# Supporting Families in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE)

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# Introduction

- When someone becomes radicalised and behaves in an 'extreme' way, this does not only affect the person, but also their family, friends, wider social circle and society.

- Families, youngsters and children are confronted with recruitment by terrorist/Violent Extremist groups. Today's reality is one in which radicalisation is not uncommon as a phenomenon.

- For vulnerable individuals and their social environment, current prevention challenges are:

  - Detecting those who are at risk of radicalisation
  - Being able to get into contact with them and support them and their families in a change of direction
  - Supporting both the individual and their family during the disengagement process

# Why are families important?

Families are vital to preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE):

- Shaping attitudes towards non-violence
- Identify signs of possible radicalisation
- Preventing radicalisation

# What role do families play in CVE?

- Support development of family commitment in CVE

- Support/empower women, particularly mothers as prevention protagonists
    - Mothers best placed to identify, predict & respond to potential vulnerabilities to VE
    - Offer meaningful counter narratives
    - Humanize impact of terrorism

# Supporting Families in P/CVE

Why are families important stakeholders?

- Families are at the core of any individual's resilience

- Family members should be seen as partners

- The objective should be to engage, build trust and form relationships over a longer period of time.

- There should be a systematic approach to the family (including understanding the family dynamics and wider social environment and community).

- Transparency towards the family is crucial to maintain a relationship. Although police involvement is necessary at times, the coordination and cooperation between them and family is of important.

# 1. Identifying a (potential) case of radicalisation within a family

- How/where do people report cases or go to receive support?

- In many cases this is the direct family or someone from the direct social network (e.g. friends).

- Concerns may also be expressed by teachers, youth workers, sports clubs, religious organisations and neighbours

- It is important that people know where they can share their concerns.

- Each concern needs to be taken seriously and assessed.

# 2. Discussing a course of action in a multi-agency setting

- To respond to concerns shared, it is important to have an infrastructure in place to deal with (new) cases of radicalisation.

- Multi agency panels can consist of: Police, Social Care/Mental Health, local authority, education/employment representative (this needs to be tailored to your specific setting)

- The exchange of information is key to a successful multi agency panel. This helps better understand the risks and protective factors at play

# 3. Getting in contact with the family 1/2

Engaging with the family who is (potentially) dealing with radicalisation:

- Visiting the family in their home will make the visit feel less threatening and they can speak within their own comfort zone

- Full transparency is around who is visiting the family, why they are visiting and what happens if the family does not cooperate;

- It may help to not focus on the radicalisation issue right away but to ask the family what they are dealing with and how support can be offered;

- It can help if the (local) police are not in uniform but in civilian attire – this makes the situation less threatening and avoids shame that could lead to stigmatisation within the neighbourhood

# 3. Getting in contact with the family 2/2

Families generally are willing to cooperate as they also have concerns and want the best for their family members and for themselves. However, there are cases in which the family structurally refuses to engage. We would advise the following:

- Invest time and keep trying to engage with the family;

- Highlight that you want to support and help them with their issues;

- Indicate the consequences should they not want to work with the family worker or social worker

- When legal procedures are needed to enforce cooperation, this is evidence of a lack of trust; in these cases, working with the family has less chance of being effective.

# 4. Making an assessment of risks and needs

- Information collected during the initial visit feeds into an assessment of the risks and needs of the family. There is no standard form or advice -files usually contain a great deal of subtle information and specific questions of relevance for the family support professionals.

- Risk Assessment forms will differ from country to country. You should ensure it consists of the following:
    - the personal history of the individual of concern and his/her family/social network, the nature and severity of the concerns
    - linkages between the individual, the family & wider contacts
    - practical issues such as unemployment, housing problems etc.
    - trigger events in the individual's or family's history;
    - the nature and severity of the concerns (background).

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# 5: Lessons & approaches to working with children

Whenever children or youngsters are radicalised or have been influenced by a radicalised person in his / her direct environment, there are a few steps that can be taken:

- Working with general early-prevention intervention methods can be effective, e.g., family relations, conflict management, etc.

- Creating a safe place and atmosphere of confidence and trust is essential for children to speak freely.

- Meeting the needs of child returnees must be informed by existing child protection best practice, and conducted within established national networks for child services (NGOs should be supported by statutory services)

# 6. Keeping track of progress and communication

- Maintaining contact with the family on a regular basis is necessary to a successful intervention

- Clear rules and boundaries for conduct should be agreed from the outset.

- It is crucial that meetings are as private and confidential as possible

- Helpful to include a psychologist as they can dispel taboos and encourage them to talk about issues

# 7. Preparing to disengage from the family

Engagement will usually end when goals have been achieved and one party (the service provider or family members) is confident that the family can proceed on its own:

- Evaluation or multi-agency monitoring should be used to assess whether the family support goals have been achieved and the support can come to an end.

- Interventions shouldn't be given 'strict' timeline as each case will be unique

- The professionalism and experience of family support professionals and psychologists will usually play an important role in these cases.

# 8: Building and developing family support capacity

- Start in the form of a pilot; allow for changes where required

- Consider continuity through resources (financial, human, political)

- Develop a communication strategy to inform the public about how family support for the prevention of radicalisation is available

- Involve engaged parents who have suffered similar experiences

- Put a support structure in place for family support professionals as working with vulnerable families is very demanding and incurs an emotional / psychological burden

- Evaluate the work being done with families to establish evidence-based best practice and to learn from mistakes.

# Points to consider

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# *Working with Families and Communities*

1.  Stakeholder engagement - who do you engage?

2.  How do families and communities enhance the effectiveness of CVE programming?

3.  What methods or good practices work in supporting CVE efforts?

# *Promote interaction between Families and authorities*

- *Face-to-face interaction*

- **Authorities to reach out and connect**

- *Community Policing*

- *Enhance information-sharing*

# *Effective engagements / interventions*

- Parenting skills / Child development courses

- Educational opportunities at the formal and non-formal levels

- Strengthening local and regional narratives

- Community-oriented policing

- Integrated approach to CVE

# *Support and empower women – particularly mothers – as prevention protagonists*

"Mothers are a continuous presence in their children's lives, with deeply-rooted connections and an understanding of push and pull factors: of what excites them, upsets them, and what might seduce them into a community of violence."

Can mothers challenge extremism? Edit Schlaffer & Ulrich Kropiunigg, 2015

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