

SANDWELL PREVENT TEAM NEWSLETTER

Prevent & COVID-19

Hi everyone, and welcome to August's edition of our newsletter. We hope that you are all keeping safe and well. We continue to be available for support and keep you up to date for key information and guidance in relation to Prevent. Please do contact us for any queries...

You will be aware that Sandwell has had a rise in COVID-19 cases recently (reportedly slowing 7/8/20). The advice has remained to be vigilant and follow Sandwell Public Health advice and Government COVID-19 guidance.

As a result of COVID-19 there has been an increasing amount of time spent online and dependence on the use of technology to learn and stay connected. Whilst important, there is also risk of being exposed to a range of disinformation and harm; including the potential of people being influenced/radicalised online. Whilst the risk is rare, it cannot be ignored. Whilst affecting the safety and wellbeing of children, this could also impact on vulnerable adults too. We've chosen to highlight an example of the potential impact of disinformation...

According to the monitoring group 'Tell MAMA' there has been a surge in online activity against Muslims manifesting into real life incidents. The groups director has described incidents against taxi drivers who have been spat at and called terrorists. Online media manipulation is being identified as to what has led to these incidents. One example includes a shared picture of a Mosque in a showing hundreds of worshippers apparently not observing social distancing. In fact, the same gathering from a different angle showed people standing two metres apart.

As children return to school and places become busier, we may see an increase in concerning views or certain changes in behaviour. In particular with peoples online footprint (traceable digital activity) and changes in an individuals attitude. For children, this could be more evident as their online footprint during the day will naturally decrease with them spending more online in the evening. This should be monitored. Any concerning attitudes, language used, and behaviours should initially be explored with the child and then referred in if there are still concerns. Please speak to us before you refer to ensure the response is proportionate and appropriate.

#BlackLivesMatter

This issue has not gone away and continues to be a difficult time for many of our communities. We support continued efforts to bring about change. Whilst many will be continuing to act peacefully, there may be Extremist individuals/groups trying to exploit protests or with their online activity. Please message us directly or use the links and contact details in this newsletter to report.

Recent news

Pavlo Lapshyn, has been found guilty of making bombs in prison. A former chemical engineer who used substances to form an ingredient to cause an explosion. He admitted to Prison Officers he had been preparing chemicals in his cell at HMP Wakefield. The 32-year old was jailed in 2013 for Terrorism. He killed 82 year old Mohammed Saleem in Birmingham and placed bombs outside 3 Black Country Mosques - Walsall, Wolverhampton and Tipton. A recent trial at Leeds Crown Court found him guilty of making the explosive substance in prison, with the Judge describing Mr Lapshyn as a dangerous but "highly intelligent man" who was unlikely to ever be released.

Met Police officer appears in court

A Metropolitan Police officer has appeared in court charged with being a member of the banned neo-Nazi group National Action, reports BBC News and others. Benjamin Hannam faces one terror offence and two fraud offences for failing to disclose his membership to the far right organisation in his 2017 police application and vetting forms. The 22-year-old was granted bail by Westminster magistrates and will appear at the Old Bailey on 14 August. Mr. Hannam was charged following an investigation by the Met's Counter-Terrorism Unit and was allegedly part of National Action between 2016 and 2018.



[We are live on Twitter!](#)

Please follow us
@preventsandwell for our latest updates and news.



Facts

- Radicalisation is a form of grooming like that of any other (i.e. gangs, sexual exploitation). Radicalisers prey on the vulnerable and aim to lead them into their way of thinking; to get them to think or act in a way that the 'radicaliser' wishes, usually out of character for the individual.
- The term 'Terrorism' comes from the French '*Terrorisme*', noted in English by 1795 as a coinage of the Revolution from the Latin terror definition "great fear, dread, alarm, panic; object of fear, cause of alarm; terrible news".

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) have issued [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Staying Safe Online guidance](#).

DFE Coronavirus helpline: 0800 046 8687

Available: Monday – Friday (8am – 6pm)

Email address: DFE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk

Conspiracy Theories

As the world continues to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic, the emergence of different conspiracy theories around COVID-19 have reinforced a sense of a 'them and us' narrative in certain segments of society. Two communities that have been affected are the Jewish and Muslim communities respectively.

A German Jewish leader has expressed his alarm and concern in relation to the conspiracy theories that are being spread within Germany. Josef Schuster, the president of the Central Council of Jews said, Jews were "increasingly being held responsible for the spread of the virus" and compared the situation to narratives around the plague in the Middle Ages. Schuster talked of how comparisons were being made for those of controlling the pandemic to the treatment of Jewish people under the Nazi regime in World War Two. An example of this is the Anti-Vaxxer (anti-vaccination) "hygiene demonstrations" where yellow stars have been worn similar to those Jews were forced to wear during the 'Third Reich'. Bearing the word 'Ungeimpft' (unvaccinated) instead of Jude (Jew). Their wearers have said that when a vaccination against coronavirus becomes available they will refuse to be inoculated, seeing themselves as victims of a dictatorship. Other demonstrators have been seen dressed in striped clothing, mimicking the uniforms of death camp inmates. And carrying placards with the slogan "Masks Set You Free", a play on the slogan "Arbeit Macht Frei" (work sets you free), which was placed on the entrance gate of Auschwitz, the Nazi death camp where more than 1 million Jews were murdered.

ONLINE SAFETY

[Infotagion](#) provides an up to date fact-checking service using sources from the WHO and UK Government to respond to a range of disinformation themes shared online related to COVID-19.

If you haven't already signed up to the [LGfL newsletter](#), this would be a great addition to keep up to date with online safety. There's a wealth of resources and links for support. You can sign up for information relevant to your role.

Report Suspicious Activity

Counter Terrorism Policing's [ACT campaign](#) is for reporting anything you've seen or heard that could potentially be related to terrorism.

Your actions could save lives...

For information, support or guidance on Prevent in Sandwell, you can email:

Prevent_Inbox@sandwell.gov.uk

If you would like to talk to someone about any queries, concerns, or a referral do not hesitate to make contact with anyone from the Prevent Team:

Strategic Prevent Coordinator: Pardeep_Brar@sandwell.gov.uk

0121 569 4725 / 07500 129348

Prevent Education Officer: Justin_Nixon@sandwell.gov.uk

0121 569 4725 / 07790 396643

TYS Prevent Officer: Sarfraz_Khan@sandwellchildrenstrust.org

0121 569 2322 / 07768 818439