Women Working Together in Waltham Forest

Waltham Forest

Safeguarding Young People in the Borough

Contents

FAITH MATTERS
www.faith-matters.org

1 Introduction

This project is based on the safeguarding of young people in the Borough of Waltham Forest and we acknowledge that mothers usually play an integral role in the safeguarding of their children, whether that be through providing them with information and advice, or guiding young people about the repercussions of actions that they may choose to take.

Today, there are a number of pressures on young people which include new communications and technology, social media and the challenges that these throw up, gang cultures and the attraction of 'belonging' to a group. There are also financial pressures and occasionally the push and pull of the rhetoric of extremist groups whether they be Far Right or from faith communities. Many of these pressures have only come about in the last decade and residents in the Borough are not isolated from them. Yet, good communication with young people and parenting that builds trust with them helps to act as a counter to such issues since young people may be more receptive to listening to messages from their parents.

With this in mind, this programme of work in the Borough is based in engaging with mothers in the Borough who have young children between the ages of 16-25. We are looking to hold 12 community engagement sessions with mothers over the next year and in schools, further education colleges, civil society groups and in faith institutions so that we can reach out to as many people in the Borough. Core to this work is the underlying ethos that Waltham Forest is made of very diverse communities though there are common shared values that transcend cultural, religious or racial differences.

These common values that are prevalent in the shared space of the Borough include (i) the right to live free from fear, (ii) the right to be who we want to be, (iii) the right to free speech, (iv) the right to value others, and (v) the right to life and a quality of life. These are values that all of us can subscribe to and enjoy and they drive this work in the Borough. It is only by parents and carers taking an active interest in the lives of their children and young people, that we can play a role in ensuring a safer, stronger and more cohesive Borough.

2 What Could Challenge These Shared Values?

As suggested, there are a number of push and pull factors on young people.

- We know that the attraction of being part of a larger group with an identity is a strong pull factor for some young people towards gangs and this is also relevant for extremist groups who use the same tactic to draw in people. Some possible indicative behaviours associated with being part of such groups include involvement in street violence, outbursts of aggression at school, drug and alcohol abuse, threats or violence by the young person at home, truancy, low attainment levels at school and general disruptive behaviour. Sadly, gang or extremist group related issues do not disappear overnight and need multi-agency engagement, information and support services to parents and most of all, time so that young people have the chance to reflect and change their behaviour patterns.

- Social media and on-line engagement platforms like Twitter and Facebook are extremely

beneficial, though like any communication system, there are also drawbacks since some extremist sympathisers and groups are active on these platforms. This means that young people may be exposed to extremist narratives and doctrines and it is essential that young people have the ability and the skills to understand what may be extreme views promoted by groups and which go against the shared values in the Borough mentioned earlier.

■ International and national issues are other push and pull factors on young people who may be disillusioned or just even wanting to make a difference to the lives of those who are less fortunate. Gaza, Palestine, Syria and national issues such as the brutal murder of Lee Rigby in May 2013 do have impacts on individuals and communities and can lead to community tensions.

There are other vulnerabilities that may play on the minds of young people. These include feelings of being insecure and feelings that they are not attractive.

This means that some young people may be vulnerable to engaging with people on-line, for example, who may seem friendly and who may even suggest that they are of the same age as the young person. Sadly, on-line grooming is not in the realm of theory but reality and it is an area that parents need to be aware of.

It is therefore essential that parents are able to openly talk about and communicate about such matters with their children. These are some of the reasons why we believe that this project is essential and why safeguarding of young people is so important in a modern, fast moving and fluid world.

3 Extremism and Radicalisation

MUCH HAS BEEN said in media sources about these two terms though as part of safeguarding young people it is important to highlight these two areas. We will also go onto talk about the Channel process later on which is an important process for ensuring that young people have the chance to be diverted away from criminality associated with extremist or terrorist related activities before it crosses the threshold for prosecution.

