Radicalisation: The Last Taboo in Safeguarding and Child Protection? Assessing Practitioner Preparedness in Preventing the Radicalisation of Looked-After Children[1].

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Abstract

Radicalisation is fast becoming one of the most acute and pressing safeguarding and child protection issues of the whole century (NSPCC, 2016). However, the issue of looked-after children as potential recruits for extremist groups has been largely overlooked, despite the universal acknowledgement that looked-after children represent the most vulnerable of all demographics within society. This research collected rare and vital primary data by interviewing practitioners within looked-after children's, residential, and respite services. The study established that practitioners lacked basic awareness of radicalisation and extremism, the Prevent strategy, and the Channel programme. It was discovered that practitioners were unsure of what constitutes the potential indicators of radicalisation, and how and to whom such concerns should be reported. It became apparent that radicalisation as a safeguarding and child protection issue has not been afforded a level of focus adequate and proportionate to the risk posed, and that other issues, namely child sexual exploitation, remain the primary concern in safeguarding contexts.

Introduction

The Prevent strategy is part of the UK government's wider Counter-Terrorism programme, known as CONTEST, and is concerned with preventing individuals being radicalised into violent extremism and terrorism. Underpinning the focus of Prevent are the 'Three I's'; Ideologies, Individuals, and Institutions. The 'Three I's' categorise and

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compartmentalise the three main areas of focus of the Prevent strategy, with the collective intention to tackle extremist ideology, protect institutions such as schools, prisons, and places of religious worship from extremism, and confront those attempting to radicalise vulnerable individuals (Home Office, 2011). The Channel programme represents the Prevent strategy's safeguarding and support referral panel, to which individuals deemed vulnerable to radicalisation may be referred for support (HM Government, 2011). The Channel Vulnerability Assessment Framework comprises of a set of criteria by which a referred individual is assessed in order to determine whether or not they are indeed at risk of radicalisation and therefore require interventions through the Channel programme. The Vulnerability Assessment Framework consists of three categories; Engagement, Intent, and Capability, which collectively assess how engaged an individual is with Extremism, how intent they are on causing harm, and how capable they actually are of doing so. Engagement factors include being at a transitional time of life, a desire for excitement and status, a need for identity, meaning, and belonging, and feelings of grievance (Gov.uk, 2012). Of the 7,631 Prevent referrals made in 2015/16, 14% were deemed suitable for discussion through the Channel process. (Home Office, 2017).

The Prevent duty 2015 has placed a statutory obligation upon educators and other relevant agencies working with children, young people, and vulnerable adults, to pay due regard to preventing individuals being radicalised (Department for Education, 2015). However, the level of training, awareness and knowledge invested in practitioners to equip them to fulfil this obligation effectively has been called into question (Quartermaine, 2014). Institutions have received much attention as requiring a particular focus to prevent those accessing them being radicalised into violent extremism and terrorism. Schools and prisons are the two institutions which have shared this focus, yet residential children's homes and other care settings have seemingly been largely neglected (Mattsson et al, 2016). This is despite the wide acknowledgement that looked-after children and young people, and those accessing care services are amongst the most vulnerable of all in society (Skillicorn et al, 2015, pp. 2015).

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This research aims to investigate and establish the current level of awareness, training, and understanding of radicalisation possessed by practitioners operating within residential, looked-after children, and respite services. Furthermore, this research endeavours to build a case for the improved provision of awareness and training for practitioners operating within children's residential homes and other care settings. The acknowledgement that such settings and those accessing them are acutely vulnerable as targets for those wishing to radicalise vulnerable young people into extremism and terrorism is of paramount importance.

Literature Review

Radicalisation is fast becoming one of the most acute and pressing safeguarding and child protection issues of the whole century (NSPCC, 2016). The term radicalisation has become central to both terrorism studies and counter-terrorism policy (Kundnani, 2012, pp. 3-25), and is defined as a personal process whereby individuals adopt extreme social, political, and/or religious ideals and aspirations, where the attainment of goals justifies the use of violence (Wilner and Dubouloz, 2010, pp. 33-51). However, Hafez and Mullins, 2015 criticise the use of the existing 'process' metaphor in the attempt to rationalise and better understand radicalisation, instead promoting the use of their 'puzzle' terminology. Whilst the term 'puzzle' does dispel the ill-informed implied notions of order and logic being universally present in the radicalisation 'process' by the former explanation, and indeed better reflects the unpredictable nature of the issue, it does little to actually further our understanding of the subject itself. (Hafez and Mullins, 2015, pp. 2-9).

The competing theories of radicalisation; A lack of consensus

The literature relating to radicalisation and the causes and theories thereof is extensive and wide ranging, yet still no consensus exists about its meaning and pathways (Sedgwick, 2010, pp. 479-494). Paying more than passing attention to a selection of the main umbrella theories in this research would be impossible, and crucially would detract from its greater

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intended focus. Therefore, three areas of radicalisation theory will be explored; Vulnerability and the 'Existential motivators for extremism', Political Grievance, and Religion and Theology.

