



forum for SEND School DSLs

Share challenges, solutions and good practice related to safeguarding children with SEND

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This forum

- ✓ NOT training. This is about networking & sharing.
- ✓ The quality of the session depends on you – please have cameras and audio on and participate
- ✓ Thematic
- ✓ Half termly
- ✓ Please look after yourselves
- ✓ Notes/Slides – <https://sendforum.lgfl.net>

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SEND DSL Forum

Meeting each half term, this forum is for any DSL who works with SEND pupils either in specialist or mainstream education provision. It offers an opportunity for DSLs to come together, discuss challenges relating to safeguarding children with SEND, share good practice and solutions and to offer peer support.

Each meeting of the SEND DSL Forum will have a theme, so that colleagues can decide if they wish to attend or not.

And the best bit? It's completely free!

[Book now >](#)

Next Forum dates:

- 28th January 2026 - Preventing children with SEND from Radicalisation
- 19th March 2026 - Improving the recognition and response to neglect of children with SEND
- 13th May 2026 - TBC
- 16th June 2026 - TBC

<https://sendforum.lgfl.net>

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Radicalisation: what does the data tell us?

- **8,778** individuals were referred to the Prevent programme - 27% increase
- **36 %** of referrals came from the education sector
- **89%** are male
- **36%** are for 11-15 yr olds, followed by **13%** for 16-17 yr olds
- Referrals for right-wing extremism are up (**21%**)
- **56%** involved individuals with no clear ideology
- Few referrals are made for 'incel'-related extremism (**1%**)

[Home Officer Data, April 2024 and March 2025](#)

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Neurodivergence and Radicalisation



Around one third of referrals involved individuals with an identified mental health need or recorded neurodiversity. Autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) was the most common (14%)

- **No direct causal link** between neurodivergence and radicalisation.
- **No more likely to commit violent acts** than the general population.
- **Certain traits and systemic factors can create specific vulnerabilities** that extremist recruiters exploit

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Findings:



- A proportion of individuals within extremist populations have autism.
- They may follow a different pathway and have different needs than their neurotypical counterparts.

Key areas to consider in the context of extremism engagement:

- Vulnerability, risk and resilience
- How best to support them to reduce risk and encourage disengagement



https://crestresearch.ac.uk/site/assets/files/4840/23-054-01_practitioner_report_autism_and_extremism.pdf

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Neurodivergence and Vulnerability



- **Social Isolation and Belonging:** Difficulties in interpreting social cues can lead to isolation or rejection in mainstream environments. **Extremist groups may offer a "false sense of community"** and social status
- **Cognitive Styles:** Traits like "black and white" thinking, or a strong need for order. **Can be leveraged by groups offering rigid, "logical" ideologies.**
- **Intense Interests:** Hyper-focusing on specific topics. **Recruiters may exploit this by directing a person's interest toward extremist narratives, ideologies, or, in some cases, technical aspects of weapons.**

https://www.educateagainsthate.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/PP-W-SUSSEX-CC-guidance_safeguarding_young_people_with_autism.pdf.pptx-3.pdf

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Autism, Vulnerability and Risk



- **Difficulty understanding others' perspectives** (Theory of Mind) - may lead to **accepting radical views without question**
- **Detail focused** - may **not see the whole picture**
- **Heightened sense of fairness and justice** - **manipulated by narratives that frame issues as deeply unjust**
- **Social naivety** - **harder to detect manipulation or harmful intentions**
- **Literal thinking** - **difficult to interpret hidden motives**
- **Social isolation** - **increase the appeal of belonging to a group or cause**

https://www.educateagainsthate.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/PP-W-SUSSEX-CC-guidance_safeguarding_young_people_with_autism.pdf.pptx-3.pdf

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Online Radicalisation:

Neurodivergent individuals often retreat to online spaces to fulfil social needs. Extremists use these platforms—including gaming chats—to groom vulnerable youth through "**weaponised**" narratives tailored to their interests.