We are aware that these terms conjure up different meanings for people, but it is important to try to contextualise them and to give them meaning.

Extremism is associated with ideas, behaviours and environments which may be characterised by simplified world views and enemies or threats. This may also include certain groups of people or certain social conditions being seen as a threat and an example is the English Defence League (EDL) and the view of EDL sympathisers that Muslims constitute a threat to the 'way of life' in the United Kingdom.

The recent report from the Prime Minister's Task Force on Radicalisation and Extremism[1] cited the following definition of extremism as being:

"The vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. Also, included are calls for the death of members of Her Majesty's Armed Forces whether in this country or overseas."

3 Extremism and Radicalisation (continued)

In fact, the definition of extremism from the Task Force report can and does cover extremism emanating from groups that attempt to align themselves with faith communities, (whether Islamist or from other faith communities) and from the Far Right. In fact, it may also cover those very small number of individuals and groups who have previously been involved in animal liberation movements[2].

Radicalisation is a process, or set of processes, that can take place gradually or suddenly when a significant local, national or international event takes place or it could take place following a significant personal event such as the loss of a family member or bullying taking place against a victim over a period of time. Radicalisation may be exhibited through the following behaviours which include the acceptance of ideology and the methods of extremism and which may lead to the individual eventually joining the group. Other behaviours may include being part of a closed group of individuals and this usually takes place when someone is being indoctrinated with ideas which are re-affirmed by peers and people within the group. In fact, one of the statements that ex-Al Muhajiroun and ex-EDL sympathisers say is that they believe that the friendships and bonds that were created during their times in these groups were some of the strongest and the most trusted and this is, unfortunately, one of the ways that people are indoctrinated and influenced.

Another behaviour pattern that may exhibit radicalisation could include the cutting off of normal social relations with friends and even with parents. This is why it is important for parents to be able to engage with their children and maintain strong communication links since this is one way to strengthen resilience against radicalisation and extremism affecting young people.

It is important to note that group dynamics, being a victim of prejudice and both social and psychological circumstances can all create the environment for someone to become radicalised and it is also important to note that this means that personal vulnerabilities may be abused or misused by those seeking to radicalise young people. This is why in many cases where young people have been charged for extremism or terrorist related offences, emotional, pyscho-social and other vulnerabilities have been at the heart of how they were manipulated or drawn into being part of extremist activities.

4 Examples of Group Dynamics in the Radicalisation Process

ONE OF THE ELEMENTS that has not been mentioned before is how victims of prejudice, can themselves, become promoters of prejudice if targeted by extremist individuals or groups. For example, there are case studies of people who suffered race hate crimes that went onto join groups which themselves took an extremist views against other groups of people. This *cumulative extremism*,[3] where groups play off each other is a phenomenon which is seen when English Defence League demonstrations have taken place and where counter-demonstrations have been undertaken by groups like Al-Muhajiroun, (translated as *the Emigrants*).

Both sides have effectively, energised each other at the expense of the majority of people who have had to suffer unrest in their local areas, the loss of trade on weekends and most of all, the stigma that is associated with such groups demonstrating up and down local towns and cities. Yet, there is also a latent impact from such groups and that is the legacy of mistrust between groups of people that they leave behind though thankfully, this has been managed to a minimum.

It is also important to note that many such groups are politically astute and attempt to play on situations to draw in supporters. For example, after the murder of Lee Rigby, the English Defence League, demonstrated in Woolwich just hours after the killing of the soldier[4]. The objective was to play on the heightened emotions, shock and revulsion that many people felt after seeing the pictures of the attack on the soldier. The motive of such actions by these groups is to show the public that they are responding to the event, whilst playing on the emotions of people so that others are drawn to the group. Once being drawn in, the process of radicalisation starts in earnest.

