Multi-agency interventions to address radicalisation

Multi-agency interventions involving police to disrupt pathways from radicalisation to violence.

First published
3 August 2023

Effect scale	Quality of evidence				
	Effect Impact on crime	Mechanism How it works	Moderator Where it works	Implementation How to do it	Economic cost What it costs
— No overall change	■■■□ Strong	■□□□ Low	No information	■■■□ Strong	No information

Focus of the intervention

The review focused on multi-agency interventions to address terrorism, violent extremism or radicalisation. Multi-agency interventions involve the partnership of two or more groups to solve a shared problem. These groups may be government agencies or non-governmental agencies such as businesses or community organisations.

The review included any multi-agency intervention where at least one partner was the police and the intervention explicitly aimed to address terrorism, violent extremism or radicalisation to violence. Intervention approaches identified in the review included:

- police engaging with other agencies to help identify terrorist threats
- police working with other agencies to refer, assess, or case?manage individuals identified as at? risk for radicalisation

- police forming task forces with other agencies to problem?solve issues relating to radicalisation or extremism

This narrative is based on one systematic review covering 26 primary studies. Five of the studies in the review focused on the effectiveness of police?involved multi-agency partnerships in either:

- disrupting pathways from radicalisation to violence by addressing multiple risk factors in a coordinated manner (one study)
- improving inter-agency collaboration (four studies)

Of the 26 primary studies, 17 were based on evidence from the USA. There were two studies each from Australia, Canada and the UK, one study each from Germany and Kenya, and one covering multiple international locations.

Effect – how effective is it?

There is no evidence to suggest that multi-agency interventions have a statistically significant impact on disrupting pathways from radicalisation to violence.

The one primary study that examined the impact of a police?involved multi-agency intervention to counter radicalisation to violence used self-report surveys to assess knowledge of out?group cultures, attitudes, and behavioural outcomes. The study did not make it explicitly clear whether treatment participants were directly exposed to the intervention components that involved the police. Additionally, neither the treatment group nor the comparison group were noted by the primary study authors as being at risk for radicalisation.

In terms of non-crime outcomes, four primary studies assessed the impact of a police multi-agency partnership on inter-agency collaboration. These studies reported on multi-agency collaboration outcome categories and the findings were mixed. As the review was unable to include a meta-analysis to combine the data from these single studies, an overall effect cannot be reported.

How strong is the evidence?

The review was sufficiently systematic that many forms of bias that could influence the study conclusions can be ruled out.

The review obtained evidence from 26 primary studies and demonstrated a high-quality design in terms of having a transparent and well-designed search strategy and sufficiently assessing the risks associated with publication bias. However, the review was unable to conduct a meta-analysis due to the interventions and outcomes in the primary studies being considered too distinct.

Additionally, in terms of the primary studies included in the review, only two studies were based on evidence from the UK. All the primary studies had substantial methodological issues and/or risk of bias. The primary studies did not use randomised or rigorous quasi?experimental methods, and only one of the studies specifically focused on evaluating the effectiveness of police?involved multi-agency interventions to counter violent radicalisation. Finally, the quality of the evidence in the primary studies for mechanisms, moderators and economic considerations was limited, with little demonstration of theoretically informed hypothesis testing or detailed accounts of costs and benefits.

The limitations with the primary studies led the review authors to conclude that more investment needs to be made in robust evaluation across interventions to address terrorism, violent extremism or radicalisation.

Mechanism – how does it work?

Multi-agency interventions to address terrorism, violent extremism or radicalisation are assumed to disrupt pathways from radicalisation to violence by:

- collectively addressing multiple risk factors
- fostering a coordination of effort
- drawing on a broad range of expertise
- allowing for information and intelligence sharing
- enabling the pooling of resources
- increasing capacity
- enhancing programme planning and design

However, these assumptions were not empirically tested in the review as the original studies did not provide the necessary information to do so.

Moderators – in which contexts does it work best?

The review did not examine under what conditions or for what population groups the intervention might work best.

Implementation – what can be said about implementing this initiative?

Factors considered to be important for the successful implementation of multi-agency interventions to address terrorism, violent extremism or radicalisation included the following.

Resources

- A dedicated coordinator to drive a multi-agency initiative.
- The same partners involved from start to finish to ensure consistency of participation.
- The police providing organisational leadership - with senior officer support helping facilitate partnership working.
- Agencies having convenient locations for meetings (although the research was conducted pre-pandemic before changes in working practices).

Funding

- Having additional funding available to support partnership work (in a counter terrorism context).
- Costs to initiate partnerships and provide products being kept low.

Training

- Providing good quality training (in a counterterrorism context).
- Follow up to training, rather than it being a one?off, and opportunities for participants to connect.
- Having easy access to training products and activities that directly align with end?user needs and priorities.
- Ensuring agency participants have a clear understanding of programme goals.

Other

- Keeping intelligence gathering activities separate and distinct from any community outreach activities aimed at countering violent radicalisation and/or extremism, to help ensure that the two activities do not become blurred.

Considerations for using multi-agency interventions

The review highlighted the following as important considerations for future replication of multi-agency interventions to address terrorism, violent extremism, or radicalisation.

- Access to funding.
- Information sharing (as a two-way process).
- Access to the appropriate intelligence databases and technology.
- Administrative oversight of databases.
- Avoiding duplication of activities and data collection.
- Providing participants with information targeted to their needs.
- Formal processes in place to enable the efficient transfer of information to partners.

However, the facilitating factors discussed in this section were not empirically tested in the review and should consequently be treated with caution.

Economic considerations – how much might it cost?

The review did not mention the costs or benefits of multi-agency interventions to address terrorism, violent extremism, or radicalisation. No pooled economic analysis was provided.

General considerations

In terms of crime reduction outcomes, the review was unable to provide evidence to suggest that multi-agency interventions have an impact on disrupting pathways from radicalisation to violence.

Only two primary studies included in the review were based on evidence from the UK. This should be borne in mind when considering suggestions of important factors for successful implementation of multi-agency interventions.

Summary

There is no evidence to suggest that multi-agency interventions have a statistically significant impact on disrupting pathways from radicalisation to violence.

Multi-agency interventions to address terrorism, violent extremism or radicalisation were suggested to be facilitated by adequate resources, inter-agency collaboration and ongoing support and training. However, these facilitating factors for effective multi-agency interventions were not empirically tested and should be treated with caution.

Additional evidence is required to identify whether and how multi-agency interventions address terrorism, violent extremism, or radicalisation.

Additional resources

- Mazerolle L and others. (2021). [Multiagency programs with police as a partner for reducing radicalisation to violence](). Campbell Systematic Reviews, 17, e1162.

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