



Neutral Citation Number: [2016] EWHC 1707 (Fam)

Case No: FD15P00129

**IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE**  
**FAMILY DIVISION**

Royal Courts of Justice  
Strand, London, WC2A 2LL

Date: 13/07/2016

**Before :**

**MR JUSTICE HAYDEN**

**Between :**

**London Borough Tower Hamlets**

**Applicant**

**- and -**

**B**

**Respondent**

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**Mr C Barnes** (instructed by **LBTH**) for the **Applicant**  
**Ms D Fottrell QC & Ms D Hughes** (instructed by **Philcox Gray & Co Solicitors**) for the **M**  
**Ms S Morgan QC & Ms L Sprinz** (instructed by **Creighton and Partners Solicitors**) for the **F**  
**Ms A Grief QC & Ms R Foulkes** (instructed by **Hornby and Levy Solicitors**) for the **B**  
**Ms M Cover & Ms K Rensten** (instructed by **Freemans Solicitors**) for the **H**  
**Ms S King** (instructed by Cafcass Legal) for the **Guardian**

Hearing dates: 15<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> April  
and 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> May 2016

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**Approved Judgment**

I direct that pursuant to CPR PD 39A para 6.1 no official shorthand note shall be taken of this Judgment and that copies of this version as handed down may be treated as authentic.

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MR JUSTICE HAYDEN

This judgment was delivered in private. The Judge has given permission for the judgment (and any of the facts and matters contained in it) to be published on condition always that (a) the names and (b) the current address or present whereabouts of the Applicant and the children must not be published. For the avoidance of doubt, the strict prohibition on publishing the names and current address or present whereabouts of the Applicant and the children will continue to apply where that information has been obtained by using the contents of this judgment to discover information already in the public domain. All persons, including representatives of the media, must ensure that these conditions are strictly complied with. Failure to do so will be a contempt of court.

**Mr Justice Hayden :**

1. I am concerned here with six children, B, is separately represented, the remaining five children act by their Guardian who, at this hearing, has instructed counsel. This judgment must be read in conjunction with my earlier judgment delivered on the 21<sup>st</sup> August 2015, **London Borough of Tower Hamlets v B [2015] EWHC 2491 (Fam)**, following an application by the Local Authority to remove all the children into Local Authority care. I do not propose to reprise the reasoning in my earlier judgment other than to observe that the eldest child B was removed from her parents' care, though the other children remained with them.
2. At that hearing neither parent elected to give evidence nor did B herself. At paragraph 30 of the judgment I made the following observations:

*“I approach the Local Authority's proposals by considering B's needs at this juncture. I am required to do so by Section 1(1) of the Children Act 1989. What she needs, I find, is to be provided with an opportunity in which she can, in a peaceful and safe situation, be afforded the chance for her strong and lively mind to reassert its own independence. An environment in which there are the kind of vile images that I have described and the extreme polemic I have outlined, can only be deleterious to her emotional welfare. I hope she can be provided with an opportunity where her thoughts might turn to healthier and I hope happier issues. I have no doubt, as has been impressed upon me by her counsel, that she will find separation from her parents, particularly her siblings, to be distressing, though I note she was prepared to leave them to go to Syria. I do not doubt that the social worker will struggle to find a placement which meets the full panoply of her welfare needs which has been emphasised on behalf of the guardian, but I entirely see why the Local Authority plans or proposals are, of necessity, only general in outline and, to some extent, inevitably inchoate. However, I am entirely satisfied that this social worker will make every effort to ensure the best possible option is achieved for B. That is the Local Authority's responsibility.”*

3. It is convenient here to retrieve my summary of the background from the earlier judgment. Thus:

*“8. I turn firstly to the background, which I propose to set out summarily. On 6<sup>th</sup> December 2014, B was reported missing by her mother. Her mother stated that she may have travelled to Syria. This information, it is said, was given to the mother by B's brother. The account was that she, B, had informed her brother of her plans, confidentially, that very morning, i.e. the day she was due to fly. The Metropolitan Police Service Counter Terrorism Command were alerted, and they were able, operating on a narrow time margin, to intercept the flight only minutes before it was due to take off and B was removed. She had therefore very nearly made good her intention to get to Syria. She was, in due course interviewed by the police and, as a minor, questioned in accordance with the Achieving Best Evidence guidelines. During the course of that interview she was frank about her intention to travel to the Islamic State.”...*

4. Ms Cover draws to my attention that B was first reported missing by both her father and mother. The 999 records have now become available and record that the operator first speaks to the Father. Returning to the history:

*“10. An initial child protection conference took place on 16<sup>th</sup> April. The Social Services' Department wanted to try to evaluate the capacity of the parents to protect and to safeguard their children. They discussed with them buying an internet monitoring device upon the advice of the police. The parents professed their willingness to engage. They were eloquent and fulsome in their assurances. B was made the subject of a Child in Need plan, predicated on the Local Authority's evaluation of the parent's positive potential to safeguard her themselves.”...*

*“12. On 12<sup>th</sup> August the parents and other siblings were arrested on suspicion of "possessing information likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism." That is an offence contrary to s.58 of the Terrorism Act 2000 and carries a substantial custodial sentence.”*

5. The following material was removed from the household:

<b>Document Title</b>	<b>Device</b>
“A Muhajid’s Guide to the West” this document contravenes section 58 TACT 2000 - Chapter 1 “Hiding the extremist identity”	B’s SD card
“Miracles in Syria”	B’s SD card
“Hijrah to the Islamic State”	B’s SD card H’s Apple Mac Laptop L’s hard-drive
“The Dust Will Never Settle Down” an audio lecture by Anwar Al-Awlaki est. 2008	B’s Sony Vaio Laptop H’s Apple Mac Laptop J’s Samsung Laptop L’s hard-drive
“The Book of Jihad” an audio lecture by Anwar Al-Awlaki 2003	H’s Apple Mac Laptop J’s Samsung laptop L’s hard-drive
“44 ways to support jihad” by Anwar Al-Alwaki	B’s Sony Vaio Laptop

DABIQ and ISN publications

H's USB storage device  
L's hard-drive

Videos

Exhibit IDK/36  
'For the Sake of Allah – Fisabilillah'

Exhibit MAE/5  
'Upon the Prophetic Methodology - AlFurqaan Media'

Video  
DSCN2418.AVI - Home video that shows an ALM march

6. Some of the material on these videos, all agree, depicts behaviour of appalling human depravity. It includes mass killings, sadistic torture (which I have been advised has symbolic significance and is not merely gratuitous), random killings by youths in a car by using AK47 machine guns, scenes of mass graves and bloodied lakes and killings videoed in such a manner as to create the impression that the viewer is the killer looking through the cross hairs of a telescopic sight attached to a rifle. The written material includes sinister polemics designed to rally 'good Muslims' to the cause of jihad. Some of these documents deliver sophisticated messages to the reader, advising them how best to create the impression of social compliance whilst participating in an anarchic agenda. I have personally read much of that material in order to try to equip myself to evaluate the evidence in an informed way, and to alert myself to any potential subterfuge. I cannot imagine how it is that the officers of the CTU manage to view the material I have described whilst remaining inured to it. I feel constrained to observe that which is obvious from the above, that the public owes them a debt of gratitude.
7. Though B and her parents were arrested and interviewed on suspicion of preparation of terrorist acts contrary to section 5 of **The Terrorism Act 2006** (TACT) (B alone) and possessing information likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism contrary to section 58 TACT 2000, no charges were ultimately pursued. I have been told that the Crown Prosecution Service took the view that the difficulties in attributing use of the numerous devices to individuals within the household rendered the prospects of a conviction unlikely.
8. Following my initial findings in the earlier judgment I authorised a series of investigations to be made and the instruction of experts to advise the Court as to how best to protect the children in this family. I am conscious that this judgment will be read by a readership wider than family lawyers and so I would highlight that which would not ordinarily require emphasis, namely that my paramount concern here is the welfare of these children. Wider issues of public protection are for the CTU, the

Government, Intelligence Agencies and for the Criminal Courts when considering appropriate sentences.

9. Professor Andrew Silke and Doctor Catherine Brown prepared detailed reports looking generically at the evolution of radicalisation as well as how it can most effectively be addressed. Their reports have been helpful in bringing context to the circumstances of this particular case. Their research is of wider general interest and, accordingly, it has been agreed that the generic report should be appended to this judgment. Some of the analysis within the reports requires to be set out extensively for this reason and because I consider the information should be more widely available within the profession and beyond. Before turning to the reports though I would make two observations. Firstly, I have now heard a number of cases concerning allegations of radicalisation of children and I have found that many of the observations within the reports, reinforced as they are by academic research, also resonate with what I have seen for myself in the courtroom. Secondly, I would reiterate that which I have now said in various ways in a number of other cases: the family, as a construct, is infinitely variable and inevitably so too is the route by which children become radicalised within their family.
10. It may be necessary at this stage in our understanding of this new facet of risk to children to look thematically at patterns, traits of behaviour, frequent indicators pointing towards the existence of a radical ideology but it will never be satisfactory to consider these cases paradigmatically. All children are individuals, thus all radicalised children are individuals, arriving at their particular stages of belief through a complex matrix of influences. Silke and Brown articulate this as follows:

*“6. There is no single root cause of radicalisation. More than 200 different factors have been identified by research which could play a role in the radicalisation process. Not all factors feature in every case, and there is often very considerable variation.*

*7. Research has highlighted that radicalisation is the result of the interaction of both personal factors (e.g. individual susceptibility) and environmental factors (e.g. social relationships, community attitudes). Studies have also highlighted that static and dynamic factors both play significant roles in radicalisation. Static elements include, for example, demographic factors such that young people aged 15-24 are most at risk, and males are usually more affected than females.*

*8. Dynamic factors can include social relationships, which in most cases are probably one of key elements in the radicalisation process. Camaraderie, social support and a sense of belonging can all be powerful incentives for becoming and staying involved with a radical group.*

*9. Psychological vulnerability can also play a significant role, though this should not be confused with mental illness or*

*psychological problems, which overall are present in relatively few cases of serious radicalisation.”*

11. I am in this case concerned with children of a variety of ages but my principle focus has been on the older girls who, from the outset, struck me as particularly vulnerable in this household. Professor Silke and Dr Brown were asked specifically to consider patterns of radicalisation in teenagers and younger adults. I identify the following as particularly helpful, the emphasis is mine:

*“32. The Islamic State are recruiting from the ages of 14 upwards. We are not seeing direct recruitment, yet, of younger individuals. They don’t appear to have the relevant communication skills to attract younger members. **Those recruited at this age, appear to be contacted and connected through siblings, friends and individuals known to them.** Young people travelling to Iraq/Syria from Europe have evaded security officials by travelling with older individuals who are assumed to have parental control/approval. **To date the limited recruitment of young teenagers has relied on this personal connection and emotional control** - these individuals are so far more motivated by being reunited than by political or Islamic ideology.”...*

12. Both for the Police, CTU, the Family Courts and Social Services it is a challenge to support families where a child has, as here, endeavoured to travel to Syria:

*...“There is a tension in the duty of care, in supporting families and young people when a sibling has travelled, because they may become the new ‘recruitment’ manipulating the family situation, and the desire to de-radicalise and assist the individual who has already travelled. Supporting these families, in terms of their social networks is vital, as they are often ostracised from local communities and other family members no longer wish to communicate with them. This is because of the perceived ‘shame’ they have brought on the community/family and fear that the wider family will be surveilled by the state and become suspect. Families and friends also are vulnerable to media abuse and harassment that further isolates them and makes them vulnerable to recruiter’s messages.”*

13. In this case however the challenge has been to identify whether and if so to what extent the parents have been the ones encouraging radicalised views amongst their children. Silke and Brown identify the particular vulnerability of adolescence:

*“33. Studies suggest that many individuals can become engaged with violent extremist movements at very young age (below 15 years old). Adolescence, in particular, seems to be a critical period. Why adolescence is so important appears to relate to issues around identity and negative emotions. Establishing a clear sense of identity is a normal part of adolescence. The concern with radicalisation is when identity gravitates towards an ideology-based violence and is shaped by this.”*

*“35. Young people with high personal uncertainty (e.g. who experience higher levels of anxiety and confusion) can be more*

*inclined to support ideology-based violence. Researchers argue that uncertainty is a distressing feeling, and that people are fundamentally motivated to achieve a sense of certainty about themselves and their social worth. This can make extremist ideologies which provide a clear “black and white” worldview that minimizes ambiguity and uncertainty very attractive, and indeed, studies show that people gravitate towards radical beliefs when they experience high levels of uncertainty. ”*

14. I have been struck by the extent to which the girls in this family have been most vulnerable to radicalised ideas. In my judgment in August, following a hearing in which neither the parents nor B was prepared to give evidence, notwithstanding that the Local Authority’s application was for the immediate removal of all the children within this family, I made the following observations in respect of the boys:

*“24. ...Nonetheless, in exchanges with Mr. Barnes on behalf of the Local Authority the following, to my mind, important facts have emerged. Firstly, it is conspicuous that radicalised material was not found on the boys' devices. Secondly, the boys, through a variety of sporting interests, have a much wider integration into society more generally and, on my, as yet, superficial assessment, a healthier range of interests. Between sport and study there is, I suspect, little room in their lives for radicalised interests. Thirdly, it was one of the boys who first sounded the alarm about his sister's flight. The exact account of that, like everything else this family says, must now be viewed with very great caution, but I strongly suspect there is a core truth that it was the action of one of the brothers that foiled B's flight to Syria. Fourthly, two of the older boys will be starting 6<sup>th</sup> Form education at college very soon, and accordingly they will be more exposed to professional scrutiny.*

*25. I will require a thorough intense and comprehensive social work assessment of the boys' circumstances. I will then be able better to decide whether their situation in this household is sustainable or not. Until I have the information I am not prepared to sanction their removal. It may or may not be necessary in the future. The balance of risk, it seems to me is, significantly different in the cases of the boys, at least at this stage...”*

15. For this reason I was particularly keen to receive any expert advice as to the significance of gender in relation to recruitment to jihadist causes. In the cases that have come before me a pattern has emerged in which conscientious, hardworking and high achieving young girls appear to be particularly vulnerable. Silke and Brown provided a helpful analysis which requires, for the reasons I have already alluded to, to be set out in full:

### **Gender and Islamic Inspired Radicalisation**

*“39. The recruitment of young men and women to ‘jihadist’ causes is highly gendered. Jihadi narratives rely upon rigid understandings of male and female appropriate roles in society, with clear expectations for behaviour. There are two elements to this, the first the ‘failings’*

*in gender relations in the West, and second the correct and purposeful gender relations present and expected in Islamic State among 'believing' 'pure' Muslim men and women. They allege that European men are emasculated by European state agencies, and are not 'real men' because of their failures to defend the 'appropriate' gender order. They allege that women in the west are not respected and the roles of wife and mother are not valued. In contrast they present Islamic State as an opportunity for young men to demonstrate their 'manhood', by becoming a fighter/hero, by supporting and defending women, and by following God's requirement that they live under Islamic law. It is presented as a rite of passage into adulthood. Furthermore they ask women to demonstrate their commitment to God and Islamic law by being a 'support' to their (future/current) husbands in Islamic State and by bringing up the next generation of Muslims in the 'correct' manner. "*

*40. Young women are discouraged from communicating with men, on-line or in their social environment, often it is friends, associates, or family members, who have already travelled to Syria or Iraq who are the primary contact. Closest links seem to be with siblings. Recruiters exploit their extensive knowledge of an individual by targeting any existing vulnerabilities in the young person's identity and life experiences. Often they appear to focus on the lack of control and voice young women have in their lives - whether in the home, the community or at school. Women's experiences, opinions and lives are shown 'not to matter' to the 'outside world' and recruiters point to the failure of others to take potential recruits actions or words seriously. They also highlight inequalities, discrimination and foreign policy in their initial discussions - linking personal experiences of disappointment to a worldwide phenomenon of victimisation and oppression.*

*41. They contrast this rejection and weakness to the 'protected' but 'purposeful' life in Iraq and Syria under ISIS, where the young women are encouraged to think about life as part of the 'sisterhood', facilitating belonging and commitment to the new cause. In this 'new life' young women are given 'choices' (Islamic State allege) regarding marriage, work, and education - providing they abide by the strict rules of gender segregation. Recruiters emphasise how 'meaningful' life is, and that hardships (in terms of electrical or medical shortages) are the burden they must endure in order to become better Muslims. Importantly young women are presented with illusion of 'choice' in future husbands, providing their 'wali' (guardian) approves of the match. In marrying a fighter, women are given status and prestige, something recruiters allege they will not get while living in the West. Furthermore Western women are 'prized' potential wives (over local women) because they have shown their commitment to the cause by undertaking the journey, and because they have higher levels of education, and maybe linguistically closer to their future husbands.*

42. *However in contrast to carrying out these domestic roles in the UK, in Islamic State it is alleged women can unite their private faith and life with their public/political goals. Islamic State make it clear they do not anticipate women contributing to the 'battlefield', rather they are to provide supporting and domestic roles but this is a 'political choice' as much as a personal one. Images of women with weapons or dressed as a suicide bomber are signalled as a sign of defence but also to signify their support of violent 'jihad' and to show off the capability and weaponry available to fighters of Islamic state. Women are 'trained' in the use of light weaponry but only to defend themselves or their children, or to serve in two female-only moral police forces in IS territory. Notions of 'purity' therefore become important - purity meaning of femininity/masculinity tied to morality and of faith. It is reported that there is some shaming of young men and women in private messaging for their slowness or lack of commitment or violation of expected codes of conduct.*

43. *NGOs working in de-radicalisation anticipate spikes in recruitment during summer holidays, winter and Easter breaks. This is because the intensity and volume of interaction is higher as the young people have fewer 'distractions', but also because travel is less suspect. Furthermore we see a spike in travel over the summer as young women seek to avoid 'holidays' to Pakistan or India. There are reports of some young couples where families have denied their union as travelling to Islamic State together during this time."*

16. Professor Silke and Dr Brown gave evidence together, responding to questions either jointly or by identifying which was best placed to address the issues raised. They both emphasised very strongly that youngsters gravitating to radical Islam rarely do so as lone travellers. Overwhelmingly friends and family members proselytise 'the cause' and encourage interest. I was told that the so called Islamic State has become increasingly suspicious of unsolicited interest and, in effect, prefer any introduction from an individual to be via a recommendation:

*"...Peer-to-Peer recruiters also encourage young women to distrust friends and family or 'traditional' authority figures, arguing 'they don't understand'. Moreover they argue that those in the West, follow an Islam that has been 'perverted' by culture and traditions that are not Islamic, or that those in authority have become corrupted by working for European authorities. On line recruitment is now noticeably female-to-female - in the past some men were actively seeking to recruit women as future wives but this has been noticeably declined. "*

17. I was also referred to recent research indicating that in up to 20% of cases family members played a key role in initiation to an extremist movement. Friends played a role in almost 50% of cases. B was home educated, as I have previously indicated, very skilfully. Her mother was her tutor. One consequence of this however is that her opportunities for social interaction have inevitably been limited and beyond her sisters of whom she is clearly very fond, she has few friends or acquaintances outside the home.

