

1. Overview

A rapid review was carried out following the death of a vulnerable teenage child who was looked after in a home in another local authority. The young person had experienced adverse childhood experiences ([ACEs](#)), been diagnosed with [Autism Spectrum Disorder](#) (ASD) and had been a victim of [radicalisation](#). The review found there was a lack of clarity surrounding the support of therapeutic and mental health services during the investigation.

2. Key Learning

- Understand the Prevent and Pursue process
- Recognise additional [vulnerabilities](#) of children who are neurodivergent during criminal investigations
- Ensure children continue to receive therapeutic and mental health support even if subject to criminal investigations
- Understand the complexities of supporting children placed out of area

7. Advice for practitioners

- Listen to their voice and how they communicate
- Consider age and understanding – are they able to make informed choices
- Understand the reporting role during the Prevent and Pursue process and the services available to young people
- Coordinate with relevant health providers to ensure any therapeutic or [mental health](#) support continues to be provided
- Collaborate with cross-border partner agencies if the child moves between areas



3. Prevent and Pursue

[Prevent](#) is part of the [Channel](#) multi-agency approach to support those who are at risk of being radicalised. [Early intervention](#) and collaborative working between partner agencies helps to protect vulnerable young people from being exploited by extremists and allows them to choose a different pathway of support. [Pursue](#) is the term used to describe the criminal investigation taken by the police. The CPS has confirmed that any child subject to criminal investigation should continue to access support for their mental health.

6. Neurodiversity and radicalisation

A child may be more susceptible due to:

- Communication difficulties
- Not fitting in or struggling with a sense of identity
- Feeling isolated and a lack of friends
- Struggle in unfamiliar environments
- Tendency to [hyperfocus](#) on specific topics
- Having a limited understanding of risk
- Difficulties in understanding appropriate behaviour by others towards them

5. Understanding neurodiversity

If you are supporting a neurodivergent young person in the [criminal justice system](#), consider your understanding when making decisions:

- What does this mean for that child?
- What is the impact on them?
- How do they make sense of what is happening to them?
- Do they have a wide support network or other protective factors?

4. Reflection

- Are you confident in supporting a young person if referred to Prevent?
- Do you take a holistic approach to make sure any vulnerabilities or individual needs are being met by the appropriate services?
- Do you have an effective partnership with safeguarding teams and know how to access [local procedures](#)?