due to its limited engagement and felt more was needed that was relevant to the unique challenges each school encounters. There was also a concern that their knowledge was not tested using the online programme—giving little incentive to learn from the material. Similar to the comments made within the safeguarding training, some staff felt they did not get the potential benefit from the training at the outset of the academic year due to the volume of topics they cover. Some could not recall attending training whilst others were unsure there was a school Prevent policy or a Prevent duty. Even though this was the situation, when discussing the various aspects of the aforementioned documents, staff was able to relate to them. Moreover, staff was aware of the overall ethos and message of the Government's Prevent strategy. They had heard the main terms and concepts without necessarily

providing a definition of either. This included having a developed understanding of the different forms of extremist ideology.

Staff expressed how they felt unsure about the different signs of Islamist based radicalisation and believed they would benefit from covering this area. Additionally, there was an understanding of the core grooming process that underpins gang, child sexual exploitation and radicalisation, but staff felt they would benefit from hearing about cases where this had taken place, and methods of incitement particular to radicalisation.

Processes and procedures

The Prevent policy infers that Prevent-related matters should be managed in the same way as other safeguarding issues unless there is an immediate risk. The DSL leads encourage any area of concern relating to Prevent to be raised with them.

Staff felt that good procedures were in place to be able to deal with any incidents. Various examples were shared about previous cases which had relevance to Prevent that demonstrate an appropriate approach to dealing with such matters has been adopted, involving escalation when necessary; and thus an effective referral pathway. The overwhelming message emerging from staff interviews was the readiness to intervene where staff felt there was any Prevent concern. The majority of staff members, when asked, assured that they would be comfortable to confront students displaying any untoward behaviour whatsoever, and it was very pleasing to see such high levels of resilience and determination.

Whilst staff was aware of the referral process internally, they were not informed about the external process thereafter. In particular, they were not aware that Waltham Forest community safety team provide a pre-consultation service. Providing this information could be helpful as some staff felt they may experience some hesitancy if they had to raise a Prevent related issue if it is considered less significant because the child may be unnecessarily pathologised. Being aware that there is a pre-consultation service may help to overcome this potential challenge.

There was very little ambiguity about what would constitute being ‘urgent’ or less significant safeguarding concern. Although staff felt confident addressing most issues which are of a safeguarding nature, they expressed less confidence, as a result of limited experience, in identifying what may be a sign of radicalisation. For instance, there was a learner who had not shown any religious tendencies who had begun to read the Koran at school daily. Staff appreciated that this behaviour was out of character and felt comfortable approaching the student. This was done tactfully, and it was established that this was merely the student regaining touch with his spirituality and of no concern whatsoever.

Advisory Remarks on Prevent

Policy

- To consider including a definition of radicalisation and examples of such within the Prevent policy.
- To consider incorporating further contextual information around broad push and pull factors in the Prevent policy.

Example: Please see policy document attached to this email.

- To consider linking the school's Prevent-related work with an equality objective, where necessary, to consolidate work in this area across policy areas. In accordance with PSED guidance, these objectives must be SMART, and based on evidence of differential inequality.

Example: To reduce the number of race and religious based incidents within the Hawkswood Group by 2024 (This does not imply there is an entrenched problem at Hawkswood Group; the example is merely for illustrative purposes and all equality objectives should be based on evidence).

Training

- Staff at Forest Pathway, and to a lesser extent at Burnside and Hawkswood Primary, were less familiar with Prevent-related guidance and legislation, or the school Prevent policy. It would be beneficial to refresh these areas during Prevent SEN training. More regular and shorter updates may also be beneficial.

Advisory Remarks on Prevent Policy (continued)

Training

- Future training should cover different signs of radicalisation based on Islamism, and methods of incitement specific to extremism.
- Future training to cover contextualised case studies to give a more tangible insight into the way risk factors and behaviours manifest themselves in the real world.

Processes

- To consider informing employees about the way prevent cases are managed externally and that Waltham Forest LA provide a pre-consultation service for DSLs.

UNDERSTANDING VULNERABILITY

This section deals specifically with feedback received from the workforce relating their understanding of Prevent and vulnerability more generally, and within the context of SEN in particular.

To fulfil the Prevent duty, it is essential that staff is able to identify children who may be vulnerable to radicalisation and know what to do when they are identified. Protecting children from the risk of radicalisation should be seen as part of schools' wider safeguarding duties and is similar in nature to protecting children from other harms (e.g. drugs, gangs, neglect, sexual exploitation), whether these come from within their family or are the product of outside influences.

