



# Walsall Prevent Digest

## May 2021

Current Threat Level in the UK: SUBSTANTIAL– An Attack is Likely

### Niall Markham, Prevent Coordinator – Introduction

You will recall from last month's Prevent Digest we included an article that highlighted the work of Small Steps Ltd. In this edition we provide an update received from Walsall Youth Connect – British Muslim Youth Group (BMYG) another of our Home Office funded project providers who for a number of years have supported the Prevent strategy in Walsall and who continue to do so.

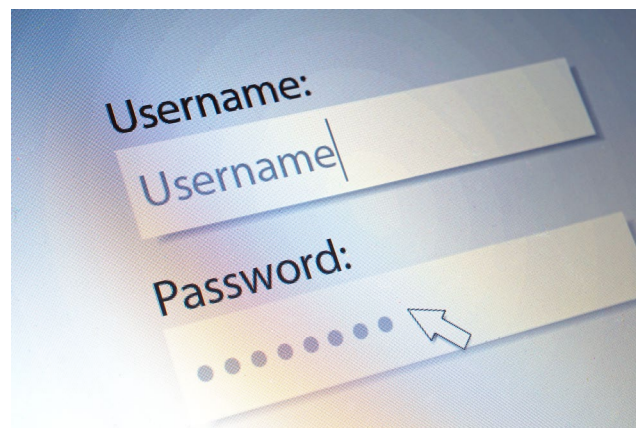
### Dave Chadwick, Prevent Education Officer

For those of you that have completed WRAP training recently you may recall me talking about 'Discord', a social media platform and very popular with the gaming community.

If you haven't heard of Discord please take a look on the NSPCC NetAware site [HERE](#). Essentially, 'Discord' is a chat app (video and text) and prior to lockdown not particularly common, that being said, usage was beginning to increase with gamers even as young as 6 years of age. During the lockdown period however, we have seen a heavy increase in activity on Discord. Some of the children say they will use it with their friends to chat about games, others said they will use it because their parents won't let them use WhatsApp.

Young People can engage in casual discussions, exchange links/usernames, share propaganda, amateurish artwork and memes and as you well know, this is precisely how befriending, grooming and recruitment can often take place.

Whether the increase is common I don't as yet know, however, it is important to make all staff aware in order for them to keep their 'ears to the ground' as it were. Children will commonly talk about 'private servers' and here they are referring to what you and I would call a 'private chat room'. Interestingly, only last week I saw that Playstation are now integrating Discord chat into the Playstation itself and therefore the likelihood is we will now begin to see a significant increase in usage towards the end of the year.



## Walsall Youth Connect – British Muslim Youth Group

### Bulleting information for prevent

Youth Connect is one of the key providers of youth services in Walsall, Working with hundreds of young people across the borough. They use Centre based, detached, sports sessions as well as specialised programmes and interventions to work with young people and their families.

Youth Connect has an established history of working with the Walsall Prevent team to deliver bespoke interventions. From the outset we have had a vision in Walsall to develop interventions from within the community to support the community. The work and the outcomes have yielded many positive outcomes for participants taking part.

With over 10 years' experience of working with hard to reach and marginalised young people in some of the most deprived wards in the UK. Our experience with our local mainstream youth population's, NEETS young people, young offenders or those on the periphery of youth crime has shaped our delivery and the way we offer services to young people.

Youth Connect also runs a mentoring programme to support vulnerable young people who require enhanced support. A 16 week programme offering one to one guidance. The prevent mentoring programme takes on Channel referrals as well as pre channel young people who are engaged in or at risk of radicalisation of any kind. We have established referral pathways from schools, local authority, youth offending service and local police.

The 6 detached youth workers who make up our team are extremely experienced. They know the community inside out and they receive intensive training before they go out. As members of the Federation of Detached Youth Work, we can stay informed about the latest developments and ensure our teams are well supported in their challenging task. Our teams work closely with the local police and partner agencies to identify and target 'hotspots' where young people hang out. In the summer, they're likely to be in the parks and public spaces. In the winter, they're more likely to be in the fast food restaurants.

Many of these youngsters have little respect for authority figures, so our primary purpose is to build relationships and, most importantly, trust with them. Ultimately, we'd love the young people we meet on the streets to come into the youth centre, where we know they'll be safe, but for many, that's never going to be an option. However, there are plenty of other ways that we can engage young people outside the centres.

The last year has seen many challenges to the youth sector and the ways we work and engage with young people. We have seen the sharp incline in increased mental health issues as well as poorer physical health. With the increase of mis-information and conspiracy theories around Covid-19 and Vaccines doing the rounds there is a real risk we are seeing a different form of radicalisation that is impacting our communities.



We have seen huge success in connecting with young people in this way. Some have been on cinema trips with our detached youth workers and other young people, while others have joined the sports activities that we run across the town. We even took one group to Wales for a weekend of outward-bound activities, to develop their self-esteem, self-confidence and resilience. Without the intervention of our detached youth workers, we know that many young people would never get these opportunities.

Some young people are becoming increasingly isolated, frustrated and even confused. When compounding this with sometimes controversial or even dangerous narratives whether it be online or even within the community, it is imperative that statutory partners and the community organisations work even harder to support individuals stay informed and safe.

Working with high risk offenders we have developed experienced workers who are prepared to work with and support challenging young people and help support them to bring them away from the grip of criminality. We have had many successful intervention results and our mentoring programme is considered best practice in turning young people away from extremism and violent behaviour.

Youth Connect is in a position to look to open up dialogue with young people and through initial consultations and through positive activities develop the foundations to future and further increased support. We deal with issues that face young people on a daily basis and put together fun and informative activities to meet their needs and to make better decisions in the future.

## 'Keeping Children Safe in Schools'.

The Centre for Teachers & Teaching Research are conducting research funded by SINCE 9/11 on 'Keeping Children Safe in Schools' the results of which will be available in a report that will be published ahead of the 20th anniversary of 9/11 this September. The research will improve our understanding of how schools support children and young people in resisting extremist views and inform SINCE 9/11's work to support teachers in the classroom by creating the resources they want and need to tackle radicalisation and extremism.



### They would be grateful of your support to:

- Help distribute the survey and invitation to interview to teachers in the education institutions you work with. Please do utilise the survey advertisement and recruitment email to do so (see attached). I would suggest the attached consent form is more for information at this stage.
- Potentially engage with the interviews yourself. If you are willing to be interviewed, please reach out to Claire Pillinger - c.pillinger@ucl.ac.uk.

## Proscription of 'Atomwaffen Division'

On 23 April, white supremacist group 'Atomwaffen Division' was proscribed by parliament, making it a criminal offence to be a member of, or invite support for the group. Atomwaffen Division is predominantly US-based and promotes the use of violence to bring about a fascist, white ethno-state. You can read the full statement on the proscription on GOV.UK [HERE](#).

## New Shout Out UK Animation

Prevent project Shout Out UK has been working on a new animation around the dangers of right wing extremism and online radicalisation, which aims to educate young people on digital literacy and how to stay resilient to hateful narratives. You can watch the animation [HERE](#) – do feel free to share this with your own networks and partners.

## Walsall Prevent Web page

The Walsall Prevent Webpage can be located on our Safer Walsall Partnership external website. The site is live and the Prevent page can be accessed via the below link:-

[www.saferwalsallpartnership.co.uk/prevent](http://www.saferwalsallpartnership.co.uk/prevent)

**For Information, Support or Guidance around Prevent, or should you have any queries, concerns or are looking to make a referral, please do not hesitate to contact us...**



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