Vulnerability and the existential motivators of extremism and terrorism

For the purposes of this research the primary focus will be upon the underlying facilitating vulnerability factors of radicalisation. The question will be framed in the context of why individuals are radicalised, rather than how. This approach and its reasoning is underpinned by Kundnani (2012, p.129), who likens the quest of scholars and academics to apply definitive causality for radicalisation into violent extremism and terrorism to issues such as religion and theology to viewing radicalisation as a virus which spreads from an already infected person to their associates; whereby "all we have done is explain the process of infection, not why the virus exists in the first place". If we accept the virus to be radicalisation, we can apply Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Need to understand that what makes individuals susceptible to radicalisation is vulnerability itself. The theory depicts a five tier system of human need, consisting of physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging needs, and self-actualisation. The theory states that human behaviour drives individuals to fulfil these needs, initially through legitimate or positive means, but in the absence of such opportunity, illegitimate or negative means will then likely be used in the pursuit of their fulfilment (Maslow, 1943, pp. 370-396). This theory is supported by Cottee and Hayward (2011, pp. 963-986), who discuss factors such as the desire for excitement, meaning or belonging, and glory or achievement as "existential motivators" for engaging in terrorism. It is stated that terrorist membership and activity may provide an outlet for basic existential desires that cannot find expression through legitimate needs. Similarly, the radicalisation process is described by Sageman, 2008 as being "not about how they think, but how they feel", focussing upon kinship and brotherhood as playing a central role in the appeal of extremist and terrorist groups to vulnerable individuals. This has become known as 'bunch of guys theory', and is based upon socio-cultural thought, which states that extremist views

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can often be borne from a group mentality based around kinship and brotherhood, much like that often associated with the culture of violence within gangs (Sageman, 2008, p.13).

Political Grievance

Radicalisation through political grievance often occurs in response to political, economic or social trends (McCauley and Moskalenko, 2008, pp. 415-430). The English Defence League (EDL) uses the social concerns of segments of the general population to garner support for its cause. As large numbers of the white working class become increasingly despondent at the lack of employment opportunities and fearful of increasing numbers of immigrants entering the UK labour market, minority groups, namely Muslims have become the scapegoat. The EDL rhetoric places the blame for a lack of employment opportunities, the disintegration of British culture, and Terrorism squarely at the feet of Muslims, appealing to many disenfranchised white working class as a target for their frustrations. (Winlow, Hall, and Treadwell, 2017, pp. 142-146).

Theology and religion

Gartenstein-Ross and Grossman (2009, pp. 20-22) highlights the role of religion and theology in the radicalisation process, and refer to individuals being "theologically predisposed" to radicalisation into violent extremism and terrorism. Issues arise with attempts to apply causality for radicalisation into violent extremism to religion and theology when evidence is presented which highlights the fact that the majority of individuals who possess radical beliefs do not proceed to engage in violent action. Likewise, a substantial percentage of those who do engage in violent extremism are actually found not to be significantly pious, and often do not possess any substantial understanding of the radical religious rhetoric they claim to represent (Borum, 2009, p.30).

However, the very study of the concept of radicalisation as a means to identify and eliminate the motivating factors of terrorists has been criticised as being superficial, and as representing the 'policing of thought'. The study of radicalisation as a means of understanding

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and predicting the drivers of terrorism is based almost entirely on the assumption that extremist thought is a precursor to extremist action, which has now largely been discredited (Borum, 2011, p.1).

The Prevent duty; Are practitioners sufficiently trained, or set up to fail?

From 01 July 2015 all schools, child care providers, and other select agencies are required by law to exercise due regard to the prevention of individuals being drawn into Radicalisation, in accordance with section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (Department for Education, 2015). However, research found that the skills and knowledge of teachers and other practitioners to respond to such issues and host debate are lacking, as is their confidence and knowledge in assessing whether information coming from such classroom debates and interaction with students need or need not be reported to the authorities (Quartermaine, 2014, pp. 13-29). This has resulted in some high-profile errors of judgement which have been highlighted in international media, such as the incident where staff at a nursery in Luton threatened to report a four year old boy to prevent practitioners after drawing his father cutting a cucumber. The boy mispronounced his explanation of the drawing which was adjudged by staff to sound like 'cooker bomb' (The Guardian, 2016). Kundnani (2008, pp. 178-179) states that the visiting of nursery schools by Prevent workers to brief staff on how to identify possible signs of radicalisation is tantamount to using young children as informants against their parents, taking advantage of their inability to know what to keep private.

It is stated that the Prevent strategy fails to clearly define key terms such as radicalisation, extremism and vulnerability, a vagueness which is likely to undermine the confidence and likelihood of both students and staff to talk openly in schools and other education settings (O'Donnell, 2015, pp. 53-76). This sentiment is supported by Jamieson and Flint (2015, pp. 59-62) who discuss the imbalance between the demands placed upon practitioners to accurately teach such content, and the lack of available resources, and state "There is a great deal of confusion in the public at large as to the meaning of the terms

terrorism, extremism and radicalisation, yet there are few resources available that enable the teaching profession to explain these complex and controversial issues in the school classroom". The Home Office (2016) describe their Prevent training courses as being "Introductory training, offering individuals a foundation on which to develop further knowledge around the risks of radicalisation", which has been criticised as insufficient and not fit for purpose. It is argued that there exists little evidence to suggest that Prevent actually delivers any educational processes which explicitly build youth resilience to extremism (Thomas, 2016, pp. 171-187). A research project carried out by Calderdale Young Advisors to gain the voice of the child as to their understanding around radicalisation, extremism and terrorism generated data which further suggests a lack of clarity and understanding of such fundamental terminology. The data indicated that "most young people thought extremism was terrorism, and that overall the responses show us that most young people do not know what extremism is" (Calderdale Safeguarding Children Board, 2017).