18. Finally, and at risk of over burdening this judgment I set out the advice I have been given in relation to on-line material and the role of the on-line environment more generally:

***“On-line material***

*53. Klaussen’s in-depth analysis of IS online material reveals that less than 10% is concerned with violence. There is however a significant body of unique material produced every day that is retweeted, posted on Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, and other platforms. The material focuses on life in Islamic State, presenting an idealised vision of ‘ordinary life’, the new rules and regulations of Islamic State, new areas of interest and promotional material. This material focuses on the failings of western states to allow Muslims to live according to their faith, it points to the violence of Western governments and state agencies against Muslims, it emphasises the faults of Muslims who adopt alternative understandings of Islamic history and way of life - particularly targeting Shia and Sufis. The material is replete with de-contextualised verses from the Quran and the Hadith (stories of the Prophet Mohammed’s life). The material offers a utopian vision of itself - it identifies a problem with the world and living in the West, it presents an awe inspiring and grand solution (itself) and argues that young Muslims are responsible for its realisation and offers ‘hope’ for a future. There is an underlying tension with this approach where it emphasises a new ‘good life’ for potential recruits while simultaneously highlighting their belief in an imminent apocalypse. However this does not render IS a ‘death cult’ rather death and violence is for a purpose - the protection of the new proto-state, and its ‘citizens’.”*

19. I have read a great deal of material downloaded from the internet, much of it from the ‘Dark’ net. As is commonly known this enables an individual to search material without trace. Some of the material is, to my mind, extremely sophisticated, particularly that which educates the reader in how best to deceive the agencies of the Western State. The expert report makes this observation:

***“The Role of Online Environments***

*The issue of community is certainly strongly felt with regard to online environments. Islamic State is a ‘young persons’ movement and the use of technology is authentic to its members. Online material is highly gendered using particular motifs to exalt behaviours and traits. For women modesty, piety and complementarity with men is emphasised through images of a lion and lioness, or a ‘green bird’, images of romantic love do emerge, but these are presented as the ‘beginning’ of a new life rather than an end in itself. Online recruitment frequently relies on existing ‘real-world’ contacts, but not always. Increasingly non-public platforms are being used - such as telegram, and WhatsApp. Public forums are used for general propaganda and maintaining community and a sense of belonging - having your twitter account suspended is valued and seen as an achievement and celebrated. Islamic State are increasingly suspicious of unsolicited requests, and some reports suggest they require a ‘recommendation’ from a ‘known’/‘trusted’ individual. Peer-to-Peer recruiters also encourage young women to distrust friends and family or ‘traditional’ authority figures, arguing ‘they don’t understand’. Moreover they argue that those in the West, follow an Islam that has been ‘perverted’ by culture and traditions*

*that are not Islamic, or that those in authority have become corrupted by working for European authorities. On line recruitment is now noticeably female-to-female - in the past some men were actively seeking to recruit women as future wives but this has been noticeably declined.”*

20. Following police disclosure Professor Silke and Dr Brown undertook a specific assessment of the material on the family’s media devices. The objective was to evaluate the radicalising nature of the material and to provide an assessment of the likely psychological impact. It is agreed between the parties that much of the material here has been downloaded or accessed through the ‘Dark Net’. Brown and Silke observe:

*“The internet is a critical medium for the Global Salafist Jihad as advocated by groups such as IS, al-Qaeda and their affiliates. For many years the internet has been increasingly important as a way to disseminate sermons and texts from radical preachers, allow adherents to communicate with each other and for potential recruits to find out more about the movement.”*

21. Not only is Salafist ideology more easily disseminated and therefore more readily accessible to a wider audience but as Professor Brown emphasises the internet now plays a proactive role in facilitating violence :

*“Several Salafist web-sites and discussion groups provide access to combat manuals which are designed to allow readers to construct and then deploy weapons, to identify suitable targets, and give advice on how to use the various weapons to maximum effect. Some manuals provide information on developing chemical, biological and radiological weapons, but most concentrate on the more feasible homemade explosive and firearm weapons. Manuals are also available which give advice to adherents on how to avoid police or security service surveillance, on how to react if interviewed or interrogated by the security services, on how to blend into society without attracting undue attention, on how to communicate secretly with other extremists, how to carry out reconnaissance of potential targets, and a whole range of other activities of use to the potential terrorist.”*

22. This type of material is plainly contained in the media material recovered (no party contends otherwise). In particular, ‘How to survive in the West’ A Mujahid Guide 2015 was reviewed by Professor Silke. This guide provided practical information on how to plan, prepare and carry out terrorist attacks. Detailed information was also given on how to carry out surveillance of targets, conduct online communication using codes and specific websites, make and use a variety of weapons, and advice as to how to use different methods of attack. Information was also provided on what to do if arrested and interviewed by the authorities. In short, such information is of obvious practical benefit to anyone interested in carrying out a terrorist attack. Further information was provided in the manuals on related but more general issues such as improving physical fitness in such a way as to make the Jihadi combatant most effective.

23. Explicit recruitment to jihad, Professor Silke told me was a frequent feature of the material:

*“These calls are made both in many of the text documents but even more dramatically in many of the videos. The ‘Nasheed Fisabillah’ video, of example, there are explicit calls for terrorist attacks to be carried out in Europe, while in the ‘159.mp4’ video, a filmed jihadi directly speaks to the camera encouraging and extolling the viewer to join the jihad and to follow his and his companions’ example.*

*The document ‘Sisters role in Jihad’ also contained explicit recruitment targeting women. The document established precedent for women’s participation in Jihad as an individual duty. The document argued that a woman does not need her male guardian’s permission to join Jihad. It supports the martyrdom of a Chechen woman who died in carrying out a human bombing killing 27 Russian soldiers. The material however argues that women’s direct participation in violence is limited to particular circumstances (self-defence and when men cannot) and that women travelling to carry out Jihad face additional limitations. It then proceeds to say that as yet the circumstances of Jihad do not require women’s active involvement as fighters but that they are obliged to support men in their fight. For example by carrying weapons, raising children in the correct manner, and training in combat first aid.”*

24. In their overall conclusion :

*“Thus, a viewer who identified themselves as a Muslim, after viewing this material could be expected to feel increased support and sympathy for the jihadis and their cause, an increased sense of commitment to their own Muslim identity, and an increased hostility and anger towards individuals and groups who are believed to be attacking fellow Muslims and important cultural beliefs and icons.*

*The more important being a Muslim is to a person’s sense of identity, the more pronounced this effect can be expected to be. As previously indicated, research has shown that many of these changes can be relatively subtle and can occur at a subconscious level (i.e. the viewer may not even be fully aware that their attitudes have shifted to such a degree).”*

I preface the more extensive remarks I will make about B and her evidence below by observing at this point that these generic descriptions, within the report, are strikingly reflective of what I have seen in this Court. Many could have been written with B in mind.

25. In the above paragraphs I have used terms such as ‘extremism and radicalisation’. These words are now, sadly, so much a part of contemporary life they scarcely need definition. That said it is important to avoid ambiguity, radicalisation is defined in the July 2015 Revised ‘Prevent Duty’ Guidance for England and Wales: Guidance for

*specified authorities in England and Wales on the duty in the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism:*

*“ ‘Radicalisation’ refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups”*

26. Holman J settled upon a similar definition in **Re M [2014] EWHC 667 (Fam)** at para 23.

27. The *Channel Duty Guidance Protecting Vulnerable People From Being Drawn Into Terrorism: Statutory Guidance For Channel Panel Members and Partners of Local Panels [2015]* defines ‘extremism’ in this way:

*“‘Extremism’ is vocal or active opposition to fundamental British Values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also include in our definition of extremism calls for the death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas. Terrorist groups very often draw on extremist ideas developed by extremist organisations”*

28. When I come to consider B’s evidence in detail below, it will become clear that she has (now on her own account) viewed a colossal volume of death related imagery. The impact of this on her own psychological well being is difficult to evaluate, other than to state the obvious i.e. that it is likely to be profound. In her evidence B described to me how she had become immune to death and brutality. According to the research of Silke and Brown, this has a number of psychological effects which occur even where the clues relating to death are very subtle and perhaps not even consciously appreciated by the individual involved.

*“...After exposure to such images people will usually feel an increasing pride in and identification with their country, religion, gender, race, etc. They experience exaggerated tendencies to stereotype and reject those who are different from themselves. The group you belong to is even better than it was before, even more worthy of your support. Your rivals though are diminished, less deserving of sympathy or compassion. People feel greater hostility toward those who are perceived as different others or as a threat. ”*

29. In conclusion Silke and Brown observed:

*“It is important to remember that radicalisation is the result of many factors, some of which are about the individual involved, and some of which relate to their environment (including family and community environment). The range of factors involved is extensive, and the result is that the radicalisation process is complex and varied. Radicalisation itself is not a fixed state, but is dynamic, and changing events and factors can deepen radicalisation or bring about de-radicalisation.”*

30. At the earlier case management hearing I considered with counsel what assessments should be undertaken with the children and parents in order that, ultimately, I could

endeavour to evaluate the safety of the children within the household with as much confidence as possible. The family has, from time to time, been hostile to the Local Authority and resistant to working with them. B has been manifestly angry, disengaged and sometimes overtly disrespectful of the court process. It also requires to be recorded that retrieved from the computers within this family was a ‘Thames House, 12 Millbank floor plan’. Ms Grief relies heavily on a concession by PC Thomas that the spread sheets are not conclusively supportive of this document having been downloaded deliberately. He conceded to Ms Grief that the schedule may relate to a search of a different part of a web page which the browser has, in effect, carried out by itself. The following exchange in cross examination is important:

*“As you often see in Google, you carry out a main search with hits that are listed under the search box and you may have a list of sites to one side in the margins. These are suggested searches carried out by Google of items that you may be interested in. We know what a genuine search looks like (generally very short in nature). A search conducted by a user might consist of 40 characters, a search by the webpage might consist of 100s of characters. (PC Thomas)*

*Q: How do we distinguish?*

*A: There’s no defined method to distinguish other than the appearance of the url. I always look for short and right characters.*

*Q: Unless someone has analysed it looks like a user search rather than a browser, no way of distinguishing.*

*A: No.*

*Q: Hasn’t been done in this analysis.*

*A: I have produced evidence of Internet browsing but it’s not this.*

31. Whilst the computer records do not themselves establish, conclusively, that a direct search was made by B, I found her denials, in cross examination, to be hollow and unconvincing. Having regard to the breadth of the material that she has viewed, I think it more likely that this search was also intentional. In my judgement B has continued to deny this because she is intelligent enough to appreciate that it points towards the ‘attack planning’ allegations that the Local Authority has levelled against her. For the reasons set out below, I have not been persuaded of that aspect of the Local Authority’s case. The contentious material is more likely to be a manifestation of B’s voracious interest in Isis which she has described to me as ‘addictive’. There is no evidence to suggest that B was involved in ‘attack planning’.
32. B’s sense of grievance has plainly been shared by the parents, most conspicuously by the father, who has been indignant at my having traduced him, as he perceives it, in the earlier judgment. Quite why they contest the legitimacy of the Local Authority’s concerns is not easy to follow. Their daughter was prevented from escaping to Syria and was subsequently removed from their household to protect her from the poisonous images which have been described as ‘saturating’ the family’s laptops, smart phones, hard drives and USB sticks. That is an apt description.

33. It was pressed upon me by all the advocates for the family, that Ms Rukhsana Thakrar should be appointed as an independent social worker. I was assured that she was well regarded and as a professional Muslim woman not associated with the Local Authority, or the Guardian for that matter, she seemed to me to be well placed to undertake what I identified in my earlier judgment as the need for an ‘intense, thorough and comprehensive assessment’. I must also admit to my aspiration that Ms Thakrar would provide an example to B of the opportunities open to independent Muslim women in the UK. Ms Thakrar has an LLB (Hons), a MA in social work, a CQSW and is an accredited social work practice teacher. She has also worked in the capacity of Guardian ad Litem, CAFCASS officer and asserts in her CV that she ‘specialises’ in ‘working with Muslim families’.
34. I very much regret to say that Ms Thakrar fell far short of the promise foreshadowed by her CV. In her very lengthy report, which is essentially simple reportage of what the family has said to her, Ms Thakrar missed the opportunity to confront them with my earlier findings and to challenge their various belief structures. Though I am satisfied that her instructions were clear and supplemented by a further set of instructions specifically directing her to the court’s concerns, she appeared to have very little understanding of the nature of the task she was engaged in. Her view of the family was expressed with fulsome positivity, though I have found it impossible to identify any analysis in her report upon which her optimism could be founded. More than that, within a report spanning over 130 pages I have struggled to identify any analysis of any issue in the case. Rather unusually despite the glowing conclusions she advanced, I had no sense that the family had forged any kind of constructive relationship with her either. Her conclusions require to be set out:

*“426. It is my assessment that the parents and children will work openly and honestly with professionals and they will allow all professionals in. The children will be monitored at school and M’s family are fully available to assist and work with professionals. The intervention of the state has been a massive wake up call for the parents to monitor and guide their children and to work with professionals and extended family members that have been concerned about the family.”*

35. For good measure Ms Thakrar added:

*427. The court and professionals do not need to wait for the findings of fact as the family are clear that there was a discussion about ISIS and this attracted B to research this further and she linked ISIS to Gaza. However there has been in my opinion a change in the mindset of all family members are clear that they do not wish to associate in anyway with ISIS.”*

36. I have genuinely struggled to understand the naivety of Ms Thakrar’s approach. She continues:

*“It is my assessment now that the substantive charges in respect of Terrorism have been dropped by the police the family will work openly with professionals. They have already made a number of major changes.”*

37. Following B's removal from the aircraft on her journey bound for Syria, F told this court that he would deploy spyware to monitor the children's computer usage. He apparently told Ms Thakrar that he did not do this because he wanted to access material of his own. In his evidence he disputed having said that to Ms Thakrar and contended that he asked a friend to fit the software for him. This was also, as Ms Fottrell reminds me set out in the parent's joint statement in the wardship proceedings. I also heard from DS Kinkead that F had been advised by CTU to use a system known as 'Pandora' which is regarded as effective. Ms Thakrar resolved this conflict in the evidence, for herself, in this way:

*"429. The parents did not place the spy ware devised on all the computers because F wanted to access material that he was interested in as I have already mentioned. This allowed B and her siblings to access material she should not have accessed. It is my assessment that the parents now accept this was an omission on their part. "...*

38. I simply do not understand how Ms Thakrar could have made so light of such a crucially significant issue. To put it in its context, the father had purported to recognise the risk to his daughter from accessing the kind of material I have already looked at and assured this Court that he would do all within his powers to prevent this. I shall make my own findings on this point later in the judgment but to conclude that he had done nothing of the kind and then discount it, so summarily, as 'an omission' is frankly astonishing. Finally, Ms Thakrar proffered this observation:

*... "434. If the parents and children have not been open and honest it is due to a fear that they may be imprisoned for being Muslim and expressing their angry feelings." ...*

39. I am constrained to say that Ms Thakrar has fallen, by some distance, below the standard that this court is entitled to expect from an expert witness. In so doing she has failed the children (primarily), the parents and the other professionals in this case who have worked extremely hard to manage a very challenging situation. I have noted that Pauffley J made criticisms of equal magnitude and of similar complexion in **Re A, B C & D [2009] EWHC 2136 (Fam)** and **Re S (A child) (Care Order) [2014] EWHC 529 (Fam)**.

40. What is particularly surprising is that in an email to the Local Authority, dated 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2015, Ms Thakrar stated '*it will be very difficult for me to make any conclusive recommendations without findings being made in this case*'. This is simply irreconcilable with her position by the time of filing her report and it was an illogicality that she was unable to remedy in her evidence. I do not question Ms Thakrar's integrity or her independence, my complaint is with her method. She spent 84 hours with the family including meetings with the children. Though she was particularly asked to assess what might be the most effective intervention for the children in the light of the Silke/Brown report, I was not convinced that she had read the crucial updated report by the time she gave her evidence before me.

