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Document Version
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Abstract

Terrorism, radicalisation and risk are contested terms – converging around particular children and young people in England to construct an emergent category of abuse – 'childhood radicalisation'. With little practice based research to date in this issue and expected responses via the state, social work needs to step up and engage with the present terrorism debates. In this paper we argue against peremptorily defining this as a child protection issue. Rather, we think that more debate is needed about the role of social work and policy influences, because social work can find itself unwittingly posing a risk to the very families we set out to help. Moreover, social workers might find themselves pawns in an ideologically driven moral panic without the benefit of debate about how we can make a contribution to families, and to this emerging practice issue. This paper offers some suggestions to bolster the confidence and skills needed in approaching this new practice issue. Social workers are themselves at risk of becoming the guardians of radicalisation risk work. This needs resisting if social work is to offer something complementary to the policing and securitization needs of an anxious politic and ever-hovering media, hungry for sensationalized risk stories.

Introduction

Terrorism, radicalisation and risk are all highly contested terms – presently converging around particular children to construct an emergent or new category of abuse – 'childhood radicalisation'. With little practice based research to date in this issue and expected responses via the state, social work needs to step up and engage with the present terrorism debates (Guru, 2012). Recently, reports have been made to some English children's services departments about children living in homes with fathers who themselves hold convictions under United Kingdom anti-terrorist legislation. Typically on release from prison, a request is made to reunite with family. Reports are then made to children's services suggesting that the children of these parents are themselves 'at risk' of becoming radicalised toward holding extremist views or, more worryingly, being encouraged toward terrorist activities. In this paper

we argue against peremptorily defining this as a child protection issue. Rather, we think that more debate is needed about the role of social work and policy influences, because social work can find itself unwittingly posing a risk to the very families we set out to help. Moreover, social workers might find themselves pawns in an ideologically driven moral panic without the benefit of debate about how we can make a contribution to families, and to this emerging practice issue.

In this paper, we raise two questions. Can we effectively intervene at the family level when ideological radicalisation risk is the reported concern? And, if we do intervene at the family level, will social workers make any difference to family cultures and ideological belief systems that promote extremist views? Or, should we aim for interventions at the structural / institutional level? With little actually known about radicalisation trajectories for children and young people reported to be at risk, and simplistic notions of 'intervention to protect' propagated, social work is finding itself in a tricky position.

Social workers have been relatively absent in the debate so far, yet are themselves at risk of being swept up in the current moral panic that ensues. Social work needs to promote an argument for moral, just and humane practice in order that we bring some balance to an overly catastrophic and simplistic presentation of childhood radicalisation risk (and children being groomed to become terrorists). However, not everyone agrees. According to London's Mayor, Boris Johnson, statutory intervention is straight-forward when it comes to terrorism risk.

> I have been told of at least one case where the younger siblings of a convicted terrorist are well on the road to radicalisation – and it is simply not clear that the law would support intervention. This is absurd. The law should obviously treat radicalisation as a form of child abuse. It is the strong view of many of those involved in counter-terrorism that there should be a clearer legal position, so that those children who are being turned into potential killers or suicide bombers can be removed into care – for their own safety and for the safety of the public (Boris Johnson, 2 March 2014).

London's mayor argues that a child being radicalised to become 'tomorrow's terrorist' is a clear cut case for legitimate state intervention. Curiously, the language of 'grooming' has entered the radicalisation discourse potentially conflating

psychological sexual abuse thinking and radicalisation risk. But what do we mean by a child at risk of radicalisation? Or being 'groomed' to join? Social workers are expected to navigate this tricky terrain. And it strikes us that practitioners have been absent from the debate so far. We aim to rectify this, by illuminating social work's contribution, and we offer four arguments to do so:

1. Social workers should offer empowerment and humanist approaches to risk-thinking;
2. We should highlight the importance of deconstructing risk and risk discourses;
3. Social work offers models of assessing and help to families (particularly in strengths based approaches offering a balance to the powerful 'psychologising' of normative childhood); and
4. We must promote a rights based approach to statutory intervention and decision making.