The Internet

One of the strongest platforms which has brought together people susceptible to and drawn to extremist rhetoric has been the internet and more recently, social media platforms. A quick look at pages of Far Right groups shows strong on-line presence and where many Far Right sites are high up on Google pages since they draw in heavy
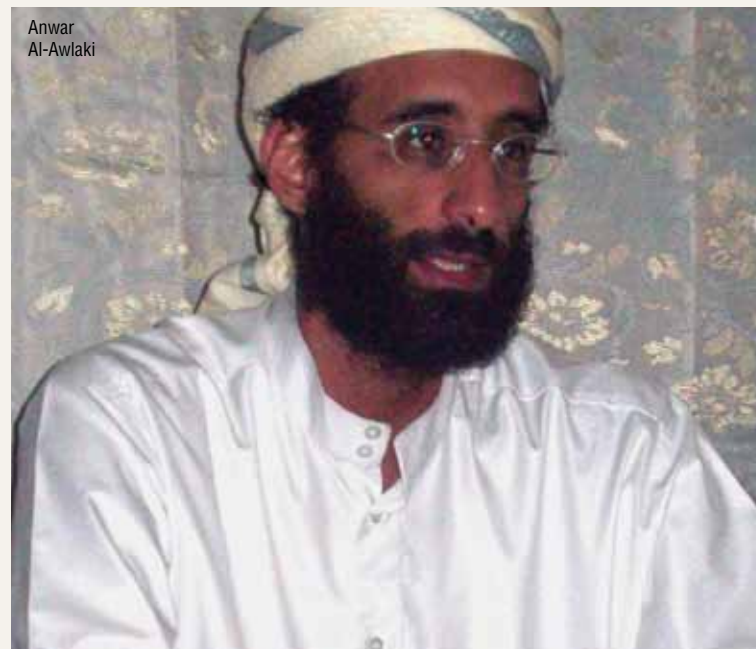
Photo: HOPE not hate

4 Examples of Group Dynamics in the Radicalisation Process (continued)

amounts of traffic. Slick, responsive and well adorned graphics give the impression that the organisation has credibility and de-facto, that the views promoted on such sites are 'normal.' This is why, today, many practitioners and specialists who understand extremist narratives and groups state that the internet has become a tool for self-radicalisation and particularly for young people between the ages of 16-30. We have listed some of these examples below for your information.[5]

Some internet platforms can therefore be a '*sounding*' or '*echo*' chamber for extreme views that are re-enforced and where a sub-culture of perceived unjust conditions or external threats can develop against certain groups in society. Alternatively, You Tube videos and material on web-sites have been used by some individuals for justification for violence and one of the clearest examples has been through the material posted by or on behalf of Anwar Al-Awlaki. An American and Yemeni imam, Awlaki's message of targeting individuals, institutions or infrastructure within Europe, the US and

Anwar
Al-Awlaki

Drawn to Extremism Rhetoric by Group Dynamics – 'Comments on the Push & Pull Factors'

"I was drawn towards the things that the people I admired were interested in. I wanted to become part of their conversations and the discourse they were using, so I would talk about the same things that they did, and tried to understand what they were saying, through the filter that they were using. You try to look at the world through the same lens, and my way of looking at things was definitely passed onto me by the group."

Individual convicted of politically motivated violence

"We would work out together every day, eat together, go for walks. We did almost everything together."

Individual convicted of terror planning

other sites, was based on the perception of a global war on Islam and Muslims and an impending threat from these nation states.

4.1 Example of Psychological and Personal Factors in the Radicalisation Process

There are numerous potential factors at a personal, emotional or psychological level that lead people to be drawn into the radicalisation process and eventually to becoming part of an extremist group or cell of individuals. As suggested before, there are personal factors that include a sense of belonging, a re-enforcement of opinions, friendships and personal bonds, emotional support that the group provides and occasionally, a sense of direction and purpose that the individual feels within the group – as opposed to feelings of being 'lost' or socially isolated when outside of the group. These are strong factors that cannot be disregarded within families given the fact that during the Syria crisis for example, mothers and fathers woke up to literally find that their sons had disappeared.