41. The acres of reportage that she has provided have been closely scrutinised by the advocates and some of the passages have been important, if only as a basis to evaluate credibility in the context of other inconsistent statements. Ms Thakrar made the following conclusions which are interspersed around her reports:

*“346. It is my assessment that the parents recognise that they were not as emotionally available to their children particularly B and Y and they would like to become more emotionally available. They also recognise that they have not had enough time for themselves and decided to refer themselves for couple work. Both have expressed a number of issues that they would like to talk about around communication, their respective families, having a large family and identity issues of having children that are dual heritage. This work will give them the space also to think about their children and make them more emotionally available to all of them particularly B and Y.”*

*“434...It appears from the discussions that [K] downloaded material which she now accepts should not be downloading and B was driven by her anger and rage and wanted to make some sort of point to the Authorities. Her anger and rage is complicated as she was already upset about Gaza and Syria and what was happening to families and children. It is my assessment that she was not having enough time with her parents and there was not enough quality family time. She was also not engaging in some of the physical activity that the other family members were engaging with.”*

*“442. B has had a number of months to reflect and think about the situation that placed her in Telford. She has explained to me how she has felt angry about how she feels she has been treated. She has also explained her reasons for finding and contacting ISIS and her reason for wanting to living in a Islamic country. Apart of this fantasy was a fantasy about her father’s life and activities. In my assessment she did not fully understand or discuss with him.”*

*“460. It is my assessment that the parents have made a radical shift in moving from home education to placing the children in schools. [N] is due to start school soon. They have recognised that there are issues they need to discuss and will continue to meet with the TCCR.”*

42. Not only is this all strikingly superficial but there is no attempt made to support the theories advanced by reference to the material within the report. Sadly, it had, in my judgement, a significant ill effect on the progress of the case. Effectively it provided what has been referred to as ‘a narrative’ for the parents, in particular, to rally around. It was hailed by the family as a vindication of their position and a justification for their resistance to social work help.
43. This said, there are strains of information within the report which resonate with other available evidence. For example, Ms. Thakrar highlighted the mother’s controlling behaviour, which I will consider more fully in due course. Others have identified something very similar and the mother herself sometimes unwittingly gives examples of rather controlling strategies. In this context some of the extensive material within the report has forensic relevance and so has not been an entirely wasted effort. It was however a missed opportunity to undertake a challenging, perhaps even ground breaking, piece of social work, looking in detail into the complex process of child radicalisation.

44. Ms Thakrar referred in her CV to the encomium provided to her by Sir James Munby, President of the Family Division in a brief coda to his judgment in **Re M (Children) [2015] EWHC 1433 (Fam)** reported as **Re M (No.2) [2015] EWHC 2933**. There was no reference to Pauffley J's judgments. I would simply note that the hearing before the President was uncontested and Ms Thakrar did not give evidence. It was largely on the basis of what was said by the President, that Ms Thakrar was identified by the lawyers as a suitable expert. I do not believe he intended his short remarks to be given such emphasis.
45. Ms Thelma Ukueku is the key social worker in the case, employed by Tower Hamlets. When the deficiencies in Ms Thakrar's report came to light Ms Ukueku agreed, in the time remaining, to plan and undertake an assessment addressing the risk matrix referred to above. This report was undertaken with a Mr Brian Sharpe and a Ms Juliette Thompson. I heard from Ms Ukueku and Mr Sharpe in evidence. It is an unfortunate fact that Judges have, from time to time, to be critical, sometimes highly critical of social workers. Too often good social work goes without comment or commendation. This case provides some opportunity to remedy that. This family is extremely fortunate that Ms Ukueku was allocated to this case. She has shown unstinting commitment to them, she has been tireless in her determination to help them, she has unhesitatingly sacrificed her own personal time and displayed an impressive mix of intellectual rigour and compassion. Perhaps most importantly, whilst trying to work effectively with the family, she has not shied away from confronting them robustly and directly where she perceives there to be error or inappropriate behaviour. She has, in my view, 'worked' the case, in the sense that she has not merely recorded the attitudes or behaviours of the adults, rather she has actively intervened to try to change them where, in her assessment, they are contrary to the interests of the child.
46. I have mentioned above that I elected not to see the video material in this case. It is rarely necessary for the Judge or the lawyers to do so. It is probably desirable that we should not. The danger that we become inured to it is greater than might initially be thought. Some of the material here is, plainly profoundly shocking. Ms Ukueku took the view that if she were truly to understand what harm B had been subjected to she ought to look at some of the material herself. She told me that on reflection she wished she had not done so. It had caused her real, not merely superficial, distress. She told me how some of the images are lodged in her mind and have from time to time intruded unexpectedly into her thoughts. She twice needed to pause to maintain her composure, as she outlined this to the Court. She told me, at this point, slightly tearfully, that she had been terribly shocked and deeply upset that B had been regularly exposed to such images. It was a powerful and memorable moment in the hearing. I noted that it had some impact on B which seemed to me to be chiefly one of real surprise. I think this was both as to the effect the images had on Ms Ukueku as well as some realisation of the great effort made on her behalf.
47. The report, dated 14<sup>th</sup> March 2016, signed by each of the contributors and endorsed by their senior manager, is carefully planned and well structured. It begins as follows:

*"The foundations for the risk assessment*

*The local authority has the benefit of the Court's assessment of the family as set out in the judgment of 21 August 2015 which in summary found:*

- i. The parents' deception of the Court and professionals;*
- ii. The risk presented by the material accessed and accessible in the family home;*
- iii. The underlying belief system present in the household."*

48. This is a succinct and accurate assessment of the key issues in the case. It formed a good foundation for the work which followed. I have selected a number of passages to be incorporated into this judgment, not only because they focus in on the important issues or contain significant information but because they illustrate the discipline within the assessment of identifying core or solid evidence:

*"108. Y in his ABE interview states that B's interest in going to Syria predated her contact with ISIS on the internet. He in his interview on the 25/02/16 said that B had informed him of her departure on the day before whilst on the 07/12/14 he said he had known for two months. The other family members said she told him on the day. M expressed how upsetting it was and 'how bad' she feels now about B confiding in Y during our interview with her on the 09/02/16 (with Thelma Ukueku). Her upset would suggest that she knew of Y's earlier acquaintance with B's plans."*

*"109. There is some consensus that the root of B's curiosity in ISIS lay in her concern about the situation in Gaza, July/August 2014, and its impact particularly on children caught up in the conflict. "*

*"110. No one, including B herself, was prepared to explain how her journey from concerned onlooker to ISIS sympathiser came about. Family members were not able or prepared to discuss the politics of the conflict in Gaza and Syria or about the differences between Hamas and ISIS. When asked about family discussions about events in Gaza or the Charlie Hebdo killings in January 2015 nobody was forthcoming. B said they had all been brought up by their parents to believe that you should withhold your opinions about any topic if you had no direct experience of it. This was a sentiment expressed also by E."*

49. Ms Morgan QC and Ms Sprinz, on behalf of the father, are critical of the Local Authority's assessment, contending that Mr Brian Sharpe misunderstood the police evidence as to who was searching for Isis material online. This, they say, 'cannot but have misinformed his thinking and such analysis as he drew from it of risk'. This seems to me to be a criticism that could be made of any risk assessment which precedes a finding of fact hearing. It is by no means axiomatic that a view of some the facts contemplated by a social worker, which in due course are not confirmed by the Judge, invalidates the risk assessment. It will be a question of degree in each case. It is for this reason I thought it appropriate to identify, at para 43 above, how, in my

judgement, the social workers took particular care to establish their evaluation of risk on a factual substratum that seemed to them to be most solid, even if the facts themselves open a spectrum of possibility ranging in gravity. E.g. did the father hold strong political views about Gaza, if so did he share them with B and, further, was the influence of these views on B's radicalisation intended or otherwise. Mr Sharpe plainly thought broadly and reflectively about some of the big issues this case presents but I did not detect that he had reached many firm conclusions. I think his role in the assessment was largely to stimulate thought rather than proffer practical suggestions. This was no doubt a useful contribution.

50. In their work, the social workers consistently take care to examine realistic placement options and identify factors both in favour and against. They repeatedly place caveats on their proposals, stating, for example, that the Court must make findings so that the Local Authority 'may develop its risk assessment'. In particular, at para 212: *'in consideration of the different placement options the risk factors are complex. The care planning proposals are tentative and would benefit from findings of fact'*. They also stressed the obvious fact that *'it is difficult to award a weight... to risks whilst the family remain closed and it is an inhibitor for future partnership and safety planning'*. I reject the assertion that there is 'misinformed thinking' or, for that matter, significant misanalysis of risk.

### **The Legal Framework**

51. Before I embark upon my analysis of the evidence in the case it is important to consider the case law and legislation which frames the process. Some of it is now trite law, albeit that the evolution of cases of this kind indicates that the application of facts to the law may be at times be both subtle and complex. Though I have emphasised, now in a number of cases, that the issues here are a new facet of child protection which are best understood by reference to tried and tested safeguarding imperatives, it needs to be noted that apparent cooperation with professionals may not be sincere and misinterpreted may lead to a false evaluation of risk. Thus, the usual weight afforded to a cooperative working relationship will require frequent testing to ensure the cooperation is genuine.
52. Cases involving allegations of radicalisation do not require any greater standard of proof than any other allegation in Family Law proceedings. Any impression to the contrary requires to be dispelled. The starting point is that a party who asserts a fact must prove it, thus the burden remains on the Local Authority throughout. The 'standard of proof' refers to the level of probability required to prove a fact. In family cases, this is the civil standard of proof i.e. 'the simple balance of probabilities': **Re B (Children) [2008] UKHL 35**. Four passages from the speeches in that case seem to me to be particularly apposite here:

*"2. If a legal rule requires a fact to be proved (a "fact in issue"), a judge or jury must decide whether or not it happened. There is no room for a finding that it might have happened. The law operates a binary system in which the only values are 0 and 1. The fact either happened or it did not. If the tribunal is left in doubt, the doubt is resolved by a rule that one party or the other carries the burden of proof. If the party who bears the burden of proof fails to discharge it, a value of 0 is returned and the fact is treated as not having*

*happened. If he does discharge it, a value of 1 is returned and the fact is treated as having happened.”*

(per Lord Hoffman)

*“32. In our legal system, if a judge finds it more likely than not that something did take place, then it is treated as having taken place. If he finds it more likely than not that it did not take place, then it is treated as not having taken place. He is not allowed to sit on the fence. He has to find for one side or the other. Sometimes the burden of proof will come to his rescue: the party with the burden of showing that something took place will not have satisfied him that it did. But generally speaking a judge is able to make up his mind where the truth lies without needing to rely upon the burden of proof.*

*69. ...There are some proceedings, though civil in form, whose nature is such that it is appropriate to apply the criminal standard of proof. Divorce proceedings in the olden days of the matrimonial “offence” may have been another example (see *Bater v Bater* [1951] P 35). But care proceedings are not of that nature. They are not there to punish or to deter anyone. The consequences of breaking a care order are not penal. Care proceedings are there to protect a child from harm. The consequences for the child of getting it wrong are equally serious either way.*

*70. My Lords, for that reason I would go further and announce loud and clear that the standard of proof in finding the facts necessary to establish the threshold under section 31(2) or the welfare considerations in section 1 of the 1989 Act is the simple balance of probabilities, neither more nor less. Neither the seriousness of the allegation nor the seriousness of the consequences should make any difference to the standard of proof to be applied in determining the facts. The inherent probabilities are simply something to be taken into account, where relevant, in deciding where the truth lies.”*

(per Baroness Hale)

53. I have also found the succinct guidance of Jackson J in **Re BR (Proof of Facts) [2015] EWFC 41** to be helpful. The following passages require highlighting:

*Para 7*

*“(2) Nor does the seriousness of the consequences of a finding of fact affect the standard to which it must be proved. Whether a man was in a London street at a particular time might be of no great consequence if the issue is whether he was rightly issued with a parking ticket, but it might be of huge consequence if he has been charged with a murder that occurred that day in Paris. The evidential standard to which his presence in the street must be proved is nonetheless the same.”*

*“(3) The court takes account of any inherent probability or improbability of an event having occurred as part of a natural process of reasoning. But the fact that an event is a very common one does not lower the standard of probability to which it must be*

*proved. Nor does the fact that an event is very uncommon raise the standard of proof that must be satisfied before it can be said to have occurred. ”*

*“(4) Similarly, the frequency or infrequency with which an event generally occurs cannot divert attention from the question of whether it actually occurred. As Mr Rowley QC and Ms Bannon felicitously observe:”*

*"Improbable events occur all the time. Probability itself is a weak prognosticator of occurrence in any given case. Unlikely, even highly unlikely things, do happen. Somebody wins the lottery most weeks; children are struck by lightning. The individual probability of any given person enjoying or suffering either fate is extremely low."*

*I agree. It is exceptionally unusual for a baby to sustain so many fractures, but this baby did. The inherent improbability of a devoted parent inflicting such widespread, serious injuries is high, but then so is the inherent improbability of this being the first example of an as yet undiscovered medical condition. Clearly, in this and every case, the answer is not to be found in the inherent probabilities but in the evidence, and it is when analysing the evidence that the court takes account of the probabilities.”*

54. The crucial importance of the Judge’s evaluation of the reliability of the lay evidence is also emphasised in **Re BR** (supra). Thus:

*“Para 8. Each piece of evidence must be considered in the context of the whole. The medical evidence is important, and the court must assess it carefully, but it is not the only evidence. The evidence of the parents is of the utmost importance and the court must form a clear view of their reliability and credibility. ”*

55. In *Re A (A Child)* [2015] EWFC 11 the President (at paragraph 14 onwards) noted three fundamental principles when a court is considering applications under s.31 CA 1989. He said:

*The third fundamentally important point is even more crucial. It is vital always to bear in mind in these cases, and too often they are overlooked, the wise and powerful words of Hedley J in Re L (Care: Threshold Criteria) [2007] 1 FLR 2050, para 50:*

*"society must be willing to tolerate very diverse standards of parenting, including the eccentric, the barely adequate and the inconsistent. It follows too that children will inevitably have both very different experiences of parenting and very unequal consequences flowing from it. It means that some children will experience disadvantage and harm, while others flourish in atmospheres of loving security and emotional stability. These are the consequences of our fallible humanity and it is not the provenance of the state to spare children all the consequences of defective parenting. In any event, it simply could not be*

*done."*

*That approach was endorsed by the Supreme Court in In re B. There are two passages in the judgments of the Justices which develop the point and to which I need to draw particular attention.*

...

*The other is the observation of Baroness Hale of Richmond JSC (para 143):*

*"We are all frail human beings, with our fair share of unattractive character traits, which sometimes manifest themselves in bad behaviours which may be copied by our children. But the State does not and cannot take away the children of all the people who commit crimes, who abuse alcohol or drugs, who suffer from physical or mental illnesses or disabilities, or who espouse antisocial political or religious beliefs." [emphasis added]*

*I respectfully agree with all of that. It follows that I also agree with what His Honour Judge Jack said in North East Lincolnshire Council v G & L [2014] EWCC B77 (Fam), a judgment that attracted some attention even whilst I was hearing this case:*

*"I deplore any form of domestic violence and I deplore parents who care for children when they are significantly under the influence of drink. But so far as Mr and Mrs C are concerned there is no evidence that I am aware of that any domestic violence between them or any drinking has had an adverse effect on any children who were in their care at the time when it took place. The reality is that in this country there must be tens of thousands of children who are cared for in homes where there is a degree of domestic violence (now very widely defined) and where parents on occasion drink more than they should, I am not condoning that for a moment, but the courts are not in the business of social engineering. The courts are not in the business of providing children with perfect homes. If we took into care and placed for adoption every child whose parents had had a domestic spat and every child whose parents on occasion had drunk too much then the care system would be overwhelmed and there would not be enough adoptive parents. So we have to have a degree of realism about prospective carers who come before the courts."*

*There is a powerful message in these judgments which needs always to be borne in mind by local authorities, by social workers, by children's guardians and by family judges'.*

56. **In Re X (Children) (No 3) 2015 EWHC 3651** the President said §110 'There are, as I have noted, many matters on which I am suspicious, but suspicion is not enough, nor is surmise, speculation or assertion.'

57. I am confident that the President was there intending to emphasise the importance of evidential discipline and forensic rigour. He was not, for a moment, suggesting that in the application of the civil standard of proof the Court is in anyway prohibited from drawing reasonable inferences from ascertainable facts. There is plainly an important distinction between suspicion and inference, the two should not be conflated.
58. The Local Authority sought the following findings:
- i) The father holds extremist views and has shared them with, and promoted them within, his family;
  - ii) The father has played a pivotal role in radicalising the children or exposing them to the risk of radicalisation which has caused them significant emotional harm and is likely to cause further significant harm;
  - iii) The mother was either complicit in the radicalisation of the children or, alternatively, was, or should have been, aware of the continued radicalisation of the family but failed to protect the children from their father's radicalised beliefs;
  - iv) The parents have lied to and deceived the professionals working to safeguard B and the other children and cannot be relied upon;
  - v) Having been exposed to extremist views and material within the family home B is a radicalised child who poses a risk to herself, her family and members of the public.
59. Some of the language here is, I suspect inevitably, ambiguous e.g.: 'has shared them with and promoted them within'; 'a pivotal role'; 'complicit in radicalisation'. What is truly in issue is what happened to B, the part her parents played, whether other children within the family have been radicalised or are at risk and ultimately how the children's welfare can most effectively be secured. As B put it, in one of the lighter moments in the case, this is 'rather a tough one for the Judge'. In the days leading up to the fact finding hearing B's lawyers indicated that she had thought carefully about her situation and was engaged in preparing what her counsel, Ms Grief QC, called a 'spontaneous' and 'free flowing' account of her circumstances whilst living with her parents. Certainly the document that was produced, only approved as late as 14<sup>th</sup> April 2016, marked a significant shift in B's position within this litigation. That said, as there are wide discrepancies between this latest statement and what B has told the police, the social workers, the independent social worker and indeed what has been stated in her own first two statements in this case, it is important to view, with caution, anything she might say. Ms Grief sensibly recognises that her client faces 'credibility issues'.
60. Some of B's observations in her final statement require emphasising:
- "I saw a video of men chained together one by one after what was said to have been a battle, who were said to be the prisoners they had taken. They took them to something like a dock/or a sea wall straight onto the sea. They unchained them one by one and shot them in the back of the head so they fell into the water. They sought to portray this like the story of Commander Khalid Bin Waleed who was*

*fighting against the Jews and he made a promise that the river would run red with blood if he won. The water in this video by the end of it was red; they had killed so many people. I'm not sure they were even soldiers at all now, they may well just have been people, ordinary civilians, who didn't agree with IS coming in and taking over. "*

*"I saw a lot of videos and scenes of violence. When I first started seeing them I was shocked at the violence. I didn't like to watch it. I was also accessing a lot of video and other on line material that I now realise was just propaganda. "*

