



Guidance for Working with Children and Young People who are vulnerable to the messages of Radicalisation and Extremism

London Borough of Merton

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1. Introduction

The current threat from terrorism and extremism in the UK is real and severe and can involve the exploitation of vulnerable people including children and young people. This can include involving them in extremist activity in the UK or abroad.

This guidance has been developed in the context of the Government's overarching counter-terrorism strategy Contest and the Prevent strategy which was developed in 2011 to respond to the threat of extremist activity. It has been further informed by the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015, which places the Prevent programme on a statutory footing, Working Together 2015 and by the new inspection frameworks for schools, academies and HE and FE. This guidance has been developed in the context of Pan London Child Protection Protocols for safeguarding to ensure that our responses to these issues are aligned with good and best practice in safeguarding vulnerable children and young people. The document has been developed by a task and finish group of Merton Safeguarding Children Board in early 2015.

2. Definitions

These definitions are taken from the HM Government Prevent Strategy 2011.

Radicalisation is defined as the process by which people come to support terrorism and extremism and, in some cases, to then participate on terrorist activity.

Extremism is 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. We also include in our definition of extremism calls for the death of members of the armed forces.

3. National guidance and strategies

Prevent is the national Government strategy to respond to the challenge of extremism and prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. It is part of a broader counter terrorism strategy known as Contest. The Counter Terrorism and Security Act has recently been passed, which places the Prevent programme on a statutory footing. The aim of the Prevent strategy is to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. The strategy sets three objectives:

- **Ideology:** challenging the ideology that supports terrorism and those who promote it;
- **Individuals:** protecting people being drawn into terrorism and ensure that they are given appropriate advice and support; and
- **Institutions:** supporting sectors and institutions where there are risks of radicalisation.

Channel is a key element of the Prevent strategy and is a multi-agency approach to protect people at risk from radicalisation. Channel uses existing collaboration between local authorities, statutory partners, as reflected on the Safeguarding Board: schools; health, police, youth offending services, youth services, children's social care and education. The partners are required to:

- Identify individuals at risk of being drawn into terrorism;
- Assess the nature and extent of that risk; and
- Develop the most appropriate support plan for the individuals concerned¹

Channel is about safeguarding children, young people and adults from being drawn into committing terrorist related activity. It is about early identification, intervention and prevention to protect and divert people away from the risk they face before illegality occurs.

4. The Merton Context

The Crime and Disorder Partnership (Safer Merton) chaired by the Chief Executive and Borough Police Commander take overall responsibility at partnership level to deliver an appropriate response to support Prevent. Within the Council, the Director of Environment and Regeneration leads at Director level for the Council and our approach to Prevent is delivered through all departments.

The Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services have a range of statutory duties in relation to children's safeguarding which extend across the Prevent agenda.

The MSCB takes the lead in relation to the safeguarding and well being of children and young people with regard to the Prevent and Channel strategy.

There are specific requirements on schools and Further and Higher Education institutions.

The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 places a duty on local authorities to establish Channel Panels to assess risks and to ensure that support is provided to individuals identified as being vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. The Channel process is a referral process and responding to identified risk and providing appropriate support. As such it is similar to the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) or Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) or Offender Management Panel (OMP). It is vital that the Channel process is informed by good and best practice with regard to safeguarding vulnerable children and adults and has appropriate expertise at panel with reporting to the relevant safeguarding boards.

Working Together to Safeguard Children (WT2015)

WT2015 identifies exposure to, or involvement with, groups, individuals who condone violence as a means to a political end as a particular risk for some children and requires that all children and young people's partnerships should have an agreed process in place for safeguarding vulnerable individuals, including children's, transition and adults' services. The guidance also requires local authorities to establish Channel Panels to assess and support individuals vulnerable to

¹ See WT2015. Paragraph 28, HM Government 2015

radicalisation and extremism. Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) and local authorities should ensure they are informed of the particular risks in their area.

