COUNTER TERRORISM POLICING NORTH EAST

Counter Terrorism Policing North East – Counter Terrorism Local Profile 2023

This document is to provide information to Northumbria Police and partner agencies and is not intended for public circulation
**Please note that not all groups discussed in this document are of counter terrorism interest. The document should be viewed in context **

UK Terrorist Threat Level

The threat to the UK is currently **SUBSTANTIAL** [1]. **(As at 31/01/23)**

There are five levels of threat used to give a broad indication of the likelihood of a terrorist attack –

- **LOW** means an attack is highly unlikely
- **MODERATE** means an attack is possible, but not likely
- **SUBSTANTIAL** means an attack is likely
- **SEVERE** means an attack is highly likely
- **CRITICAL** means an attack is highly likely in the near future

These reflect the threat posed by **all** forms of terrorism (irrespective of the ideology which inspires it) and incorporates the threat from **Islamist Terrorism**, **Extreme Right Wing Terrorism** (ERWT) and **Left Wing**, **Anarchist** and **Single Issue Terrorism** (LASIT) in the UK.

Terrorism in the UK [2]

Since March 2017 to November 2022, CT Policing and UK Intelligence Services have disrupted **37 late stage terror plots**.

The CT policing network is currently working on a record number of more than **800 investigations**. These investigations focus on a range of activities, including fundraising, radicalising and preparing acts of terrorism.

Self-Initiated Terrorism

The primary threat to the UK stems from a **Self-Initiated Terrorist (S-IT)** acting in support of an **Islamist** or **Extreme Right Wing** terrorist ideology. A S-IT is a person who threatens or mobilises to violence without material support or personal direction from a terrorist organisation but who may still be influenced or encouraged by the rhetoric or ideology of a group.

There is no common profile of a S-IT and potential S-ITs can conduct attacks as a result of numerous, different personal and situational factors potentially making them difficult to identify and disrupt.

However, S-ITs live within communities with family, friends, neighbours, colleagues, teachers, doctors, online contacts etc. to whom they may intentionally tell, or unintentionally 'leak', their plans. Their identification offers an opportunity for intervention and prevention which highlights the importance of partnership working, information sharing and awareness raising.

Nationally and regionally there have been cases of S-ITs utilizing **low-sophistication methodology** in attacks, (E.g. knives or vehicles) but more complex methods such as the use of an **improvised explosive device** are also possible.

Terrorism Investigations [1]

Nationally, in the **12 months to 30 September 2022** there were **190** terrorist related arrests, the same as in the previous 12-month period.

[2] **54** (28%) of those arrests resulted in a charge, of which **52** were for terrorism-related offences. The majority of charges and convictions were for 'Dissemination of Terrorist Publications which is an offence under Section 2 of the Terrorism Act 2006'

Sex (where known) **–**
- As in previous years, and similar to other types of crime, the vast majority of those arrested for terrorism related activity were **males** (93%).
- **13** of the 190 arrests were **females** (7%), compared to **15** (8%) in the previous year.

Age –
- As in previous years, those '**aged 30 years and over**' accounted for most arrests (43%).
- The age group '**30 years and over**' decreased by 16 arrests, 8% lower than the previous year.
- The largest increase was in the **18 to 20** age group, which increased from 17 to 32.
- Those aged **17 and under**, and **21 to 24**, increased by 6 and 9 arrests respectively.
- 16% were aged **17 and under** (up from 13% in the previous year). While this was the highest proportion seen in an annual period, it was largely a result of falls in arrests of those in older age groups.

For more information, please see the GOV.UK website.

Online Extremism

Online extremism and **radicalisation** are priority areas due to extremist and terrorist organisations having the ability to **disseminate their propaganda globally** and the ease in which those **vulnerable to radicalisation** can access such material. Online extremism plays an increasingly prominent role in the way in which radicalisation occurs.[3]

Government restrictions resulting from **Covid-19** created an environment in which people spent more time online. This increased the risk of being exposed to extremist material and radicalising influences and, as a result, people became more likely to find themselves engaged with extremist activity.

As an example, James OWENS, a 37-year-old neo-Nazi from the West Midlands, is described in the media as "Britain's Most Racist YouTuber". He is said to relentlessly attack Jewish and other ethnic minorities on his online broadcasts but uses coded expressions (rather than mentioning these minority groups by name) reducing his risk of being banned by social media platforms for hate speech [4]. This tactic means he can continue to legitimately spread his Extreme Right Wing rhetoric on a mainstream social media channel and reach global audiences.

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Prevent [1]

Prevent forms part of the Government's wider counter-terrorism strategy, known as **CONTEST**, and aims to **safeguard people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism**.

In the year ending 31 March 2022 –

- There were **6406** referrals to Prevent, an **increase of 30%** compared to the year ending March 2021 (4915).
- This increase is likely to have been driven by the associated impacts of lifting the public health restrictions that were in place to control the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19).
- The Education sector made the highest number of referrals (**2305**; 36%), followed by the Police (**1808;** 28%).

