30/11/2019

EX POST PAPER

RAN LOCAL meeting – 'Individual case management',
13-14 November 2019, Milan, Italy

Individual case management: When and how to intervene?

During this meeting, experienced local coordinators and case managers focused on the general set-up and ways to conduct effective individual case management in the prevention of radicalisation and violent extremism.

Together we discussed the important elements of individual case management:

- When to start intervening;
- How to do that;
- Which partners should be involved;
- How to monitor any progress being made;
- When and how to close a case.

For each element above, we discussed the necessary actions, shared lessons and how to avoid making mistakes. In addition, we discussed the importance of certain conditions that should be in place to let individual case management be as successful as possible:

- Ensuring the safety of team members;
- Being transparent about goals and interests;
- Combining individual case management with other actions, like building strong communities and investing in sport activities for young people.

Product of the RAN Centre of Excellence
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Introduction

Individual case management includes the core of the work of local P/CVE coordinators: reducing risk for society. Depending on the case, the tailor-made action plan can consist of any possible action that might help an individual to deradicalise. This might include his or her social environment (school, community, family, online) as well. But where to start?

During the RAN LOCAL meeting that took place 13-14 November in Milan, experienced local P/CVE coordinators and case managers came together to discuss the process of individual case management per element. In break-out sessions, participants discussed questions like: When does one start intervening? How do you check the possible signs of radicalisation the local authority received? What does good management of a case look like? When must a case stop, and why?

Participants shared tips, tricks, mistakes and lessons learned: The outcomes are outlined in this paper, which starts with a description of the context. After that, the process of individual case management is broken down into four sub-elements. Although the national and local structure in which individual case management takes place differs from country to country, all elements are recognisable and more or less applicable to every case.

This paper is addressed to local authorities as a means of checking their own structures and processes around individual case management and to complement them where possible.

The context of individual case management

Let's start by looking at the context of individual case management with the help of the so-called prevention triangle[1], which categorises prevention into three different levels of intervention:

General prevention: the target audience is the general society

General prevention is a crucial component and the foundation of most prevention interventions, as the target group is broad-based. This level of general prevention primarily targets the development of social skills, encouraging involvement in society and fostering a sense of responsibility among children and young people. Activities include the promotion of democracy, development of critical-thinking skills in educational settings, and the strengthening of general protective factors within society. Measures are designed to strengthen social resilience.

Specific prevention: the target audience is at-risk groups and individuals

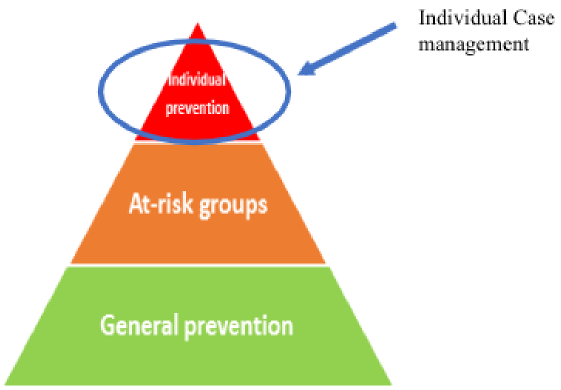
At-risk groups are those that are vulnerable to radicalisation and at risk of being recruited for terrorist or extremist purposes. Typical interventions targeting them include contact points for support services, mentors and parental coaches. The focus is on interventions in cases where there are already clear indications that a person is close to being radicalised. Intervention at this level does not work with broad target groups, but with specific problems, groups and individuals. The objective is to reduce the number of people at risk of radicalisation through activities that strengthen the individual's social skills and positive relations.

[1] https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/2018-09/preventing-countering-violent-extremism-takingstock.pdf

Individual prevention: the target audience is radicalised individuals

Prevention efforts are directed at individuals who are active in extremist environments and at direct risk of becoming violent or involved in other criminal activities. Typical initiatives involve preventative dialogue, rehabilitation after prison or returning from Syria/Iraq, and exit strategies.2

Individual case management is used to carry out a specific individual's prevention:



Individual case management

Individual case management mostly takes place in the context of the local P/CVE strategy and is carried out in a multi-agency setting. The goal of case management is to increase or mitigate the risk of someone radicalising into violent extremism or to disengage and rehabilitate a released prisoner or someone returning from Syria/Iraq (currently, mostly women and children).

Together with experienced local coordinators and case managers we have looked into the process of individual case management from the beginning to the end and created a list of elements and tips. These elements are structured roughly under the four different parts of the process in individual case management. The infographic below serves as a summary. This is followed by a detailed explanation of each part.