4 Examples of Group Dynamics in the Radicalisation Process (continued)

These parents simply were not aware that their children's views, opinions and sense of purpose were being shaped to such an extent, (whether via role models or peers to their children or through the internet), and which had led to these children taking a flight out to be involved in Syria. Yet, these are not just isolated incidents and these events have impacted on families throughout England and Wales.[6]

In the last three, months more and more cases have come to the forefront of news outlets with British citizens and residents being involved in actual fighting in Syria as a means of helping Syrians overthrow the regime of Basher Al Assad.[7]

The pull of such conflicts on the mind-set of some young people cannot therefore be disregarded given the factors listed in this information booklet.

Further examples of personal and psychological factors therefore may include:

- Developing a sense of identity, purpose and status through involvement with a group.

- Underlying factors that may include the need for recognition and a desire for excitement and being part of events that seem detached and unique from the rest of society.

- Testing social boundaries and what may be acceptable and here is where the cross-over with gang dynamics become virtually identical. Young men are driven to test their sense of masculinity which is sometimes expressed through perceived tests of strengths, control, weaponry, status symbols, uniforms, hierarchical structures and militarism. Some of these desires are met by being part of a small unique clique or gang of individuals and which come together usually around a central charismatic leader.

- Personal, psychological or physical crises, such as having a relationship breakdown, loss of a job, being subjected to a hate crime or having been a victim of violence.

Photo: HOPE not hate

5 Factors That May Mitigate Against Extremism

WHILST MANY OF US may experience a sense of personal crisis, mental health and emotional difficulties or anger at issues that include a lack of social resources such as housing, the majority of the population will not be drawn to the ideology of extremist groups. There are no clear cut reasons as to why this resilience is present in the vast majority of the population though a combination of factors may be at play which include:

■ Strong values of feeling a part of the local community and associated emotional and moral attachments to views that all people matter, irrespective of which cultural, racial or religious group they belong to.

■ Economic and social mobility and educational attainment though it should be noted that even individuals who have been exposed to these benefits have also joined extremist groups,

■ Critical thinking and engagement with democratic structures and processes such as supporting mainstream political parties,

■ Having a healthy scepticism towards extremist narratives, statements and political leaders of such groups.

For example, one of the best examples of communities rejecting extremism, intolerance and bigotry was after the murder of drummer Lee Rigby when York Mosque offered tea and biscuits to English Defence League supporters[8] who arranged a demonstration outside the institution. Such actions are essential in countering the confrontational and aggressive nature of such extremist groups who thrive on counter-reactions. As York mosque clearly showed, there is a method of disarming some groups through kindness, forgiveness and compassion.

Photos: HOPE not hate

6 Pro-Activity versus the Internet

WE UNDERSTAND that most people are able to access internet sites, whilst some parents are very active through social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook. Whilst there are a growing plethora of social media platforms, we also recognise that these two platforms are the most widely used and the most pervasive, with one sending out instantaneous messages and the other, postings that sit on the internet and which may become searchable over time through simple Google searches.

Golden Rules to Promote to Young People

There are some golden rules which should be consistently highlighted to young people who are active on-line and these include:

- Never give out personal information such as a phone number or a personal address. Remember that if you would feel uncomfortable giving such information to a person that you physically met for the first time,

then there is no reason why young people should be providing this information to people that they have just met on-line.

- It is safer not to accept on-line 'friendships' through social media platforms like Facebook, if young people do not know the person who has made the friend request. Accepting the friend request can open up access to personal information that may be posted onto the Facebook page of the recipient, such as their birthday, relationship status, the school that they are at and a possible location as to where they live. **Remember, it is better to be cautious than trusting in the on-line world.**

- Young people should not choose to meet people alone whom they have met on-line. Ideally, such initial meetings should flag up possible interventions by parents particularly if the young person is under the age of 18 and even so, it is always in your best interest as a parent to communicate with

and talk through any concerns with your son or daughter.