Within the London Borough of Merton, there is a Prevent Multi-Agency Partnership Board that is responsible for coordinating work on this agenda. The Channel process is established in Merton; this consists of a referral process and processes for responding to identified risk and need, and the provision of appropriate support. For more detail see “**Channel: Protecting Vulnerable People from being drawn into terrorism; A guide for local partnerships**” www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications.counter-terrorisim/prevent/channel. Channel referrals should therefore be prioritised by the local authority and other statutory partners in all their work to safeguard vulnerable individuals. Channel should be considered alongside other early intervention measures such as work undertaken to support and divert young people from anti-social behaviour, gangs or drugs.

Awareness of Prevent and an understanding of the risks it is intended to address are both vital. Professionals can help to identify, and to refer to the relevant agencies, children whose behaviour suggests that they are being drawn into terrorism or extremism. Schools can help to protect children from extremist and violent views in the same ways that they help to safeguard children from drugs, gang violence or alcohol. Schools’ work on Prevent needs to be seen in this context. The purpose must be to protect children from harm and to ensure that they are taught in a way that is consistent with the law and our values.

All organisations should have an awareness of the prevent agenda and the various forms radicalisation may take, in being able to recognise signs and indicators of concern and respond appropriately. Workshops to Raise the Awareness of Prevent (WRAP), and further awareness training is being delivered across many organisations in Merton.

5. Understanding and Recognising Risks and Vulnerabilities of Radicalisation

Principles

A **child** is defined in the *Children Acts* of 1989 and 2004 as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday.

Children and young people can be drawn into violence or they can be exposed to the messages of extremist groups by many means. These can include exposure through the influence of family members or friends and/or direct contact with extremist groups and organisations or, increasingly, through the internet. This can put a young person at risk of being drawn into criminal activity and has the potential to cause **significant harm**. Children and young people are vulnerable to exposure to, or involvement with, groups or individuals who advocate violence as a means to a political or ideological end. Examples of extremist causes that have used violence to achieve their ends include animal rights, the far right, internal terrorist and international terrorist organisations.

Most individuals, even those who hold radical views, do not become involved in extremism. Numerous factors can contribute to and influence the range of

behaviours that are defined as extremism. It is important to consider these factors in order to develop an understanding of the issue. It is also necessary to understand those factors that build resilience and protect individuals from engaging in violent extremist activity.

Safeguarding children and young people from radicalisation is no different from safeguarding them from other forms of harm. Indicators for vulnerability to radicalisation are the same as those you are already familiar with:

- family tensions
- a sense of isolation
- migration
- distance from cultural heritage
- experience of racism or discrimination
- feeling of failure etc.

Those in the process of being radicalised may become involved with a new group of friends, search for answers to questions about identity, faith and belonging, possess extremist literature or advocate violent actions, change their behaviour and language, or may seek to recruit others to an extremist ideology.

It is important to note, that children and young people experiencing these situations or displaying these behaviours are not necessarily showing signs of being radicalised. There could be many other reasons for the behaviour including alcohol or drug abuse, family breakdown, domestic abuse, bullying, etc., or even something less worrying.

It is important to be cautious in assessing these factors, to avoid inappropriately labelling or stigmatising individuals because they possess a characteristic or fit a specific profile. It is vital that all professionals who have contact with vulnerable individuals are able to recognise those vulnerabilities and help to increase safe choices.

The risk of radicalisation is the product of a number of factors and identifying this risk requires that practitioners exercise their professional judgement, seeking further advice as necessary. It may be combined with other vulnerabilities or may be the only risk identified.

Some children may be at risk due to living with or being in direct contact with known extremists. Such children may be identified by the police or through MAPPA processes.

6. Vulnerability / Risk Indicators

Please note, the following lists are not exhaustive and all or none may be present in individual cases of concern. Nor does it mean that vulnerable people / young people experiencing these factors are automatically at risk of exploitation for the purposes of extremism. The accepted view is that a complex relationship between the various aspects of an individual's identity determines their vulnerability to extremism. Over-simplified assessments based upon demographics and poverty indicators have

consistently proven to increase victimisation, fail to identify vulnerabilities and, in some cases, increase the ability of extremists to exploit, operate and recruit.

There is no such thing as a 'typical extremist' and those involved in extremism come from a range of backgrounds and experiences. The following indicators have been provided to support professionals to understand and identify factors that may suggest a child, young person or their family may be vulnerable to or be involved with extremism.