61. Addressing her discussions on the internet or on Tweets B said:

*"Often there were discussions on line about being a good Muslim and joining IS in Syria. These were just Tweets. Back then they were not really policed. People could say things to encourage others and there was no policing of it. "*

*"There were a range of views along a spectrum. Some people were willing to wait in the UK and see how things pan out and were not willing to take any action in their own country or even join IS. This was even though they were IS supporters. The other end of the spectrum was people wanting to go to join IS and while in the West willing to carry out whatever they could think of in their own country, meaning a terrorist act or getting support for IS and trying to send people to Syria. There was even a group of people who were really, really extreme and they were not even going to go to Syria, they had just made up their minds to carry out an attack here. There was a strong debate about following the rule of law in your own country. There is a hadith about this and so many people strongly argued that this was the right approach and that if you were in the Islamic State then you would follow Sharia law but in your own country you had to follow the rule of law there. The majority thought it better just to go to IS and follow the law there. Others argued (and it got quite heated) that you should act to further IS in your own country even if that was against the law. I didn't; join in with the arguments. I agreed with the 'follow the rule of law in your own country' argument, and if you want to live under Sharia law just go there. Ultimately, that was why I got on the plane. I wanted to live in an Islamic state under Sharia law. "*

62. In relation to her objectives in Syria B states:

*" If I got to Syria I knew that eventually I'd have to get married. I knew I wouldn't have to fight, because the men did that. My main reason in going was not to get married, and I still find it embarrassing that people think that was my motivation. I wasn't sure I'd be allowed to study, although I really hoped I would, but I was prepared to forego it as a sacrifice for my religion."*

*"In travelling to Syria I wanted to be part of the Islamic state and to live under Sharia law. I accept that I believed in the cause i.e that the Islamic State was fighting for Muslims who were oppressed and that the cause was to obtain land by waging war as well as by seeking to defend Muslims that were being bombed by drones etc. I came to*

*think that it was my duty to go to Syria to assist in supporting the growth of IS. ”*

63. Perhaps the most significant of the concessions made in this statement is that in respect of B’s viewing of gruesome killings and torture:

*“I saw so much violence that it seemed to lose its effect. Everything merged into one. I can’t believe I’m saying that now. ”*

*“In respect of the beheadings of Western people, at the time the message was that they were spies for the West and that’s why they had been killed. I thought that Western spies were in the same category as soldiers, which was why they could be executed. ”*

*“I did not really like the fact that they were beheaded but I realized that they did this as a way of trying to grab the West’s attention. If they had done that to Syrian soldiers no one would pay attention, but because they were British and American that would mean more publicity.”*

64. Concerning the risk that B said she represented to her siblings:

*“For about a week after I came back in December 2014, I told H I wished I hadn’t been stopped and that I wanted to go there. After that I didn’t share with her my up and down feelings about IS. I didn’t suggest to her that she ought to go too, but I did say that I should be going, as a good Muslim, so she might have taken that as me suggesting she should go too. I didn’t say that with the intention of persuading her to go too, but I accept that might have been the effect on her. H is more likely to follow me than I am to follow her. I accept that if I said things about what I saw as my duty or why it would be right as a Muslim to go, there is a risk the others would have begun to see it that way and may have attempted to go or become involved.”*

*“I accept therefore that I was “radicalized”. I do not accept that I was a risk to the public as I never intended or planned in any way to carry out any attack against others. I did not intend to harm anyone. I completely deny that I was ‘attack planning’ and partly my fear of admitting what I had really been feeling about support for IS was that I thought that everyone would assume that the police theory was true. It wasn’t. ”*

*“I accept that I was a risk to myself, and to an extent to my siblings, who might have been influenced by my beliefs.”*

65. Confronting obvious credibility issues she tackled them in this way:

*“I know it maybe said well how can we believe you now when you’ve admitted lying? I can only say that I lied to protect myself and because I was too scared and got in so far I couldn’t admit that I had been radicalized. I knew if I did everyone would say I was a risk and never believe that I didn’t intend to harm anyone. I had hurt my*

*family so much I couldn't admit it to them either. It just got worse and worse as time went on."*

66. B negotiated her false statement to Ms Thakrar in this way:

*"I have the following comments to make about Rukhsana's report. I accept that I allowed Rukhsana to impose her own "narrative" about the reasons I tried to go to Syria. I agreed with what she was suggesting because I was scared of telling the truth. "*

*"Para 161 It was Rukhsana who suggested that I was stubborn like my dad, and that my dad's community were "simple" people. I just agreed with her. That whole first meeting was very negative, I did not speak much, and I was just saying yes or no to Rukhsana. I did not feel like talking to her as I had just had contact with my mum, and I was upset that my dad had not come."*

67. Ms Grief invited me to permit this statement to stand as B's evidence, unchallenged. I was informed that B did not want to go into the witness box as she was too nervous and afraid. With respect to Ms Grief, I did not entertain that suggestion for very long. B is nearly 17 years old, she is a party to these proceedings, with capacity to litigate therefore but, most importantly, I simply could not see any way in which it would be possible to evaluate the risk she presents without subjecting her to appropriate questioning. I did permit her to give her evidence by video link, though for the remainder of the case she sat in court next to her father.
68. It is clear therefore that shortly before the commencement of this hearing the range and breadth of the issues had reduced considerably. As I have already said above the degree of involvement of the parents in their daughter's radicalisation and the true extent of that radicalisation has become the central issue. None of the family members has given evidence which can properly be characterised as 'the whole truth and nothing but the truth'. As I have read in the downloaded documents, deceiving the State is not only acceptable in pursuit of a radicalised Islamic vision, there are, in fact, whole tranches of advice as how best to obscure it. Of course, lies can be told for much simpler and more obvious reasons.
69. I think that having watched this family now over many months in the courtroom and listened carefully to their evidence, it would be helpful if I set out my impressions of them. In doing so I do not have regard solely to the vast quantity of written material about them, nor do I confine myself to what has been said about them in the various reports or indeed by them in their oral evidence. I also include my observations of their reactions to each other and to the evidence as it has unfolded in the court room. This can often be very telling and a significant part of the Court's evaluation of demeanour.
70. I have found B to be an intelligent, intellectually confident young person. As she approaches 17 years of age she has a real thirst for knowledge and a striking academic curiosity. Her core Islamic beliefs, as opposed to the distorted ones that have now gripped her, seemed to me to have inculcated into her a strong sense of intellectual discipline. I noticed that she was adept at spotting and weeding out some of the contradictions in her own thought processes. Though fully capable of absorbing the case advanced on her behalf she was both realistic enough and perhaps strong willed

enough to divert from it where she considered it appropriate to do so. I was struck by how B described her own thinking behind her changed position in her third statement which I have taken some time to set out above. Hers was a far more pragmatic calculation. She told me that as she thought about the case and as she knew the hearing was pending she began to realise that it was inevitable that findings would be made against her. Accordingly, she felt driven to address some of the allegations that she had up until that point avoided. Whilst I find there is an element of cynicism in this, it is not undiluted. My impression is that the very task of approaching the evidence more realistically became cathartic to some degree. In her evidence she proved herself to be at times remarkably candid.

71. B was asked about the number of videos she had seen which contained violent and death related images. She told me that they were too numerous to remember and that they no longer had any effect on her. Everybody in this courtroom will remember this piece of evidence. It was profoundly disturbing to listen to, not least because it was both uncompromisingly honest and manifestly accurate.
72. The cases advanced by B and her parents were so closely allied that that there was strategic disincentive to the parents' advocates in pressing her on matters which were contrary to what was a broadly unified family position. I asked B if in any of the videos she had seen there were images which shocked her still. I watched as she paused and genuinely engaged in the question. I saw her face change as she identified her answer. However, she at first responded by saying 'there were none really'. I told her that was not my impression. She indicated that she had not responded immediately because she was diffident about sharing the image that she had in mind, conscious that it would shock people. It did. Indeed, I have decided not to relate it in this judgment. It would merely be gratuitous and of no forensic utility.
73. The father had, in my judgement, properly understood the emotional and psychological consequences of his daughter having become inured to such dehumanising material. He encapsulates this in a phrase which carries something of the poetry of the Arabic language and is, in this instance, all the more powerful because of it. He said '*the pity side of a person would be finished, the mercy. If you watch something like [B] did it's easy for the mercy to disappear from the heart.*' I agree with Ms Sarah Morgan QC and Ms Lucy Sprinz in their closing submissions on behalf of the father that this illustrates that the father had reflected carefully on the issue.
74. It occurs to me that the reason that the father may be so eloquent in articulating the emotional harm caused by such images is that he sustained a similar kind of harm himself as a child. He told Ms Thakrar that as a Berber male from the Algerian community he held some negativity towards the French in their use of tanks in Algeria in the 1950's. He explained that his family had shown him photographs of this period which he considered revealed French tactics to be 'unjust and upsetting' and which plainly had stayed in his memory. In evidence, he drew a comparison with these grainy, black and white photographs of a conflict which pre-dated his birth and the videos seen by B. The moving, 'living' pictures in colour and so much more clearly defined were, the father said, much more searing.
75. During the course of the Mother's evidence the Local Authority applied for permission to produce material from social media. The application, which I granted,

was made before the Father went into the witness box. The material included photographs of charred bodies and the cracked skull of a dead infant. These were produced into evidence, I think, during the course of the cross examination of the Father. In any event I did not look at them until the Father was asked to comment on them. I was not expecting to see the kind of images they contained, indeed it took me a moment or two, from the rather poor quality photocopies, to realise what I was looking at. I found them disturbing.

76. The Father told me that he was motivated by the photographs to participate in humanitarian work. I accept that he was. Nonetheless, I had the strong impression, as he responded to questions, that he too had, albeit in a different way to his daughter, become numbed to images of death. Such photographs may well have triggered moral outrage in him, an entirely different dynamic to B's objectives in looking at the material I have considered above, but for all that I sensed that something of his own 'pity' and 'mercy', to use his expressions, had been compromised. I do not think that he contemplated that the image of the child might not merely shock people, but that it might provoke a simple human distress reaction for the child which eclipsed the underlying humanitarian objective that he intended. I consider that this resonates with something that he is reported as having told Ms Thakrar:

*"He stated that when he was in Gaza he had watched what was going on in Gaza. This appears to have been a turning point for [the father]. He stated that he watched Aljazeera Arabic as he felt that Aljazeera gave an accurate picture of what was going on in the world. He also brought back videos and pictures of Muslims being killed and burnt alive. He stated that Palestines (sic) were being killed by Israelis. He found this very haunting and upsetting. He explained to me that his children saw these pictures and they were all upset and crying. It was very clear from his body language and how he spoke that these atrocities had left a deep and lasting impression on him. It also appears from his descriptions that all the children had been deeply moved and upset. Certainly they would have left a deep impression on [B]."*

77. Once again the father challenges the accuracy of the ISW report, he denies that he told Ms Thakrar that he showed photographs or videos to his children, claiming that she has misreported him. I reject that. There is much in that passage which is plainly accurate. The father was fulsome in evidence about the atrocities in Gaza, as he sees them. He plainly, in my assessment, was affected by what he had seen. He confirmed that he watched Al Jazeera on the basis that he felt that was a reliable chronicler of world events and certainly accepted that he had brought back pictures. All of this is essentially accurately recorded. It is also very much of a piece with his evidence more generally. I may have been critical of Ms Thakrar's lack of focus and forensic rigour but, as I have already said, I have no reason at all to doubt her integrity. Neither have I found evidence of regular misreporting, in what I remind myself were 84 hours of interviews.
78. I am satisfied that the father did indeed show these children videos or pictures of Muslims being killed and burnt alive. I consider that in the heat of his own outrage he was motivated to do so by what I have loosely referred to as humanitarian instincts. Having been shown disturbing photographs of death himself as a child I do not think that he has ever extrapolated from that, that it is entirely inappropriate to present

children with such images. He does not appear to have absorbed that childhood innocence needs to be protected and that he as a father has that responsibility. His failure to rise to those obligations is, in my assessment of the evidence, critical to what has happened to B. I also consider that like B, he too has become desensitised, on a basic human level, to images of child and adult suffering. His response is ideological rather than visceral.

79. It is at this point also pertinent to note that B was herself so interested in Gaza that she asked her father if she could travel with him. That too seems to me to be consistent with her father sharing the images in the way that Ms Thakrar reports him to have told her. I recite the paragraph in full:

*“[The father] stated he would like to continue with his humanitarian work in Gaza. However after the family meeting on 23 January 2015 [the father] has agreed to stop the humanitarian work as he needs to spend more time with his family and children. He was no longer involved in the community very much but he was more active in sport. He stated that he qualified as a mechanic and he used these skills in Gaza. He informed me that [B] wanted to go to Gaza but he felt she was too young to go there. He drew a link between his trips and work in Gaza to her desire to become a doctor. He stated that the ISIS had manipulated her to travel to Syria by informing her she could study for free in medicine and qualify as a doctor. It appears that there had been some worries as to how her medical studies would be funded. (In a later meeting [the father] informed me that he planned to sell some family land to pay for her studies in the future. He also informed me that [B] knew if she had informed her parents they would have stopped her from going.”*

80. Ms Morgan describes her client as ‘a complex personality’. I agree. B’s affection for him though is obvious. It would have been clear merely from watching them together in the courtroom without hearing or reading a word of the evidence. The father once wanted to study medicine. B shares that aspiration and intellectually has every prospect of achieving it. Father and daughter are united in this ambition for her. The father has an interest in herbal medicine and has obtained certificates in respect of it. B helps him out and plainly has her own strong views on herbal remedies which the father told me about with obvious respect.
81. Elaborating upon what was told to Ms Thakrar, the father explained to me in evidence how significant in his life is the situation in Gaza. He told me that he has on four occasions involved himself in humanitarian convoys to the Gaza strip, journeys which he confirmed placed his own life in peril. These trips took him away from his family. He told me how distressed his youngest son had been when, on one occasion, he waved his father off. It follows, as the father acknowledged, that on these occasions he had valued these humanitarian objectives more highly than his own life or the needs of his children for their father. This is all the more poignant as the father himself was orphaned as a child. Its significance seems to me to be that the father was, if necessary, prepared to die for a cause. I record this without interpolating any censure. In many different contexts adults have to make difficult and unenviable choices between the dictates of their conscience and the needs of those they love. I

record my findings here because they have obvious resonance for B's situation. B too has been prepared to imperil her life for her beliefs. That said, it does not appear to have been obvious to the father. He comes close to it though when he stated, in evidence, '*maybe she is thinking if she goes to Syria she would please me*'. I think that he is, in part, right. But, like her father B is also complex and her motives in attempting to go to Syria were neither simple nor, given her age and immaturity, necessarily coherent.

82. Much has been made of the fact that the father does not easily verbalise his affection or pride in his children. I agree that this plainly causes B to want to please her father, as many have suggested. She values his approval and he rations his compliments. This may be, in part, due to his faith, which eschews strong emotions such as pride or anger. Of course, not everybody finds it easy to communicate deep emotions. He has however been entirely unable to hide the distress he feels at B's determined and nearly successful attempt to get to Syria. When he has discussed this, in the courtroom, he has not been able to retain his composure. As I watched B and her mother react to this evidence my assessment of their reaction, as they lowered their eyes and turned their faces, was that they felt a sense of shame that their father should be brought to a position where he cries in the courtroom in front of so many people. Their discomposure at this evidence was much greater than at any other point in the hearing. I have watched their reactions, as they sit behind their lawyers, very carefully indeed in this case and over a long period of time.
83. Ms Morgan analyses the father, daughter relationship in a not dissimilar manner, pointing out that this has not been the father's case and that logically it could not have been if he lacked the insight into it. In a characteristically clear submission she speculates:

*"One possible conclusion is that B – highly intelligent and curious with a lively and enquiring but crucially not yet fully formed mind; with all of the well-recognised vulnerabilities of the teenager on the cusp of adulthood – was more influenced than the Father realised by his own ethical and principled approach to world events and human rights issues. The potent effect of those qualities in combination with the palpable closeness of their relationship might well go some way to explaining B's actions."*

84. This is, of course, more benevolent to the father than my own analysis but, as Ms Morgan observes '*if this or something like it*' underpins B's evolution to radicalisation then it is a '*long way from the way in which the Local Authority put their case against the father*'. I accept that submission, at least to the extent that I do not believe that the father has deliberately indoctrinated or infected his daughter with radicalised beliefs. He has however, created an ideological tinder box in which combustion was almost inevitable. It is troubling that he expresses little insight into his own responsibility which, when I come to look at individual factual findings, I assess as considerable. He has, despite his love for his daughter, caused her very significant emotional harm in a way that is directly attributable to his failings as a parent. He spoke of the effects of exposure to the flood of death imagery that B has witnessed as causing 'the pity side of a person to be finished.' He uses the perfect tense. I hope he is wrong to do so because the central objective of future care planning is to restore 'pity' and 'mercy' to B's 'heart', if I may use the father's own terminology.

