

EX POST PAPER

RAN LOCAL: ‘Cooperation between local authorities and schools in multi-agency interventions and the prevention of radicalisation’

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Summary

Schools and teachers are important partners in local multi-agency networks working to prevent radicalisation. They are key players, in close contact with young people at risk of radicalising. The first meeting of RAN LOCAL in 2017 focused on cooperation between local authorities and schools, and how to enhance this. The outcomes of this meeting – in summarised format – are shared in in this ex-post paper.

This paper is produced by the RAN Centre of Excellence.

Introduction

During the meeting, dedicated to cooperation between local authorities and schools, we looked into enhancing cooperation by focusing on the two main objectives of this cooperation:

1. General prevention of radicalisation (prevention);
2. In the case of a specific, potentially radicalised youngster (multi-agency interventions).

The challenges and solutions per objective are described in this paper.

1. General Prevention

How can all schools be involved and engaged in general prevention?

- Create a contact team/person for schools within the local authority. This person should be the liaison between the local authorities and the schools, and the person to whom they can turn with their concerns and ideas regarding safety, security and the prevention of radicalisation. Furthermore, this person should be ready to discuss the place of religion in schools, pupils' identity issues and how to deal with tensions between certain groups following (geo)political developments.
- The local liaison officer/team should go to schools and collect information and feedback. What are the actual needs of each school, and how can they be supported? Don't forget to talk with teachers and not only the

head of the school. This approach is important to create bottom-up solutions based on the actual needs of teachers.

- It can help to create and facilitate a platform for all schools in the region. Have two platform meetings a year during which heads and teachers can share experiences and practices and get information from the local authorities.

Tip: If the principal blocks the way, start conversation on all issues and achievements of the school and have patience.

Example: In Antwerp (BE), a platform is up and running. For information, send us an e-mail and we'll put you in touch with the relevant people.

How can the competences and skills of teachers in the prevention of radicalisation be enhanced?

- Start by asking teachers which competences and skills they think they need to be able to prevent radicalisation. Competences and skills in addition – of course – to all the valuable competences and skills they already have. Teachers may say they want more information about the process of radicalisation and about current extremist and radicalised groups, or they might want to practice and share experiences about how to talk about difficult or polarised subjects in a classroom.

- Develop training suited to the needs of the teachers in your local region. This should not just be on radicalisation (then people get too focused), but more about diversity and multicultural society, and about critical thinking and on how to discuss certain topics. And there should not be a stand-alone training session, but a continuous effort.
- Coordinate the training and the selection for training with schools. Start with special or key teachers. If needed the training can be made mandatory. Make sure part of the training is a description of where teachers can get information about radicalisation, and who they can call if they are worried about a specific pupil or situation. Also, what will happen when they

Tip: Teachers from the same schools should attend the same training session. They need to work together on a daily basis, including on preventing

share this information about a pupil? This description should fit the local situation.

Example: In Finland, more and more social workers and psychologists are working in classrooms.

How can trust and relationships be developed between schools and local authorities?

- In short: practice what you preach.

Be clear about what you want, why you want it and how you want it. And stick to that. Always.

- Be realistic in your expectations about what schools can and cannot do in the general prevention of radicalisation. It needs to fit within schools' full schedules and tasks. Also, be open about what schools can expect from you as a local authority.
- Don't forget: building a relationship and especially building trust takes time.

Tip: Check the '13 Powerful strategies for building trust' at the end of this paper.

2. Multi-agency Interventions

How can information sharing between schools and local authorities be ensured?

- To make sure local authorities and schools exchange relevant information about a specific person/pupil and situation, you need to create a setting in which the schools understand why and what kind of information needs to be shared and how this will take place. Be aware that knowing what will happen is of crucial importance for schools. Schools will first and foremost protect their pupils.
- If the schools are convinced of the need to share information, develop a protocol for sharing information for the prevention of radicalisation. You

may already have a protocol like this for sharing information on other topics. If so, you might want to check if it can be re-purposed for radicalisation.

- Elements of an information sharing protocol to prevent radicalization:
 1. Define the reason why information needs to be shared
 2. Define which type of information needs to be shared
 3. Describe per partner
 - their tasks and their responsibilities
 - the type of information they have and can share
 - the type of information they need from whom
 4. Describe when and how relevant information will be shared and who will coordinate the sharing
 5. Sign the protocol, along with all partners
 6. Use it, evaluate it every three months, adjust the process and if needed the protocol, and keep using it.
- Remember: to be able to cooperate and share information, you need a functioning relationship. This means not only contacting schools when in need of information, but also on a more

regular basis, to see how they are doing and whether there are relevant developments you would like to discuss.

How can cooperation between schools and a local authority be facilitated, supported and coordinated?

- To be able to cooperate when a person shows signs of radicalisation and intervention is needed, talk the process through with schools beforehand. Ask them what their ideal process would look like and draft a plan for who does what and when.
- If not already done, introduce the schools to the other partners in the multi-agency network that cooperate on the local level to prevent radicalisation. Make the schools part of the local network and make them aware of their role, but also of the fact that they are not on their own; on the contrary, there is a whole network of partners at the local level working on preventing young people from radicalising. Schools can also benefit from these contacts for other topics, such as drug abuse or mental health issues.

