Section 4

Understanding Radicalisation and Exploitation

This section explains the processes around radicalisation, exploitation and terrorism.

4. Understanding Radicalisation and Exploitation

Introduction

4.1 There is no single profile of a person who is likely to become involved in terrorist-related activity, or single indicator of when a person might move to support extremism. Also, there is no universally accepted view of why vulnerable individuals might become involved in such activities.

4.2 An increasing body of information indicates that factors thought to relate to personal experiences of vulnerable individuals affect the way in which they relate to their personal environment and may make them susceptible to exploitation by those seeking to radicalise, potentially leading to their supporting terrorist activities.

4.3 Vulnerable individuals who may be susceptible to radicalisation could be patients, carers and / or staff. Recent case studies of incidents highlight that factors such as a negative change in a person's behaviour or circumstances may indicate increased vulnerability.

Radicalisation

4.4 Radicalisation is a process. It has no single route or pathway.

4.5 It is generally more common for susceptible individuals to become involved in terrorist-related activity through the influence of others. Vulnerable individuals may be exploited in many ways by radicalisers who target their vulnerability.

4.6 Radicalisers often use a persuasive rationale or narrative and are usually charismatic individuals who are able to attract people to their cause based on a particular interpretation or distortion of history, politics or religion.

4.7 Initial contact may be via:

- Peers, siblings, other family members or acquaintances with the process of radicalisation often being a social one;
- A range of unsupervised environments, such as gyms or cafés;
- In private in individual's homes; and
- The Internet and Social Media.

4.8 Contact with radicalisers is also variable and may be direct i.e. face-to-face, or indirect through the Internet, social networking or other forms of media. More commonly it will be through a combination of the above.

### Use of extremist rationale or 'narrative'

4.8.1 Radicalisers usually attract people to their cause through a persuasive rationale contained within a single narrative (See Glossary, page 35) that has the potential to influence views. Inspiring new recruits, embedding the beliefs of those with established extreme views and/or persuading others of the legitimacy of their cause is the primary objective of those who seek to radicalise vulnerable individuals.

Exploitation

4.9 The factors surrounding vulnerability are many and they are unique to each person. It is increasingly recognised that the personal experiences of vulnerable people affect the way in which they relate to their external environment.

Susceptibility to exploitation

4.9.1 In terms of personal vulnerability, various factors, expressed in the diagram below, may make individuals susceptible to exploitation. None of these are conclusive in themselves, or exclusive of each other. Therefore they should not be considered in isolation but in conjunction with the particular circumstances of the individual and any other signs of radicalisation.

Vulnerability Factors
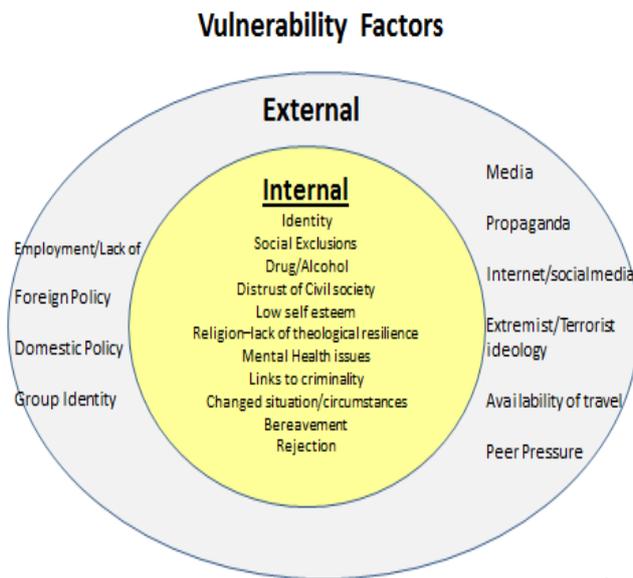
Identity crisis
Young adults exploring issues of identity can feel distant from their parents/family, cultural and religious heritage and

uncomfortable with their place in society around them. Radicalisers exploit this by providing a sense of purpose or feelings of belonging. Where this occurs, it can often manifest itself in a change in a person's behaviour, their circle of friends, the way they interact with others and the way they spend their time.

Personal crisis
This may for example, include significant tensions within the family that produce a sense of injustice within the vulnerable individual and alienation from the traditional certainties of family life.

Personal circumstances
The experience of migration, local tensions or events affecting families in countries of origin may contribute to alienation from UK values and a decision to cause harm to symbols of the community or state.

Adults at risk

4.10 Adults who may be at risk, as defined by the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 and who are:

- Unable to safeguard their own well-being, property, rights or other interests, and
- At risk of harm, and
- Affected by disability, mental disorder, illness or physical or mental infirmity, and / or are
- More vulnerable to being harmed than adults who are not so affected.

Terrorism

4.11 Terrorism is defined as:

an act that endangers or causes serious violence to a person/people and/or damage to property; or seriously interferes with or disrupts an electronic system (see Glossary).

4.12 There are various forms of terrorist activity[6] ranging from 'lone actors'[7] to more organised groups such as Al Qaida. In addition to physical forms of attack, terrorists may also try to access information that may be of use to them, for example by infiltrating an organisation or securing the assistance of an "insider".

4.13 There is no typical profile for a UK-based terrorist. On-going research is contributing to the body of knowledge about how and why individuals become involved with terrorist-related activity; it highlights that the radicalisation process or path to engagement with terrorist-related activity is neither linear nor predictable and the length of time involved can differ greatly, ranging from a few weeks to a number of years.

4.14 The following factors have been found to contribute to vulnerable people joining certain groups that support terrorist-related activity:

- Need to express or act on feelings of anger, grievance or injustice;
- Desire for excitement, comradeship or adventure;
- Fascination with violence, weapons and uniforms;
- Them-and-us thinking;

- Need for identity, meaning and belonging; and,
- Need for status.

4.15 However, it should be noted that even if an individual follows a radicalisation path, it does not necessarily mean that their engagement will result in committing terrorist acts. Along that path there may be opportunities for healthcare staff and / or other professionals to intervene to help protect those who are being exploited and divert them towards positive activities.

4.16 Terrorism is unlikely to directly affect Health Boards. However, there have been instances when healthcare services have been directly affected by terrorist incidents, such as the Glasgow airport attack (see Appendix 3), which had a significant impact on local hospitals and business continuity. It is also possible that political events in other countries and counter-terrorist operations in the UK may result in community tensions; These in turn may have a subtle impact on NHS staff, particularly those from minority communities, and service delivery.

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[6] See Terrorist Methods
https://www.mi5.gov.uk/home/the-threats/terrorism/terrorist-methods.html
[7] Anders Brevik, Norway, 2011.

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