85. The central complaint made by the Local Authority against the father is that he promoted and facilitated B's research by claiming, in December 2014, to have purchased and installed filtering software on each of the IT devices in the household with his own computer as the master, to prohibit the children accessing any inappropriate websites. I found father's response to this allegation, under cross examination, to be hollow, evasive and entirely unconvincing. He can have been under no misapprehension as to the importance of installing the necessary spyware. He directly acknowledged its significance in his statements. In the parent's joint statement in the Wardship proceedings dated 20<sup>th</sup> April 2015 is the following paragraph:

*"The police officer Richard informed [father] of a piece of technology costing £79 which allows complete monitoring of the computers in the house [father] followed Richard's instruction on this and bought it and a friend who is technologically minded (which neither of us are). The children are not aware of it. We completely understand the police and social service's concerns, but we don't want any intervention to further impact upon our family life."*

86. In his statement filed within these proceedings the father stated:

*"Following this incident in December 2014 and on the advice of a police officer named Richard; I purchased, and installed, security software on all electronic devices in our household with my computer as the master, to prohibit the children from accessing any inappropriate websites. I did not tell the children that I was doing this so they were unaware that the software had been installed."*

87. To state the strikingly obvious, this father had nearly lost his daughter to Syria where, he told me, she would likely have suffered the degradation of becoming a jihadi bride. One would have expected nothing less than hawkish vigilance on behalf of a parent in such circumstances. I have used the term degradation because the father told me that he understood the life expectancy of a jihadi warrior to be '*so short that the women would be expected to remarry quickly*' with all the physical and emotional consequences that carries.
88. In respect of the father's own hard drives, which were being used by other members of the family, there was pro Isis material and propaganda present. I agree with Mr Barnes, on behalf of the Local Authority, that this indicates at very least that the father failed to conduct the most basic of checks, evidenced by the screen shots which have been downloaded, printed and incorporated into the case material. There was no password protection or encryption or any attempt to hide the material. The father had been given specific advice by the police as to the most appropriate software to purchase. I recall that there was even discussion at Court as to how this would be funded. It is not particularly expensive. In simple terms Isis material was sitting there in front of him, on his own hard drive. He failed to make the most fundamental of checks and claims to be unaware it was there. All this I emphasise again follows: wardship proceedings; the involvement of the CTU; Social Services and considerable press interest in this family.

89. The father developed some loose and unconvincing story about ‘a friend’ who had purchased the monitoring equipment (unknown) at a price also unknown and installed it for him. I reject this account without hesitation nor can it be reconciled, in any sensible way, with his earlier statements. Frankly, this was just embarrassing to listen to as I am sure B must appreciate, for she is no fool. It is of course troubling on two bases. Firstly, that the father’s account should be so unreliable on such a crucial issue in the case has clear and negative implications for his potential to work openly and constructively with the Local Authority in the future. Secondly, that, as I find, the father has so fundamentally failed to protect his children from viewing the images in this case, there is a real difficulty in having any confidence in him to act differently in the future. Of course if, as I think likely, the father knew this material was there and that it had been downloaded by B then he can only be taken to have given her research enquiries his tacit approval. There is ultimately, I regret to say, no other logical conclusion.
90. The second significant allegation levelled against the father relates to a USB stick found in the parents bedroom (ID K /88) and removed in the police search of August 2015. The father initially denied that this belonged to him, though his position on this appeared to soften. I agree with the Local Authority that the weight of evidence supports an attribution of all the material on it to the father. I would go further, in my view, the evidence is compelling. Its significance is that the material on this device includes pamphlets which can be characterised as expressing jihadist leanings: lectures by Al-Awlaki which refer to violent military jihad; videos which contain death images; photographs of prisoners from Guantanamo Bay and general extremist opinion.
91. It is obviously significant that the USB stick was found in the parents room and on the father’s boxes. I have seen photographs of this household, it is meticulously neat and well organised. It is inhabited by people who show great personal discipline in every aspect of their lives. It is a small house for the size of the family who live there. Books, work, personal items are carefully arranged into individual space and often very neatly stacked. Accordingly, the fact of where the USB stick was found is, in my judgement, far more significant than it might potentially be in more disorganised or chaotic households.
92. In addition, the father accepted that he used that USB stick when travelling abroad. Following additional investigation during this hearing it was discovered that the other material on the USB stick included many of the father’s CV’s and certificates of accomplishment in which he took great pride and which it was important to him to preserve. Conversely, there is no document on the USB stick which falls to be attributed to anyone other than the father. Also, as Mr Barnes subtly teased out in evidence, the qualitative nature of the various texts seen here is different to those on B’s devices. There is a generational complexion to it, it is rather more academic in its content and also slightly more dated. The videos on this USB stick also resonate with the father’s interests. As Mr Barnes notes in his closing submissions, there has not been any challenge to the record of the father’s discussion with the Prevent Intervention Provider where he appears to accept visiting a website which contained Dabiq and a tract entitled ‘How Muslims could be misunderstood’. In addition, though it had not been foreshadowed to any great extent in the statements filed in the case, it became clear in evidence that the father frequently ventilated his political

views on Twitter where, as I have already referred to, he posted graphic and disturbing death related images.

93. Whilst evaluating the father's role in the radicalisation of his daughter, both in relation to its extent as well as its motivation, it is important to survey the wider picture of this family's life at the relevant time. Following the Wardship proceedings and the foiling of B's escape to Syria the CTU offered B support on the Channel project. This is entirely voluntary. The parents declined to accept it and B did not attend. Both the father and mother have told me that they felt their family had quietly addressed the issue of B's interest in Isis and that they wanted a period of calm in the family away from outside involvement. Again, I do not accept this explanation as either sufficient or complete. I am sure that there is an element of truth in it, but I have become equally clear that this family is resistant to the State and its involvement in their life.

### **My conclusions in respect to the father's involvement in the radicalisation of B**

94. The Local Authority has characterised the father's role as 'pivotal'. I agree that it is, though not in the way that the Local Authority initially contended. As I have sought to analyse it, the father's role has been a complex one in which he has, I am satisfied, often failed to appreciate the consequences of his own behaviour and its impact on his daughter. He is, in my evaluation of the evidence, a headstrong man who has a deep suspicion of the press, the courts and to some extent the world generally. He aspires to knowledge and respects learning. I am satisfied that he was simply not prepared to monitor B's use of the computer in the way that he had promised this Court and the CTU that he would. He deceived all the agencies into trusting him to regulate his daughter's use of the internet but, I find, made absolutely no effort to do so. It was anathema to him to curtail B's exploration of ideas however dark or dangerous they may have been. I do not believe that he had ever stopped to reflect on the extent to which his daughter could inflict emotional and psychological damage on herself by what she viewed on the internet. Here, in this particular case, a 16 year old girl has dehumanised herself by viewing a surfeit of death related images that have left her emotionally numb. It is this that is the most striking feature of the case, more so than her reading the polemics or expressions of radicalised views. Of course, they make their contribution too.
95. It must be the case that B knew that her father was breaking his promise to the Court. She was present in court when the promise was made. I think his high handed disregard for the Court and for the Police glamorised him in her eyes as a rebellious figure who could not be easily subjugated. The extent of the Isis related material on the family computers illustrates beyond any sensible contradiction that B felt absolutely no inhibition from viewing what she wanted without restraint from her father.
96. Unlike his daughter B, the father has a much broader life outside the home. B was an academic, 'bookish' child in a family that enjoyed outdoor sporting activities. The reality is that B, unlike her siblings, really did not seem to care for sports very much. In her evidence the sister told me of the family's irritation when B would not accompany them on their frequent outdoor activities. By contrast with her vibrantly healthy siblings B is strikingly pale. When talking about his faith, which is undoubtedly important to him, he did so in language that was moderate, unforced and

lacking in zealotry. He told me that he attended mosque regularly but he revealed no fanaticism.

97. On the question of his religion the father spoke spontaneously and without guile. Neither did he theologise or use language of his faith with any insistence on precision. In this respect he was dramatically different to his wife and to B herself. I found this both striking and revealing, I do not consider that the father shares or indeed spends very much time thinking about a heightened or more perfect aspirational Islam. I also note that many who have been involved with him have found him to be kind, warm and generous. He has been described as having a sense of humour too. During this case he has also revealed those features of his personality in this courtroom. I am satisfied that the father himself viewed Isis material though it was qualitatively less violent and damaging than that read by his daughter. His denial of it until he was effectively trapped by the forensic evidence is a further example of his inability to work constructively with the Authority to protect his daughter.
98. Despite all this there is a naivety to the father's behaviour rather than a deep seated destructive agenda. For the reasons I have sought to explain above, he is badly placed to understand the effect of these grossly disturbing images on his daughter. In some respects this has nothing to do with faith, political views, or radicalisation. It is above all else a significant parenting deficiency. The veneration of ideas and political causes eclipsed the instinctive obligation of every right thinking parent to protect a child's innocence. Though he did not fully appreciate it, perhaps not even at all, this father was complicit in the corruption of his daughter's emotional integrity and a corrosive influence on the development of her personal autonomy. If, as he speculated, viewing such images kills the 'pity and mercy' of the human spirit then I regret to say that he, more than any other person, is responsible for this. I can only hope that having captured the central issue in the case so movingly and succinctly the father will step up to his responsibilities in the future. I must of course add finally that in failing B in this way the father also left his other children potentially vulnerable to the insidious effects on these images.

### **The mother**

99. Ms Fottrell and Ms Hughes, on behalf of the mother, preface their extensive (40 pages) closing submissions with the following key observation:

*"The attention of the Court has been largely on the harm which has been caused to [B] from her exposure to explicit and harrowing video footage of beheadings and other terrorist killings. By her own account this resulted in a psychological and emotional numbness. No party has sought to suggest other than that this is in itself a disturbing and unusual feature of this case. The fact that it was harmful is not disputed. All parties accept that the character of the material is different to that ordinarily the subject of analysis by the Family Court. Its effect on [B] short term is that it radicalized and dehumanized her so that she lost her moral compass."*

100. Much of this accords with my own analysis and represents, at least forensically, a significant acknowledgement on behalf of the mother. Whether the mother is truly committed to the sentiments expressed on her behalf (which she will undoubtedly have approved) remains to be seen. It is further submitted that the Court should not

permit the nature of the images in this case to corrupt an objective evaluation of either ‘harm or risk’. Thus it is said:

*“The repulsion at the material and empathy with the child victim, which are both properly present in this case, inform the subjective evaluation of professionals and the Court. It is submitted by those representing the mother that this does not negate the need for objective analysis of the causes of the harm. The subjective evaluation should however inform the dispassionate consideration of the consequences of the harm experienced by [B] and the risk arising from that.”*

101. In this submission Ms Fottrell advances the mother’s case through the prism of B’s best interests. She has deployed this particular strategy with some frequency throughout a number of hearings in this case and in so doing has highlighted issues which otherwise would, I suspect, have been missed. Ms Fottrell argues that the Court should only make such findings as it has to do and in such a way that does not avoidably damage B’s life chances and ambitions for the future:

*“As a direct result of the nature and character of the harm [B] suffered she continues to be fragile and vulnerable. The determination which the Court makes in respect of findings against her and her family, and the decision as to whether she returns home or not, will likely dictate [B’s] life path. Whether she is to be permitted to have a second chance at achieving her life’s ambition to be a doctor is very much in issue.*

*To this end any findings made against [B] must be carefully balanced and proportionate. The way in which the case has been put against her by the local authority has at times been excessive, punitive and quasi criminal. If [B] is found to have been ‘attack planning’ ( which is not made out on the evidence) it is difficult to see how she could gain entry to medical school. Lesser findings may also diminish her prospects in this regard.”*

102. This is a challenging submission. In so far as there is an implicit suggestion that I should potentially curtail my findings, in order to keep open for B the prospects of a medical career, I have an uncomfortable sense that this might require me to treat B more favourably than an equivalent child whose future does not hold such a glittering prospect. That said, it is B’s welfare which, on this point, is the paramount consideration and, in the context of Children Act proceedings, both the proportionality of the findings sought as well as their consequences are relevant to the primary objective of the legislation i.e. the lode star of the ‘welfare principle’. I should record that Ms Fottrell makes a very similar point to this in her submissions on behalf of the Mother.
103. In sanctioning B’s removal from her home I intended to give her the space and opportunity to flourish and grow in her own independence. I have, on a number of occasions, deprecated the concept of ‘de-radicalisation’. It is no part of the function of this Court to police people’s views or beliefs. What I hoped to achieve for B was an opportunity for decompression, a respite from what she herself has described as her

‘addiction’ to the material that I have been considering. I hoped to create an opportunity for her prodigious intellect to range more widely and to feast on the many opportunities available in a pluralist society. Above all I wanted B’s thoughts to be her own and not those of the people who would manipulate her.

104. The first and guiding paragraph in any care plan must identify a child’s needs. I continue to believe that what I have just articulated above is B’s most pressing need. Accordingly, I structure both my findings and, in due course, my analysis of her welfare interests to this objective.
105. Like her daughter’s case the mother’s has also evolved. At the conclusion of the evidence she makes the following points which require to be set out:

*“The mother accepts that she failed to protect [B] from December 2014 to August 2015 and that this reflects deficits in her parenting...  
...In essence the mother’s case is as follows;*

- i) *That [B] was radicalized between June and December 2014;*
- ii) *That the catalyst to [B’s] radicalization was her reaction to the events in Gaza in June 2014 and in particular the deaths of civilians/ children;*
- iii) *That the mechanical process of radicalization occurred by way of [B] researching and accessing material on line;*
- iv) *That [B] became obsessed and addicted to looking at damaging and gruesome materials to which she became numbed;*
- v) *That [B] hid her interest and became involved with ISIS recruiters via Kik;*
- vi) *That after 6<sup>th</sup> December 2014 [B] offered an explanation of her intentions which was not accurate and minimized her interest and radicalization and to her great regret the mother accepted that narrative without properly probing or deconstructing it;*
- vii) *That the mother did not consider or realize that [B] was radicalized.*

106. In relation to her own culpability or responsibility for what has occurred to the daughter the mother is less fulsome:

*“That the mother was not sufficiently protective or vigilant between December 2014 and August 2015 is accepted albeit that there are explanations (rather than excuses) offered by her as to her thinking at the time.”*

107. It must further be recorded, for the avoidance of doubt, that the mother accepts that B was ‘radicalised’ and that she has suffered ‘immeasurable damage as a result of her repeated exposure to vile and grotesque ISIS films’. It is asserted on her behalf: ‘she does not seek to deny the grave nature of the harm. Like others she was deeply troubled by B’s evidence that she was numbed and inured to the impact of films of killings and repeated viewings of the dead’.
108. At the conclusion of the hearing the Local Authority did not consider the evidence supported a finding of ‘complicity’ rather, they said, the mother ‘should have been

aware of B's radicalisation and the risk of radicalisation to the children arising from the permissive environment within the home'. On the face of it this does not appear to go much further than the mother's own concession. The careful language, on both sides however, does not give the complete picture.

109. The mother describes herself as 'a revert' to Islam. In the Local Authority's assessment sessions, she explained how the father's commitment to his religion was something that she had found very attractive when they first met. As she talked about Islam, in her evidence, it became obvious that her faith was not simply an important part of her life but utterly integral to it. Her faith, it became clear, is vocational, in the sense that it is the most important thing in her life. She is intensely clear about what is expected of a 'good Muslim' and doctrinally precise in her use of language. She explained how a Muslim should never give way to anger or succumb to pride. Faith wasn't confined to the mosque but, she told me, was about how a Muslim should live a more aspirant life. For the avoidance of doubt this is my summary of her evidence.
110. Without any arrogance, she set out for me how an understanding of the expectations of Islam and an appreciation of the rigorous standards it set was key to her faith. Whilst she told me that it would be wrong of her to criticise her fellow Muslims, in the sense that to do so would be contrary to the will of Allah, nonetheless I was left with a very clear impression that she considered that there was a failure of commitment or aspiration to a more rigorous Islam amongst some in the British Muslim community. To the secular mind this might sound arrogant but I consider that the mother is driven by piety and rejects rather than condemns a diluted or more earthly form of Islam.
111. In her evidence B told me of her own support for an Islamic State which practiced a religion divorced from a corrupt society. The definition she went on to give of this was disingenuous, in my judgement. She described some kind of pluralist western utopia which celebrated difference. These, I consider, were vacuous platitudes, a false cloak of liberalism. It is utterly irreconcilable with the material she has been reading, containing as it does excoriating condemnation of western values and emphasising a duty to dismantle them through, it seems, whatever means available. I have no doubt that B's concept of Islam is far closer to that described by her mother. Her views resonate very comfortably with the mother's outline of her own beliefs which I have set out above. Similarly, I see B taking the same care with language, eschewing immodesty or pride and, most notably, I see that, like her mother, B commits to any task before her with uncompromised effort and dedication. This I believe she regards as a facet of her duties as a good Muslim.
112. B and her mother plainly have a very close relationship. The mother is also very bright. While she was in the witness box I suggested to her that B got her brains from her mother. She would have regarded agreement to this as immodest and denied it. But the intellectual similarities between the two women in cross examination were striking.
113. Both Ms Thakrar and Ms Ukueku, quite independently, came to the view that the mother is a 'controlling personality'. The mother strenuously rejects this allegation. It seems to irritate her somewhat disproportionately, given the enquiry we are involved in and the serious allegations she faces. I am bound to say I agree with the

professionals on this point. The terminology is irrelevant but I find that the mother is deeply, indeed rather cloyingly involved in the lives of her children.

114. The mother's own evidence was that she collected the older boys from school everyday. They are of an age when this is not only unnecessary but, I suspect at times, probably rather embarrassing for them. She explained that she liked to catch them when they came out of school at a time when their heads were full of the day's activities. 'If I wait until they come home', she told me, they have 'moved on' to other concerns and the 'opportunity has been lost'. This struck me as, in some ways, rather poignant. The mother is almost desperate to be in the thick of her children's lives. They are, in my judgement, integral both to her own sense of self worth and, in some more complex way, intrinsically linked to the way she perceives her obligations as a Muslim woman. She aspires to do Allah's will, through her children.
115. The boys have been involved in Prevent work. Ms Ukueku has been repeatedly irritated that the mother accompanies them to these sessions, sitting in her view, either in ear shot or in such proximity to the boy's private meeting that it risks compromising the confidentiality of the process. These meetings are intended to provide a private space for the boys and to help them foster their own independent thought. Just the proximity of the mother undermines the process, says Ms Ukueku. I agree. Moreover, I am satisfied that this is the mother's intention. She is desperate to know what is going on and to manage or control it.
116. It is obviously significant that the mother elected to educate B at home. She spoke with enthusiasm and animation as she described her teaching strategies and techniques which I need not further burden this judgment with. B was a responsive student, who now has a string of Grade A Star GCSE's.
117. I watched B respond to rigorous and challenging cross examination by a number of skilled and experienced advocates. Like her mother, her answers were measured, articulate and analytical. Also like her mother B was highly alert in anticipating what might lie behind an apparently innocuous question. That this mother and daughter had spent long times in each other's company was obvious.
118. At this point it is pertinent to note the observations of the siblings at the time when B made her valiant bid to travel to Syria. Y reports how B *'like a month a few months, before... She didn't really spend a lot of time with us'*. Y explained that B *'spent more time on her computer'* and was *'more moody'*. He had noticed that *'she'd turn like the screen away'*. With the candour of the young he also said that it was like *'she was not really there'*. He thought that mum and dad had noticed this change in B's behaviour. Another sibling, X, agreed that she was secretive about her use of the computer, she *'wouldn't let anyone see what she was doing and stuff like that'*. He too thought his sister was *'slightly grumpy'*, and had noticed that *'when someone came upstairs B would turn the laptop off'*. H, B's sister told me during the course of her evidence that she too had noticed that B had become withdrawn and preoccupied.
119. The descriptions from the siblings are very telling. What strikes me is that they resonate with B's own account of herself as 'addicted' to Isis material. Typically, the addict is furtive, withdrawn, deceptive. The children's observations of B create precisely that impression of her behaviour. I am very clear that this mother would have quickly been alert to her daughter's changed behaviour and would have rooted

out the cause with unstinting energy. I find that even before the attempted flight to Syria the mother would certainly have known that her daughter was dangerously enthusiastic about the Isis agenda. Having reached that conclusion, which seems to me to be irresistible on the evidence, I have wondered whether she was directly involved in her daughter's attempt to leave the country.