Schools are expected to assess the risk of children being drawn into terrorism, including support for extremist ideas that are part of terrorist ideology. This means being able to demonstrate both a general understanding of the risks affecting children and young people in the geographic area and a specific understanding of how to identify individual children who may be at risk of radicalisation and what to do to support them.

Staff cited a range of general risks factors and also those specific to their learner cohort. The former referred to families who feel ostracised, aggrieved and individuals who can lack appropriate leadership. It also included those who had experienced neglect and were vulnerable. Nevertheless, there was a general understanding that being from any specific socio-demographic group was not a risk factor.

Within Hawkswood therapeutic in particular, whilst it was understood that immediate risks that would intentionally emanate from learners in the school were limited, there was an appreciation that the learners are very dependent,

vulnerable and suffer from a lack of guidance at home. It was recognised that this could make them vulnerable if they are placed in an unfavourable situation when they may be coerced to carry out an activity (outside of school) where they may not fully understand the consequences. Similarly, in Burnside most staff members specifically mentioned that the learners are very easily led, and gang members/recruiters fill the gap left by this lack of guidance and provide the certainty and attention these learners crave. Although there was a strong appreciation that many of the learners are vulnerable to gang violence and being drawn into county lines drug trafficking (although this was more specific to Burnside) there was a sense that there was less understanding that the core vulnerabilities of the learners, combined with specific SEN traits, could increase their vulnerability.

Staff was very competently able to refer to a range of actions that may indicate a learner has been exposed to or is at risk of radicalisation or gang grooming. This mainly pointed towards changes in behaviour (such as increased aggressiveness, withdrawing from peers, long periods of absence from school etc), but also explicit actions (such as voicing support for extremist views, showing extremist material to other students on their electronic devices etc).

Advisory Remarks on Understanding Vulnerability

- To increase awareness about core vulnerabilities and behavioural traits of SEN learners in relation to Prevent.
- To use real-life case studies to illustrate some of the intricacies of radicalisation and how they relate to young people with SEN.
- Future prevent training should include scenarios to illustrate the way a person has been radicalised, the changes in behaviour and the outcome.
- Staff working at the school, and especially those who do not reside in Waltham Forest borough, felt they had limited awareness of the aware of patterns of extremism that occur within the borough. Continued working with the police is advisable. It may also be beneficial for Hawkswood group to consider involvement in LBWF PAG.
- Staff can be made aware of the data in appendix 1 which helps to challenge ideas about the typology of a would-be extremist.
- For the following resource to be made available for staff as wider reading: 'Understanding the mental health disorders pathway leading to violent extremism'

PARTNERSHIPS

Across the four schools good contacts have been established with external agencies. This has included information sessions with criminal justice agencies and expertise in the area of mental health. Burnside offers a good example of partnership working, whereby the police officer recounts any concerning incidents or events which have taken place outside of school hours. In this way, Burnside staff has an accurate perception of the bigger picture and wider context in which its students operate. Recurring names are highlighted and safeguarding next steps are therefore tailored not only to achieve the best results internally, but also with sensitivity to the wider context and external offending patterns. In this way, staff members are kept aware of students' involvement in local criminality and offending, which can often affect the way in which these students behave at school. Increased levels of awareness about the context outside of schools contributes to interventions which can be more holistic and well-rounded, and go further towards achieving long-lasting change both at school and at home. A CAMHS worker being situated permanently at Hawkswood therapeutic, and input from educational psychologist at Forest Pathway, offer further examples of partnership working.

The teaching staff was well aware of the important role relationships can play to ensure Prevent works to greater effect. Communication between staff and parents takes place on a formal basis termly at parent's evenings which are called 'parent/carer days'. Informal communication also takes place on an ad hoc basis as and when parents or staff need to communicate about a matter. Staff members noted that parents are very ready to request meetings with teachers themselves regarding any issues that have arisen in relation to their children's schooling or indeed any untoward behaviour out of school

which they think teachers can play a role in resolving. In this way, teachers reassured us that the schools maintained good family links where possible.