The Channel Programme: Efficacy and Transparency

The efficacy of the Channel programme has long been criticised, especially with regards to the number of referrals vs the number of cases approved for interventions. As the number of individuals referred continues to increase, so do the number of individuals referred 'unnecessarily', and who are not deemed suitable for Intervention through the Channel process (Radicalisationresearch.org, 2016). As touched on previously in the introduction, of the 7,631 Prevent referrals made in 2015/16, only14% were deemed suitable for discussion through the Channel process. Furthermore, 381 individuals subsequently received support through the Channel process, with just 4% still receiving support at the time this information was published. 83% of those who ceased receiving support did so with their vulnerability to radicalisation judged to 'have been reduced'(Home Office, 2017). Claiming such success has resulted in repeated calls for the U.K government to show its methods for measuring outcomes, and publish detailed figures, yet this challenge remains unanswered (Weeks, 2017, pp.1-18).

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The creation of 'suspect communities'?

The National Union of Students and the National Union of Teachers have historically lead the opposition to Prevent, with the former strongly criticising the Prevent duty as an imposition upon education providers, forcing them to participate in the Government's "programme of racial and religious profiling", and calling for it to be banned by Government and boycotted by education providers (NUS Connect, 2015). Meanwhile, the latter also remains critical of the Prevent duty but takes a more pragmatic approach, calling for the Prevent strategy to be reviewed and agencies such as themselves used to identify alternative ways to safeguard children and young people from Radicalisation (National Union of Teachers, 2016). The Prevent duty is similarly criticised by the NHS for the legal obligation of its Accident and Emergency staff to report any concerns relating to radicalisation of individuals they encounter (Heath-Kelly, 2016, pp. 29-45). General Practitioners have expressed similar concerns, claiming that the Prevent duty stigmatises already marginalised individuals and compromises patient confidentiality (Wright and Hankins, 2017, pp. 288-289). It is alleged that 'the war on terror' and subsequent anti-terror legislation packaged under the Prevent strategy has established British Muslims as a 'suspect community', targeting them for surveillance, and undermining national security rather than improving it by alienating and stigmatising Muslim communities (Pantazis and Pemberton, 2009, pp. 646-666). Furthermore, it is explicitly suggested that current Counter-terror measures actually feed and sustain terrorism (Choudhury and Fenwick, 2011, pp. 151-181). However, Greer (2010, pp. 1171-1190) states that the link between UK anti-terror legislation and Muslims becoming a 'suspect community' is unreliable and one-dimensional, suggesting the relationship between the two is not as simple as oppressive anti-terror laws creating a suspect community as is often presented in the media (Greer, 2010, pp. 111-1190). David Anderson QC, the independent reviewer of counter-terrorism legislation refutes the claims of the poisonous nature of the Prevent strategy and its underpinning counter-terrorism legislation by insisting that it is in fact proportionate. Anderson elaborates that the "hostile narrative of power-hungry

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secret services, police insensitivity, and laws being ratcheted up to new levels of oppression is, quite simply, false" (Anderson, 2016, pp. 90-91).

Radicalisation as a safeguarding and child protection issue

It is stated that approaching radicalisation as a child protection issue is not helpful, and risks the roles of social workers and police becoming indistinguishable (Stanley and Guru, 2015, pp. 353-366). The concern over the role of the social worker in matters of radicalisation is supported by McKendrick and Finch (2017, pp. 308-324), who go as far as to say that the securitisation approach to modern social problems is damaging to communities. However, the Department for Education (2015) state that protecting children, young people and vulnerable adults from radicalisation should be perceived as part of all agencies' wider, existing safeguarding duty, and that keeping children, young people and vulnerable adults safe from the threat of radicalisation is a safeguarding issue that needs to be viewed and addressed in the same way as other threats such as child sexual exploitation, neglect and abuse (West Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Board, 2016). The radicalisation of children and young people currently remains above all viewed as a security risk, focussed upon the detection and incapacitation of individuals, rather than acknowledging those radicalised as victims in need of support (Van San, Sieckelinck, and De Winter, 2013, pp. 267-289).

A serious case review was published in July 2017 in response to the deaths of two young brothers from Brighton, who were killed fighting in Syria in support of an Al-Qaeda affiliated group believed to be the Al-Nusra front in 2014. The review explored how despite substantial involvement from social care services and multi-agency partners, there existed no indicators that the siblings were likely to travel to Syria. The review states that this case represents the real challenge for professionals in being able to identify children that are being radicalised. (Brighton and Hove local safeguarding children board, 2017).

