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Background

Online Radicalisation refers to the process by which an individual is groomed through the online environment to come to support terrorist or extremist ideologies. It is important to consider extremism in the context of the wider spectrum which could include *far-right, environmental, Islamist or animal-rights* extremism.

Online material used in the process may include articles, images, speeches or videos that promote terrorism or encourage violence. As with other forms of grooming, extremists will seek to exploit vulnerabilities in individuals that may include: unmet aspirations, identity crisis, perceived injustice/s or a sense of belonging in order to further their ideological aims.

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Why it matters

Young people may potentially be vulnerable to online radicalisation through their affinity for the online environment and social media when considered alongside

- > Adolescence is a time of change for young people who may be 'finding their place' in the world
- > The ability to question the veracity of information may be less developed, particularly if it has come from someone in a position of perceived knowledge or authority
- > Young people mature at different stages and may not have broader critical thinking skills that are typically developed through maturity and life experience

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Information

Extremist organisations will often make significant use of the facilities the online environment offers. Social media in particular allows such organisations to engage with their target audiences (including young people) on a widespread scale, requiring relatively little cost or expertise. Similar to potential indicators more commonly associated with CSE, signs of radicalisation can be challenging to distinguish from typical adolescent behaviour.

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However, these may include changes in behaviour such as becoming increasingly argumentative, being secretive about or reluctant to discuss their online activity, refusing to listen to different points of view, spending increasing amounts of time online or on their phone, distancing themselves from previous friends or having more than one online identity.

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Young people may be influenced by related online factors which may include the impact of 'filter-bubbles' or 'online echo-chambers' where social media platforms can serve to reinforce a viewpoint through a distorted narrative or one-sided-view of a topic. This can lead to a perception that the extreme narrative is the 'prevailing world view'. Building online resilience in children and young people is important. Developing critical thinking skills such as being able to recognise misinformation, manipulation, false news or bias are increasingly essential lifelong skills for C&YP.

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What to do

Do not be put off by the technology (online radicalisation is grooming) and follow your organisation's safeguarding procedures.

Act proportionately and discuss your concerns with your Safeguarding lead who may make a referral to the Channel programme. Reporting online material can be done through Social Media platforms or via the dedicated [Home Office](#) reporting facility

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Questions to consider

Do my organisation's safeguarding procedures include radicalisation and how to deal with an incident?

Does my organisation have a robust and effective child-centric process to deal with an incident?

Does my organisation have measures to prevent access to extremist online content by C&YP?

Do we make use of supporting resources such as the online safeguarding section of your LSCB's website or the Lancashire [P4S](#) website?