Vulnerability

- **Identity Crisis** - Distance from cultural/religious heritage and uncomfortable with their place in the society around them
- **Personal Crisis** – Family tensions; sense of isolation; adolescence; low self-esteem; disassociating from existing friendship group and becoming involved with a new and different group of friends; searching for answers to questions about identity, faith and belonging
- **Personal Circumstances** – Migration; local community tensions; events affecting country or region of origin; alienation from UK values; having a sense of grievance that is triggered by personal experience of racism or discrimination or aspects of Government policy
- **Unmet Aspirations** – Perceptions of injustice; feeling of failure; rejection of civic life
- **Criminality** – Experiences of imprisonment; poor resettlement/reintegration, previous involvement with criminal groups

Access to extremism / extremist influences

- Is there reason to believe that the child/young person associates with those known to be involved in extremism - either because they associate directly with known individuals or because they frequent key locations where these individuals are known to operate? (e.g. the child/young person is the partner, spouse, friend or family member of someone believed to be linked with extremist activity)
- Is there evidence to suggest that the child/young person are accessing the internet for the purpose of extremist activity? (e.g. use of closed network groups, access to or distribution of extremist material, contact associates covertly via Skype, email etc.)
- Is there reason to believe that the child/young person has been or is likely to be involved with extremist / military training camps/locations?
- Is the child/young person known to have possessed or is actively seeking to possess and/or distribute extremist literature/other media material likely to incite racial/religious hatred or acts of violence?
- Does the child/young person sympathise with, or support illegal/illicit groups e.g. propaganda distribution, fundraising and attendance at meetings?
- Does the child/young person support groups with links to extremist activity but not illegal/illicit e.g. propaganda distribution, fundraising and attendance at meetings?

Experiences, Behaviours and Influences

- Has the child/young person encountered peer, social, family or faith group rejection?
- Is there evidence of extremist ideological, political or religious influence on the child/young person from within or outside UK?
- Have international events in areas of conflict and civil unrest had a personal impact on the child/young person resulting in a noticeable change in behaviour? It is important to recognise that many people may be emotionally affected by the plight of what is happening in areas of conflict (e.g. images of children dying); it is also important to differentiate these children/young people from those that sympathise with or support extremist activity.
- Has there been a significant shift in the child/young person's behaviour or outward appearance that suggests a new social / political or religious influence?
- Has the child/young person come into conflict with family over religious beliefs, lifestyle or dress choices?
- Does the child/young person vocally support terrorist attacks; either verbally or in their written work?
- Has the child/young person witnessed or been the perpetrator/victim of racial or religious hate crime or sectarianism?

Travel

- Is there a pattern of regular or extended travel within the UK, with other evidence to suggest this is for purposes of extremist training or activity?
- Has the child/young person travelled for extended periods of time to international locations known to be associated with extremism?
- Has the child/young person employed any methods to disguise their true identity? Has the child/young person used documents or cover to support this?

Social Factors

- Does the child/young person have experience of poverty, disadvantage, discrimination or social exclusion?
- Does the child/young person experience a lack of meaningful employment appropriate to their skills?
- Does the child/young person display a lack of affinity or understanding for others, or social isolation from peer groups?
- Does the child/young person demonstrate identity conflict and confusion normally associated with youth development?
- Does the child/young person have any learning difficulties or mental health support needs?
- Does the child/young person demonstrate a simplistic or flawed understanding of religion or politics?
- Does the child/young person have a history of crime, including episodes in prison?
- Is the child/young person a foreign national, refugee or awaiting a decision on their immigration/national status?
- Does the child/young person have insecure, conflicted or absent family relationships?
- Has the child/young person experienced any trauma in their lives, particularly any trauma associated with war or sectarian conflict?

- Is there evidence that a significant adult or other in the child/young person's life has extremist view or sympathies?

More critical risk factors could include:-

- Being in contact with extremist recruiters
- Articulating support for extremist causes or leaders
- Accessing extremist websites, especially those with a social networking element
- Possessing extremist literature
- Using extremist narratives and a global ideology to explain personal disadvantage
- Justifying the use of violence to solve societal issues
- Joining extremist organisations
- Significant changes to appearance and/or behaviour

7. Referral and intervention process

The intervention process consists of the local "Channel" process and the Merton Children and Young People Well-Being Model (hereafter, MWBM).