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Radicalisation, institutions, and looked-after children

One of the three strategic objectives of the Prevent strategy is to work with institutions where there are risks of radicalisation that need to be addressed (HM Government, 2015). Prisons and schools have received the most attention of all institutions in terms of training and investment (Mattsson et al, 2016, pp. 251-265). It should come as no surprise that prisons can act as breeding grounds for terrorism, providing access for committed extremists to a captive audience of vulnerable and disaffected individuals seeking purpose and belonging (Mulcahy et al, 2013, pp. 4-14). Likewise, the same behavioural, and social vulnerabilities are present amongst children and young people in or accessing care, yet research, government focus, and the allocation of resources fails to keep pace in this specific area (Crerar, 2015, p.12).

The Trojan Horse Affair refers to an anonymous letter which was exposed to suggest a series of schools in Birmingham were involved in a coordinated plot to radicalise Muslim students. Although the subsequent investigation failed to identify a concerted and deliberate plot to radicalise Muslim students, it did criticise many senior managers, governors and local authority representatives for failing to respond proactively to concerns raised about the issue of the radicalisation of students. What this identifies is a clear enhanced vulnerability and susceptibility of children and young people to be radicalised in institutional settings, or at the very least for institutional settings to act as facilitators for extremist thought and incubators for terrorism (Mogra, 2016, pp. 444-465).

The Looked After Children and young people who reside within children's homes either on a full-time residential basis, who attend on a short-term ongoing basis in a respite capacity, or who access the service on a short-term basis in a crisis situation are often by definition acutely vulnerable (Appleton and Stanley, 2010, pp. 383-386). Those attending children's homes in any of the above capacities do so either as a result of abuse, neglect or a parental inability to safeguard and protect them from harm, which leave deeply entrenched trauma and a wide range of social, psychological and behavioural vulnerabilities (Kendrick, Steckley and Lerpiniere, 2008, pp. 79-93).

The numbers of children being placed in foster care are increasing as a result of physical, sexual, and emotional or psychological abuse and neglect, and are believed to be more likely to experience negative outcomes including those of a behavioural, neurobiological and social nature (Leve et al, 2012, pp. 1197- 1211). Based on 2016 data supplied by government, the number of children looked after continues to rise steadily and is 5% higher than in 2012. Furthermore, 40% of all care leavers aged 19-21 were not in education, employment or training, compared to just 14% of non-care leavers of the same age category (Gov.uk, 2016). Research shows that children who enter the care system achieve far less positive outcomes than those who continue to live with parents or carers. It also highlights a heightened risk of becoming involved in substance misuse, anti-social behaviour, crime, and is linked to a higher propensity to carry such behaviours into adulthood, culminating in an increased likelihood of serving a prison sentence (Pinto and Woolgar, 2015, p. 181). The over representation of looked after children in the youth justice system is symptomatic of the profound and enduring negative outcomes which stem from loss, neglect and trauma suffered by those who subsequently enter care (Prison Reform Trust, 2016), yet residential care placements remain unlikely to provide young people with a secure sense of attachment (Every Child Matters, 2003). It stands to reason that carers and residential children's home staff employed as corporate parents should receive significant investment in terms of training to allow them to respond decisively to all manner of safeguarding issues including radicalisation, yet sadly at present neither parents or carers are receiving the necessary support and investment in this regard (Pels and Ruyter, 2012, pp. 311-325).

Predictions and hypotheses

- It is believed that the research will uncover a lack of radicalisation-related awareness possessed by participants. It is anticipated that this will be evidenced in a lack of definitional clarity of what constitutes radicalisation, knowledge of how to spot the potential signs of radicalisation, and a lack of understanding of how to report

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radicalisation related concerns. Furthermore, it is anticipated that participants will lack awareness of the Government's Prevent strategy and Channel programme.

- It is predicted that the research will identify a lack of radicalisation related training possessed by participants, including a lack of knowledge relating to the availability of such training.

It is expected that the research will indicate a general lack of government and local authority focus upon radicalisation as a safeguarding and child protection issue, which will be evidenced by the disparity in participants' level of confidence and detail of response to questions framed in a radicalisation or child sexual exploitation context respectively. In theory, participants are expected to respond more confidently to child sexual exploitation related questions, and less confidently to those related to radicalisation.

Methods

The overall aim of the study is to ascertain the level of practitioner awareness, training, and knowledge of radicalisation, the Prevent strategy, and Channel programme within the looked-after children and care services sector of a local authority in the North of England. The study also aims to establish whether radicalisation is currently being afforded the proportionate level of focus and investment given the substantial threat from international terrorism worldwide.

Objectives of the study;

- To successfully interview a five-participant sample consisting of practitioners who work in children's residential and care services.
- To thematically analyse the data to identify its results.
- To produce a final report highlighting the key findings and establish whether these support or contradict the existing literature and original hypotheses of this research project as a whole.

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Design

The research aimed to establish practitioner opinion and level of knowledge in relation to the six key themes of awareness, training, signs, risks, responsibility, and reporting. Furthermore, the research aimed to identify the extent of participant familiarity with the Prevent strategy and Channel programme. Semi-structured interviews were used to enable sufficient coverage of each key content area, whist permitting relevant participant elaboration. Thematic analysis was utilised to analyse the captured data with thematic coding, which identified themes from the research and allowed the appropriate categorisation.

Sample

The sample consisted of five participants, all of whom worked within the looked after children, residential and respite services. The sample was chosen to reflect as accurately as possible the varied demographic makeup of the workforce, including in terms of gender, age, and years of service. The age of participants ranged between 35-45 (M=40.4), (STD=3.23), with years of service between 1-20 (M=11.2), (STD=3.33).