13 Powerful strategies for building trust

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Implementing the following 13 strategies will **greatly** improve your success rate when building trust. As a result, building trust with others will become a much faster, smoother experience.

1. Keep to your word and follow through with your actions

- The entire purpose of building trust with others is that they will be able to believe you when you say that you will do something, e.g. if you promise to perform a task for them, they should be able to hand the task over to you and forget about it until it is completed.
- There will be times when you regret making a commitment but for the sake of the relationship, it is generally best that you follow through on your commitment and then avoid repeating it. There will be some situations in which you are required to break a commitment, but this should be communicated early and treated as a renegotiation.

2. Learn how to communicate effectively with others

- The main reason why relationships fall apart is bad communication skills. As mentioned above, there will be times when you have to break a commitment, but if communicated early and properly, this rarely becomes a major issue.
- Another important element of communication is to be clear on what you have and have not committed to. Never leave the site of an agreement without double-checking that all parties are crystal clear about what exactly has been agreed. Effective communication is critical to building trust.

3. It takes time to build and earn trust

- Building trust should be viewed as a daily activity. Don't expect too much too soon. Focus on small steps and small commitments. As the trust level grows, you will become more comfortable making and accepting bigger commitments.

4. Take time when making decisions and think before acting too quickly

- A lot of disagreement and broken trust arises due to one person agreeing to something that they didn't really want to agree to. Don't be that person. Before you

make a commitment, make sure that you are happy to agree to it. Consider everything that is involved in keeping the commitment as you may find that you do not have the time or desire to follow through on it.

- As unpleasant as it may seem, if you really do not want to do something, you should say 'no'. While others may be disappointed, agreeing to something and not following through would be far worse for everybody.
- Value those relationships you have and don't take them for granted. We all have people in our lives who have been with us for years. It can be very easy to take these friendships for granted until problems arise and we realise that we neglected this person. Even during very busy periods, it is always possible to find a little time for those that matter most to us. Taking this time will ensure that you have valuable, supportive relationships built on a bedrock of trust.

6. Treat your partners well and thank them for their efforts

- As above, don't get so busy building trust and relationships with new people that you forget

to nurture the relationships that you already have. It is far easier to maintain existing relationships. If you neglect these relationships they may be lost and virtually impossible to re-establish.

7. Develop your team skills and participate openly

- Whatever team you find yourself in, you have value to offer. Otherwise, you wouldn't be there. Do not be the quiet person that sits in the corner and contributes nothing. Those who do not contribute anything are viewed as freeloaders, in whom others find it difficult to trust.
- When you participate fully in a team and offer your insights, people respect and trust you. Even if they don't agree with you, they value the fact that you are willing to offer your view and have a discussion. When building trust within a team, it is important that you demonstrate your willingness to trust others. Your openness and willingness to contribute demonstrates this.

8. Always be honest

- It shouldn't really need to be said, but sadly it does: 'honesty is the best policy'. People often tell small lies in an attempt to protect

others, or to avoid trouble.

However, when the other person finds out that you lied, they automatically assume that you are prepared to lie about everything. Your chances of building trust will be lost over a small lie that was of little worth to anyone.

- While you may wish to present information in the most pleasant way possible, the message you communicate should always be the truth.

9. Help people whenever you can

- One of the most effective strategies when building trust is to be of service to others. If you help somebody in a way which provides no direct benefit to yourself, you will experience the indirect benefit of improved trust. Kindness really does go a long way.

10. Don't hide your feelings

- People have always tried to hide their feelings in order to appear tough and avoid appearing vulnerable. However, people like and trust people who are most like them, e.g. if you receive some upsetting news, others expect you to appear upset. They understand. If you try too hard to hide these

emotions, you come across as a heartless robot and, nobody trusts a heartless robot.

- When people know you care, they are more prepared to trust you. The honesty of your emotions can be a very powerful tool when building trust.

11. Don't always self-promote

- Think about others. If they have worked hard and effectively, don't they deserve some recognition too? When you recognise and appreciate the efforts of others, you demonstrate your talent for leadership and teamwork. Building trust with those with whom you work becomes incredibly easy and you soon develop a team of people who will go that extra mile to help you.

12. Always do what you believe to be right

- Life would be easier if you just did everything that others wanted. You would have all the approval that you could possibly want, and approval is nice. The problem with seeking approval is that you have to sacrifice your own values and beliefs to get it. In other words, you don't trust yourself, your values and your beliefs.

- In addition, when people see that you are willing to sell out on yourself, they conclude that you would also be willing to sell out on them. Ironically, when you build a reputation for always doing what you believe to be right, even when others disagree with you, they respect your honesty and integrity. It may seem strange, but when building trust, you have to be prepared to upset others.
- In order to always do what you believe is right, you need to be clear about your values. Values Based Living¹ can help you achieve this.

13. Admit to your mistakes

- Everybody makes mistakes. When you try to hide your mistakes, you are hiding your own humanity. People know that you are being dishonest. When you accept and acknowledge your mistakes, you have the opportunity to share what you have learned from them. Showing your vulnerable side helps to build trust with others as they see you as somebody who is more like them.

¹ See www.coachingpositiveperformance.com