Although it was agreed that the senior management team would be able to engage with parents to discuss issues of concern, there was a degree of nervousness about challenging some radical viewpoints. Staff felt they would like to find out more about how to challenge extremist ideas i.e knowing what is acceptable to say when challenging and what may be (religiously) offensive. This anxiety is of course compounded by the knowledge that challenging any home environment requires careful treading, especially since a common thread running through the interviews was that staff felt the students were not receiving the level of parenting they needed to build resilience. The potentially damaging messages being received were therefore not adequately countered at home; indeed, one teacher noted that there is a lack of male role models amongst the students with many coming from homes without a sense of family structure.

Advisory Remarks on Partnerships

- Awareness of Islamic (as well as other forms of) extremism were not on a par with gang-related issues, which is understandable given the local context. Staff did not want to associate any issue(s) linked to Islam with radicalisation and extremism, they also did not want to overlook any matter(s) which could signify a learner is in danger. As the Prevent duty extends to these forms of extremism, it would be beneficial for Hawkswood to establish a formal communication channel with a mainstream mosque to facilitate a better understanding about what is acceptable and appropriate.

TRAINING

Hawkswood staff will attend a Prevent SEN training session with a focus on Prevent within the context of SEN. As there is minimal evidence on radicalisation and extremism that is related directly to the learning cohort of the school, the session will be tailored to issues that most closely align with the schools varying needs. Based on recommendations from staff members extrapolated from the interviews carried out during the Needs Assessment, the training will aim to provide:

- A very brief review of the Government's Prevent strategy.
- A presentation about the risks of radicalisation to children with lower functioning learning abilities, conduct disorders and SEMH based.
- A review of key case studies of individuals with similar backgrounds to those students (conduct related and socio-emotional challenges).
- An overview of religious extremism and far right extremism.
- Understanding the threshold of risk and where there may be significant harm to a child due to extremist radicalisation.
- The influencers and drivers of extremist radicalisation in particular related to families and home environment, including home risk factors for joining gangs.
- Well-rounded and comprehensive overview of vulnerabilities specific to the local context in which the students live.
- Overview of cultural awareness issues related to working with diverse cultures and families.

TABLE OF ACTIONS

To be completed after the training day is delivered.

Steps to take	Who is responsible	Due Date
Safeguarding general		
<p>Shorter follow-up safeguarding refreshers to recap on policies. Can be targeted to LSAs and TAs.</p> <p>To continue with quiz based work and scenario examples for FPW staff around escalating safeguarding.</p>		
Prevent Policy & Procedures		
<p>Prevent policy: to include a definition of radicalization and examples of such.</p> <p>Further contextualise prevent policy with information on push and pull factors</p> <p>Develop an equality objective to consolidate holistic prevent work.</p>		
<p>To consider including a definition of radicalisation and examples of such within the Prevent policy.</p> <p>To consider incorporating further contextual information around broad push and pull factors in the Prevent policy.</p> <p>To consider linking the school's Prevent-related work with an equality objective, where necessary, to consolidate work in this area across policy areas (see pg.XX)</p>		
Understanding vulnerability		
<p>To increase awareness about core vulnerabilities, and behavioural traits of SEN learners in relation to Prevent.</p> <p>To provide real-life case studies to broaden awareness surrounding radicalisation and relevant to SEN, and illustrate changes in behaviour.</p>		

Staff provided with opportunity to read Appendix 1, giving background to literature in this area.		
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Partnerships

Establish a formal communication channel with a mainstream mosque to increase knowledge and a conduit for support.		
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APPENDIX 1: BRIEFING PAPER

During the need assessment visits with educational providers in the London borough of Waltham Forest, interest was expressed in the strength of the relationship, and the associated knowledge base, between developmental disorders and mental ill-health on the one hand, and radicalisation and extremism on the other. This short briefing paper aims to provide some background information on this area.

To cover these areas the main literature directly associated with, and pertinent to developmental disorders and extremism are briefly presented. The paper then looks more broadly at evidence pertaining to forensic data, which draws on mental ill-health and criminal offending more generally to provide a contextual overview. Findings from the available literature which are of an epidemiological nature are then presented, looking at research that has covered Muslim people and analysing their sympathies towards violent radicalisation. Before concluding, evidence generated from the work of WLI with people who have been radicalised is briefly discussed.

When looking across the different types of development disorders and how they have been associated with extremism, autism has received the most attentionⁱⁱ. Some researchers and commentators have become fixated with the idea that obsessional features, a characteristic trait often associated with individuals diagnosed with autism, predisposes such individuals to becoming radicalisedⁱⁱⁱ. Whilst it is possible to see how these conclusions can be drawn, they are without any empirical foundation. Moreover, at the time of writing, no broader trends can be found within the extant literature that suggest people diagnosed with autism are more likely to be radicalised^{iv}.