The practice context

During 2014, several reports about children being at risk of radicalisation have been made to English local authorities – seeking a statutory social work response. The practice issues here are not straightforward, with little or no practice guidance to help working with families that do not want statutory social work help. The purpose of this paper is to promote debate about the role of statutory social work services and to pose the question – how can we effectively help? And, under what circumstances should statutory social workers respond? What constitutes enough risk that statutory social workers intervene under the Childrens Act? And, what informs the 'risk thinking' in these cases? How can social workers resist the tendency to view risk in these cases in rather fixed, positivist and psychologising terms (thus predetermining a child's trajectory *to be* 'at risk'?) something at odds with the empowerment and social justice aims of social work? Moreover, this leads us to ask how social workers might make better use of their risk thinking, and be encouraged to find ways of approaching risk work humanely and more effectively, in order that they avoid narrow or punitive options (Featherstone, White & Morris, 2014).

A family where a convicted terrorist resides is considered a risky situation for children. But what happens when this family chooses to home school their children? Or attend protest rallies with their children? Should we be more worried about this? How is risk communicated between professionals when we do not see children? How are rights debates resolved? Decisions made can have powerful ramifications. Families that experience surveillance or pressure here may choose to leave the jurisdiction. Risks are weighed up and choices made. Paradoxically, a family may place their children in greater harm with a decision to leave England and head to a conflict zone like Iraq or Syria. So, how can we avoid drawing simple conclusions about these situations and choices? We need to debate this issue because there is a danger of social work being positioned as the agency that needs to rescue vulnerable children from such radicalisation risk.

News headlines help to promote the idea that the risk-work here means intervention to rescue. For example, a recent headline for Nurseryworld by Hannah Crown claimed *Terrorism bill means nurseries 'must understand risk of radicalisation'* (23 December 2014) – suggesting that early childhood staff are to join the new frontier of 'spotting tomorrow's terrorist'. But how is risk in these situations being assessed? Earlier, Boris Johnson argued for a social care response with child removal an option "to protect (rescue) the child, and us". While affecting a small number of families, the potential is for more and more (Muslim) families to become subjects of more and more surveillance by education, health and early year's workers and, no doubt, referrals will be made to children's services 'just in case'. Preliminary assessments will be made by school staff, health colleagues and others. Children's services will then be asked to carry out fuller assessments of risk with simplistic theorizing easily drawn on to explain (e.g. father is ideologically indoctrinating child, so high risk and child abuse enquiry must ensue). Risk factors get counted up and (too easily) simplistically conflated to high risk. This is a problem for families and for practice.

The problems for practice

There are a number of problems when risk is constructed through 'risk factor science'. First, a 'logic of risk' is drawn on that acts as a framework through which behavior is

seen as problematic and in need of correction – and this gets assessed as being 'risky' (Broadhurst et al., 2010). Problems are viewed as resulting from individual choices. This produces anxiety for social workers if they regard their role as one to resolve and manage risk. This focus easily weakens collaborative practice with parents, as they get constructed as the source of risk. Further, this compromises working relationships by encouraging a focus on deficits in a working context that too easily blames workers if things go wrong (Jones, 2014). So, practitioners guard against this, and our practice is influenced. For example, parents are expected to come to meetings with the social worker, and if they don't arrive they are seen as failing, or being in denial. We then make a new risk argument to managers, thus risk gets reified and seen as more worrying. The risk case is easily made by social workers. Professionals might mistakenly believe that they can assess risk to accurately predict human behaviour in linear causal terms (Munro, 2010). This is impossible. We need to avoid simplistic risk trajectory arguments and approach risk in more sophisticated ways. So, understanding how the policy landscape influences practice is an important part of being more risk-sophisticated.

An influential policy landscape

Terrorism is a political activity designed to achieve political goals to redress perceived socio-economic and political injustices (Aradau & van Munster, 2009). It is not the first time that the British and other governments have faced terrorism, and militant Islam is not the only challenge presenting itself; in the UK similar threats come from the IRA and the political right such as English Defence League (EDL). However, the way in which militancy and armed struggle is addressed today is significantly different from the past. In colonial history many armed resistance movements were militarily quashed by the dominant ruling powers. When this strategy failed more subtle strategies were employed to pathologise dissident cultures as 'primitive' and 'oppressive', in order to transform them through acculturation and assimilation and to brainwash people to accept normative, hegemonic customs and discourses, best evidenced by the experiences of Native Americans. Other armed

resistance, such as the American Black Power movement of the 1960s was partly resolved through both processes of acculturation and through the acquisition of civil rights; in the UK the IRA reached tentative peace after a long protracted armed struggle. One of the key features of such strategies and responses was that they acknowledged the political nature of the problem, presented in the form of an armed threat. This is not the case with regards to current mechanisms for addressing radicalisation.

