

Public reminded to report suspicious activity and concerns about vulnerable people

With the traditional summer holiday period soon to begin and more people expected to visit our towns and cities rather than going abroad, we're reminding people about the need to be vigilant when out and about and to report suspicious activity.

And in addition to urging people to report concerns about unusual behaviour, we're also asking the public to let us know if they're worried someone may be vulnerable to radicalisation.

Assistant Chief Constable Steve Cullen said: "The threat level for the whole of the UK remains at substantial, meaning an attack is likely. Like all forces, we continue to take appropriate steps to protect all our communities and we're asking the public to remain vigilant.

"During the COVID-19 crisis public places have been much quieter than normal while schools and colleges have virtually shut down.

"As more and more local businesses continue to reopen and life starts to return to what it was like at the start of the year I'd like to once again highlight the important role the public have in keeping our communities safe.

"Any piece of information could be important, it is better to be safe and report. You could help the police stop an attack and save lives.

"Do not worry that you may be wasting our time. No call or click will be ignored. What you tell us is treated in the strictest confidence and is thoroughly researched by experienced officers before, and if, any police action is taken."

An interactive course explaining how to spot the signs of suspicious behaviour and what to do to help yourself, others and the emergency responders if an attack should take place has been developed by Counter Terrorism Policing.

A recent police appeal to people currently working from home to take part in the Action Counters Terrorism (ACT) e-Learning course resulted in nearly 70,000 signing up to be 'CT Citizens'.

"Having more people with a basic level of awareness, and who know what to do if they see suspicious activity, is a real asset to the police and with everything people have had to cope with over the past couple of months, it's great to see they continue to want to play their part," ACC Cullen said.

The reminder to be vigilant comes following a national decline in referrals to Prevent – the government programme which works to offer bespoke support to those at risk of radicalisation.

ACC Cullen added: "Like every other police force, we've seen a fall in Prevent referrals in Avon and Somerset since the lockdown was introduced and this is primarily a result of

schools and other statutory services such as social care and mental health provision being impacted.

“Despite the reduction, we know that the threat is not going away. In fact, it is likely that the risk of radicalisation has increased for a small number of vulnerable people, as the pandemic is driving people, young and old, to spend more time online and is exacerbating grievances which make people more vulnerable to radicalisation – such as financial insecurity or social alienation.

“We really need parents, friends and family to be aware of what young or vulnerable people in their care are looking at online – and most importantly what they can do to help.

“If you are worried that someone could be vulnerable to radicalisation there is help and advice out there. From schools via the Safeguarding Officers, to specialist charities and also the police.

“If you have concerns about someone, we are here to help.”

Visit the [Let's Talk About It](#) website for more information about safeguarding people from radicalization.

If you have an immediate concern you want to share with a trained professional who will treat your enquiry with understanding and discretion, call police on 101.

To access the ACT e-learning course visit <https://ct.highfieldelearning.com/>

In an emergency always dial 999.