Table 1. Breakdown of participant demographics.

Participant	Age	Gender	Years of service
01	35	F	2
02	42	M	20
03	45	M	18
04	39	F	15
05	41	F	1

Procedure

Prospective participants were contacted by email with the informed consent sheet, participant information sheet and a copy of the questions they would be asked. This was to allow prospective participants to make an informed decision as to whether they wished to

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participate in the study. The interviews were voice recorded to allow accurate and exact transcription, and to facilitate thematic analysis. The semi-structured interview typology used allowed participants to elaborate on any areas they deemed necessary, adding further contextual information, whilst ensuring all areas of focus were covered without excessive deviation.

Ethics

Initial approval was given by the head of residential and looked-after children's services in the local authority participating in the study. Additional authority was granted by the University of Central Lancashire's ethics committee, which granted full approval to begin the research. Participant anonymity was achieved by the process of assigning participants with unique identification numbers, which were used throughout the process of thematic analysis and during the results.

Analysis

The data was analysed using thematic analysis, and adopted a six-stage approach, encompassing all conducted stages from collating the data, to producing the completed report. The six stages include; Building familiarity with the data, generating codes, identification of themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and production of the report.

Stage 1: Building familiarity with the data; This stage focussed upon the reading and re-reading of the data set to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the data existed. Spending time away from the data was used as a technique to apply fresh perspective to the data.

Stage 2: Generating codes; The coding of this particular data set was conducted manually, highlighting potential codes and themes. Codes and themes were then collated together from the entire data set.

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Stage 3: Identification of themes; This stage was centred on identifying themes from the initial coding conducted in the previous section. The initial codes were used to develop more in-depth themes based upon the existence of relevant codes.

Stage 4: Reviewing themes; The themes which were highlighted from the initial codes in the previous section were refined here. The themes were reviewed to establish whether their existence was justified in their own right, or whether they should be reconstituted within another existing theme.

Stage 5: Defining themes; After reviewing the highlighted themes, appropriate names were given to each theme to identify the exact nature of each theme. In this case the themes given were all one-word only, allowing effective understanding of the information contained within.

Stage 6: Production of the report; Producing the report was the final stage to be completed. This stage encompassed presenting the information gathered and developed in all of the previous stages in a concise, structured and interesting way, allowing the reader to easily understand the information presented for each individual theme.

Discussion

The key findings of the literature and research are outlined below within their respective sub-categories, with the data interpreted and synthesised to create an in-depth summary of the main findings.

Awareness

Awareness of radicalisation, Prevent, and Channel is highlighted in the literature as lacking (Jamieson and Flint, 2015, pp. 5-62). There also exists a distinct lack of consensus around the meanings of such key terms, which is likely to lead to uncertainty and a lack of confidence of both practitioners and young people in discussing the issue (Sedgwick, 2010, pp. 479-494).

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The research supported the literature and the original hypothesis in identifying that there was a general misunderstanding of what constituted radicalisation, and a confusion around key terms. Participants did, however, identify that radicalisation was a form of brainwashing or influencing of another person, and acknowledged it as a form of exploitation. However, when asked; "Are you aware of what Radicalisation is, and how it is relevant to your role and the agency you represent?", one participant stated;

> *"For me, radicalisation is about people getting involved with other cultures that want to do stuff to others and harm them, like suicidal bombings and making bombs and stuff like that".*

The response illustrates a misunderstanding of radicalisation, and appears to suggest a perceived interchangeability of terminology with regards to radicalisation, extremism and terrorism. Moreover, the mention of suicide bombing may illustrate a tendency to associate radicalisation purely with Islamist typologies of extremism, which is symptomatic of the marginalisation of the right-wing issue within the public consciousness and the oversubscription to the thought of radicalisation being a purely Muslim problem. All but one participant stated that they were familiar with the Prevent strategy, however they were not able to describe it in any detail and tended to have it confused with the Channel programme. The lack of awareness of Prevent and Channel outlined in the research also supported the literature and the original hypothesis, with only one participant stating that they were familiar with the Channel programme. The remaining participants having never heard of it before. When asked "Are you familiar with the government's Channel programme, including its referral process in your area?", one participant responded;

> *"No, I've not heard of the Channel programme, the only thing I've heard of is the Prevent strategy, so the channel programme is a new one. I might have heard about it, but I don't remember it"* P.02.

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This is representative of the lack of focus placed upon radicalisation in comparison to other safeguarding issues such as Child Sexual Exploitation, and demonstrates a fundamental lack of knowledge and awareness of the core elements of radicalisation specific safeguarding provisions.

Training

A lack of radicalisation related training and promotion of training was highlighted in the literature. The ambiguity surrounding key terms such as radicalisation, extremism and terrorism highlighted by information captured from interviews with school children by a local authority suggests that they have either not received this information in school, or that the level of knowledge possessed by teachers delivering the sessions was not sufficient (Calderdale Safeguarding Children Board, 2017). HM Government themselves describe their Prevent training as "Introductory training, offering individuals a foundation on which to develop further knowledge around the risks of radicalisation" (HM Government, 2016). However, describing and acknowledging their Prevent training for practitioners as introductory, and stating that it is designed to represent a foundation on which practitioners can themselves expand upon risks appearing to practitioners as a 'tickbox' exercise, and could result in opposition, or at best, lethargy and disinterest. It appears that practitioners' legal duty to prevent individuals being drawn into radicalisation may not at present be matched by the quality of training they are being armed with in order to fulfil this duty effectively.