A parallel counter-terrorism strategy is now at work, incorporated in CONTEST, first introduced in 2003 and two of its most important community based approaches are embedded in Prevent and Channel programmes. These make a departure from previous responses to armed resistance in that they largely deny the political nature of terrorism and work with individuals and families instead, to avert individuals away from existing or potential 'radicalising' influences. However, continuities in pathologising discourses are evident, particularly through the demeaning of Muslim masculinities, as individuals and families are blamed for their 'problems'. This approach is a more insidious technique of control, discipline and regulation, akin to 'thought police', but serving the same purpose as acculturation and assimilation techniques that went before.

The Prevent and the Channel programmes focus on 'vulnerable' individuals who are suspected of constituting a terrorist threat. The measures seek to counter terrorism and the 'radicalisation' of young 'vulnerable' people by supporting them to resist radicalisation and violent extremism. The Terrorism Act (2000) defines terrorism as 'the use or threat of action designed to influence the government or an international governmental organisation or to intimidate the public, or a section of the public; made for the purposes of advancing a political, religious, racial or ideological cause'. The Prevent Strategy defines radicalisation as a process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism leading to terrorism. Extremism is defined as a vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. 'Violent extremism' is seen as an 'endorsement of violence to achieve extreme ends' (HM Government, 2011). Prevent and Channel seek to de-radicalise individuals and drive them away from terrorism.

As Coppock and McGovern (2014) illustrate, positivist psychology plays a key role in Prevent and Channel programmes as models based on psychometric tests, screening and profiling, together with life-course approaches focusing on youth and youth transition, are used to provide legitimacy and 'scientific rationality' for placing young people under surveillance. The programmes acknowledge the structural, socio-economic and even political causes of terrorist activity, but these are considered rather peripheral concerns compared to their central risk-averse agenda and techniques which pays premium to assessing individual risk and 'deficit.' Practitioners are instructed to be alert to young people's expressed opinions providing support for terrorist organisations, their access to online radicalising materials, behavioural indicators such as associations with family, peers and other networks and exposure to organisations holding extremist views (HM Government and ACPO, 2010:9).

Substantial attention is also paid to behavioural and attitudinal characteristics of those deemed to be 'vulnerable' and 'at risk' of radicalisation. Tools are used to assess the vulnerability of young people through indicators such as their levels of qualifications, labour-market positions, their 'emotional vulnerability', 'distress' 'anger, 'alienation' or if they feel 'culturally uprooted', socially and spiritually alienated', or express feelings of 'dissatisfaction and disillusionment' with mainstream political institutions as mechanisms for political change, or have existing or potential ties with people involved in terrorism (Youth Justice Board, 2012:22-3). Attention is also paid to questions about children's identity, faith, self-esteem, identification with charismatic individuals and their explanations about why they feel that their communities are discriminated against (DCSF, 2008). Using such indicators, referrals by teachers, and other practitioners or even members of the public can be made about children and young people deemed vulnerable to radicalisation, who are then referred to children's services for assessment and intervention.

Recent illustrations of referrals by members of the public include someone who was known to have recently converted to Islam and without evidence the boy was believed to be willing to sacrifice his life for his faith. Upon further investigation no indication of extremist behaviour or attitudes were confirmed but other vulnerabilities were revealed, that the boy was from a foster care home and affiliated with a local street

gang. Having been referred to an organisation specialising in working with young converts, and through one-to-one meetings and group activities the boy's interpretation of Islam was explored. Another referral, by a community youth group worker, was based on the grounds of a boy uttering words to the effect that he wanted 'to go to Iraq and kill Americans.' He became the subject of engagement with 'social activities along with ideological mentoring', which challenged the 'boy's violent feelings towards non-Muslims, followed by educational support, Islamic education, mentoring and working with the boy's mother' (HM Government and ACPO, 2010:16). Further work might lead to the boy being supported into engagement with alternative activities such as sport, finding a part-time job or perhaps building stronger bonds with his family as evidenced in similar work carried out in Denmark (The Danish Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration, 2012).