[2] Ex post paper RAN LOCAL: Local Action Plan Academy, RAN CoE, M. Meines & P. Woltman, November 2017

Information-gathering and first analysis

Once you know a person might be radicalising, or returns from Iraq/Syria, or is about to leave prison, you should start individual case management. To be able to make this decision, you need to be informed about signs of radicalisation and make a first analysis of the situation. Is this person actually radicalising, and if so, is it worthwhile and necessary to start a multi-agency effort to decrease his/her risk of radicalisation? If someone returns from Iraq/Syria, this question is not necessary: you already know it is necessary to work with this person individually. It is crucial at this stage to make sure the information reaches you. How do you organise that important information reaches you? Who and which organisations need to be involved? And if you have all relevant information (or at least enough information), who decides if this case should be discussed in a multi-agency setting? Participants discussed the following elements regarding information-gathering and the first analysis:

- **Include experts from different fields:** Each partner can bring new information and perspectives to the table. Together you are able to form a good impression of the individual and perform a detailed analysis. Partners can include youth workers, mental health practitioners, the (community) police, educators, law enforcement officials, and people who know the individual directly. Depending on the national structure, information-sharing might be a problem. Partners can deal with this partly by informing each other about what they can and what they cannot share. They can also inform each other about concerns, without going into the reason for them. This transparency within the team also helps to create trust.
- **Risk assessment: Is this a security signal?** Depending on the national structure, handling the case might not be the responsibility of the local authority. Are we talking about a minor? In that case the process can be different as well (child protection could step in). And what kind of sign is it? Are we sure it is connected to radicalisation, or is it perhaps just a (negative) call for attention? In that case other forms of support (family support, mental health) might be much more effective. It is important that there be clear consensus about the definition of radicalisation within the multi-agency team. For example, that the definition includes all forms of radicalisation: religious extremism, far-right extremism, far-left extremism, and so on.
- **Where does the signal come from?** Always check the source of the warning. It is possible that there is an ongoing conflict, for example related to illegal activities like drug dealing, in which warnings serve to harass someone and draw the attention of authorities to this person. Always ask yourself: Is the source of information reliable? What are their motives and interests?
- **Where does the information come in, and is this structure clear to everyone?** Who receives the information first, and is this person not the only one receiving the information? On a very practical note: if this person is out of office, signals that need attention directly can be overlooked. Are (external) partners aware where to go to with signals of radicalisation? The procedure of reporting a case of possible radicalisation should be very clear. A telephone hotline might be a solution.

In-depth analysis and individual action plan

Once enough information is gathered to start an in-depth analysis, one or more stakeholders can start it. At this stage it is important to compare or combine knowledge and expertise. The first step will probably be to gather even more information, possibly through organisations or partners who are not yet involved. The information collected will then serve as the basis for a set of actions and interventions to be discussed in order to formulate an action plan. This action plan should include the social context of person, a goal that is formulated as *SMART* as possible, a planning, a list of all involved organisations, who the coordinator is and what the planned actions and interventions are. Participants discussed the following elements in analysing a case and developing a plan:

- **Be aware of information gaps:** The absence of information is information as well. A checklist can be used to see what you already know, what you do not know, and what is important to know and to focus on.
- **Formulate SMART goals[3]:** All multi-agency partners should work on the same big goal – reducing risk for society. Per case a goal should be formulated as well. Why do we start individual case management here, what do we want to achieve, and why? It is important to ensure goals are formulated on the basis of SMART, as this helps deciding which actions and interventions should be included as part of an individually tailored plan. It also ensures your work can be properly evaluated.
- **Include a planning in the action plan:** Who is going to do what, and when? It is for example not a good idea to have all partners take action at the same time. Make sure to include check-in moments in this planning: Is everything going according to plan? Are any adjustments needed? Keep in mind that the action plan is a dynamic document, and that new information might lead to new actions.
- **Clear coordination is key:** Leadership (not to be confused with hierarchy) helps maintain oversight of the case, the partners, the task division, and to make decisions. Ideally, this coordinator should be a neutral person – someone with no personal or professional interest in the case.

[3] https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/knowledge/other/smart-goal/

- **Action and interventions should mix security with a social aspect:** It is all about balance. Do not focus on deradicalisation alone, but work on reintegration at the same time, to ensure the individual does not feel lost. Reintegration could include "out of the box" actions, like a mentorship. Keep an open mind.

