



Video Gaming & Extremism

Please note, this is a sensitive topic that impacts many people. If you find that this has caused you any upset or distress, please stop and seek appropriate support or feel free to reach out to the Safeguarding team at safeguarding@qa.com



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Video Gaming – The Dark Side

Video gaming is one of the most consistent and fastest-growing sectors. It is estimated that there are around 2.8 billion gamers around the world. However, as technology develops, so do the associated harms, with new challenges constantly presented.



A growing concern for counter-terrorism is the increasing intersection between video gaming and (violent) extremism. It is suggested that extremists and terrorists, who are often pioneers in the digital space, are afforded new opportunities through gaming and associated platforms.

How?

Creation of video games - Games can be crafted with storylines that align with extremist views. This includes portraying certain groups as enemies or threats, which reinforces negative stereotypes and biases. The narrative might reward players for actions that are consistent with extremist ideologies, making these views seem heroic or justified or incentivising this. Some games may also be designed to present a skewed version of historical events, often glorifying or justifying extremist ideologies.

'Mods' - original games can be modified to introduce new characters, images, backgrounds, landscapes, and other attributes. Extremists share modded versions of popular games that include their propaganda, altered game textures, characters, or even new storylines that propagate extremist views. Customisation options can also allow players to dress their avatars in a way that represents extremist groups. This can include clothing, tattoos, or other visual markers that signify allegiance to certain ideologies.

Applications - Extremist groups use applications to identify and recruit new members. They can groom individuals over time, and are able to share radical content and ideologies. They can also create group chats which facilitate a community for this. 3 most popular applications but not limited to are:

- **Steam** - Described on its own platform as the 'ultimate destination for playing, discussing, and creating games'.
- **Discord** - Discord's initial purpose was to enable an effective means for gamers collaborating on multi-player video games to communicate with one another. It has the function of allowing gamers to talk in real time using voice, text, or video chat. Users are also able to share files, videos, and music.
- **Twitch** - Twitch is a platform where users livestream themselves playing video games, with others being able to simply watch or interact with the gamer in real-time using the in-app chat function, or through additional platforms like Discord.



Thinking Points

Questions to ask yourself if you feel someone is becoming radicalised through gaming...

- Are they becoming increasingly intolerant to other people's views?
- Are they being secretive about who they are talking to online?
- Do they appear to be expressing someone else's views, change in interests, isolated?
- Are they using new jargon?
- Are they showing paranoia, distrust, victim mentality?

Steps to Take if You Suspect Radicalisation

Open Communication: Engage in open, non-judgmental conversations about their gaming interests and online interactions.

Educate: Educate them about the dangers of online radicalisation and encourage critical thinking about the content they consume.

Seek Professional Help & Report:

- Call the Anti-Terrorism Hotline on 0800 789 321
- Report online - [Report online material promoting terrorism or extremism - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-online-material-promoting-terrorism-or-extremism)
- Make a referral to the Safeguarding team:
[Safeguarding Referral Form \(Staff/Employers/Peer\)](#)
[Safeguarding Self-Referral \(Apprentices\)](#)
[Low-Level and Behavioural Safeguarding Concern](#)
- *Call 999 if there is a crime in progress*

While video gaming has revolutionised entertainment and created vibrant global communities, it has also opened new avenues for the spread of extremism. Addressing this issue requires collaboration among game developers, platforms, parents, educators, and players. By fostering awareness and implementing robust countermeasures, we can ensure that gaming remains a safe and enjoyable activity for everyone.