By emphasising the 'vulnerability' of individuals these processes of risk assessment and prevention give primacy to a 'deficit thinking' risk model; that the population in question is deficient and in need of improvement/treatment. This emphasis on normative, systems and networks gives primacy to positivist, psychologising discourses which deny individuals agency and the political nature of their experiences and social problems. The focus on individuals and families isolates them from being seen in their holistic socio-economic, political context and their resistance to oppression and injustice is seen as an aberration, a problem, a state of mind which can be changed, treated and normalised by the introduction of alternative activities, relationships and networks. For this reason, amongst many Muslim communities Prevent and Channel are primarily seen as tools for surveillance of Muslim children, justified by particular ideological constructions about the processes causing radicalisation (Kundnani, 2012; Coppock & McGovern, 2014). Coppock and McGovern point out that 'Underpinned by psychologising discourse, ostensibly innocuous thoughts, feeling and behaviours of children and young people are thus re-constructed as deviant and potentially dangerous (2014: 250).

Until social workers were required to make statutory interventions in preventing radicalisation on the grounds of 'child protection' the profession was largely absent from engaging with issues of terrorism and political conflict. Where it was involved, it was mainly concerned with adopting a neutral stance as in the Troubles of Northern

Ireland. However, some workers in these situations chose to act in alternative ways particularly challenging, where legitimately possible, to redress draconian state measures such as the imposition of at-source deductions to benefits, introduced to undermine the rates and rent strike held in protests against the internment without trial of terrorist suspects. A few social workers acted independently in these situations to help alleviate the ensuing hardship endured by claimants and drew upon the resources accessed through existing legislation to assist children and families (Smyth and Campbell, 1996).

<u>Dilemmas for practice</u>

So, how do social workers assess and work with ideological risk issues and then offer an intervention plan that actually helps children and families? If the problem is at the family level, and ideology is promoted in particular ways, and where radical views are promoted to children, what is the task of the social worker? It is unclear as to how we would leverage any change to these ideological views, nor does it seem likely that social workers would seek to remove children from their home based on this alone. Is social work caught between a need to define what is harmful or risky to the child and offer an intervention that is helpful and makes a difference?

We need to ask what risk is too much risk. And, what risk thinking is happening for the social worker and their manager? What gets drawn on to help decide the next course of action? The research evidence available for social workers is not conclusive on the issue of childhood trajectory toward radicalisation. However, theorizing this situation is important because it helps to explain the underlying assumptions that operate and influence our decision making. Psychological theorizing would suggest that the children will be led to follow a trajectory of their father or mother's path because of influence and teachings. Risk here is reified as the parent and their influential behavior. To contrast, a sociological or socio-cultural analysis would suggest that radicalisation is a more complex phenomena, and more likely to emerge through group and peer behaviors, with young people seeking a sense of belonging or understanding in life. This is a less clear trajectory argument, but one where the reification of risk is less likely.

Making sense of this situation is tricky, and there is a risk that social workers will be seduced by 'psy-complex' theorising (Healy, 2005), that lends itself to a reductionist and deficit based approach. Further, when this happens –

- A child rescue ideology tends to operate and is encouraged via reified risk
- Families then experience surveillance via social work via monitoring
- Social justice and human rights approaches are less likely to feature
- And, unintended consequences might follow (e.g. families or young people leaving the country and heading to conflict zones)

The dilemma is how we intervene and for us to ask what help will be offered to families in this situation? Will social workers be able to help these families? Would a voluntary or third sector agency be better placed to help? In our current situation it behoves us to be critically reflective of what we are being asked to carry out in the name of child protection. 'Social problems are not caused by deficits in communication between individuals and systems' (Morau, quoted in Carniol, 1992:3), as so often suggested by dominant, mainstream theories; on the contrary, it is the differential power to access resources, frustrations about the inability to be heard by conventional methods, to have a political voice and representation, and the intransigence of the powerful, that are more likely sources of conflict and terrorism. This type of analysis points toward radical and structural methods of social work. Morau (cited in Carniol, 1992) identified six dimensions of structural empowerment work, one of which was the 'defense of clients' which he thought necessitated social workers asking 'whose side are we on'? Carniol developed this work and stated that whilst the needs of some clients may be met by social workers,

> ... agency practices and elitist professional attitudes often become formidable barriers to the achievement of these goals. By encouraging ... focus primarily on assessments of emotions, parenting skills, and interpersonal capacities, mainstream social work literature also conveys the message that these tasks are more important than addressing issues of 'mere' material resources' (Carniol, 1992:6-8).