120. In a statement to the Police dated 06/12/2014, a family friend described the day B went missing in these terms:

*“at around 3pm ... my daughter asked [the mother] where [B] is? Mother said that she must be upstairs reading and told my daughter to go and look for her, after a short time she came back down and said she was not upstairs. It was at this point that we all started to look for [B]. We searched the entire house including the shed, but she was not to be found”*

It is important to remember that B did not come and go from this house in a way that other teenagers of her age might. It is common ground that she did not ever leave the house unescorted. By this stage, on any view, it is unlikely that her disappearance would have gone unnoticed. The statement continues thus:

*“we arrived back at the home address, I said to [the mother] let me speak to [the younger brother]. I called him and he came down to me. I then took him to one side and said ‘this is no joke, she could be in danger, tell me what you know, if you know something you have to tell me’. [He] said ‘I don’t know’. I could see he was withholding something, so I asked again and he said ‘my mum is going to kill me’, I said ‘this is important, you have to tell me’, he said ‘she has gone to Syria’. Is said ‘what do you mean?’ he said ‘yeah, she has gone to Syria to be a doctor and help the people’. I said ‘did she go alone, did she go with someone?’ He replied ‘I think she has gone with someone, a lady’. I said how old is she?’. He said ‘I think she is about 20 years old’. I said ‘how did she meet her?’ He said ‘I think she met her on Twitter’.”*

121. These paragraphs are fretted with ambiguity. That they support different interpretations is obvious and need not be spelt out. Though I am left with a very high level of suspicion concerning the mother's knowledge about B's escape to Syria, I am not ultimately persuaded, to the requisite standard of proof, that this mother knew of the plan. As I have already made clear I consider the mother to be both controlling and a highly authoritative figure in the household. I am sure that if this young boy had been pressed by his mother, even in the gentle way the friend describes in her statement, he would have told the mother that which he told the friend. I think it unlikely that the mother ever asked him for an account, indeed she does not describe herself as having done so. Given that she herself identified this boy as B's closest confidante this is a troubling anomaly in the evidence. This said, properly analysed, it does not establish a fact and I make no finding. I should state that neither the Local Authority nor the Guardian invited me to. Of course, the only possible inference that remains is that the mother was, as Mr Barnes describes it, permissive in her attitude to B's interests in Isis. This I do find to be established, on the balance of probabilities.

122. Before leaving this point it is notable that there is reference made to B meeting her escort to Syria by arrangement on Twitter. It is clear that B continued to use her Twitter account during the period after her return from the airport i.e. whilst she was a Ward of court and whilst the CTU and the Court were being assured by the parents of their vigilance. Moreover, H actually told the mother that B was using her Twitter account at this time. Despite everything that had happened the mother contended that she knew nothing of her daughter's Twitter activities and had made no enquiry. I reject her explanation, not least because it simply does not fit with H's manifestly truthful evidence on this point.
123. Like the father, I am satisfied that the mother made no effort at all to restrict her daughter's use of the Internet either before or indeed after her attempted flight to Syria. Accordingly, I find the mother too was party to a deception upon each of the safeguarding authorities involved. They both colluded to create the impression that they were monitoring their daughter's safety. In reality, they were doing nothing of the kind. There is in both parents a deep vein of resistance to authority. I have seen flickers of it during the course of these proceedings, characterised by their combative attitude to the investigation and to those who have been motivated to help them. Nor does either parent, in my view, really engage with the substance of the process. I emphasise, B is not being 'punished' for what she has done, the parents are not being 'punished' either, rather the State is trying to protect their daughter from the damaging consequences of the vile images which she has repeatedly made access to and the corrosive ideology which has beguiled her.
124. The parents decision to refuse the offer of structured help and support for their daughter, offered by the Channel Project, was, in the light of my analysis, a cynical strategy motivated to keep the police at a distance from their lives. In retrospect it ought to have signalled rather more concern than it did at the time. This resistance to authority coupled, as I find it to be, with a deep-seated capacity for deception has to be considered in the context of the fertile ground that existed within this family for radicalised ideas and extremist views to flourish. In particular the father's own insensitivity to death related images and the mother's dedication to a heightened Islamic code of belief. These I find are the predominant forces in this household which led to B becoming radicalised.
125. At risk of labouring the point foreshadowed at the beginning of this judgment but because it is important that there is no ambiguity, I wish to emphasise that the factors that I have identified as leading to B's radicalisation are particular to this child, these parents and this family's unique circumstances. I am confident that I have characterised the mother's belief system in a way which accurately reflects her own evidence. Every faith has its spectrum of observance from those whose religion is peripheral to their lives to those for whom it is vocational. I do not find that the mother held radicalised beliefs but I have found that on a spectrum of Islamic observance she is at the most committed end. In this family those beliefs proved to be fertile ground for B's journey to radicalisation.
126. There is no correlation between strict or very high levels of commitment to a rigorous interpretation of Islam and a susceptibility to radicalised beliefs. The children of highly devout Muslims are neither more nor less likely to be attracted to Isis ideology. In so far as that may be a popular perception, it is entirely misconceived. It runs counter to the research that I have set out above and contrary to my own experience in

these cases. In **Re A v London Borough Enfield [2016] EWHC 567 (Admin)** where I was considering an application for Judicial Review, A appeared to have been attracted to extremist ideology, in part, by way of rebellion to her highly anxious parents whom she considered to be insufficiently Islamic in their lifestyle. All this illustrates the complexity of the challenge to the Police, the Social Services and the Courts in understanding the process of radicalisation. Every child is different, every radicalised child is different.

### **B's evidence**

127. It is important to state that over the course of these proceedings and during her evidence I found B, as I have said, to be intelligent and perceptive. She gave her evidence on video link and was able to do so without inhibition or embarrassment. She was relaxed in cross examination, alert to the objectives behind the questions and never remotely intimidated intellectually. Some of the material she was discussing can only be described as profoundly disturbing. As she described some of these images she became distant, withdrawn, flat and rather glazed in her expression. She gave some of the most disturbing evidence I have ever heard from a child or, for that matter, an adult. She told me how violent beheadings, point blank shootings through the brain and images of mass killings no longer had any impact upon her. Whatever doubt I may have about any other aspect of her evidence I am entirely satisfied that she was telling the truth about this. Her demeanour was entirely congruent with her verbal evidence. The impact of this evidence on all those who heard it will remain for a long time.
128. As I have indicated above, shortly before the fact finding hearing began B sought leave to file a further and final statement. I granted permission. I propose now to set out some of the paragraphs from that lengthy statement as I do not find them to be easily receptive to précis. Addressing her beliefs B stated:

*"2. I have already stated that my primary reason to go to Syria was to join an Islamic State, albeit sooner than I had imagined. I believed that this was the best way for me to be a good Muslim. I believed that the West were responsible for the suffering of Muslims, particularly in Gaza, where innocent people and especially children were being bombed and killed. The UK was implicated in supplying arms. I felt a traitor living in the West. In that sense, I was anti-West as I have already said in my previous statement. I believed that I might be able to study there, for free and that this would enable me to study to become a doctor, which, in turn, would enable me to help others. That was a very attractive promise that was made. However, I wasn't sure I would be allowed to study, I think I was already questioning in my mind whether or not that would really happen although of course I really hoped it would, but I was prepared to forego it as a sacrifice for my religion. I have already said that it was not my primary reason for going and I accept that when I was saying to others that was the reason, and the only reason, it was because it sounded better and gave me a 'way out' of having to explain my support at that time for IS.*

*"4. I did support the view of IS taking over as much of the world as they could, as they said they would, and turning it into an Islamic State (although I thought that was probably unrealistic but the Arab*

*world might not be). In this respect they talked about conquering 'Rome'. That didn't mean the city of Rome, it was a term used to describe the West really. I did support the killing of Syrian soldiers (pro-Assad) who had been killing the Syrian civilians...."*

*"7. I knew that IS would use violence against people standing in their way and not accepting their rule. At the time what was said was that they attacked IS first and it was explained or likened to when Islam was first established by the Prophet and trying to spread Islam they would often come up against their own tribes and people who didn't want to accept Islam..."*

129. Describing one particular video B said :

*"7...The water in this video by the end of it was red; they had killed so many people. I'm not sure they were even soldiers at all now, they may well just have been people, ordinary civilians, who didn't agree with IS coming in and taking over..."*

130. Discussing her online conversations she said this:

*"8 ...I also think something weird happened to me and the way I was on line. An example is IS supporters on line used to be really against Shia Muslims. It was like a big argument between them on line and others who joined in the debates. Even though I agreed on Twitter with what they said about Shia's, I didn't really agree with it in real life as my Mum's best friend is Shia, with whom I have a very close relationship, and she was one of the people I suggested to live with. It was easy to maintain this divide between my real life and my online life as no-one knew me in real life. So although I ended up trying to go to Syria and it doesn't get more real than that, I also think that perhaps in my head there was also a distinction between things happening in the Islamic state and things happening here...."*

131. In relation to attacks:

*"14. I didn't think it was good to do a suicide bomb on a train or in a public place because you could kill innocent women and children. In Islam you're not supposed to kill women or children, just the men fighting against you."*

132. I would interpose my own observation here. I have noticed that whilst B is very mature intellectually she is conspicuously immature for her age emotionally. The reasons for this are obvious, she has had very limited exposure to the world, no experience of socialising with boys. She is not allowed out of the house unaccompanied. As I watched her giggle innocently, as her sister gave video link evidence about references to boys in her diary, it reaffirmed my impression, which was foreshadowed in B statements, that something of the allure of Syria was rooted in her perception of its potential for a romantic encounter. B would vigorously deny this and will not like my including it amongst my observations. Nonetheless in trying to understand how she has become radicalised I feel constrained to observe that she, like any other teenager, was attracted to social opportunity. B saw Syria as an opportunity for an adventure and a kind of social freedom.

133. In what I find to be a very carefully crafted concession B had this to say about proselytizing Isis views to her sisters:

*“27. For about a week after I came back in December 2014, I told [H] I wished I hadn’t been stopped and that I wanted to go there. After that I didn’t share with her my up and down feelings about IS. I didn’t suggest to her that she ought to go too, but I did say that I should be going, as a good Muslim, so she might have taken that as me suggesting she should go too. I didn’t say that with the intention of persuading her to go too, but I accept that might have been the effect on her. [H] is more likely to follow me than I am to follow her. I accept that if I said things about what I saw as my duty or why it would be right as a Muslim to go, there is a risk the others would have begun to see it that way and may have attempted to go or become involved.”*

134. Finally and specifically in relation to s31(2) threshold criteria B said:

*“37. I accept therefore that I was “radicalized”. I do not accept that I was a risk to the public as I never intended or planned in any way to carry out any attack against others. I did not intend to harm anyone. I completely deny that I was ‘attack planning’ and partly my fear of admitting what I had really been feeling about support for IS was that I thought that everyone would assume that the police theory was true. It wasn’t.”*

*“38. I accept that I was a risk to myself, and to an extent to my siblings, who might have been influenced by my beliefs.”*

*“39. I also accept that I sought to give the picture that everything was OK after I was removed from the plane when it wasn’t. That misled people and meant that because they couldn’t work out what I was thinking they couldn’t work out how to help me.”*

*“40. I do not, and will not accept that I was a threat to the public.”*

135. The key issue in planning for the future is whether B remains radicalised. I have no hesitation in concluding that she does. The emotional damage she has sustained as a direct consequence of seemingly unlimited access to and viewing of the images discussed above has left her inured to human suffering. It seems to me therefore, that having damaged such a crucial part of her core humanity, she must be regarded as a significant risk of harm to herself and others. In her evidence I asked her about some well publicised and notorious killings. She responded to these questions in the same way that she had described the videos, which I can only relate as revealing a chilling lack of empathy to the victims. I do not consider it appropriate or necessary for me to identify the particular incidents being considered. It is this underlying and striking lack of empathy for ordinary human suffering that leads me to conclude that I must continue to regard her as presenting a risk. To this extent she remains radicalised.

136. The Local Authority had initially pressed further than these concessions. Most significantly they sought a finding that B was involved in what has been termed ‘attack planning’. It is inevitably difficult to evaluate the reliability of a 16 year old young person who now, on her own account admits repeated deception to the Court,

the Police and a variety of professionals. All this, coupled with the disassociation with human suffering, leads me to be cautious about making findings generally but, having warned myself in this way, I am satisfied that there is not sufficient evidence to establish this finding to the requisite standard of proof and the Local Authority is correct to abandon it.

137. The Local Authority emphasise that B took significant steps to protect her online privacy, this included the use of a process by which she could gain access to the Dark Net; she used CC cleaner to clear her data history. She utilised a 16 digit alpha numeric password and, on her own account, stored material on devices used by other family members.
138. The Local Authority is not content with the superficial concession that B might casually or half heartedly have shared her enthusiasm for Isis with her sister, H. There is a factual dispute between H and Brian Sharpe as to what was said in the course of their meeting in March 2016. Mr Sharpe was clear in his evidence that H revealed that B had tried to convince her to travel to Syria in the course of 2015. As I have already commented whilst I found Mr Sharpe to be somewhat ponderous at times and lacking a pragmatic social work instinct, I was left in no doubt as to his honesty and integrity. Where his evidence conflicts with H I unreservedly prefer his.
139. Moreover, there is corroborative material within the Prevent notes supportive of Mr Sharpe's recollection. Those notes reveal that B gave H videos to watch concerning Isis activity; she also gave her a USB stick containing extremist material and made a number of attempts to convince H to join Isis and leave for Syria. Mr Sharpe's record that H, in effect, played along with B to humour her, unifies these strands of evidence and provides a cogent history.
140. As I have said already, the usual forensic indicators of a witness's reliability have constantly to be re-evaluated in this family but I ultimately feel comfortable that Mr Sharpe's assessment of H is an accurate one. Ironically, whilst his integrity appears to be challenged, he is in fact providing real assistance to H, presenting her as resistant to B's extremist overtures. I formed a similar impression, having listened to her evidence. Like her brothers and like them through her interest in sports, she engages with the world in a healthy and energetic way. This has provided her, so far, with an immunisation to the radical agenda of her sister. Similarly, it seems to me, it takes her away from her mother's zealous Islamic beliefs. Nor is she exercised by her father's humanitarian interests and so not as likely to be exposed to the death related images that he shares with B. I find the father though curious about radical Islam is not, himself, motivated by an extremist agenda and as such he is not driven to proselytise. Accordingly, I think it unlikely that H would be shown the kind of images that B is shown by her father, at least not to anywhere near the same degree.
141. I have taken a great deal of time in this judgment to study a family, living here in London, where dangerous radical beliefs caught fire resulting in their child, B, sustaining significant emotional harm. I intend that a professional, independent of the family, will sit down and explain to the younger children something of what has happened here based on this judgment. Most importantly I want them to know that B was not placed in care as a 'punishment' but for her own protection, because her parents had been unable to provide her with a sufficiently safe and nurturing home. I have an uneasy feeling, despite their protestation to the contrary, that B has been

made a scapegoat within the family. Whilst she undoubtedly bears responsibility for her actions, the greater responsibility lies with her parents, who have let her down badly. Her siblings should know this.

### **Welfare options**

142. When I sanctioned B's removal into care I had intended that she would be exposed to the world, in the sense that she would have an opportunity to meet a wider range of people, to be stimulated by new ideas, activities and philosophies. It sounds like a bold ambition but I do not believe it was. I have in the past seen women who have previously been subjugated in closed communities, flourish and grow with new confidence and self belief, even whilst confined to prison. I make no apology for repeating that the Court's objective was not to 'de-radicalise' B, which rather repels me as a concept, but to offer her the space and the stimulation to open her mind to alternative possibilities.
143. As Ms Fottrell has said, the reality of what has been available in interim care could not have been further from this Court's aspiration. I agree. In doing so I do not condemn the Local Authority. They encountered resistance from schools when trying to secure a placement for B. Opportunities for foster care, always limited for teenagers, were non-existent for B. The consequence was that she has lived for 9 months in very isolated circumstances. Her access to the internet has been limited and supervised for obvious reasons. It has not been possible for her to be provided with the degree of tuition she requires to get the AS grades she needs to pursue her chosen career. In the end she took the decision to abandon this academic year. I have come to the conclusion that the present arrangements neither address the issues that B faces nor meet the range of her welfare needs to a degree that can be described as satisfactory.
144. What then are the alternative options? Some extended family members (Mr & Mrs J), have put themselves forward to care for B, outside London. The proposal is that she should live with them until she finishes her A-levels, a time scale which takes her beyond the remit of this Court. A college placement is likely to be available.
145. The Local Authority's position was that such a decision should be deferred until the conclusion of the fact finding hearing. I disagreed, there is a very limited window of opportunity to achieve anything at all within this process. The luxury of extensive assessment and reflection is not available. I asked Mr and Mrs J to attend and they gave evidence. They are a delightful couple, they have full lives and they have brought up their own children, one of whom is practising as a doctor. On the face of it they have much to offer. B is polite and respectful to them and would clearly prefer to live there than in her present circumstances.
146. I hope Mr & Mrs J will not think me discourteous when I say that they have a far from complete understanding of the issues in this case and only a superficial appreciation of what is being asked of them. Though they have read my earlier judgment, which is expressed in plain and uncompromising language, I repeatedly sensed that they regarded this family as in some way victimised. It is positive that their relationship with the family has not been weakened by the criminal investigations or the findings in the Family Court but it is, perhaps, a little surprising. Both Mr & Mrs J have a strong faith and are highly motivated to help.

