

LEICESTERSHIRE AUTISM SUPPORT EVENT - 18TH NOVEMBER 2021

We are holding an event on the 18th November 2021 (See attached) with the aim of helping support parents and carers of children with diagnosed or suspected Autism and wondered if you might be able to help?

I work for the Leicestershire Prevent Team, part of Counter Terrorism Policing, dealing with the safeguarding of people who are vulnerable to being drawn into extremism and terrorism. We have identified a growing number of cases being referred in to us where, following engaging with the family and people referred in, there was no actual extremism or terrorism element to the case but there was a family struggling to support a vulnerable child on the Autism Spectrum. In many of these cases, the young person has latched on to certain theories or stories they have seen online and have expressed these in a way that has been misconstrued as them having a strong, concerning, belief or grievance. On speaking with the young people, we are finding that their comments are fairly spurious, having been made whilst processing items they have seen online and there are no deep rooted concerns or beliefs for us to work with. Discussions with the families prior to us closing the case has then highlighted their need for online safety advice, information to support them better understand Autism, how to communicate in ways their child understands and how they can obtain additional support.

We have made ad-hoc requests to individual support groups and local authorities in the past to support these families but have found some of these services difficult to identify and commission. As this appears to be a growing area of referral for us, we felt that we needed to establish a better understanding of the support provided by partner agencies and local groups, as well as assist in directly supporting the families we are involved with. This led us to create a list of objectives and proposals for how we could achieve these objectives.

Objectives:

- Establish better links between Prevent and local support groups and services.
- Help Prevent officers better understand Autism
- Help Parents / Carers Understand:
 - What Autism Spectrum is.
 - How it affects a child's development / social skills.
 - What support is available. (education, financial, life skills, home support etc)
 - How they can obtain this support / how they get a diagnosis.
 - If there are any downsides to getting a diagnosis.
 - How they can better understand / support / communicate with their child.
 - If there are any increased risks they should know about. (rigid thinking, accepting info as the truth, different learning / communication styles etc)
 - What steps they can take to ensure their child is safe. (Online safety / grooming / reporting etc)
 - Who they can turn to for ongoing support.

Proposals:

- Liaise with local services and groups to establish best practice / identify what resources are already available.
- Consider ways to maintain a list of support services are available and be accessible by anyone.

- Host an in-person attended event (with refreshments) for parents and carers and live stream the event with Q&A facilities available for those that cannot attend in person:
 - Invite local support services / groups to provide stands around the room to encourage movement and discussion.
 - Host guest speakers to discuss key aspects of Autism; Services / Groups available and Online Safety.
 - Allow time for Q&A / meet and greet between presentations and at the end of the event.
 - Encourage and assist with the creation of parent / carer support groups during the event / link in with pre-existing groups.
- Encourage monthly meetings for the support groups that hopefully form as a result of this event.
- Maintain contact with the groups to provide Prevent with an avenue of support for future referrals.

We have already secured the lecture theatre at Leicestershire Police HQ on the 18th November as well as funding for refreshments. Our first guest speaker, Clinical Psychologist Lisa Hewitt, has confirmed her attendance and I will be providing an input around online safety. We would very much like to involve local support organisations in the development of this event to help refine the format of the event; determine options for maintaining a support directory; explore the options for the creation of support groups, identify what support already exist and to provide their presence and support on the day of the event.

If you feel that this event is something you would like to support us with, please would you let me know by return of email or by calling the mobile number below?

I would be grateful if you are aware of any other support services covering the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland areas, which may be interested in assisting us, please could you forward this email on to them?

Thank you very much for your time.

Kind regards,

Mark Bebbington

Prevent Officer (Leicestershire)

Counter Terrorism Policing | East Midlands

Tel	101 (Ask for the Prevent Team)
Mob	07976 863087
Email	Mark.Bebbington@leics.police.uk
Web	To make a Prevent referral, please click here.

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Report it in confidence at www.gov.uk/ACT. Your actions could save lives.

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