Ex post paper
RAN H&SC meeting on multi-agency structures
Date: 18-19 May 2016
Location: Copenhagen, Denmark

Ex post paper

Handbook on

How to set up a multi-agency structure that includes the health and social care sectors?

Summary

Radicalisation is a complex social problem and thus cannot be merely tackled through the work undertaken by one sector alone. Indeed, it needs an integrated approach consisting of practitioners from different fields working together, pursuing a common aim and each bringing to this approach their unique skills, knowledge and capacity to identify and to provide the individuals at risk the necessary support. In such multi-agency cooperation practitioners, together with policy-makers and civil society, can effectively ensure that people at risk are given the right support at an early stage in order to prevent and counter the radicalisation process.

But how does one build such effective structures, either from scratch or within an existing framework? There is no one-size-fits all model that will fit in every national, regional or local context. This paper will however, describe some of the guiding principles on how to create multi-agency structures that include the health and social care sectors. It provides a handbook with practical steps and insights that are helpful for these sectors when working together with other key sectors to prevent radicalisation and violent extremism.

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Introduction

Radicalisation is a complex social problem and thus cannot be merely tackled through the work undertaken by one sector alone. Indeed, it needs an approach consisting of practitioners from different fields working together, pursuing a common aim and each bringing to this approach their unique skills, knowledge and capacity to identify and to provide the individuals at risk the necessary support. In such multi-agency cooperation practitioners, together with policy-makers and civil society, can effectively ensure that people at risk are given the right support at an early stage in order to prevent and counter the radicalisation process.

But how does one build such effective structures, either from scratch or within an existing framework? Who should be involved, and what can health and social workers undertake to stimulate their involvement in such multi-agency structures? In Copenhagen, the RAN H&SC working group explored the role the health and social care sectors, in particular, can play in multi-agency structures around the prevention and in countering violent extremism. For these sectors, specific challenges arise around multi-agency work. For example, such structures are often lead or coordinated by national, regional or local authorities, and even though local authorities might be best positioned to coordinate a multi-agency cooperation, they may not necessarily be aware to include the health and social care sectors. Furthermore, issues around information sharing and patient confidentiality are sector specific challenges which can form an obstacle to engage in multi-agency cooperation.

The examples of effective multi-agency cooperation currently existing across Europe show that these come in a variety of models and there is no standard format. Rather, each multi-agency approach needs to be tailored to its own locality and according to the needs within that locality. Hence, this handbook provides below five practical steps accompanied each time by guiding principles that can be followed or taken into account when engaging or further developing a multi-agency approach, from the perspectives of the health and social care sectors.

This handbook is based on the RAN H&SC meeting that took place in Copenhagen on 18 and 19 May in which extensive exchange on best practices took place on how best to build up a multi-agency approach and what the lessons learned are so far. In addition, it builds on the earlier published RAN papers around the issue of multi-agency work, e.g. by RAN LOCAL and RAN P&P, and on the RAN Collection of Approaches and Practices.

Step 1. Map the relevant agencies and start networking

When initiating or starting the process of multi-agency cooperation with a view of addressing the prevention of radicalisation and VE, a first step is to identify the relevant agencies and as such provide a useful overview of the organisations that ideally should be included in the multi-agency structure.

Guiding principles:

- *Go as local as possible*
  Where possible, the preference of most participants is to build multi-agency structures on a local level. However, especially in more rural areas, regional or even national structures might not be avoidable due to both the number of inhabitants and available facilities.

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- *Involve a wide range of organisations*
A preventive approach needs to be tailored to the needs of the persons who are susceptible for radicalisation/violent extremism. To do so, several organisations with different expertise need to work together. The number of organisations and the extent to which these are involved will differ greatly from one case to another. However, partnership involvement ensures that those who are considered vulnerable have access to a wide range of support, from diversionary activities through to the provision of specific services. Therefore, when identifying possible partner organisations as part of setting up the multi-agency structure, besides the more obvious organisations such as the (local) police, schools and (local) authorities, efforts should be targeted at also including organisations usually less involved in such structures such as the health and social care sectors, communities/families, NGOs, housing organisations, sports, advice centres, employment, and even prison and probation. Possible models could include a core structure of a number of main partners whereas other partners can be included depending on the needs of the case that have been identified.

