

New NSPCC Helpline for parents worried about radicalisation

Counsellors from the NSPCC have been trained by experts from the Home Office to advise parents on how to spot signs of radicalisation in children who could fall victim to online groomers.

The helpline is also available for parents who want to know how to reassure children worried about terrorist attacks taking place.

Signs which may hint towards radicalisation in children

- They isolate themselves from family and friends
- They become disrespectful or ask inappropriate questions
- They seem to be more angry or aggressive
- They have an unhealthy obsession for websites about terrorists
- Their speech seems scripted when talking about radicalised ideas

Children who may be targeted by online groomers

- Those with low self-esteem
- Those with a history of gang membership
- Those with a history of being bullying

The helpline, the first of its kind, was launched in July. It comes after the children's charity said it received a high level of concern from anxious parents and children following the Paris terror attack in November.

John Cameron, head of helplines at the NSPCC, told it was created to "fill the gap between reporting terrorist events and people who have safeguarding concerns". Previously, parents could only contact MI5 or police-run anti-terror hotlines if they were concerned about their children. But they were worried about getting an adverse reaction from the government organisations, said Mr Cameron.

'Child protection issue'

Mr Cameron said that children being radicalised online was a "child protection issue" and similar to other forms of grooming.

The children who are most likely to be affected are those who were vulnerable.

"Children who get more isolated, don't feel they have caring relationships... they look for other groups," said Mr Cameron, adding that this helped improve their self-esteem and give them a purpose.

"Parents need to improve relationships, give children a stronger affinity to their family. If the pull of the family is greater than the pull of external groups, children can be kept safe."

Adults can ring the NSPCC helpline on 0808 800 5000, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week