In structural social work it is the duty of the social worker to move beyond the neo-liberal, case management approaches and build more egalitarian relationships with service users where together, having built trust in each other they work to demystify information, language, techniques and sharing information to unravel the true nature and cause of the problems – to unmask structural sources of oppression which conventional approaches obscure by psychologising essentially political concerns which service users often internalise and self-blame. In unmasking the problem the awareness on both the service users and the social workers are increased and so offer greater chances for challenging and redressing injustices.

Many studies point out that terrorists have not always emerged from marginalised, poorer, less educated groups. But the strength of a raised awareness, of consciousness-raising, is that one is able to act in solidarity with others sharing similar interests within and across boundaries, and so in this globalised world, the causes of terrorism may not always lie in the country of the 'home grown' terrorists. Just as Britain acts in solidarity with the US and joins hands in action against Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere, so individuals too are capable of solidarity. The call to arms across the Muslim countries resonates with Muslims across the globe, a process facilitated by the concept of 'Umma', or unity amongst Muslims which has intensified after 9/11. This can be seen as a product of political awareness, borne out of the exploitation and oppression by the West and the alienation it has generated. These are factors that are partly recognised by Prevent and Channel but overridden by impositions of neo-liberal techniques and emphasis on individual pathology. However, the political essence of these issues and questions will not disappear and it is this that young (and older) people probably want to address, but the state wishes to evade.

These are political and rational questions – thus an ability to make sense of the world; they are not a sign of criminality, nor mental illness or vulnerability. It may be true that people in general, not just the young, may be misguided by more dangerous elements with ulterior motives to recruit jihadists for particular causes that may or may not be in the best interest of Muslim youth and communities, but the questions in themselves are healthy. To avert attention away from them, to somehow get people to

have a 'better understanding' of religion or other ideologies as envisioned in the Prevent and Channel programmes, amounts to a process of social conditioning, an accusation often levelled against terrorist propagandists themselves. It is a breach of civil rights, to live in conditions where one cannot think and believe freely without having one's thoughts policed. It goes against the grain of democracy. It is ironic that the very 'democratic values' that have arguably driven the occupation of the Middle East are breached on British shores by imposition of oppressive and undemocratic practices on children and young people – the beacons of our future democracies.

In this context, the pursuit of current measures will continue to alienate young people and their families, as well as their communities. Social workers and others working with young people will need to decide what questions they want to ask, and of whom?

Taking a rights-based and network approach to practice

So, how can we ensure that we are not using risk discourses in ways that blame or label family members and reify risk as being *their* problem? To offer balance, social workers can draw on discourses that contribute to the value base of the profession, that is, those ideas and principles that support a moral commitment to justice and rights. This should help encourage participation by families into assessment work. The most obvious outcome to not questioning risk in these cases is that families are more likely to be monitored, and not actually be helped.

Furthermore, identifying risky individuals, for example, the 'terrorist parent' can obscure the social context impacting on the parents' ability to provide adequate care for their children, and further, reinforces blame. This in turn reinforces notions of the individual being the sole target for intervention (a child) which can encourage child rescue orientations to the work. Further, a neglect of the social and political context is also reinforced and any political action by some families becomes easily conflated in terms of childhood risk (Rose, 1999).

We need to work to avoid psychologising explanations that can cause unintended harm. Risk is easily reified by others – for example, police telling us that dad is *the risk* – and when this happens social workers need to open up their risk thinking and question this so that we avoid slipping into default causal explanations.

The 'signs of safety' approach is one way we might bring balance to overly catastrophizing risk presentations (Stanley & Mills, 2014). Signs of safety is a strengths-based approach to practice that emphasises the importance of establishing client's views about their lives, and respecting clients as 'people worth doing business with', (Turnell & Edwards, 1999, p.42). It avoids deficit, pathological or psychodynamic thinking about problems. The signs of safety approach shows how particular discourses are drawn on to construct harm and safety, and this invites a deeper thinking about risk. In this way our risk thinking can be opened up. This is a risk analysis model for risk work that many social workers are now using.

