

# Keeping safe – radicalisation and what it has to do with me

## TEACHER GUIDANCE

You can use this resource to provide a broad overview of **radicalisation** and why your learners need to be aware of it. It is suitable for learners with autism who may be fairly high-functioning and accessing the community independently but have less well-developed social awareness than their neurotypical peers.

The resource also provides a jumping-off point for numerous follow-on activities which will give learners the opportunity to develop and practise their **English skills** including:

### Reading

- Read articles online and extract key points from them

### Writing

- Summarise information gained through reading into slides for a presentation
- Combine visual and written information to present findings to an audience
- Express own views in writing
- Create written material for a specific audience and purpose (e.g. Fake Friends poster)

### Speaking and listening/communicating

- Deliver a presentation to a group
- Contribute ideas in a discussion
- Listen and respond to the ideas of others
- Give simple explanations
- Justify own views in discussions
- Present ideas through role play

## INTRODUCTION

**Many learners with autism will struggle to understand the abstract concept of ‘radicalisation’ and may not see it as having any relevance to them.** Their tendency to take at face value what others say to them, and not suspect other people’s motives, may also make them particularly vulnerable to being led unwittingly into involvement with extremist groups. Some learners with autism may also find it difficult to recognise or articulate their own sense of unease about the actions or relationships they find themselves engaged in.

This resource takes the form of an online presentation which will help learners to

- understand what radicalisation means
- be aware when they are most at risk of exploitation by extremist groups
- recognise key warning signs that they may be being drawn into something ‘dodgy’.

Learners can view the resource online via a phone or tablet. This means you can present it in class but learners can also return to it in their own time and share it at home with family members.

## FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

You can unpack the various different learning points covered by the presentation in a range of different ways. The following is just a small selection of ideas, presented in the order in which the themes appear in the presentation. Some of them are short activities; you may need to address others over a series of sessions.

1. To combat any misconceptions about extremism being associated with a single faction, ask students to research examples of different extremist groups. What sort of views do they hold? Note that they have very different views, but all can be described as 'not acceptable to most people'. Different learner groups could explore different extremist groups and present their findings to the class as a whole.
2. Create a set of images of people of different ages, gender, ethnicity and ask learners to pick out those most at risk of radicalisation. Use this exercise to explain that anyone from anyone of these groups could be radicalised. You could move from this activity to a discussion of genuine risk factors (e.g. people who are isolated, with low self-esteem, experiencing discrimination, affected by a traumatic incident).
3. Ask learners to come up with a list of situations/places where they meet new people - online and face-to-face. In small groups, learners choose one of these actual meeting opportunities, e.g. playing Fortnite online; going to a concert. This will help learners see the relevance of the exercise to their own lives.

Give each group a set of cards with different types of personal data, e.g. name, address, favourite football team, photos of self/family, name of their college, phone number, and ask them to sort them into two piles – Good to share/Not good to share in the context of the meeting opportunity that they have chosen. You could make it more specific by focusing on what's good to share at a first meeting and what might be okay once they've known someone over a longer period.

Discuss their selections. If there are disagreements, encourage learners to articulate their reasons and be prepared, as their teacher, to challenge any flawed thinking about what is safe behaviour and what is not.

4. Reinforce the concept of coercion through role-play. Discuss some of the tactics that coercers use, e.g. blackmail, threats of violence, ostracising, promise of belonging to something exciting, rewards such as money or a new phone. Ask learners to work in pairs to demonstrate through a short piece of role play what it looks like if someone is trying to get you to do something you don't want to do. The experience of having acted it out and observed other people's role plays will help learners grasp what coercion looks like in practice.
5. People with autism or other types of SEND are at particular risk of 'mate crime' – being exploited by people they were misled into thinking were their friends. The exploitation might be financial, physical, emotional, sexual or related to radicalisation. You could help learners to differentiate between real and fake friends by asking them to come up with two sets of descriptors, completing the stems, 'Real friends....' And 'Fake friends....'. You may find ARC's easy-read [Friend or Fake booklet](#) a useful resource to share with learners.