- Struggle to tell the difference **between real friends and people pretending**
- Find it hard to understand other **people's intentions**
- Not realise when someone is trying to **manipulate or take advantage** of them
- Have difficulty understanding the **impact of their actions** on others

https://www.educateagainsthate.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/PP-W-SUSSEX-CC-guidance_safeguarding_young_people_with_autism.pdf.pptx-3.pdf

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Uncovering Lived Experience

Part of how I got involved—my parents were always telling me that I was just rebellious and hateful when really that wasn't really the case... I remember consciously saying, well, if they just think that I'm rebellious and hateful, then I'll just be rebellious and hateful. —Hunter

The only reason that we're divergent and a problem is because we don't fit your box, and we know it. - Robbie

There was a sense in which my autism was valued. Looking back, I'm now realizing they just wanted the benefits of it... It's a deceitful tactic, but I think they mainly preyed on the fact that I felt marginalized. —Avery

<https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/10.1089/aut.2023.0192>

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Preventing engagement in extremism

“...champion **inclusive** environments that recognise autistic individuals’ **skills** and address underlying factors contributing to **disenfranchisement.**”

Acceptance

Purpose

Structure

Community

Addressing neurodivergent needs

<https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/10.1089/aut.2023.0192>

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What can you/do you do in your school to prevent engagement in extremism?

Consider including children with SEND in school life

- Teaching children using social stories about equality and diversity and reiterating that these principles are important throughout general school learning. – AI can help to create these **IF** permitted in your school
- Promoting student voice – regular and diverse methods
- Including all pupils in lunchtime clubs, extra curricular activities etc to help them to feel included, develop a sense of belonging and aspirations.
- Celebrating / recognising cultural / religious events – with a culture of openness to ask and discuss in a supportive environment
- Supporting a successful transition to secondary [Autism Education Trust framework](#)
- [ClickView](#) used to help curate content

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What can you/do you do in your school to prevent engagement in extremism?

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Consider cognitive understanding to help build resilience and critical thinking, including online

- Widgit to communicate
- Social stories
- Use <https://goingtoofar.lgfl.org.uk/send.html> SEND & Inclusion resources to build resilience and critical thinking online
- Outside groups coming in to give training, understanding for students
- Use of quizzes and created activities such as statement sorting and thumbs up and down activities, talk and repeat to get the message across with pupils
- DSL open for concerns and queries
- Pupils are mentors for other pupils and can be approached
- Vocational curriculum including topics around faith, how we get on, understanding difference
- Opportunities to access local community to recognise situations around risk and concept of who to trust
- Discussing current events
- Peerscroller [Peer Tutors Bring PSHE into the 21st Century — YipiyapWorkshop & Plays - ARTS](#)

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What can you/do you do in your school to prevent engagement in extremism?

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Policy - consider having a trauma informed policy around behaviour, suspensions and exclusions

- Promoting quality and respect for differences across all policies including Online Safety policy
- Carry out a Prevent Risk Assessment: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-risk-assessment-templates>
- Open Culture supporting curiosity – importance of not being judgmental
- Ensure AUPs are written/communicated in a way that is explicit and personalised to pupils so that they understand these
- Ensure suspensions/exclusions/pupil behaviour policies do not inadvertently discriminate against SEND pupils and push them towards exploiters

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What can you/do you do in your school to prevent engagement in extremism?

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Consider talking to parents about online safety and radicalisation? Can you share examples of relational approaches?

- Parents' safety awareness posted on the school's website
- Great use of the LGfL Parent Safe resources: <https://parentsafe.lgfl.net/>
- Exercising curiosity and recognising concerns of parents in discussions
- Parent workshops from LA on communication and risks
- Celebrating pupils who embody school values in assembly
- All staff are vigilant on this topic and encouraged parental involvement
- Regular conversations, individual meetings for parents with literacy of learning difficulties
- Visual factsheets
- Cultural events for parents to bring cultural meals in and share

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What can you/do you do in your school to prevent engagement in extremism?

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Consider training and support to staff to identify and manage concerns of radicalisation of SEND children.

- Termly post-outs of prevent issues related to local threats
- Run LGfL's Prevent Spotlights for staff cpd: <https://spotlight.lgfl.net/> (Extremism Vs British Values) and (Never ignoring a concern)
- Run staff training videos and discussions on extremism; <https://counterextremism.lgfl.org.uk/>
- Staff updates in weekly briefings and f2f once a year
- Trigger points, forms and questions for staff understanding
- Awareness - Trying to identify changes in behaviour and changes in dress
- PSHE/RSHE training for ALL staff who deliver it

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What can you/do you do in your school to prevent engagement in extremism?

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Consider using the data from your filtering and monitoring systems to safeguard young people from radicalisation

- DSLs using monitoring to assess risk or concerns and follow up on these as appropriate.
- Explore search term reports on filtering to see what kinds of terms pupils are searching and whether any of these infer risk

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Over to you!

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What can you/do you do in your school to prevent engagement in extremism?