Professionals working with children and young people should use the "Vulnerability Risk Indicators" in section 6 and the "Appropriate, Proportionate Responses and Intervention Model" in Appendix (1) to assist them in identifying and responding to concerns about children/young people who may be vulnerable to radicalisation or being drawn into violent extremist activity.

Early identification of support required should result in responses being made through universal service provision or where concerns are identified through targeted interventions. Some concerns which are identified may have a security dimension to them. For this reason, it is important that liaison with the police forms an early part of all investigations.

MASH referral Routes

Where there are specific Child Protection concerns regarding a child/young person who may be at risk of significant harm as a result of radicalisation or extremism a telephone referral is immediately made to Merton MASH at Specialist MWBM Level 3, which will be supported by then submitting a dedicated Safeguarding Children Referral Form to Merton Mash within 24 hours. Prevent referrals will be forwarded to the Metropolitan Police Counter Terrorism Command 'Prevent and Engagement' Officer for Wandsworth, Merton and Sutton; who will assess each referral and make a judgment regarding whether or not a Channel Panel meeting is required. MASH will inform referrers regarding the outcome of each referral.

The named or designated safeguarding professional, in discussion with other professionals as appropriate, will need to determine the most appropriate level and type of support to offer the child/young person and their family:

Early discussion with the local designated safeguarding professional to decide if a referral to Channel is required, or if services are sufficient to manage identified concerns.

In a few cases the concerns around the child/young person may go beyond being vulnerable to extremism to concerns to involvement in supporting or following extremist behaviour. This should result in responses at **Tier 3**.

Tier 1 - Universal Provision	Children and Young People Well-Being Model Level 1 (Universal)
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Wherever possible the response should be appropriately and proportionately provided from within the normal range of universal provision of the organisation working with other local agencies and partners. Responses could include curriculum provision, additional tutoring or mentoring, additional activities within and out of school, family support; (needs met through universal service provision).

Tier 2- Enhanced Interventions	Children and Young People Well-Being Model Level 2 Vulnerable (CASA)
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Where a higher level of targeted and multi-agency response is indicated a formal multi-agency assessment should be conducted. Where concerns are identified in respect of potential signs of radicalisation which indicate the child/young person is vulnerable the person raising the concerns should discuss their concerns with the Channel police lead who will decide if a referral to channel is required or if services at tier 2 are sufficient to manage concerns.

For the referral to be accepted the review of available information must show a concern that the child/young person is vulnerable to radicalisation. The Channel police lead should liaise closely with the Single Access Point. There should be a discussion with MASH, with agreement from and parents/carers, in meeting to address the child/young person's identified needs.

Tier 3 – Specialist Interventions	Children and Young People Well-Being Model Level 3
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Where there is an identified risk/potential risk that a child/young person may be involved/potentially involved in supporting or following extremism, further investigation by the police will be required, prior to other assessments and interventions.

Any professional who identifies such concerns, for example, as a result of observed behaviour or reports of conversations to suggest the child/young person supports terrorism and/or extremism, must report these concerns to the named or designated safeguarding professional in their organisation or agency.

The named or designated safeguarding professional should consider whether a situation may be so serious that an emergency response is required. Professionals should exercise professional judgement and common sense to identify whether an emergency situation applies. Examples in relation to extremism are expected to be very rare but would apply when there is information that a violent act is imminent, or where weapons or other materials may be in the possession of a young person, another member of their family or within the community. **In this situation, a 999 call should be made.**

Where a child/young person is thought to be in need or at risk of significant harm, and/or where investigations need to be carried out (even though parental consent is withheld), a referral to Children's Services should be made. However, it should be recognised that concerns of this nature in relation to violent extremism are most likely to require a police investigation (as part of Channel) in the first instance. The person/agency raising the concern should make a referral to MASH submitting a dedicated [Safeguarding Children Referral Form](#) to Merton Mash within 24 hours.

The multi-agency assessment will involve the Police in the making of decisions about the appropriate response. All cases at this level will be reported to Children's Services.

Some children/young people who are at risk of being drawn into extremist activity may pose a risk to others. There must not be a conflict between the welfare needs of the child/young person and the victim. Agencies have a duty to safeguard both.