Gender (where specified)– As in previous years, most referrals were **males** (5725; 89%).

Age (where known) – Those aged **15 to 20** again accounted for the largest proportion (1902; 30%) but those aged **under 15** account for an increased proportion of referrals (1829; 29%) compared with year ending March 2021.

Ideology – The category called '**Vulnerability Present But No Ideology or CT risk**' accounted for the largest proportion of referrals (2127; 33%). For the second year running, the number of referrals for **Extreme Right-Wing** radicalisation concerns (1,309; 20%) was greater than referrals for **Islamist** concerns (1,027; 16%).

For more information, please see the GOV.UK website.

Radicalisation – Where to Get Help

Radicalisation is the word commonly used to describe the mental process a person is going through as they get drawn down a dangerous path. If someone is becoming **radicalised** it means they are **displaying extreme views in support of extreme ideologies or beliefs, terrorist groups and activities.**

This can happen to a person of any age but it has been identified that interest in extremism is on the rise, particularly regarding **Extreme Right Wing** terrorism, involving children as young as **13**.

Is someone close to you becoming a stranger? It can be hard to know what to do if you're worried that someone close is expressing extreme views or hatred which could lead to them harming themselves or others.

By working with other organisations the Police can help to protect vulnerable people of all ages from being exploited by extremists through **Prevent**.

The **ACT Early** campaign is aimed as parents, carers, family and friends in raising awareness and vigilance about the signs of radicalisation and seeking advice whenever concerns are raised.

See the **Act Early** website for more information. https://actearly.uk/

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Extreme Right Wing Terrorism (EWRT)

Extreme Right Wing Terrorism is inspired by an ideology which includes **anti-Islam, anti-immigration, anti-government, anti-LGBTQ+** and **white supremacist beliefs**. Nationally and regionally there have been cases of S-ITs with an ERWT ideology utilizing **low-sophistication methodology** in attacks, (E.g. knives or vehicles) but more complex methods such as the use of an **improvised explosive device** are also possible.

Three Key Ideologies driving ERWT Groups [1]

Ideology	Beliefs
Cultural Nationalism (CN)	A belief that "Western Culture" is under threat from mass migration into Europe and the lack of integration by certain ethnic and cultural groups.
White Nationalism (WN)	A belief that mass migration from the "non-white" world, and demographic change, poses a threat to the "White Race" and "Western Culture". Advocates a "White homeland". Classified as Identitarian.
White Supremacism (WS)	A belief that the "White Race" has certain mental and physical characteristics that make it superior to other races. This can also include a belief in the spiritual superiority of the "White Race".

Some WN and WS groups also subscribe to **Satanic** and **occult** beliefs. The 'Order of the Nine Angles' (O9A) is an international, Nazi-Satanist group that has influenced the most extreme UK ERWT groups.

The prominence of **ERWT** has grown in the UK in the last 10 years with five Extreme Right Wing groups (along with their alias name/s) now being proscribed, i.e. banned, under UK legislation (See logos below)

1. National Action — AKA — NS131 — Scottish Dawn — System Resistance Network

2. Sonnenkrieg Division — 3. Feuerkrieg Division — 4. Atomwaffen Division — AKA — National Socialist Order

5. The Base

A major driver of this threat is in the **online space** where ERW terrorists, both within the UK and abroad, are intentionally targeting and attempting to recruit young people through social media platforms, closed chatrooms and even gaming sites.

A full list of proscribed organisations can be found at www.gov.uk/government/publications/proscribed-terror-groups-or-organisations--2

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Islamist Terrorism (IT)

Counter Terrorism Policing is aware that the term 'Islamist' is problematic; and that our use of it can make our Muslim colleagues and communities feel alienated, or marginalised. But we must also recognise that 'Islamist' is the accepted and official terminology in the National Security community, and we will still have to use it in some official documents and communications. In those cases, we want to be clear that when we do use the term we are describing individuals or groups who use a warped interpretation of Islam as their source of authority. Counter Terrorism Policing (CTP) have also committed to being clearer in our communications about the motivation behind acts of terrorism where they are known, so that where possible we will seek to use alternative terminology such as 'inspired by Daesh', or other extremist groups, rather than simply 'Islamist'.

Islamist Terrorism remains the primary threat to the North East and is our most significant area of business.

In the North East, the key ideological influence continues to be from ISIL (also known as ISIS or Daesh) but there is also some support for Al Qaeda. Propaganda encouraging individuals to travel for extremist purposes is a continuing theme.

Nationally and regionally there have been cases of S-ITs with an IT ideology utilizing **low-sophistication methodology** in attacks, (E.g. knives or vehicles) but more complex methods such as the use of an **improvised explosive device** are also possible.