The Good lives Model (GLM) also offers the potential to inform a social work response to cases of radicalisation risk. The GLM is a strengths and asset based approach to practice (Ward & Mann, 2004). The GLM encourages us to take into account the client's goals and values, and through facilitation work, the skills and opportunities to meet these in more adaptive ways is the focus. Parental ideology would fulfil so many regular life functions (a sense of autonomy, a place in relationships, a sense of belonging, group status, gender role, emotional feelings, and so on). Expectations by police and courts that these be jettisoned with little or no replacement is quite unrealistic. The GLM suggests that alternative meanings (and life goods) are sought out and located, built upon, and through this work more socially legitimate means are planned for. Used in sexual offending treatment work, the GLM offers a potential way for risk thinking and risk practice for social workers involved in radicalisation risk cases. This is a therapeutic constructionist approach to risk work that social workers could use.

Discussion

Left to statutory social care alone – by default because there are children in the family – they are likely to 'assess, asses and assess again,' encouraged by rather narrow discourses of risk, psychologise parents in reified risk terms, and construct the children as vulnerable victims, all the while probably not offering any meaningful help. Families will probably experience an extension of the state surveillance machinery that already operates, rather than receive practical or emotional help. We might create more risk.

Working proactively with risk in these cases, that is talking about risk in its many variances and possibilities opens up a more collaborative working relationship where talking about what people might want to do is the focus. This is a more humane approach to having conversations about what needs to happen. Social workers can work with risk in this constructionist way, but this may not be comfortable for everyone. Managers will need to understand strengths and asset base approaches as evidence informed approaches to practice. This practice needs to be encouraged as an intellectual task and a moral enterprise, as a way of working with risk.

To date, social work has lacked a critical framework through with our risk work can be reflected on. The strengths based approaches to practice discussed above offer helpful ways forward. This requires a considerable level of skill by the practitioner and their manager. They must also believe that this is *the right thing to do*. Social workers by drawing on the value of social justice and rights based approaches to the human condition could also be educating other colleagues (e.g. early help, early education, schools, health staff, and police) who are asked to 'spot the terrorist child'. More social work presence in schools, in health, in community settings is another way forward to help colleagues who may find themselves caught up in the moral panic of 'spotting the terrorist child'. A spate of terrorism legislation ranging from stop and searches to dissemination of literature 'glorifying' terrorism have been introduced since 9/11. This has culminated in making some in the UK Muslim community, in particular, feeling like a 'suspect community' and living with increased fear and paranoia (Dodd, 2014). Social workers understanding this will help them to make links to the social justice and social change aims of practice. This is where sociological theorizing offers much in a landscape where psychologizing dominates.

However, despite our argument that this work should not always be led by the child protection system, social workers inside local authorities will be asked to assess cases of radicalisation risk. It is already happening. This paper is attempting to open up the debate about the approach such cases need, and asks – should this be the work of statutory social workers? Undoubtedly, the small number of families and young people who refuse the Prevent/ Channel option will have a social worker knock at the door. We think that there are four areas of skill needed before the knock.

1. Family work skills – working with family dynamics, power, control, and involving extended family; using ecomap and genogram tools
2. Political and ideological analysis skills
3. Risk thinking at a sophisticated
4. Developing a sociological imagination (Mills, 1959) to help link the person in context, highlighting historic forces as influences in where we are today

If we are to offer help, we think these four areas of development for our social workers will be needed. Most local authority training programs won't have this on the learning menu, and so we suggest that the principal social worker takes a practice leadership approach with these cases. The principal social worker could work these cases. A change to the Education Act (2002) is needed, which presently does not require home educated children to be seen by home education visitors. Only the curriculum is checked annually, hence some children can be out of sight for years. Perhaps getting children into a conventional education environment is the best social workers can aim for. Socialisation and offering a more open world view being more likely. The pathway to terrorism is not clear; but education in conventional terms does widen exposure to difference and diversity. It is just impossible to know if this is enough to halt the radicalisation trajectory toward extremism.

Conclusion

New practice issues continue to emerge in social work. In the case of radicalisation risk, we are asking the question about who is best placed to help. Is this the work of statutory social workers or are there other parts of the system better placed to

intervene and help? An early help model involving community, charities, education and family is a good option for families. However, higher risk cases that are beyond the remit of Prevent/ Channel (a small number of cases so far) are posing real challenges for social workers. This paper offers some suggestions to bolster the confidence and skills needed in approaching this new practice issue. But social workers are themselves at risk of becoming the guardians of radicalisation risk work. This needs resisting if social work is to offer something complementary to the policing and securitization needs of an anxious politic and ever-hovering media, hungry for sensationalized risk stories. It is a tricky time for practice.

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