Evidence gathered from the field of forensic studies is similar when looking at developmental disorders and mental illness, and offending more broadly. The literature on development disorders and criminal offending generally — as opposed to radicalisation in particular — fails to draw any conclusive patterns^v. In this respect disorders such as ASD should not be thought of predisposing factors to offending behaviour^{vi}. The same can be said for mental illness and offending^{vii}.

One related area of interest is that of three studies carried out in the UK. Researchers carried out a survey involving 608 British Muslims to look for an association between mental illness and sympathies towards violent

radicalisation. The first paper^{viii} reported no relationship between ‘depression’ and ‘radicalisation’; but the second^{ix} reported a finding that ‘mild depression’ was associated with ‘radicalisation’ when the data was reallocated by a method that weighted some items of the radicalisation scale used called SVPT (sympathies for violent protest and terrorism)—which itself had not been validated—by what is called a ‘cluster analysis’ on a so-called ‘classification likelihood method’, although there is no attempt in the paper to justify the use of this method in this sort of study. The third paper^x derives complicated theories on how depressive symptoms plus either the death of a relative, another major event or the subject having signed a petition, could evoke sympathies for violent protest. Incidentally the third paper states that the first paper ‘found an association between depressive symptoms and SVPT’ although the latter states clearly that no such association was found. The three papers show a tendency towards ‘data dredging/data-trawling’—the dubious approach of repeated analysing of the same data using a variety of statistical approaches and combinations of data in the hope of reaching significant finding—thus raising serious doubts about the quality of the research.

When looking at confined populations (e.g. prison population, secure care), rather than broader trends, there is a different picture. Indeed, there is a significant over-representation of people within the criminal justice system with mental health problems and learning difficulties, compared to what should be expected in broader society (REF and statistic). Nonetheless, using such data for predicting risk is problematic as it is possible, for instance, that mental health problems occur as a result of the criminal justice process. It is also never clear how frequently a mental health problem or development disorder directly contributes to offending behaviour. Again, therefore, one of the challenges that hampers the possibility of making robust conclusions is the scarcity of reliable data.

Interesting findings have been observed in case study data when looking at offending behaviour and developmental disorders. When looking at an offender population, researchers identified certain traits when looking more granularly at the behaviours of individuals. They found that characteristics such as interpersonal naiveté and a lack of emotional empathy, were common across the offenders examined. However, as already noted, this was in a confined population, and very small study, and thus, the findings of which cannot be extrapolated to the population at large^{xi}.

Identifying who is at risk of becoming radicalised is by no means a straightforward exercise. This is emphasised by the work of the UK government. They developed a framework, put together by psychologists, which is comprised of a list of 22+ factors used to determine whether an individual is considered to be at risk. However, the list of factors in the framework has never been validated and is not available to the public^{xii}. Whilst this raises questions of transparency, it points the possibility that the framework will yield inconsistent results.

It is evidential that no population-based evidence can be found which highlights any heightened risk associated with the learner profile in SEN schools in relation to radicalisation. Although WLI has observed a higher number of young people with learning difficulties and traits of ASD who have been radicalised within custodial settings, the position we take is that there is no specific way of identifying an individual who is susceptible to extremist ideology, although behavioural changes should be investigated and where necessary, raised as a safeguarding issue. Additionally, there is no perfect or agreed method to identify individuals at risk.

Further, the stance taken by WLI is that a lack of evidence on risks should not be equated with there being no risk. Whilst characteristics of various developmental disorders may not put learners at greater risk, it can make them vulnerable in a different way. This will be highlighted in the training provided, so as not to mislead staff that there is no risk of radicalisation/grooming, and to ensure staff continue to use best practice to address these issues. What remains the situation, regardless of any number of risk factors, is that it is still possible to predict what takes person who harbouring an extremist ideology to carryout out an act of extremism.

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/439598/prevent-duty-departmental-advice-v6.pdf

ii Schulten, N., Doosje, B., Spaaij, R., & Kamphuis, J. H., Radicalization, terrorism & psychopathology: State of affairs, gaps and priorities for future research. WODC, 14 January 2019. 5 Murphy, D., & Allely, C., Autism spectrum disorders in high secure psychiatric care: A review of literature, future research and clinical directions. *Advances in Autism*, 2019. doi:10.1108/AIA-10-2018-0044

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