Channel Referral Process.

Some concerns which are identified may have a security dimension to them. For this reason, it is important that liaison with the police forms an early part of all investigations. The Metropolitan Police Counter Terrorism Command, 'Prevent and Engagement' Officer and MASH will carry out an initial assessment and, if appropriate, set up a multi-agency meeting to agree actions for supporting the individual. If it is deemed that there are no concerns about radicalisation, support will be arranged for the individual through other means such as an Early Help Assessment, or through Children's Services or another organisation.

Remember that any information you give to the police at this stage will be investigated in the pre-criminal space. It does not assume that any criminal activity has taken place and the police will be looking to support rather than arrest.

For all types of response, a clear plan must be developed and documented to set out how the needs of the child will be met, and who will have responsibility for doing this. MSCB partners have developed a referral form for the Channel Process where cases are required to be discussed at a multi-agency level. Awareness training and promotion of Channel within all organisations will explain how to make a referral and the local Channel coordinator can also advise on how the referral can be made if required.

8. The Channel Referral process (see Appendix 2) should be used to guide the named or designated safeguarding professional in making the referral.

The Channel Process will assess each new referral to determine where multi-agency response, co-ordination and review are beneficial. Also at each meeting, all Channel cases will be reviewed to determine if services are effective in safeguarding the child or young person and reducing the risks of radicalisation and extremism. All services, provided at any tier, will have a responsibility to regularly report on progress being made. The Channel Coordinator, on behalf of the chair, will co-ordinate responses and attendance at the required meetings.

Reviews must be carried out at the agreed intervals, or sooner if a change in circumstances indicates this is appropriate. All reviews should be documented appropriately and records retained by services and agencies working with the child or young person. Unless it is deemed appropriate to end the agreed response, each review meeting should agree dates of further reviews, along with the person responsible for convening the review meeting and the people who should be involved in this.

All those involved with the child or young person should continue to monitor the situation, and consider modifying the response if circumstances change. If the risk is perceived to diminish, it may be appropriate to end the response. However, if the risk is perceived to increase, an escalation of the response may be required and may take the case outside of the 'Prevent' strand of the CONTEST strategy, if this does happen, early contact with the Channel Coordinator is key.

Where the Channel intervention ends it may be that the child or young person still has outstanding needs being met through the Early Help, Child In Need, Child Protection or Youth Offending Service processes. These processes should continue to be reviewed until all needs are met. Every Channel case that has ended will be reviewed 6-12 months after exiting the process to ensure there are no new risks or intelligence that require a response.