Implementation and monitoring of the action plan

How can one coordinate the implementation of the action plan? Who is responsible for this coordination? How do you exchange information in a timely manner and how do you monitor the effects of the actions and interventions being taken? At this stage, the planned actions and interventions are carried out should be monitored and discussed. Are there any negative side effects? Do the interventions work? Who checks this, and when? These are all questions you need to deal with when working on individual case management. Participants discussed the following elements on implementing and monitoring an individual case management action plan:

- **Ensure that tasks and responsibilities are clear to everyone:** Divide tasks and responsibilities and when these are outsourced, make sure there is a regular check. In addition, it is important that everyone at the table understands the methodology and uses the same professional language.
- **Create check-in moments from time to time - does the plan need any adjustments?** *'When you get new information, act according to it.'* The action plan is dynamic and flexible. Depending on new information or developments along the way, it might be necessary to adjust actions and partner involvement at various stages. To ensure everyone in the multi-agency team is aware about the latest state of play and is up to date about each other's actions, regular check-in moments are crucial. Do keep in mind that it's not only the internal developments that should be reviewed, but the external events as well – at a local or national context, or even online - may be of great importance in case management. A tip from a local coordinator is to invest in an ongoing system of information exchange, particularly online.
- **Divide coordination into two components – content and process:** Individual case management takes place in a financial, political and logistical setting. Although all partners are working towards one and the same goal – reducing risk for society – other interests are involved as well. Therefore, it might be wise to ensure the coordinator is a neutral person, who takes all the interests of all parties into account. Coordination of content and process do not have to be done by one and the same person. The process coordinator plans meetings and logistics and monitors the process, while the content coordinator checks the content and is responsible for decisions.
- **Evaluate:** Start discussing the topic of evaluation as early as possible in the process. Monitoring actions is necessary to ensure that on one hand you keep on track (process evaluation) and on the other the actions and interventions have the desired outcomes (effect evaluation). Keep in mind that the best partner to carry out an evaluation is a neutral (academic) partner, such as a university. Evaluation is pivotal to ensure you have objectives in place that support your case or the decision to stop working on it. Although evaluation take time and money, it is an important part of individual case management.

When and how to stop an individual case management

According to first line practitioners, it is hard to stop once an individual case management has begun. When is the person not a risk anymore? And who should – and can – decide this? Participants discussed the following elements to decide when and how to stop individual case management.

- **Objectives are necessary to support your decision to stop a case:** Repeat the risk assessment or make use of the outcomes of an effect evaluation.
- **Replace case management by the regular care system:** Once regular care is sufficient, try to use it to replace individual case management. The focus might shift from P/CVE to mental health or family support, but this does not have to be a problem. It can even be an advantage to work with the same person under a different umbrella, as it can decrease any possibility of the person being stigmatised.
- **A case can be reopened:** The process of individual case management is never a linear one. There are ups and downs, and it is always possible the individual may have a relapse. Therefore, it should be possible to reopen a case. In many situations, a file could be saved for years. Ensure that the individual's surroundings – family, general care system – are aware of this future possibility.
- **Closing the case should be a joint decision:** Ensure that the one person held accountable over any risks is supporting the decision to stop a case. In a lot of cases this happens to be the mayor of a city, who has the responsibility of maintaining public order and safety. In addition, it is helpful to include the opinions of all multi-agency partners who worked on the case. Keep in mind that we do not live in a risk-free society and that other aspects, such as finances, do have to be taken into account as well.

- **Stop the actions, but keep on monitoring:** *'Fade out before stepping out'.* Monitoring may still continue while actions are being stopped or have stopped. For example, you could be checking every three months, for up to one year from the end of action. Do keep in mind that individual case management may also stop if the individual is not willing to work with you anymore.

Lessons learned

- **Do not overpromise** either to partners, or to the client or the family. You cannot solve each and every problem in a case.
- Always include several people with different backgrounds/professions in a case. **One view is too limited**. Don't forget to think about partners from the mental health sector!
- **Take enough time** for the analysis (if possible) and the implementation of the action plan. When rushing, people make mistakes and overlook important details.
- Before developing the action plan, make sure you know what the **underlying root causes** and push and pull factors of the radicalisation process of your client are. It is most efficient to work on removing the breeding ground of radicalisation.
- **Strong coordination** is needed in the multi-agency team. Different partners shouldn't all start taking action on the same case at the same time.
- Ensure partners of the multi-agency team are aware of each other's goals and actions: **Keep others informed,** as their actions might rely on your knowledge.
- Within the multi-agency team, all partners should **work on the same goal** and be aware of that: Reducing risk in society.
- *'You'll always find what you are looking for'.* **Be aware of your own biases**.
- Try not to get attached to the client, or to get too involved on a personal level. This will add bias your perspective.
- Take the **security and safety of yourself and your team** into account.
- Sometimes it might work better to connect with the client and work on building a relationship first, before diving into the problem.
- Don't forget the **online** aspect.