The serious case review published in July 2017 in response to the deaths of two brothers from Brighton whilst fighting for the Al-Qaeda affiliated Al-Nusra front in 2014 is said to highlight the extent of the challenge faced by professionals in being able to effectively identify children at risk of being radicalised. It was stated that despite a multitude of professionals being involved with the family, that there were no signs to suggest the siblings were preparing to travel abroad. (Brighton and Hove local safeguarding children board, 2017). Whether the practitioners involved had received any radicalisation related training, and if so, whether the quality of the training was sufficient are questions which must surely be asked in

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this situation. It seems improbable that substantial multi-agency involvement such as that said to have been present in this case would not have managed to identify signs indicating the intentions or the level of radicalisation of the siblings. As a safeguarding practitioner experienced in both leading and operating within a multi-agency team it appears unfathomable that no signs existed in this case. It appears more likely that the level of training and awareness undertaken and possessed by the practitioners was not sufficient enough to empower them to identify the signs.

The research strongly supported the literature and the original hypothesis, indicating that there is a lack of training and promotion of training related to radicalisation for practitioners. Only 40% of respondents had received the WRAP training, however in both cases the training was received whilst employed in a different role, not within a residential or respite service. 100% of respondents identified that there was not enough training available relating to radicalisation. Participants were asked "Do you believe there is sufficient training available on Radicalisation as part of your role?" One respondent stated;

> "*Is it sufficient?, it's probably not enough I'd say. I've not been on it, but I haven't needed to*" P.02.

This response illustrates a lack of understanding of the need for practitioners of all levels and seniority to undergo training and become competent in responding to concerns relating to radicalisation in safeguarding contexts.

Another participant stated;

> "*I don't think I've come across any training since being in this service to do with radicalisation. However, I don't know if something has been put on the new training matrix at present with what's going on, I couldn't answer that, but I don't*

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think at this moment in time that there is sufficient training, and I think people need to be made aware and be able to make a judgment" P03.

As a practitioner having worked in various safeguarding related roles, and currently operating within children's residential and respite settings, it is apparent that there is a lack of urgency and importance attached to undertaking radicalisation related training, both by individual practitioners and management teams. The WRAP training is currently not mandatory, and an individual successfully undertaking the training relies upon an existing interest in the subject and them taking the time to search for relevant training, as the level of promotion of such training remains insufficient. Furthermore, the individual successfully gaining approval to undertake the training will rely upon their manager assessing the training as appropriate and necessary to their role. The Prevent and Channel general awareness e-learning training courses are free to all, however like the WRAP training, these packages are not mandatory and are not actively promoted by local authorities enough, therefore awareness of their availability remains low.

Responsibility

Confusion around responsibility is evident in the literature, evidenced by the National Union of Students (2015), and The National Union of Teachers (2016) both opposing the legal duty applied to them in paying due regard to protecting individuals from radicalisation. The literature highlights that parents are an undervalued and underutilised resource in working towards the prevention of radicalisation, despite being uniquely placed to notice any signs indicative of radicalisation (Pels and Ruyter, 2012, pp. 311-325). Disparity is evident between the messages espoused by Educate Against Hate (2017) who advise parents that they are the first line of defence against the radicalisation of their children, and urged them to be vigilant of the signs and know what action to take, and Davies (2008 pp. 50-51) who identifies the lack of a universal profile or journey of radicalisation as a factor which renders efforts of parents or teachers to play 'spot the terrorist' as useless. Such contradiction in the

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existing literature is not helpful and risks causing confusion amongst practitioners, agencies, and parents. The literature also highlights how protecting children from radicalisation is a part of every agency's existing safeguarding policy, and that the theory and reporting mechanisms for doing so are very much in line with existing policy on responding to other safeguarding concerns such as Child Sexual Exploitation (Department for Education, 2015).

The apparent lack of empowerment and training of parents to be better equipped to respond to radicalisation related concerns highlighted in the literature was supported by the research and further supported the original hypothesis; Participants were asked "In whose remit of responsibility should preventing Radicalisation fall? For example, Police, Education providers, parents, youth workers, social workers etc". One participant responded;

> "*I think everybody should be educated on it and know. Everybody who works with children, young people and families should have that education, and I suppose making parents aware, because I don't know if they know. We know through work, but I don't know if parents know about that. Because prevent go into schools don't they, and they do awareness sessions. However, as a parent, I've not had any information from a school telling me what it is, I just know because of my role"* P05.

This response indicated support for the need for parents to be better educated in relation to radicalisation and for them to be viewed as an important resource in the prevention of radicalisation. Also suggested was an over-reliance upon 'professionals' and 'practitioners' as being best placed in this regard, overlooking the influence of friends, parents, and other family members.