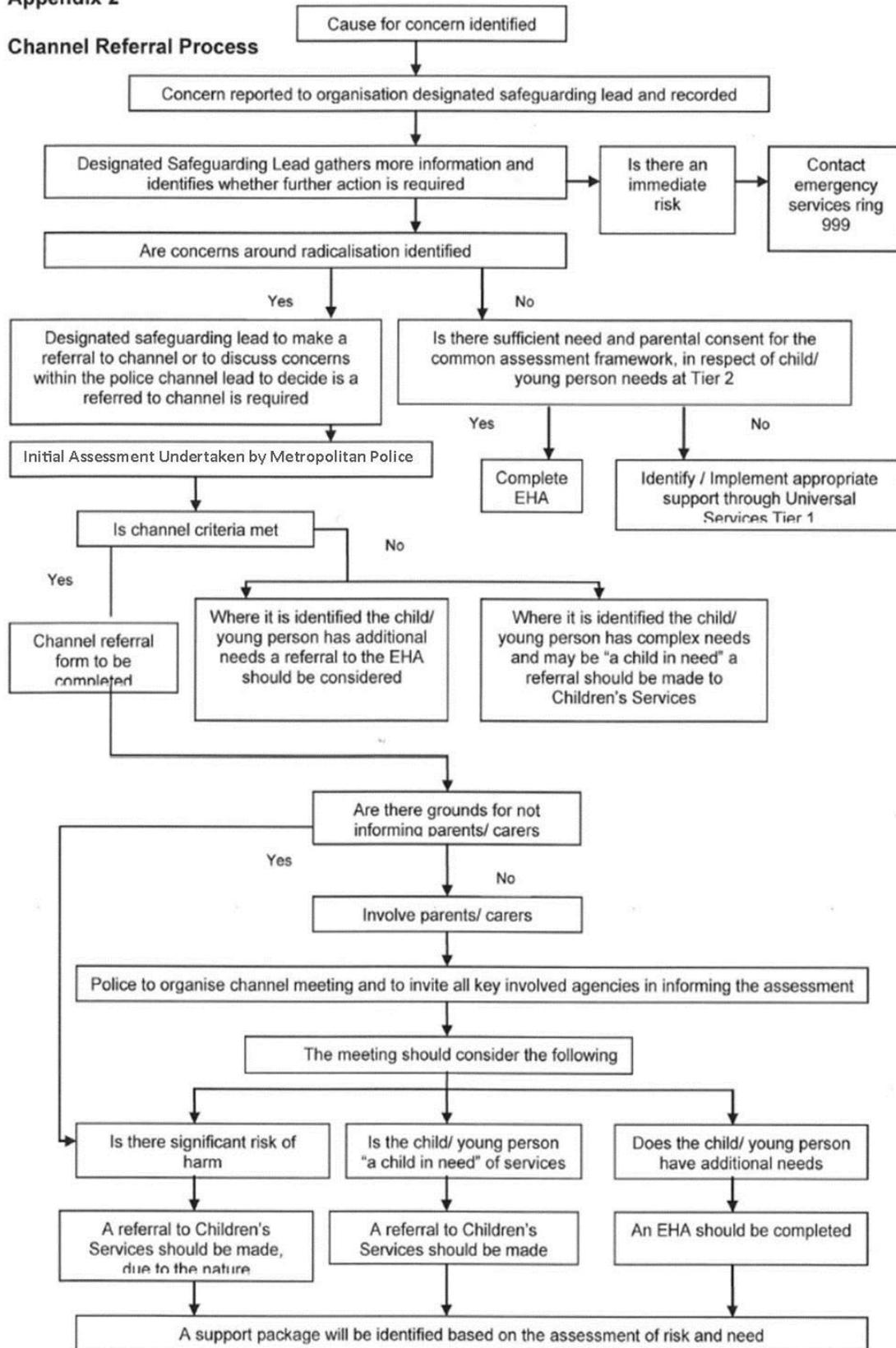
Where new risks or intelligence suggest a repeat of concerns the assessment process can be restarted at any point. Where agencies become aware of new or repeat risks they should not wait for the 6-12 month review, and must discuss the concerns immediately with the Prevent Channel Coordinator.

9. Appendix 1
Appropriate, proportionate responses and interventions

<p>SPECIALIST INTERVENTIONS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE ALREADY ENGAGED IN OR LINKED TO EXTREME VIOLENCE</p>	<p>Managing Risks Intensive Family Support Programmes; Family Therapy / Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) programmes; Youth Offending Team(YOT); Rapid Response support Police Prevent team support; Specialist intervention programmes Intervention Panels</p>
<p>TARGETED WORK WITH THOSE AT RISK</p>	<p>Pupil Support and Challenge Individual Early Help Assessment (EHA) action plan; Youth Inclusion Support Panel (YISP) crime prevention programmes; Support from school; attached police officer; Formal behaviour support / anger management programmes</p>
<p>UNIVERSAL PROVISION</p>	<p>The Curriculum: Work on anti-violence addressed throughout curriculum; Focussed educational programmes; Citizenship programmes; Open discussion and debate, religious education, inter-faith initiatives, exploring British values.</p> <p>The Extended Curriculum: Positive out of school hours programmes; Youth clubs and holiday programmes; Increased adult support, supervision and encouragement; Parenting programmes.</p> <p>Teaching and Learning Styles and Pedagogy: Pastoral support; Attendance support; Behaviour support / anger management work in school; Positive buddying programmes; 1 to 1 or group counselling; Community cohesion programmes.</p> <p>Learning, social and emotional skills: Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning; Anti-bullying work</p> <p>Support from Partner Organisations: Schools police officer work on safety, workforce training risk and crime prevention; Links with relevant voluntary or religious organisations.</p>

Appendix 2

Channel Referral Process



Appendix 3: Stages within the Channel Process

