Extremism and Radicalisation – Guidance for Staff

Protecting the public is a key role of the Prison Service. We take appropriate action to prevent prisoners from engaging in criminal activity whilst in prison.

We know you are already used to monitoring prisoners for criminal or dangerous behaviour, for example looking for suspicious associations, gang membership, bullying or racism.

We also need you to be on the look out for extremists who might be looking to use their time in prison either to plan criminal acts or influence vulnerable or suggestible fellow prisoners at times of crisis in their lives.

Extremist views are not, of course, in themselves going to lead to violence but may be a warning sign to be alert to.

The Government judges the greatest threat to the UK at this time to be from Al Qaeda inspired extremists. This must not be confused with the Islamic faith. Islam is one of the major world religions. It is based on the Unity/Oneness of God and tolerance towards all mankind. It is one of the three great Monotheistic Religions. The others are Judaism and Christianity.

Islam means ‘Peace’, and complete submission to the will of God. A Muslim is ‘one who spreads peace.’

There is no suggestion that legitimate expressions of faith are in any way indicative of radicalisation or extremism. We respect all faiths and we will continue to facilitate the variety of faiths practised in our prisons. Faith can play a positive role in the lives and rehabilitation of prisoners.

Muslim chaplains are the source of specific advice on Islam within prisons.

What do we mean by extremism and radicalisation?

**Radicalisation** – process by which experiences and events in a person’s life cause them to support or engage in violence/illegal conduct to resolve perceived grievances.

**Extremist prisoners** – prisoners allied to a group that spreads radical views and justifies the use of violence/illegal conduct in pursuit of its objectives.

Sources of further information:

If you need more information you should speak to:

- Your security department
- A member of your SMT
- Your Chaplaincy team/ Muslim chaplain
- Your Race Equality Officer (REO) or other members of your Race Equality Action Team (REAT)
- The Extremism Unit at Cleland House
- We are providing specific training on handling intelligence relating to extremism and radicalisation to key staff – e.g. Deputy Governors, Security Staff and Race Equality Officers to allow them to help you.

**Far Right Wing activists** - commit criminal activity motivated by a political or cultural viewpoint which includes any or all of the following: extreme nationalism, racialism, fascism and neo-nazism.

**Al Qaeda inspired extremists** - seek to justify their violence by literal, distorted and unrepresentative interpretation of Islamic texts to advocate and justify terrorism/illegal conduct to try and achieve fundamental change in society. This is wholly different from the proper expression of Islamic faith and worship.

Groups currently categorised as extremist include:

- **Dissident Irish Republicans** - members of republican groups that reject the Belfast Agreement and political engagement with the British or Irish Governments on any subject other than a ‘united Ireland’, and seek to continue a terrorist campaign against British interests.

- **Ulster Loyalists** - Loyalist paramilitarism is the violent manifestation of opposition to a ‘united Ireland’, or the perceived undue influence of the Republic of Ireland in the affairs of Northern Ireland.

- **Animal Rights Extremists** - are those who plan or engage in any unlawful act with the intent to disrupt lawful business, intimidate or harass, motivated by opposition to the perceived exploitation of animals.

- **Anarchists** - act towards the destruction of statehood. Most self-proclaimed ‘anarchists’ are not anarchists in the true sense of the word. Anarchist activists tend towards the overthrow of parliamentary democracy or the global economy by political, industrial or violent means. This could include acts of politically inspired terrorism.
Extremism and Radicalisation Guidance for Staff

What do we need you to look out for?

We need you to use your operational experience to keep an eye out for changes in prisoners’ behaviour, attitudes or relationships which might be due to extremism or radicalisation.

Where you identify this we want you to submit a Security Information Report (SIR) recording your concerns.

Identifying evidence of extremism or radicalisation can be difficult. To help the following are examples of some of the things to look out for. We also suggest other sources of help and advice. If you are in doubt as to whether to submit an SIR you should do so. We would rather have too many than miss the one that with the benefit of hindsight was important.

Examples

1. Presentation
   - Challenges at communal prayers
   - Disrespect towards the Muslim Chaplain
   - Attempts to usurp the Muslim Chaplain’s role

2. Use of language
   - Support for radical extremist causes or leaders
   - Approval for terrorist acts
   - Contempt/intolerance of other Muslim prisoners who do not share in their interpretation of Islam
   - Contempt/intolerance of non-Muslims
   - Expressions of anti-Western sentiment

3. Relationships
   - Contacts with people involved or suspected of involvement with extremist activity
   - Telephone contacts, letters
   - Exchange of material with other prisoners
   - Use of social media

4. Material
   - Books, posters, leaflets etc.
   - Documents received through correspondence
   - Material with a religious/political theme

5. Behaviour
   - Involvement in bullying, intimidation or gangs allied to extremism or radicalisation
   - Targeting vulnerable prisoners
   - Withdrawal from ‘normal’ prison life

6. Violence
   - Any act of violence with elements of extremism or radicalisation

7. Other
   - Other acts of extremism/radicalisation not covered above

Promote Race Equality

The Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 requires you to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination;
- Promote equality of opportunity;
- Promote good relations between people of different racial groups.

It is important not to confuse race and religion - if in doubt please refer to PSO 2800, your REO or your REAT lead.