The research also mirrored sentiments expressed in the literature relating to it being everybody's responsibility to be vigilant and respond to concerns relating to radicalisation, and specifically that agencies must take a multi-agency approach in this response and be confident in sharing information. Whilst a shared responsibility of parents, carers, school

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staff, police, youth workers, and so on to prevent the radicalisation of individuals is a noble pursuit, it does risk creating a culture lacking in personal accountability.

Risk

The literature identified looked-after children and those accessing care services as being amongst the most vulnerable of all in society, having often suffered severe early life trauma, abuse and neglect (Kendrick, Steckley, and Lerpiniere, 2008, pp. 7-93). Despite the substantial acknowledgement of the increased vulnerability of this category of children and young people, no existing literature was found specifically linking them to an increased risk or propensity to being radicalised into violent extremism and terrorism.

The research arrived at two distinct conclusions with regards to the identification by participants of those believed to be most at risk of radicalisation, which is very much representative of the polarisation present in the literature. Firstly, 60% of participants highlighted vulnerability generally as the most significant risk factor and enabler of radicalisation, whilst 40% of all participants explicitly mentioned Islam and Muslims, specifically the way they believe the media to portray them as being most vulnerable to radicalisation and most in need of protection and safeguarding.

When asked "Who do you feel is most at risk from Radicalisation? A particular age, gender, religion, ethnic group?", one participant responded;

> *"If we look in the media we'd assume Islam and the kind of Isis influenced are amongst the most prevalent in radicalisation for young people, so you'd have to say religion to a point"* P02

Another participant answered;

> *"I think that media portrays that it's Muslim males that are most at risk but I'm very aware that that's not always the case"* P04.

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Both responses highlight a perception of a reflex association between radicalisation and Muslims specifically. Both participants explicitly cite the media as being responsible for this perception, and appear eager to make it clear that it is not their own opinion. This is symptomatic of the sensitivity applied to the issue of radicalisation and Muslims by practitioners, a level of sensitivity which could result in avoidance of action for such concerns for fear of being labelled as discriminatory.

From working with acutely vulnerable children and young people in various safeguarding settings it is apparent that there exists a significant degree of chance as to the typology of exploitation an individual is subject to, which may be dependent largely upon geographical location and demographic makeup of location. For too long government focus has been upon protecting Muslims from being radicalised by other Muslims who use Islam as the common ground and facilitator in the radicalisation process. The quest of a potential victim to fulfil unmet basic human needs does not discriminate between exploitation typology, whether sexual, gang related, or extremism of Islamist or right-wing derivations. An individual need not subscribe to Islam in order to subscribe to Islamic extremism. If the cause offers love and belonging, kinship, safety and security, and identity, it is likely to appeal to the potential victim, and those grounds alone are likely to prove sufficiently enticing. We must not be so short-sighted as to assume that extremist and terrorist typologies, whether Islamist or right-wing cannot and do not span cultural, religious and ethnic boundaries.

Signs

The literature highlighted the level of ambiguity and confusion surrounding the potential signs indicative of the onset of the radicalisation process evident in an individual. The desire for identity and belonging, a desire for excitement and adventure, feelings of grievance, and being at a transitional time of life are all listed in the Channel vulnerability assessment framework as factors which could suggest an individual has entered the radicalisation process (Gov.UK, 20120.

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The research reflects the ambiguity of the supposed signs of radicalisation present in the literature, with participants largely unable to distinguish between potential signs of radicalisation and those indicative of CSE. However, the tone and fluency of responses between Exploitation typologies differed greatly. The participants were tentative in their responses when asked to identify potential signs of radicalisation, yet were much more confident and fluent when answering in relation to CSE. When asked: "Could you identify signs, such as physical, behavioural, ideological, which could indicate a child/young person is being/has been radicalised?", one participant stated;

> *"I don't think I've come across any. I should really know this. I haven't come across it, but because I've had Prevent training in a team meeting in my previous job I should really be aware. I know there's different symbols to be aware of the families might have up in the home. I suppose it's like being groomed in a way isn't it, like maybe hanging around with different people that they don't usually hang around with, behaviours might change. They might become withdrawn or even more outgoing. I think they become quite secretive, or they can do. That kind of thing I think I might be aware of. And probably a lot of them together. Who they're hanging around with"*
> *P05.*

The same participant then went on to list fluently a number of potential signs of CSE, after which they acknowledged that the signs of radicalisation and those of Child Sexual Exploitation are in fact incredibly similar;

> *"Missing episodes, being secretive, their physical appearance might change, they might have new mobile phones, clothes, possessions, hanging around with different people, substance misuse. Their behaviour might change. They might not go to school. I suppose it's quite similar to the last question really"* P05.

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This similarity is supported further when considering the engagement factors outlined in the Channel Vulnerability Assessment Framework, in fact the engagement factors listed could be equally indicative of CSE. The ambiguity of such factors when listed as potential indicators of radicalisation are not viewed as helpful, as practitioners become indecisive as to whether their concerns are justified, or whether they are felt as a product of their anxiety and hypersensitivity to fulfil their legal duty to protect individuals from radicalisation.

It has become clear that those practitioners who are confident and familiar with identifying the signs of CSE do not possess the same degree of certainty and ability when the question is framed within a radicalisation context. This is symptomatic of the lack of consensus in viewing radicalisation as a safeguarding and child protection issue and is reminiscent of the way in which CSE was viewed prior to the Rotherham and Rochdale scandals being investigated.