1. Including children with SEND in school life
2. Cognitive understanding
3. Policy
4. Parents
5. Staff training
6. Filtering and monitoring

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Curriculum Resources for SEND and Inclusion **LGfL**
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A practical resource for teachers to empower young people to:

- recognise examples of extremist behaviour and content online
- understand actions which could be identified as criminal activity
- explore techniques used for persuasion and build resilience through critical thinking
- access support from trusted individuals and organisations

goingtoofar.lgfl.net <https://goingtoofar.lgfl.org.uk/send.html>

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Legal or Illegal?

Scenarios to help recognise examples of extremist behaviour online and reflect on implications

goingtoofar.lgfl.net <https://goingtoofar.lgfl.org.uk/send.html>

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Online Safeguarding

sendsafe.lgfl.net



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Word-free picture stories for people with learning disabilities



Each story is co-created with people with lived experience and trialled by people with learning disabilities. Topics include:

- Belonging
- Behaviour
- Feelings
- A Refugee's Story
- Feeling Cross and Sorting It Out
- Surviving Abuse
- Surviving Trauma

- School's Trauma Informed Book Set
- Primary School's PSHE Relationships
- Primary School's PSHE Wellbeing
- Secondary Schools Book Set

<https://www.booksbeyondwords.co.uk/bookshop/lifestyle-and-relationships>



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Support for Parents around Radicalisation

Parental Guidance

Safeguarding autistic children and young people from radicalisation

https://www.educateagainsthate.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/PP-W-SUSSEX-CC-guidance_safeguarding_young_people_with_autism.pdf.pptx-3.pdf



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Working with parents

For teachers to use

safetraining.lgfl.net
relationalpractice.lgfl.net

For parents to use

parentonlinesafety.lgfl.net

parentsafe.lgfl.net



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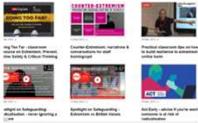
Staff Training and Support





FREE Prevent Training

This FREE training can support you to ensure your school is compliant with the Prevent duty. You will be equipped with practical ideas, strategies guidance to



Prevent Resources

Access cross-curricular resources to build pupil resilience to extremism and promote critical thinking online, with guidance for risk assessment, policy and



Risk Assessment Workshop

This 1-hour workshop provides you with guidance and strategies to evidence and risk assess your school provision



Prevent Staff Quiz: UPDATED Sept 2025

Use this short quiz to assess your staff's understanding of the Prevent duty. Packed with scenario-based questions on



Guidance
Managing risk of radicalisation in your education setting

prevent.lgfl.net

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FREE Webinar





04 Feb 2026

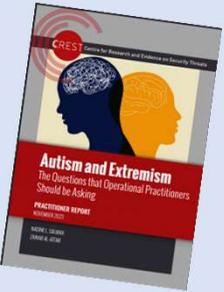
Combatting Extremism in the Classroom - FREE webinar for schools

safetraining.lgfl.net

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Research and Guidance





https://crestresearch.ac.uk/site/assets/files/4840/23-054-01_practitioner_report_autism_and_extremism.pdf



Guidance
Managing risk of radicalisation in your education setting
Updated 7 September 2023

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-prevent-duty-safeguarding-learners-vulnerable-to-radicalisation/managing-risk-of-radicalisation-in-your-education-setting>

Research Article | OPEN ACCESS | Published Online: 9 August 2024

Neurodivergence and the Rabbit Hole of Extremism: Uncovering Lived Experience

Authors: Sachchidi Misra, John Robinson, Christine Welch, Alexander Westohal, Rachel Luffin, Barbara Perry, Victoria Romo, and Melanie Perry

Publication: Autism in Adulthood • <https://doi.org/10.1089/aut.2023.0192>

<https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/10.1089/aut.2023.0192>

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Next Session





for SEND School DSLs
19th MARCH 2026

Improving the recognition and response to neglect of children with SEND

Share challenges, solutions and good practice related to safeguarding children with SEND



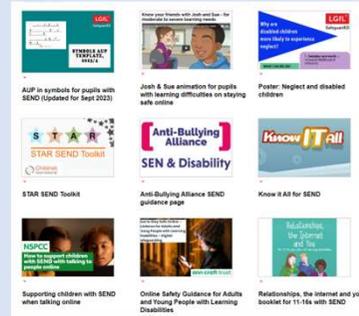
<https://sendforum> / <https://safetraining.lgfl.net>

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Keep in touch



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IncludED site: included.lgfl.net
Resources: saferesources.lgfl.net
Training: safetraining.lgfl.net
Email: safeguarding@lgfl.net



<https://sendsafe.lgfl.net>