■ Malware (Malicious software coding) links that capture data and e-mail attachments that contain malicious coding are all ways that people try and use the internet to capture data about the personal habits or background of people. It is important not to open such as e-mails, if you do not know where they have originated from. This is even more relevant for young people who are inquisitive and who may not be aware of how such malicious coding and materials may compromise personal data on the their computer.

■ If your child sees anything suspicious on-line it is always better to report it and at school, they should inform their form tutor or a responsible adult such as a subject tutor. Alternatively, individuals may get in touch with their Safer Schools Officer through the following link: (http://safe.met.police.uk/contact/how_to_contact_us.html#sso).

7 Sites Where Parents Can Report Into

- On-line criminal sexual content can also be reported through the Internet Watch Foundation and further details can be found here: https://www.iwf.org.uk/

- Social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook are the ones most used by young people and activities such as trolling[9] are sadly an everyday occurrence. What is also real for many young people who use these social media platforms is that Far Right groups are particularly active and these individuals undertake trolling[9] on-line and are particularly abusive to individuals who happen to be of a Muslim background.

- It is important that parents work with their children to inform them as to how they can report in abuse and whilst Twitter does not have a reporting in function for prejudice/targeted hate or hate speech, nonetheless, an 'abuse' report can be made through the following link: https://support.twitter.com/forms/abusiveuser.

- Therefore if someone has been subject to 'general' abuse or violent threats or if their personal information is being posted by the perpetrator Twitter account, they should report the matter to Twitter as soon as possible.

- Hate incidents and crimes on-line should also be reported through third party hate crime reporting projects such as TELL MAMA (www.tellmamauk.org) for Islamophobia, the Community Security Trust (www.thecst.org.uk) for Antisemitism, or Stop Hate UK (http://www.stophateuk.org) for hate crimes involving disability and any other forms of prejudice.

- There is also the option of calling 101 and logging the on-line hate incident with the police. However, if the hate incident involves serious threats we would strongly advise that the matter be reported to the police with the option of reporting to the third party projects thereafter. Police hate crime reports can also be made through True Vision, the national police hate crime reporting site, http://www.report-it.org.uk/home.

■ Reporting into Facebook involves reporting in using the tabs that are related to specific articles posted on a Facebook account and they provide an easy drop down menu for reporting in. You can report in abuse, timelines, events and advertisements and a range of other elements and Facebook regularly reviews reports and provides quick responses to individuals. Further information can be found here: http://en-gb.facebook.com/help/www/181495968648557

8 Support Structures within the London Borough of Waltham Forest

ASSESSING VULNERABILITY and reducing risk to young people is a responsibility on us all. This includes parents, carers, schools, further education colleges, hospitals, the local authority and a range of other charitable and statutory bodies. Part of the assessment is based on behavioural traits that may indicate risk and in today's world, the unfortunate reality is that there are those who seek to radicalise and recruit people to their cause.

Early interventions to ensure the safeguarding of young people by parents is therefore essential to ensure that young people are diverted away from activities that can affect them for the rest of their life, particularly if they enter the criminal justice system and have a criminal record. This is one of the reasons why the local authority is a 'Channel provider' and Channel is part of the Prevent[10] strategy that seeks to tackle extremism within communities by these very same communities taking lead roles in countering the rhetoric and narratives.

It is important to highlight that Channel is not a secretive process where people who are referred end up being tainted or being labelled as extremists. It is a system of support for individuals and their families and is a multi-agency approach between local authorities, agencies such as social services, the health sector and children's and youth services just to name a few. Channel is therefore a diversionary process that can support young people away from breaking the law and it gives them a chance to be part of the community and to get on with their lives without affecting it as getting a criminal record will do.

Who Co-ordinates Channel?

There is a local police practitioner in the Borough who is responsible for the delivery of Channel, though as suggested before, there is a multi-agency approach to provide support to the person being referred. A range of support packages are considered by partners and it is important to note that there is a statutory duty on

local authorities to establish both Adult Safeguarding Boards and Local Safeguarding Children Boards to ensure safeguarding of individuals.