Reporting

The literature indicated confusion amongst school teachers and other practitioners, stating that they are not confident about what radicalisation related concerns they should and should not report (Quartermaine, 2014, pp. 13-29). Instances of poor decision making have been widely publicised in international media. There have been instances where school teachers have reported children to police and prevent practitioners over misunderstandings or miscommunications in the classroom, such as the case where staff at a nursery in Luton had threatened to report a Four-year-old boy to prevent practitioners over a picture he had drawn of his father cutting a cucumber. The boy's mispronunciation of cucumber was believed by staff to mean 'cooker bomb', which lead them to suspect that the child's father was a bomb maker (The Guardian, 2016).

The research supported the literature and the original hypothesis as it demonstrated a substantial lack of understanding amongst participants of how to report concerns related to radicalisation. Participants were asked "Would you know, if needed, how to report a concern related to Radicalisation, and who to?". One participant stated;

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"I'd just report it to the police. And hopefully they'd earmark me to the right person really" P03.

Only one participant mentioned the prevent coordinator as being the correct person to report their concerns to, but again this was tentative and uncertain. This participant was one of two who had undertaken the WRAP training in a previous role, and stated;

"If I was working with the family would it be me, or the social worker? It would probably go to the Prevent coordinator I think" P05.

The participants were again more confident in their responses when asked about reporting concerns related to CSE. The responses generally illustrated a lack of autonomy and personal responsibility of practitioners to report concerns related to radicalisation, all of which seem likely to originate from a lack of confidence underpinned by insufficient training and awareness of radicalisation and its associated policy and procedure.

Limitations and Bias

The sample size used for this research project is above the minimum required for this level of study, however it could have been beneficial to obtain a much larger sample size in order to capture a larger-scale voice. It would also have been useful to have included private residential children's homes and services within the study, however this may be more meaningful as a separate research project entirely.

A small portion of the participants, namely those most senior in rank, appeared conscious of the fact that their responses relating to shortfalls in training provision, for example, may indicate their employer is not being as proactive as they could be. At times the participants were perceived as almost apologetic and keen to excuse their lack of training in this area. It can be assumed that any subconscious bias exhibited in this way by participants has had negligible impact upon the integrity of the data collected, if anything, it suggests that

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the true extent of the lack of focus upon radicalisation as a safeguarding and child protection issue has been downplayed.

Conclusion

This research has highlighted the under-acknowledgement of radicalisation as a current and pressing safeguarding and child protection issue, with it being afforded much less emphasis and allocated much fewer resources than other issues such as Child Sexual Exploitation. The lack of training and awareness possessed by practitioners highlighted during this research continues to be reflected in the overwhelming disparity between the large number of Prevent referrals made, and the tiny percentage which are ultimately accepted into the Channel process and for which interventions are subsequently provided. The majority of such referrals are rejected on grounds of the referred individual requiring other forms of support not related to radicalisation, which reflects clearly the lack of understanding of referring practitioners as to what constitutes legitimate radicalisation related concerns. This is not an attempt to criticise the level of understanding of such practitioners, rather to acknowledge this as an inevitability due to the current insufficient training and awareness provision. It is hoped that upon receipt of this research data and proposed improvements, that local authorities will seek to improve their provision and delivery of radicalisation awareness and training. It is intended that local authorities will reflect upon this research and learn lessons from the Child Sexual Exploitation disasters in Rotherham, Rochdale and other areas which stemmed largely from a lack of practitioner awareness and training, without having to suffer similar disasters relating to radicalisation before the necessary improvements are made.

The literature and research also highlighted the major concerns of practitioners and the public alike with the lack of transparency of Prevent processes and those working in Prevent roles. This is seen as further evidence of its covert nature and unwillingness to engage with those it appeals to for help. As the frequency of terror attacks on British soil continues to rise, with recent attacks in London and Manchester in 2017, it becomes ever more crucial for

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authorities to gain the support and cooperation of the British public. However, as more public support and assistance is requested, such criticisms of the lack of transparency of Prevent must be answered. Communities must be trusted with more details of Prevent and its purpose, and their good-will and cooperation harnessed to improve community reporting and collective resilience. This must include the publishing of details of its Prevent and Channel outcomes and success measurement protocol, to allow the public at large to make informed decisions about their efficacy. No hard figures exist in the public domain to corroborate the rates of success claimed by the government, yet the public remain expected to swallow such claims without question or hesitation.

Crucially, there has arisen through this research a somewhat controversial yet credible argument that the aspirations of individuals who are radicalised are often anything but extreme, in fact what they seek is love and belonging, identity, and safety and security, all of which are basic human needs. Acknowledging the fact that the fulfilment of unmet basic needs often lays at the heart of an individual's susceptibility to radicalisation may be an uncomfortable truth for government agencies, as it highlights that the pool of potential recruits for those wishing to radicalise vulnerable individuals far exceeds the boundaries of Muslim communities exploitable through theological or religious means, or deprived white working-class communities through socio-economic or political grievance. Without an easily identifiable face for the 'potential extremist', the sparsity and inefficacy of existing counter-radicalisation resources will be outed, and see government agencies and practitioners forced to begin looking inward at the 'us', rather than outward at 'them'.

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