

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Step Ahead values freedom of speech and the expansion of beliefs/ideology as fundamental rights underpinning our society's values. Learners and staff have the right to speak freely and voice their opinions. However, freedom of speech comes with responsibility, and free speech designed to manipulate the vulnerable or that lead to violence and harm of others goes against the moral principles in which freedom of speech is valued. Free speech is not an unqualified privilege; it is subject to laws and policies governing data protection, human rights, equality, community safety and community cohesion.

The threat from terrorism in the UK may include exploiting vulnerable people, involving them in terrorism, or in activity that supports terrorism. The normalisation of extreme views might also make individuals vulnerable to future manipulation and exploitation. Step Ahead is clear that this exploitation and radicalisation should be viewed as a safeguarding concern.

Step Ahead seeks to protect individuals against the messages of all violent extremism, including, but not limited to, those linked to Islamist ideology, or Far Right / Neo Nazi / White Supremacist ideology, Irish Nationalist and Loyalist paramilitary groups, and extremist Animal Rights movements.

POLICY

The Senior Management Team and the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will assess the level of risk within the service and put actions in place to reduce that risk. Risk assessment may include curriculum content, a provision or service explicitly targeting vulnerable groups, disclosed safeguarding cases, anti-bullying policy, and other issues specific to the service's profile, community and philosophy.

Designated Persons and Contacts

When a staff member has any concerns that a candidate/learner may be at risk of becoming radicalised or involvement in terrorism, they should speak with the Designated Safeguarding Lead responsible for safeguarding individuals from radicalisation and involvement in terrorism.

Additional contacts include the following:

- To report illegal content, such as information, pictures or videos found on the internet, go to <https://act.campaign.gov.uk/>;
- To report concerns, call the Police Anti-Terrorist Hotline number: 0800 789 321;
- If a crime is being committed or there is a threat to someone's life, call 999 immediately.

Interventions

Several factors can influence the range of behaviours defined as violent extremism, but most people do not become involved in extremist action. For this reason, the appropriate interventions in any particular case may not have any specific connection to the threat of radicalisation, for example, they may address mental health, relationship or drug/alcohol issues.

Indicators of vulnerability to radicalisation

1. Radicalisation refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism leading to terrorism.
2. The Government defines extremism in the Prevent Strategy as:
 - a) 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.
 - b) We also include in our definition that extremism calls for the death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas.
3. The Crown Prosecution Service defines extremism as:
The demonstration of unacceptable behaviour by using any means or medium to express views which:
 - a) Encourage, justify or glorify terrorist violence in furtherance of particular beliefs;
 - b) Seek to provoke others to terrorist acts;
 - c) Encourage other serious criminal activity or seek to provoke others to serious criminal acts;
 - d) Foster hatred which might lead to inter-community violence in the UK.

There is no such thing as a "typical extremist": those who become involved in extremist actions come from a range of backgrounds and experiences, and most individuals, even those who hold radical views, do not become engaged in violent extremist activity.

Learners can become susceptible to radicalisation through a range of personal, social and environmental factors; it is known that violent extremists target and exploit vulnerabilities in individuals to drive a wedge between them and their families and communities. Therefore, staff must be able to recognise those vulnerabilities.

Indicators of vulnerability include:

- Identity Crisis – the person is distanced from their cultural/religious heritage and experiences discomfort about their place in society;
- Personal Crisis – the person may be experiencing family tensions, a sense of isolation, and low self-esteem, they may have dissociated from their existing friendship group and become involved with a new and different group of friends, they may be searching for answers to questions about identity, faith and belonging;
- Personal Circumstances – migration, local community tensions, and events affecting the person's country or region of origin may contribute to a sense of grievance that is triggered by personal experience of racism or discrimination or aspects of Government policy;
- Unmet Aspirations – the person may have perceptions of injustice, a feeling of failure, rejection of civic life;
- Experiences of Criminality – which may include involvement with criminal groups, imprisonment, and poor resettlement/reintegration;
- Learning Support Needs – learners may experience difficulties with social interaction, empathy with others, understanding the consequences of their actions and awareness of the motivations of others.

This list is not exhaustive, nor does it mean that all people experiencing the above are at risk of radicalisation for the purposes of violent extremism.

Prevent Policy

More critical risk factors could include:

- Being in contact with extremist recruiters;
- Accessing violent extremist websites, especially those with a social networking element;
- Possessing or accessing violent extremist literature;
- Using extremist narratives and a global ideology to explain personal disadvantage;
- Justifying the use of violence to solve societal issues;
- Joining or seeking to join extremist organisations;
- Significant changes to appearance and/or behaviour;
- Experiencing a high level of social isolation resulting in issues of identity crisis and/or personal Crisis.

Offshore Staff Considerations

Step Ahead recognises that offshore, remote and overseas staff may face additional challenges in accessing safeguarding support. The following arrangements apply to ensure consistent practice across all locations:

- Reporting concerns - Offshore staff must report any safeguarding or radicalisation concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) as the primary point of contact, regardless of location.
- Emergency situations - Where there is an immediate risk to life or a crime in progress, staff should contact local emergency services in their country of residence and inform the DSL as soon as possible.
- Access to support - Where time zone differences or availability restrict access to the DSL, an alternative safeguarding contact or escalation route will be provided.
- Legal and safeguarding frameworks - All staff, including those based overseas, must follow UK safeguarding principles and the Prevent Duty. Where local requirements differ, guidance should be sought from the DSL.
- Data protection - Safeguarding information must be recorded and shared securely in line with UK data protection requirements using approved systems.
- Training and support - Offshore staff will continue to receive safeguarding training, refresher updates, and access to guidance when managing concerns remotely.

Training

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will attend training courses as necessary; at least every two years, this will include training on extremism and radicalisation and its safeguarding implications.

All staff, including offshore, remote, hybrid and overseas staff, will receive training on The Prevent Duty and its context within safeguarding during their company induction which will be refreshed annually.

Recruitment

The arrangements for recruiting all staff to the company include but are not be limited to:

Prevent Policy

- Ensuring that DBS checks are always made at the appropriate level;
- That references are always received and checked; and
- That we complete and maintain a single central record of such vetting checks.


We will apply safer recruitment best practice principles and sound employment practice in general and, in doing so, will deny opportunities for inappropriate recruitment.

We will be alert to the possibility that persons may seek to gain positions within our organisation to unduly influence our company character and ethos. In addition, we are aware that such persons may seek to limit the opportunities for our learners, thereby rendering them vulnerable to extremist views and radicalisation as a consequence.

By adhering to safer recruitment best practice techniques and ensuring that there is an ongoing culture of vigilance within our organisation, we will minimise the opportunities for extremist views to prevail.

RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Grievance Procedure
- Safeguarding Policy
- Modern Slavery Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

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