- *Avoid stigmatising and labelling by setting up a more general structure*
An overall multi-agency structure focused on different kinds of social issues which for example serves the more general aim of crime prevention and integrates the prevention of radicalisation dimension rather than making it the main objective of the structure, prevents stigmatising and labelling people as a radical person, violent extremist or even terrorist. Building a more general structure around for example safeguarding children and vulnerable adults is also beneficial when it comes to wanting to receiving additional information from for example schools or youth workers. A possibility is to have a specific unit or expert team within the structure to help on the cases related to violent extremism.

- *Build on existing multi-agency structures*
In many Member States, some form of multi-agency cooperation is already in place, for example around child abuse. Drawing upon the existing collaboration between (local) authorities, statutory partners (such as education and health sectors, social services, children and youth services and offender management services), the police and the local community, instead of setting up a new arrangement is absolutely key in terms of efficiency and to avoid duplication. It will save time and resources to investigate whether these structures can also be adapted to work for people vulnerable to radicalisation. This might imply additional policy, information sharing agreements and training but will build on existing networks and procedures making them quicker to establish. In addition, these partners can rely on existing working relationships thus further facilitating the inclusion of an additional dimension in their cooperation.

- *Involve communities*
Not only involve organisations within the structure, but also civil society. Building long term (trust) relationships – not only during crises – with communities is necessary. Seeing and having to cooperate with familiar faces will help engaging vulnerable people in addressing their potential problems.

- *Start networking and take the time to learn and develop*
After the identification of relevant organisations to engage in the process, start networking and explain the benefits of multi-agency work to others, find the missing links, and involve the right people. Even though it might seem somewhat unusual for the health and social care sectors in taking such initiatives, over time it will become clear to other partners that they play a crucial role in such structures and can therefore also take the process forward.

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Step 2. Invest in the relationships and develop the multi-agency structure

When professionals with different backgrounds (police officers, educational professionals, mental health care workers, civil servants, social workers) begin working together in multi-agency structures, this can initially cause difficulties. Practitioners practice their profession from their own perspective using their (scientific) insights, experiences, values, justification, terminology, etc.. However, over time and whilst building up trust, some of these difficulties can be overcome. Indeed, trust is a crucial component within any multi-agency approach. Therefore the second step is to invest in mutual trust and understanding before further developing the structure. Not only between sectors and organisations, but also between departments within organisations. Often it is unclear what other departments or organisations do or *can* do (based on legislation). There should be clarity about role and responsibility of each professional within the structure.

Guiding principles:

- *Come together on a regular basis*
  Meeting each other face-to-face, for example once a month, helps to understand the other professionals, organisations, and sectors better. Important is that partners have the opportunity to meet each other outside formal meetings organised to discuss specific cases or when a crises occurs.
- *Involve organisations/partners at all levels*
  Within the multi-agency cooperation partners at all levels need to be engaged in order to mutually reinforce efforts and ensure all partners are given the right level of support in order to be able to operate effectively. The national level and thus representatives of policy making are needed as much as the local level partners so these can ensure legislative and financial support is provided where needed.
- *Embed multi-agency cooperation in job roles and functions*
  Often trust is build through personal relationships which means that people know each other, know each others work and interests and ask for/give help when needed. The downside of personal relationships appears when people change position or job and new relationships need to be build. When this happens often it will most likely negatively affect the partnership. To be less reliant on personal relationships, cooperation with other agencies could be embedded and made an integral element in specific roles/functions. New employees in the involved organisations should immediately get familiar with the multi-agency structures.
- *Create a partnership, not a legal entity*
  Legislation varies across countries and even within a country across sectors. . Building partnerships, instead of a legal entity, is a way to possibly overcome this challenge. In terms of legislation, examples have shown that the presence of some legislation can be an obstacle as much as it can be an enabler and actually facilitate cooperation making organisations realise the 'duty' they have to cooperate, i.e. it should be clear that cooperation is not optional but rather a moral obligation.
  For example within the Channel Programme there is the 'Prevent duty' installed on all professionals in several sectors and also in Denmark's multi-agency structures there is a legal obligation to cooperate and share between the social services, schools and the police. In the Netherlands, the multi-agency cooperation is based on a 'letter of intent' and thus applying the moral obligation principal.
- *Appoint a coordinator avoiding hierarchical structures and politics*
  In order to ensure a coordinated multi-agency approach, one organisation should chair and facilitate