147. However, the reality is that they would have to regulate B's contact with her family and monitor her use of the internet. This would be challenging enough even were it predicated on a clear understanding of the nature of the contemplated risk but absent that, it strikes me as a very tall order. Thus, on careful analysis, whilst B maybe afforded protection from the fact of Mr & Mrs J's location, I do not think she will be effectively defended from parental influence. Indeed, I consider it would be much harder, in this scenario, for the Local Authority effectively to monitor the situation.
148. Unsurprisingly, B wants to go home, she is rather desperate to do so. She is sad and lonely and misses her siblings, particularly her younger brother. She is being phlegmatic about life with Mr and Mrs J but I think she senses a loneliness for her there too. So do I. Mr & Mrs J have their own interests and commitments, these are understandably not structured around a teenage girl and will require much renegotiation in their lives. I was told that their commitments do not enable them to allocate a great deal of time to helping B make the transition to their home over the summer months, were that to be the plan.
149. Many teenagers of this age, who find themselves in the care system, simply take matters into their own hands or to use the term frequently heard in these Courts 'they vote with their feet'. For the duration of the Care Order i.e. until she is 18 (in just over 12 month's time) I think it unlikely that B would do so. To some extent, her experience of the Court system has been salutary. After that I do not know. She will be beyond my remit and able to exercise her own adult autonomy. Should she return to her parents home at that point and there may be pressure for her to do so, she will once again interrupt her education and potentially damage her academic prospects. Though it may not seem the obvious solution, in the light of my findings above, I have come to the conclusion that the plan most likely to meet B's needs is to return her home. I identify the following reasons:
- i) The circumstances of B's radicalisation involved a combination of factors and influences unique to her situation;
  - ii) B's brothers and sisters do not share her beliefs and are likely to be resistant to them;
  - iii) B is most likely to rediscover her own intellectual autonomy in a home environment where she is happy and loved;
  - iv) I think it likely that the siblings will challenge B's extremist beliefs, even without intending to do so;
  - v) B will enrol in a local college if she returns home;
  - vi) I think it likely that B will respond enthusiastically to a wider social group at college, holding inevitably different opinions and beliefs. Her lively intellect is likely to be stimulated by the exchange of ideas. It is worth emphasising that B has never attended school before;
  - vii) Whilst I consider that B's admissions in this court are driven by her pragmatic evaluation of the evidence against her, as she herself volunteered, there is nonetheless an underlying sincerity to her own description of the numbing

effect that these awful videos have had on her. This has the potential to be a breakthrough in combating what she has described as her ‘addiction’ to violent and death related images;

- viii) In the last 9 months the Local Authority’s Care Plan has been able to provide a sustained period in which B has not seen the kind of images that have caused her such harm. This occurred at a crucial stage in her development and has enabled her to gain the tentative insights I have referred to above. (As I know B will read this judgment carefully, I wish her to appreciate a simple and unvarnished truth: those who do not empathise with human pain and suffering will never make effective doctors, it is intrinsic to the core motivation of the profession);
  - ix) The family has a proactive social worker who has demonstrated that she will not be naïve and will not be deflected by controlling or manipulative behaviour. The plans for all the children should enable them to get space from their mother. In particular, the mother should not attend the children’s Prevent sessions and neither should she collect the children from school;
  - x) Having recognised the impact of death related images on his daughter, I have some confidence that the father will restrain from sharing such images with her in the future. This he might like formally to undertake to the Court, knowing that he might be sent to prison should he breach his own undertaking;
  - xi) I also consider that this family can be more easily monitored when together rather than separated. I have no doubt that the police and the social services will be vigilant concerning the use of computers in this household;
150. Very shortly it will not be possible to make a Care Order within the framework of the Children Act 1989, given B’s age. I propose therefore to make a final care order today requiring the Local Authority to put together the detail of a care plan reflecting the decision I have outlined above. The matter will require to be listed before me expeditiously to consider the details of the plan.

## Issues Relating to Radicalisation

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**Date of Report:** 6 November 2015

### 1. Aim of the Report

2. The aim of this report is to provide a review of relevant scientific evidence on radicalisation. In order to address particular concerns, the report focuses attention on issues around children and adolescents, communities, on-line material, gender and psychological vulnerability.

### 3. How Radicalisation Happens

4. Radicalisation is a complex and dynamic process which results in individuals coming to embrace a violent ideology in support of a political or religious cause.<sup>1</sup> The process should not be seen as linear – with one stage neatly following another – but rather as an often erratic experience which can go in a variety of directions.<sup>2</sup>
5. There is no single root cause of radicalisation. More than 200 different factors have been identified by research which could play a role in the radicalisation process.<sup>3</sup> Not all factors feature in every case, and there is often very considerable variation.

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<sup>1</sup> A. Schmid, "Radicalisation, de-radicalisation, counter-radicalisation: A conceptual discussion and literature review", *ICCT Research Paper 97* (2013).

<sup>2</sup> R. Borum, "Radicalization into Violent Extremism II: A Review of Conceptual Models and Empirical Research", *Journal of Strategic Security*, Vol. 4, No. 4, (2011), pp.7-62; M. King and D. Taylor, "The Radicalization of Homegrown Jihadists: A Review of Theoretical Models and Social Psychological Evidence", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 23, No. 4, (2011), pp.602-622

<sup>3</sup> University of Amsterdam, *Empirical Study (revised)*. *SAFIRE: Scientific Approach to Finding Indicators for & Responses to Radicalisation* (2013) <http://www.safire-project-results.eu/deliverables.html>

6. Research has highlighted that radicalisation is the result of the interaction of both personal factors (e.g. individual susceptibility) and environmental factors (e.g. social relationships, community attitudes).<sup>4</sup> Studies have also highlighted that static and dynamic factors both play significant roles in radicalisation. Static elements include, for example, demographic factors such that young people aged 15-24 are most at risk, and males are usually more affected than females.<sup>5</sup>
7. Dynamic factors can include social relationships, which in most cases are probably one of key elements in the radicalisation process. Camaraderie, social support and a sense of belonging can all be powerful incentives for becoming and staying involved with a radical group.<sup>6</sup>
8. Psychological vulnerability can also play a significant role, though this should not be confused with mental illness or psychological problems, which overall are present in relatively few cases of serious radicalisation.<sup>7</sup>
9. The presence of an extremist ideology is a further factor. The key element here is how an individual latches onto the ideology and incorporates elements within their own identity. The transformation of the individual's identity is an important dimension, rather than, for example, nuances within the ideology. Indeed, radicalised individuals can often have a surprisingly simplistic and shallow understanding of the ideology.<sup>8</sup>
10. Ultimately, radicalisation is not simply the sum of different factors, but rather that the different factors seem to play a role at different stages in the process. Key events can

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<sup>4</sup> H. Allan, A. Glazzard, S. Jespersen, S. Reddy-Tumu and E. Winterbotham, *Drivers of Violent Extremism: Hypotheses and Literature Review* (London: Royal United Services Institute, 2015).

<sup>5</sup> A. Silke, 'Holy warriors exploring the psychological processes of Jihadi radicalization', *European Journal of Criminology*, Vol.5, No.1 (2008), pp.99-123.

<sup>6</sup> See for example M. Sageman, *Leaderless jihad: Terror networks in the twenty-first century* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); E. Bakker, *Jihadi Terrorists in Europe*. Clingendael Security Paper No. 2. (Haag: Netherlands Institute of International Relations, 2006); and, A. Kule and Z. Gül, 'How individuals join terrorist organizations in Turkey: An empirical study on DHKP-C, PKK, and Turkish Hezbollah', *The Global: A Journal of Policy and Strategy*, Vol.1, No.1 (2015).

<sup>7</sup> R. Borum, 'Psychological vulnerabilities and propensities for involvement in violent extremism', *Behavioral Sciences & the Law*, Vol.32, No.3 (2014), pp.286-305.

<sup>8</sup> A. Silke, *The Psychology of Counter-terrorism* (Oxon: Routledge 2010).

motivate individuals to radicalise further or to de-radicalise, and overall radicalisation is best seen as a complex, non-linear and dynamic process.<sup>9</sup>

## 11. Psychological Vulnerability

12. A range of psychological factors have been identified as important including: issues of grievance, perceived injustice, identity, anger, revenge and a quest for significance.<sup>10</sup>

Most extremists believe at the time of their offending that their actions are morally justified, and various psychological processes (such as deindividuation, mortality salience, moral disengagement and risky shift) appear to play an important role in facilitating their involvement.<sup>11</sup>

## 13. Quest for Significance

14. Perceived success in life appears to be a factor in radicalisation.<sup>12</sup> Individuals who perceive themselves as less successful identify more with their religion or nationality, and people who see their identity primarily in these terms are more likely to express support for extremist violence. Other research shows that feelings of shame or insignificance correlate with support for extremism and political violence.<sup>13</sup> Linked to this, recent

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<sup>9</sup> J. Marret, A. Feddes, L. Mann, B. Doosje, and H. Griffioen-Young, 'An overview of the SAFIRE project: a scientific approach to finding indicators of and responses to radicalisation', *EXIT-Deutschland: Zeitschrift für Deradikalisierung und demokratische Kultur*, Vol.1 (2013), pp.123-148.

<sup>10</sup> See for example, J. Horgan, 'From profiles to pathways and roots to routes: Perspectives from psychology on radicalization into terrorism', *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol.618, No.1 (2008), pp.80-94; and, R. Borum, 'Psychological vulnerabilities and propensities for involvement in violent extremism', *Behavioral Sciences & the Law*, Vol.32, No.3 (2014), pp.286-305.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, A. Bandura, 'Mechanisms of moral disengagement in terrorism', in W. Reich (ed.), *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, ideologies, states of mind*, pp. 161-191, (Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1990); T. Pyszczynski, A. Abdollahi, S. Solomon, J. Greenberg, F. Cohen and D. Weise, 'Mortality salience, martyrdom, and military might: The great Satan versus the axis of evil', *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Vol.32, No.4 (2006), pp.525-37; and, A. Silke, *Terrorism: All That Matters* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2014).

<sup>12</sup> A. Kruglanski, M. Gelfand, J. Bélanger, A. Sheveland, M. Hetiarachchi and R. Gunaratna, 'The psychology of radicalization and deradicalization: How significance quest impacts violent extremism', *Political Psychology*, Vol.35, No.1 (2014), pp.69-93.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

research in the UK has found that Muslim individuals with symptoms of mild depression were more likely to express support for terrorism and political protest.<sup>14</sup>

15. Thus, the gravitation towards an extremist ideology is for many a way of dealing with perceived inadequacy and failure in their own lives, and of attempting to increase their own self-esteem and sense of significance.

#### 16. *Identity*

17. How someone sees their identity appears to be an important factor.<sup>15</sup> People who see their identity as individuals first, are less likely to support or feel positive about an extremist ideology. In contrast, people who have a collectivistic identity (i.e. they see their identity first in terms of their religion or nation) are more supportive of extremist violence. Past life events can play an important role in an individual's sense of identity. Studies show that there is a strong relationship between self-reported life failure (or lack of success), and greater identification as a member of a collective (nation or religion). Those who experience a loss of significance are more likely to then adopt collective ideologies that will provide them with significance. Once someone has adopted a group-centred identity, studies show they are more likely to engage in activity in support of that group.

#### 18. *Self-Esteem*

19. Linked with the quest for significance, individuals with lower levels of self-esteem can be more vulnerable to radicalisation.<sup>16</sup> The extremist ideology can offer people a way to

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<sup>14</sup> K. Bhui, B. Everitt and E. Jones, 'Might Depression, Psychosocial Adversity, and Limited Social Assets Explain Vulnerability to and Resistance against Violent Radicalisation?' *PLoS ONE* Vol.9, No.9 (2014), e105918. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0105918

<sup>15</sup> See for example: C. Dean, 'The Healthy Identity Intervention: The UK's Development of a Psychologically Informed Intervention to address Extremist Offending', in A. Silke (ed.) *Prisons, Terrorism and Extremism: Critical Issues in Management, Radicalisation and Reform*, pp. (Oxon: Routledge, 2014); J. Liht and J. Savage, 'Identifying young Muslims susceptible to violent radicalisation: Psychological theory and recommendations', in M. Sharpe (ed.) *Suicide bombers: The psychological, religious and other imperatives*, pp5-25, (Amsterdam, Netherlands: IOS Press, 2008); and, S. Schwartz, C. Dunkel and A. Waterman, 'Terrorism: An identity Theory Perspective', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol.32 (2009), pp.537-559.

<sup>16</sup> V. Lub, 'Polarisation, radicalization and social policy. Evaluating the theories of change', *Evidence and Policy*, Vol.9, (2013), pp.165–183; and, A. Feddes, L. Mann and B. Doosje, 'Increasing self-esteem and empathy to prevent violent radicalization: a longitudinal quantitative evaluation of a resilience training focused on adolescents with a dual identity', *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, Vol.45, (2015), pp.400–411. doi: 10.1111/jasp.12307

enhance their self-esteem. This helps to explain the finding from some research studies that people at early stages of radicalisation can show low self-esteem, but individuals at later stages (who have been heavily radicalised) actually report high self-esteem (a result of embracing the ideology and the message that the individual is an active member of a valued in-group).<sup>17</sup>

## 20. *Mortality Salience*

21. When people are exposed to death-related thoughts or imagery this results in what psychologists refer to as a ‘mortality salience’ effect. Psychological research has shown that even very subtle cues relating to death can create mortality salience effect – even when the cues are not consciously recognised by the person involved.<sup>18</sup>
22. Mortality salience has a number of psychological effects. After exposure to such images people will usually feel an increasing pride in and identification with their country, religion, gender, race, etc. They experience exaggerated tendencies to stereotype and reject those who are different from themselves. The group you belong to is even better than it was before, even more worthy of your support. Your rivals though are diminished, less deserving of sympathy or compassion. People feel greater hostility toward those who are perceived as different others or as a threat.
23. These changes in attitude and perceptions are also linked to changes in behaviour. Some of these are relatively subtle, such as sitting closer to a person who shares your own culture, while moving further away from foreigners. Others are starker, including increased physical aggression toward anyone critical of cherished beliefs.
24. Crucially, mortality salience has also been found to lead to an increase in support for extremism when it is linked to group identity. For example, one study found that under mortality salience conditions white Americans expressed more sympathy and support for other Whites who expressed racist views. In the Middle East, researchers found that Muslim students under mortality salience conditions expressed more support and

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<sup>17</sup> University of Amsterdam, *Empirical Study (revised)*. *SAFIRE: Scientific Approach to Finding Indicators for & Responses to Radicalisation* (2013) <http://www.safire-project-results.eu/deliverables.html>

<sup>18</sup> T. Pyszczynski, S. Solomon and J. Greenberg, *In the Wake of 9/11: The Psychology of Terror* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2002).

sympathy for suicide bombers, and also expressed a greater willingness to carry out suicide attacks themselves.<sup>19</sup>

25. The more that important cultural icons and beliefs (e.g. in the context of militant jihadi terrorism, reference to the Quran, the Prophet Mohammed, and other vital aspects of Islam) are involved, then the more pronounced that the effect is likely to be. Mortality salience leads to an increased attachment and protectiveness towards such beliefs and also produces increased hostility and aggression to others who appear to be denigrating or insulting such icons and beliefs. Some web-sites highlight issues such as the alleged abuse of copies of the Quran committed by Americans in Iraq, for example, and under mortality salience conditions such acts take on more serious and provocative dimension.

#### *26. Altruism and Self-Sacrifice*

27. Perhaps strangely, many people see their involvement with an extremist movement as a pro-social activity.<sup>20</sup> Altruistic tendencies can be increased by stressing similarities with others. The stronger a person can identify with others the more they care about what happens to them. In contrast, stressing the differences weakens such bonds and interest and concern declines.

28. Altruism is likely to have an impact on support for extremism when it is considered within the context of identity. Individuals who feel their identity is closer to the militant group, and who score higher on altruistic measures, are arguably the ones who will express and feel the strongest support for the group including the group's use of extreme measures. Potentially, they will also be more likely to act on these sentiments.

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<sup>19</sup> T. Pyszczynski, A. Abdollahi, S. Solomon, J. Greenberg, F. Cohen and D. Weise, 'Mortality salience, martyrdom, and military might: The great Satan versus the axis of evil', *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Vol.32, No.4 (2006), pp.525-37

<sup>20</sup> See for example: R. O'Gorman and A. Silke, 'Terrorism as altruism: An evolutionary model for understanding terrorist psychology', in M. Taylor, J. Roach and K. Pease (eds.) *Evolutionary Psychology and Terrorism*, pp.149-163, (Oxon: Routledge, 2015); and, Z. Reeve, 'Terrorism as Parochial Altruism.' Paper presented at the *Annual Convention of the American Political Science Association*, San Francisco, 3-5 September 2015.

29. Importantly, studies show that measures of altruism correlate closely with measures of the psychological willingness to self-sacrifice.<sup>21</sup> Both of these factors also match closely measures of having a commitment to higher causes - causes which provide meaning in people's lives. Self-sacrifice is also linked to an increased willingness to engage in extreme actions, to endure personal suffering and hardship on behalf of a cause, and feeling angry towards people who do not respect that cause.