Much has been said about Channel that it is a 'spying exercise' and that it is a process used to intelligence gather. This is simply not the case and it is a process that supports people who may be at risk and many of whom show a range of additional vulnerabilities.[11]

Referrals

Agencies may make referrals to the local practitioner in the Borough and assessments will involve a multi-agency approach. However, as stated before, Channel is not a secretive process for gathering information or for labelling people. It is a diversionary process that can support individuals and divert them away from breaking the law. It should therefore be seen as a support process that is available to parents. More details about how to make a referral are listed later in this document.

It must also be added that parents are involved and consulted with at every stage of the Channel process and loved ones are not isolated or removed from the process. This is a chance for practitioners and family members to work together to ensure that young people get the best opportunities to steer away from crossing the prosecution threshold into criminality and where having a criminal record could affect their futures for the rest of their lives.

8.1 Local Agencies That Provide Support Around Safeguarding

**London Borough of Waltham Forest:
Community Safety Team**

E-mail: communitysafety@walthamforest.gov.uk

Phone: 020 8496 4770

Phone: 020 8496 3000

8 Support Structures within the London Borough of Waltham Forest (continued)

8.2 Waltham Forest Multi- Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

Immediate Risk

If you believe that a child is at immediate risk of harm please call the Police on 999 who will be able to provide an immediate response. Alternatively, you can contact your local police on 101 at any time.

Non-Immediate Risk

If you don't believe the risk requires immediate action, contact the Waltham Forest Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub team (previously the Referral and Advice Team) to discuss your concerns on:

- Tel: 020 8496 2310 (Monday to Thursday, 9am-5.15pm and Friday, 9am-5pm)
- Tel: 020 8496 3000 (Out of Hours).
- E-mail: cscreferrals@walthamforest.gov.uk

You will get to speak to a social worker who is part of the Waltham Forest Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) team.

8.3 Early Help and Threshold Criteria for Intervention with Children and Families

This document outlines the ambitions and values set out by the local authority that underpin the way that Waltham Forest works together with a range of agencies to put children and families first in everything they do to improve the outcomes of local residents.

The vision for the local authority is to secure high quality services for children, young people and adults, developing their independence and giving them resilience and power to influence their journey through life and achieve their ambitions. Further information can be found through this link: http://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/Documents/Early-Help-and-Threshold-Criteria-for-Intervention.pdf

Notes

We hope that you may find this document of value and that the safety and security of young people in the borough is an ongoing concern for parents, carers, statutory, private and third sector agencies in the borough. It is therefore an ongoing concern for us all.

1   http://tellmamauk.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/islamopho-bia.pdf

2   http://www.channel4.com/news/woolwich-terror-attack-edl-clash-police

3   The case of Zachary Chesser: http://security.blogs.cnn.com/2012/02/28/a-classic-case-of-self-radicalizing/

The case of Pavlo Lapshyn: http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2013/oct/21/ukrainian-pleads-guilty-attacks-midland-mosques

The case of Roshonara Choudhary: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-11682732

The case of Tamerlane Tsarnaev: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/apr/23/tamerlan-tsarnaev-terror-experts-puzzled

4   It should be noted that whilst the numbers of such cases are small, probably in the low hundreds, the impact on the family and local communities have been significant

5   http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2525300/British-Muslim-Ifthekar-Jaman-joined-Al-Qaeda-fighting-Syria-killed.html

6   http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-york-north-york-shire-22689552

7   Activity which sows discord on the internet and which may be abusive or prejudicial in nature.

8   https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attach-ment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf

9   Channel uses a Vulnerability Assessment Framework to assess risk and this is based on the tripod elements of assessing whether someone has had engagement with (i) an individual, group or ideology (ii) the intent to cause harm and (iii) the capability to cause harm