Not all extremist activity is direct attack planning. UK-based Islamist extremists are supporting terrorism by:
• Radicalising individuals to believe in the legitimacy of joining a terrorist network or carrying out a terrorist attack;
• Fundraising for terrorist networks, often through criminal activity such as diverting money donated to legitimate charities;
• Helping radicalised individuals to travel abroad to join a terrorist group and potentially receive training. Some of these individuals may receive direction to plan an attack back in the UK.
• The threat is constantly developing, presenting major challenges for the UK's intelligence agencies and the police.

Other Statistics

Extremism in Prisons [1]
• As at 30 September 2022, there were **239** persons in custody for terrorism-connected offences in Great Britain
• Of those in custody, the vast majority (**65%**) were categorised as holding Islamist-extremist views; a further **28%** were categorised as holding Extreme Right-Wing ideologies and **8%** were categorised as holding Other ideologies

CTP Borders (Ports)
[2] Counter Terrorism Policing Border Officers are at the front line of protecting national security from the threats posed by terrorism at UK borders and ports. Borders officers manage the threats posed by individuals and groups seeking to travel across borders in furtherance of terrorism
[1] Under Schedule 7 of the Terrorism Act 2000, an examining officer has a number of powers, including:
• examinations of persons and resultant detentions
• strip-searches
• refusals to postpone questioning (usually to enable an individual to consult a solicitor)
• examinations of goods

In the latest year, **2,581** persons were subject to the use of Schedule 7 to TACT 2000 in Great Britain; this was an increase of **5%** compared with the previous year (where there were **2,454** examinations)

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Emerging Issues

3D-Printed Firearms

In the UK it is illegal to construct a viable homemade firearm, including 3D printed designs. However, **the threat posed from 3D printed firearms is increasing** due to improved printing techniques and the accessibility of products. [1]

Two individuals from Keighley in West Yorkshire, were found in possession of a partially constructed 3D-printed handgun in June 2022 and subsequently convicted. [1]

In 2022, the first prosecution in the UK took place in respect of the manufacture of 3D printed sub-machine guns. Three men from Hull and Bradford all pleaded not guilty to conspiracy to transfer the prohibited weapon to persons unknown and are due to stand trial in February 2023.[2] Whilst this offence is not CT related, affordability, greater purchasing options and more availability of detailed printing plans online, highlights the increasing risk of 3D printing firearms.

3d-Printed Handgun Image From Sky News

3d-Printed Sub-Machine Gun Image From Hull Daily

Children & Vulnerability to Terrorism

The number of children arrested in relation to terrorism has reached its **highest level** since records began nearly 20 years ago.[3]
As at September 2022, of the **190** people arrested in the UK for terrorism related offences, **31** (16%) were aged under 18 years of age. [4]

CTP continue to focus on safeguarding children and protecting them from being drawn into terrorism.

Cryptocurrency

Fundraising is a reoccurring theme in terrorist related activity, particularly with the use of **cryptocurrency** due to the anonymity it offers and the difficulties in determining the end usage of the cash flow. It is likely that there will be a continuation in the use of cryptocurrencies as it becomes more readily and easily available.

In September 2021, Leicester-based Hisham Chaudhary was imprisoned for 12 years, after being found guilty of funding the Islamic State group using Bitcoin [5]

In America, a female from New York was charged with using cryptocurrency to provide financial support to the proscribed terrorist group, Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, in Syria [6]

Drones

Reporting surrounding the criminal use of **drones** has increased, both nationally and within the North East. Currently, there has been no information to suggest the use of drones for terrorist purposes within the North East.

CT Reporting, Resources & Training

If you have any information about activity or behaviour that doesn't feel right, please report it. Use our secure online form at gov.uk/ACT. Alternatively, you can call us on **0800 789 321**. In an emergency you should always dial 999.

Protect & Prepare

ProtectUK – Designed for organisations to access vital information, guidance, resources and training relating to Protect and Prepare activity.

Link – | ProtectUK.

SCaN (See Check and Notify) 'For All' module – E-Learning package designed for all staff members across an organisation to increase awareness of hostile reconnaissance and how to respond.

Link – SCaN for all staff | ProtectUK.

Act Awareness – Learn about the best practices to help counter terrorism and increase your security awareness.

Link – ACT Awareness e-Learning | ProtectUK.

Run Hide Tell – What to do in the event of a terrorist attack? Guidance issued by CT Policing for members of the public.

Link – RUN HIDE TELL | ProtectUK

Crimestoppers

Report a non-urgent crime or incident anonymously by telephone on **0800 555 111** or online at –

https://crimestoppers-uk.org/give-information/forms/pre-form

ACT Early

The **ACT Early** campaign is aimed as parents, carers, family and friends in raising awareness and vigilance about the signs of radicalisation and seeking advice whenever concerns are raised.

Link – https://actearly.uk/

References

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