### **30. Radicalisation and Children and Teenagers**

31. The Islamic State are recruiting from the ages of 14 upwards. We are not seeing direct recruitment, yet, of younger individuals. They don't appear to have the relevant communication skills to attract younger members. Those recruited at this age, appear to be contacted and connected through siblings, friends and individuals known to them.<sup>22</sup> Young people travelling to Iraq/Syria from Europe have evaded security officials by travelling with older individuals who are assumed to have parental control/approval. To date the limited recruitment of young teenagers has relied on this personal connection and emotional control - these individuals are so far more motivated by being reunited than by political or Islamic ideology. There is a tension in the duty of care, in supporting families and young people when a sibling has travelled, because they may become the new 'recruitment' manipulating the family situation, and the desire to de-radicalise and assist the individual who has already travelled. Supporting these families, in terms of their social networks is vital, as they are often ostracised from local communities and other family members no longer wish to communicate with them. This is because of the perceived 'shame' they have brought on the community/family and fear that the wider family will be surveilled by the state and become suspect.<sup>23</sup> Families and friends also are vulnerable to media abuse and harassment that further isolates them and makes them vulnerable to recruiter's messages.

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<sup>21</sup> J. Bélanger, J. Caouette, K. Sharvit and M. Dugas, 'The psychology of martyrdom: Making the ultimate sacrifice in the name of a cause', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol.107, No.3 (2014), pp.494-515.

<sup>22</sup> B. Franz, 'Popjihadism: Why Young European Muslims Are Joining the Islamic State' *Mediterranean Quarterly* Vol 26 No. 4 (2015) pp.5-20

<sup>23</sup> See for example the testimonies in <https://www.facebook.com/mothersandlife/> and Sisters Against Violent Extremism and Mothers' without Borders <http://www.women-without-borders.org/save/> In addition, the video: <http://highline.huffingtonpost.com/articles/en/mothers-of-isis/>

32. Studies suggest that many individuals can become engaged with violent extremist movements at very young age (below 15 years old). Adolescence, in particular, seems to be a critical period. Why adolescence is so important appears to relate to issues around identity and negative emotions. Establishing a clear sense of identity is a normal part of adolescence. The concern with radicalisation is when identity gravitates towards an ideology-based violence and is shaped by this.
33. This is more likely to happen in cases where the young person has a strong identification with an (ethnic and religious) in-group; where they perceive this in-group as superior; yet, where they also perceive that this in-group has been humiliated by others.<sup>24</sup> The psychological background can be marked by negative emotions and a quest for significance. Self-esteem may be low at the start of the process, but can rise as the individual embrace's the radical ideology and incorporates this more and more into their own sense of identity.
34. Young people with high personal uncertainty (e.g. who experience higher levels of anxiety and confusion) can be more inclined to support ideology-based violence. Researchers argue that uncertainty is a distressing feeling, and that people are fundamentally motivated to achieve a sense of certainty about themselves and their social worth. This can make extremist ideologies which provide a clear "black and white" worldview that minimizes ambiguity and uncertainty very attractive, and indeed, studies show that people gravitate towards radical beliefs when they experience high levels of uncertainty.
35. Also, young people who have a higher sense of agency (i.e. feel that they understand themselves and their roles) appear more willing to actually act on violent intentions.

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<sup>24</sup>University of Amsterdam, *Empirical Study (revised)*. *SAFIRE: Scientific Approach to Finding Indicators for & Responses to Radicalisation* (2013) <http://www.safire-project-results.eu/deliverables.html>

36. Important background environmental factors which contribute to all this, can be negative situations at home, the presence and endorsement of the ideology among their peers and family, and negative key events in their personal lives.<sup>25</sup>

### **37. Gender and Islamic Inspired Radicalisation**

38. The recruitment of young men and women to ‘jihadist’ causes is highly gendered.<sup>26</sup> Jihadi narratives rely upon rigid understandings of male and female appropriate roles in society, with clear expectations for behaviour. There are two elements to this, the first the ‘failings’ in gender relations in the West, and second the correct and purposeful gender relations present and expected in Islamic State among ‘believing’ ‘pure’ Muslim men and women. They allege that European men are emasculated by European state agencies, and are not ‘real men’ because of their failures to defend the ‘appropriate’ gender order. They allege that women in the west are not respected and the roles of wife and mother are not valued. In contrast they present Islamic State as an opportunity for young men to demonstrate their ‘manhood’, by becoming a fighter/hero, by supporting and defending women, and by following God’s requirement that they live under Islamic law.<sup>27</sup> It is presented as a rite of passage into adulthood. Furthermore they ask women to demonstrate their commitment to God and Islamic law by being a ‘support’ to their (future/current) husbands in Islamic State and by bringing up the next generation of Muslims in the ‘correct’ manner.<sup>28</sup>

39. Young women are discouraged from communicating with men, on-line or in their social environment, often it is friends, associates, or family members, who have already travelled to Syria or Iraq who are the primary contact. Closest links seem to be with siblings. Recruiters exploit their extensive knowledge of an individual by targeting any

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<sup>25</sup> University of Amsterdam, *Empirical Study (revised)*. SAFIRE: Scientific Approach to Finding Indicators for & Responses to Radicalisation (2013) <http://www.safire-project-results.eu/deliverables.html>

<sup>26</sup> For example, see: M. Bloom, ‘Death Becomes Her: The Changing Nature of Women's Role in Terror’, *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, (2010), pp.91-98.

<sup>27</sup> A.I. Ahram “Sexual Violence and the Making of ISIS” *Survival*, Vol 57, No. 3, (2015) pp.57-78

<sup>28</sup> Institute for Strategic Dialogue. *Becoming Mulan*. London 2015 Available at: [http://www.strategicdialogue.org/ISDJ2969\\_Becoming\\_Mulan\\_01.15\\_WEB.PDF](http://www.strategicdialogue.org/ISDJ2969_Becoming_Mulan_01.15_WEB.PDF); Institute of Strategic Dialogue *Till Martyrdom Do Us Part’ Gender and the ISIS Phenomenon* Available at: [http://www.strategicdialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Till\\_Martyrdom\\_Do\\_Us\\_Part\\_Gender\\_and\\_the\\_ISIS\\_Phenomenon.pdf](http://www.strategicdialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Till_Martyrdom_Do_Us_Part_Gender_and_the_ISIS_Phenomenon.pdf)

existing vulnerabilities in the young person's identity and life experiences. Often they appear to focus on the lack of control and voice young women have in their lives - whether in the home, the community or at school. Women's experiences, opinions and lives are shown 'not to matter' to the 'outside world' and recruiters point to the failure of others to take potential recruits actions or words seriously. They also highlight inequalities, discrimination and foreign policy in their initial discussions - linking personal experiences of disappointment to a worldwide phenomenon of victimisation and oppression.<sup>29</sup>

40. They contrast this rejection and weakness to the 'protected' but 'purposeful' life in Iraq and Syria under ISIS, where the young women are encouraged to think about life as part of the 'sisterhood', facilitating belonging and commitment to the new cause. In this 'new life' young women are given 'choices' (Islamic State allege) regarding marriage, work, and education - providing they abide by the strict rules of gender segregation. Recruiters emphasise how 'meaningful' life is, and that hardships (in terms of electrical or medical shortages) are the burden they must endure in order to become better Muslims.<sup>30</sup>

Importantly young women are presented with illusion of 'choice' in future husbands, providing their 'wali' (guardian) approves of the match. In marrying a fighter, women are given status and prestige, something recruiters allege they will not get while living in the West. Furthermore Western women are 'prized' potential wives (over local women) because they have shown their commitment to the cause by undertaking the journey, and because they have higher levels of education, and maybe linguistically closer to their future husbands.<sup>31</sup>

41. However in contrast to carrying out these domestic roles in the UK, in Islamic State it is alleged women can unite their private faith and life with their public/political goals.

Islamic State make it clear they do not anticipate women contributing to the 'battlefield',

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<sup>29</sup> Marc Galanter and James J.F. Forest, 'Cults, Charismatic Groups, and Social Systems: Understanding the Transformation of Terrorist Recruits', in James J.F. Forest (ed.), *The Making of a Terrorist: Recruitment, Training, and Root Causes* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security, 2006), pp. 51-70; G. Wood "What ISIS really wants" *The Atlantic* (2015) March. Available at: <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/>

<sup>30</sup> K. Brown "Utopian Visions in Jihadi Politics" Symposium Dürnstein: Glücksbilder. Die Wirklichkeit der Utopien, Dürnstein, Austria, February (2015) <http://www.symposionduernstein.at/> Also available at: [https://www.academia.edu/11637582/Utopian\\_Visions\\_in\\_Jihadi\\_Gender\\_Politics](https://www.academia.edu/11637582/Utopian_Visions_in_Jihadi_Gender_Politics)

<sup>31</sup> Bloom, M and Winter, C. "The women of ISIL" *Politico* (2015) <http://www.politico.eu/article/the-women-of-isil-female-suicide-bomber-terrorism/>

rather they are to provide supporting and domestic roles but this is a ‘political choice’ as much as a personal one.<sup>32</sup> Images of women with weapons or dressed as a suicide bomber are signalled as a sign of defence but also to signify their support of violent ‘jihad’ and to show off the capability and weaponry available to fighters of Islamic state. Women are ‘trained’ in the use of light weaponry but only to defend themselves or their children, or to serve in two female-only moral police forces in IS territory.<sup>33</sup> Notions of ‘purity’ therefore become important - purity meaning of femininity/masculinity tied to morality and of faith. It is reported that there is some shaming of young men and women in private messaging for their slowness or lack of commitment or violation of expected codes of conduct.

42. NGOs working in de-radicalisation anticipate spikes in recruitment during summer holidays, winter and Easter breaks. This is because the intensity and volume of interaction is higher as the young people have fewer ‘distractions’, but also because travel is less suspect. Furthermore we see a spike in travel over the summer as young women seek to avoid ‘holidays’ to Pakistan or India. There are reports of some young couples where families have denied their union as travelling to Islamic State together during this time.<sup>34</sup>

### **43. The Role of the Family in Radicalisation**

44. In his analysis of the life histories of hundreds of jihadi terrorists, Edwin Bakker for example found that these individuals tended to become involved in terrorism through networks of friends or relatives and that generally there were no formal ties with terrorist networks.<sup>35</sup> More recent research suggests that in up to 20% of cases family members played a key role in introducing and initiating to an extremist movement. In contrast, friends played the key role in almost 50% of cases.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Huey, L “No Sandwiches Here: Representations of Women in Dabiq and Inspire Magazines”

TSAS Working Paper Series Vol 15, No 4, (2015) [http://library.tsas.ca/media/TSASWP15-04\\_Huey.pdf](http://library.tsas.ca/media/TSASWP15-04_Huey.pdf)

<sup>33</sup> A. P Perešin “Fatal Attraction: Western Muslimas and ISIS” *Perspectives on Terrorism Vol 9, No. 3 (2015)*

<sup>34</sup> N. Jaffer ISIS Brides Secret World *The Guardian* (2015)

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/24/isis-brides-secret-world-jihad-western-women-syria>

<sup>35</sup> E. Bakker, *Jihadi Terrorists in Europe*. Clingendael Security Paper No. 2. (Haag: Netherlands Institute of International Relations, 2006).

<sup>36</sup> A. Kule and Z. Gül, ‘How individuals join terrorist organizations in Turkey: An empirical study on DHKP-C, PKK, and Turkish Hezbollah’, *The Global: A Journal of Policy and Strategy*, Vol.1, No.1 (2015).

45. Negative experiences in the family environment can also be a risk factor, though the effect here appears to be in terms of subsequent issues around the quest for significance, self-esteem, identity and increased peer influence.<sup>37</sup>

#### **46. The Role of Communities in Radicalisation**

47. Social and community environments can either support and encourage violence, or inhibit and undermine it.<sup>38</sup> Social dynamics are an important element in radicalisation, and social environments which permit and endorse the extremist narrative provide a supportive milieu for radicalisation.

48. It is important though to consider that communities are rarely uniform in their attitudes to extremist violence. As individuals radicalise they tend to reduce contact with those elements of the community who disagree or are hostile to the radical ideology, and increasingly favour those who are sympathetic to it. They gradually become more distant from childhood friends and family who are not involved, and grow increasingly dependent on - and loyal towards - the extremist group.<sup>39</sup> With an increasing focus on this group, the ideals and values of the movement become even more important. Combined with an increased sense of group identity and commitment, this helps to radicalize individuals and facilitate their entry into violent extremism in a way that is encouraged and sanctioned by their new social peers.

#### **49. The Role of Online Environments**

50. The issue of community is certainly strongly felt with regard to online environments. Islamic State is a ‘young persons’ movement and the use of technology is authentic to its members. Online material is highly gendered using particular motifs to exalt behaviours

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<sup>37</sup> University of Amsterdam, *Empirical Study (revised)*. *SAFIRE: Scientific Approach to Finding Indicators for & Responses to Radicalisation* (2013) <http://www.safire-project-results.eu/deliverables.html>

<sup>38</sup> H. Allan, A. Glazzard, S. Jespersen, S. Reddy-Tumu and E. Winterbotham, *Drivers of Violent Extremism: Hypotheses and Literature Review* (London: Royal United Services Institute, 2015).

<sup>39</sup> M. Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

and traits. For women modesty, piety and complementarity with men is emphasised through images of a lion and lioness, or a ‘green bird’, images of romantic love do emerge, but these are presented as the ‘beginning’ of a new life rather than an end in itself. Online recruitment frequently relies on existing ‘real-world’ contacts, but not always. Increasingly non-public platforms are being used - such as telegram, and WhatsApp. Public forums are used for general propaganda and maintaining community and a sense of belonging - having your twitter account suspended is valued and seen as an achievement and celebrated.<sup>40</sup> Islamic State are increasingly suspicious of unsolicited requests, and some reports suggest they require a ‘recommendation’ from a ‘known’/‘trusted’ individual. Peer-to-Peer recruiters also encourage young women to distrust friends and family or ‘traditional’ authority figures, arguing ‘they don’t understand’. Moreover they argue that those in the West, follow an Islam that has been ‘perverted’ by culture and traditions that are not Islamic, or that those in authority have become corrupted by working for European authorities. On line recruitment is now noticeably female-to-female - in the past some men were actively seeking to recruit women as future wives but this has been noticeably declined.<sup>41</sup>

### *51. On-line material*

52. Klaussen’s in-depth analysis of IS online material reveals that less than 10% is concerned with violence.<sup>42</sup> There is however a significant body of unique material produced every day that is retweeted, posted on Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, and other platforms. The material focuses on life in Islamic State, presenting an idealised vision of ‘ordinary life’, the new rules and regulations of Islamic State, new areas of interest and promotional material. This material focuses on the failings of western states to allow Muslims to live according to their faith, it points to the violence of Western governments and state agencies against Muslims, it emphasises the faults of Muslims who adopt alternative understandings of Islamic history and way of life - particularly targeting Shia and Sufis. The material is replete with de-contextualised verses from the Quran and the Hadith

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<sup>40</sup> Pearson, E. (2015), The Case of Roshonara Choudhry: Implications for Theory on Online Radicalization, ISIS Women, and the Gendered Jihad. Policy & Internet. doi: 10.1002/poi3.101

<sup>41</sup> Heuy, L and Witmer, F. “#IS\_Fangirl: Exploring a New Role for Women in Terrorism” *Journal of Terrorism Research* Vol 7, Issue 1. <http://doi.org/10.15664/jtr.1211>

<sup>42</sup> Jytte Klausen (2015) Tweeting the Jihad: Social Media Networks of Western Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 38:1, 1-22

(stories of the Prophet Mohammed's life). The material offers a utopian vision of itself - it identifies a problem with the world and living in the West, it presents an awe inspiring and grand solution (itself) and argues that young Muslims are responsible for its realisation and offers 'hope' for a future. There is an underlying tension with this approach where it emphasises a new 'good life' for potential recruits while simultaneously highlighting their belief in an imminent apocalypse. However this does not render IS a 'death cult' rather death and violence is for a purpose - the protection of the new proto-state, and its 'citizens'.

### **53. Ideology**

54. The issue of ideology has already been raised in a variety of sections in the report.

Ideology plays a significant role in facilitating extremist violence, though it is probably a mistake to view it as the most important factor. The importance of ideology appears to be the role it plays in connection with other factors, and notably with issues around identity, quest for significance and self-esteem.<sup>43</sup>

55. Radical ideologies are attractive to people who have a group identity, who have experienced personal setbacks, who are experiencing personal uncertainty and who are searching for higher meaning in their lives.<sup>44</sup> What form the radical ideology takes is not overly important, provided that it provides a strong positive image for members of the in-group, combined with a clear "black and white" worldview. Indeed, recruits and supporters often have a simplistic and relatively shallow understanding of the ideology the movement endorses.

### **56. Conclusions**

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<sup>43</sup> C. McCauley and S. Moskalenko, *Friction: How radicalization happens to them and us* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>44</sup> A. Kruglanski, M. Gelfand and R. Gunaratna, 'Terrorism as means to an end: How political violence bestows significance', in P. R. Shaver & M. Mikulincer (Eds.), *Meaning, mortality, and choice: The social psychology of existential concerns* (pp. 203–212), (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2012).

57. It is important to remember that radicalisation is the result of many factors, some of which are about the individual involved, and some of which relate to their environment (including family and community environment). The range of factors involved is extensive, and the result is that the radicalisation process is complex and varied. Radicalisation itself is not a fixed state, but is dynamic, and changing events and factors can deepen radicalisation or bring about de-radicalisation.

## **58. Declaration**

59. We are aware that in providing this report our overriding duty is to the court. We believe that the facts stated in this report are true, and that the opinions we have expressed represent our true and complete professional opinion. We have not omitted any facts of which we are aware which would have had a material effect on our conclusions as stated above. The absence of an expressed opinion on any particular point should not be construed as meaning that we have no opinion on that point. We would be happy to assist the court by clarifying any matter raised herein.

Professor Andrew Silke  
Date 6 November 2015

Dr Katherine Brown  
Date 6 November 2015