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the process. This coordinating organisation will differ across countries or even localities, but it should be clear to everybody which organisation leads the process and coordination of interventions. Ideally this role is executed by the local municipality or an independent person (for example an ombudsman). Although political support is helpful, preferably the coordinating person has no political role. .

- *Invest in shared ownership over the multi-agency project*
  Working on shared and common goals could enhance shared ownership and shared accountability. Make sure you know what the mandate and aim of the organisations are you want to cooperate with whilst being clear about your mandate and goals.

- *Have clarity of roles*
  Related to the above have absolute clarity of roles of all professionals involved in the multi-agency approach and of what each party is doing. Having the right expectations and know what it is each partner can bring are crucial preconditions for success.

- *Work with permanent members (safeguarding hub) and ad hoc /guest members*
  It was agreed amongst the participants that at least the following partners should structurally be involved: representatives from local government/municipality (for facilitation), local/community police (often their role in the first instance is to check whether a case is already under investigation), social work/social services and behavioural experts (pedagogic professionals, mental health workers). To enable tailor-made interventions it is recommended to include ad hoc members in the multi-agency structure as explained in Step 1. For example, depending on the profile of the vulnerable person the following 'guest chairs' could be involved: schools, youth/street corner work, but also NGO's, parents or community leaders.

- *Be flexible and transparent*
  New partners (for example NGO's or private companies) should be able to participate and when engaging new partners it should be made clear why there are being involved and what they can bring to the cooperation.

- *Good coordination at the governmental/administrative level*
  In practice, many health and social care practitioners are working in several multi-agency structures, for example one around mental health issues, another one around child abuse, etc. To avoid overlaps, the (local) government /administrative level is often best positioned to align these different cooperation structures.
  The same applies for questions around the scale of working areas (municipal versus regional structures) as working across borders is often more difficult. Administrative back-up can help with these issues.

- *Apply a training component*
  A certain element of training on the job (rather than formal training) within the multi-agency work can have beneficial effects. Development and learning opportunities should be part of the networking.

Step 3. Be able to share information and assess together

The objective of a multi-agency approach is to share knowledge and expertise and as such be able to assess together a case in order to prevent or counter radicalisation or violent extremism in a more coordinated, effective and managed approach.

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While individuals will not always consent to information sharing, the right to privacy and confidentiality is not absolute. There may be situations where a professional judges a client to be a serious threat and of immediate risk of harming himself/herself or others. In such circumstances, the duty to share information may override the professional duty to confidentiality. Additionally, it is important to distinguish what is genuinely classified information and what is sensitive information, but could be shared with some prudence. For example, some classified information could be brought to a sufficient level of abstraction just enough to be able to effectively work on a case. In this way, the information can be shared with other agencies, without endangering the sensitivity of the data initially contained (privacy protection) nor stopping the cooperation among agencies (within an agreed framework).

Guiding principles:

- *Clear rules and guidelines on information sharing*
  As information sharing is legislated differently for each Member State and sector, a specific challenge for the (mental) health sector is patient confidentiality. However, in many cases some bits of relevant information *can* be shared. Also, patients could give their consent to sharing.
  The mental health sector could be motivated to seeing the benefits for them (and their patients' treatment) as well.

- *Reciprocity is key*
  All partners dealing with a (potential) violent extremist should share and have access to information to be able to follow-up adequately in a way that is proportionate and necessary in order to protect the interests of the vulnerable individual.

- *Include experts where needed*
  It is important to ensure that when cases are being examined, discussed and an action plan is being drawn up, that specialised expertise on radicalisation can be brought to the case assessment and intervention plan when needed. For example, this could be a professor on the religion of Islam.

> **6 steps to sharing information within the health sector**
> Sharing concerns to support vulnerable individuals
>
> Step 1: Recognising, analysing and verifying concerns
>
> Step 2: Speaking with clients about these concerns
>
> Step 3: Consulting with colleagues or national experts
>
> Step 4: Consulting with managers
>
> Step 5: Risk assessments by specialists
>
> Step 6: Sharing information with the appropriate partners (e.g. social care, education or law enforcement)

Related to this, even before cases are being addressed, specific partners can fulfil the role of providing detailed information on certain aspects and/or gather such information via for example surveys to provide a more robust knowledge base to the multi-agency structure.

- *Invest in training and assessment tools*
  It is recommended that all agencies are provided with awareness building training/education material, which clearly articulates the threat of radicalisation, ways of identifying the threat, and models of working with individuals from the point of view from various agencies across sectors.
  Some level of training specific to counter radicalisation needs to be provided to all actors who will be involved, from senior management to front-line workers.
  Access to toolkits and manuals that provide a framework for assessing and responding to the needs of at risk individuals could also be an important aid.

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Step 4. Appoint a case owner and intervene

The next step is to collectively appoint a case owner and develop (tailor-made) interventions. As there is no limit to the amount of actors involved in multi-agency cooperation, per case it should be clear which actors are involved and why. Those engaging need to work on all levels simultaneously (with the radicalised individual as well as with the family/parents and community) and have an overview of (as much as possible) everything that is going on. A case owner coordinates the individual case and is responsible for the interventions. He or she is also the recognisable point of contact with the individual, and its family and communities, as it is not helpful if families are inundated by numerous different individuals given this will diminish trust-building.

Guiding principles:

- *Appoint a case owner*
  The organisation most suitable or competent for each case, for example the one with the closest relationship with the client, is best positioned as the case manager.

- *Joint interventions*
  There are multiple interventions a multi-agency structure can develop and make use of in order to prevent vulnerable people from radicalisation and violent extremism. Based on the experience of the participants, ideally a combination is developed having elements of assistance but also of punishment or legal pressure if need be to ensure vulnerable people can be taken out of a dangerous situation. Across the countries, participation in interventions can be compulsory (f.e. Safety Houses in the Netherlands) or voluntary (f.e. in the UK's Channel programme). Examples of interventions to be used within the multi-agency approach towards prevention of radicalisation and VE are:
  - Mentoring programmes including 'mentor life' psychology in which a community person leads the programme and works with the individual at risk. The community person (for example from the same ethnic background installs trust and as such this helps the vulnerable person to engage more easily).
  - Counselling services;
  - Inclusion in employment/youth clubs, etc.
  - House visits undertaken jointly, for example a social worker together with a local police officer, were mentioned as an effective way to raise concerns, receive a lot of information and speak and engage with the family members.
  - Involve civil society or organisations with street credibility and organise for example team visits to school raising awareness on anti-discrimination.

- *Be able to respond in 24 hours*
  Focus on early prevention, but also work on a societal emergency plan.

- *Monitor the implementation of the action plan*
  The implementation of an action plan to address a case should be monitored throughout and changes should be made where necessary. In this process, the coordinator has the lead role in overseeing this monitoring process.

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Step 5. Evaluate and follow-up

As a final step, be sure to jointly evaluate the process that takes place within the multi-agency structure as well as the interventions that took place related to a certain case. Equally important is to follow-up all the actions undertaken and feed back to your partners on results obtained and lessons learned. Overall, this crucial last step allows to adjust the multi-agency structure where necessary and build on experience and as such make improvements.

Guiding principles:

- Explain results
- Share more positive stories instead of negative stories and keep partners engaged and motivated
- Share lessons based on experiences: get the word out. This will also help to keep partners involved and motivated
- Stress the shared benefits
- Make the (local) media aware of their responsibility

Most importantly as part of the evaluation process, all partners need to be conscious that multi-agency working is a learning process meaning it is ok to make mistakes and move on with a better way of working. In addition, an element of creativity is highly desirable in multi-agency cooperation.