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TECHNICAL R E P O R T

Individual disengagement from Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups

A Rapid Evidence Assessment to
inform policy and practice in
preventing terrorism

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Prepared for the
Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism, UK Home Office

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Preface

This report, prepared for the Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism (OSCT) in the UK Home Office, presents the findings of a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) into individual disengagement from Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups. The REA was commissioned to inform policy development in relation to the 'Prevent' strand of the Government's counter-terrorism strategy, Contest II.

The REA sought to answer two questions: 'What are the psychological, social and physical factors associated with leaving terrorist groups?' and 'What interventions have been employed to encourage individuals to leave terrorist groups, and is there any evidence as to their effectiveness?'

As well as reviewing the limited body of literature on leaving Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups, the REA extended to the available literature on leaving street gangs, religious cults, right-wing extremist groups and organised crime groups. These areas of literature might provide lessons that are potentially transferable to leaving terrorist groups, and thus inform policy and practice in relation to the preventative element of the counter-terrorism strategy.

This report should be of interest to practitioners and policymakers in national government, local government and other local organisations seeking to prevent terrorism, as well as to those involved in planning and designing evaluation and research in this area.

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The views expressed in this report are those of the authors, not necessarily those of the Home Office (not do they represent Government Policy).

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Summary

In order to inform policy and practice in relation to preventing terrorism in the UK, the Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism (OSCT) in the UK Home Office commissioned a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) of the available literature on the factors associated with leaving terrorist groups, and the effectiveness of interventions that might encourage individuals to leave such groups.

As agreed with the Home Office OSCT, this REA focuses upon terrorism which arises from the Al Qa'ida ideology or Al Qa'ida affiliates' ideology. In this REA the term 'terrorist group' is used to refer to these particular groups.

Due to the fact that there is very little research on leaving such terrorist groups, the OSCT also commissioned a second REA of the factors involved in leaving other groups, in the hope of identifying potentially transferable lessons. These other groups, selected by the OSCT, were street gangs, religious cults, right-wing extremist groups and organised crime groups.

Findings from the Rapid Evidence Assessment into factors associated with leaving Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups

A summary of the outcomes and findings of the first REA is as follows.

The available evidence provides a limited basis for policy development. There are too few studies that look at leaving terrorist groups, and a very limited number that look at leaving Al Qa'ida-influenced groups. The studies that have interviewed individuals who have left terrorist groups are useful starting points, but they provide an insufficient basis for isolating the factors that caused, or were strongly associated with, an individual's decision to leave.

The limited evidence base stems from the practical and methodological difficulties of conducting research on members and former members of terrorist groups. Such individuals are difficult, if not impossible to identify, and there are considerable risks involved in interacting with them. Those who do come forward to take part in research might be quite different from other current and former members.

In the limited evidence base, disillusionment is a commonly cited reason for disengagement from all kinds of terrorist groups. Reportedly, individuals can be disillusioned with the way that the group operates, the ideology of the group, the behaviour of the leader or the rules of the group.

Ties to family and friends outside the group and changing personal priorities may be associated with the process of disengagement from terrorist groups. However, while social bonds to family outside the group can act as ‘pull’ factors to exit, group membership is commonly built upon family and friendship ties that are a barrier to exit – thereby reinforcing continued membership. The available evidence suggests that the role of social ties and family commitments differs between individuals and, further, does not allow the REA to draw conclusions as to the relationship (if any) between disillusionment, social ties and changing priorities. For example, it could be that feeling disillusioned might lead an individual to rebuild relationships with family.

Changing roles within a terrorist organisation is cited in the available literature as a factor that might be associated with exit from Al Qa’ida-influenced terrorist groups. However, a change in roles might be the result, rather than the cause, of a decision to exit.

While there are many descriptions of de-radicalisation interventions, the REA identified no published robust evaluations of their effectiveness. However, authors and researchers working in this field have identified a number of features, which they believe constitute ‘best practice’ in de-radicalisation interventions. In the absence of more robust evaluative evidence, these expert opinions provide a starting point for policymakers. The best practice includes:

- focusing on both ideology and behaviour;
- engaging on matters of religion and theology, by involving clerics or imams who have credibility with programme participants and with whom individuals can build a relationship;
- tailoring interventions to different kinds of terrorist groups – including the group’s beliefs, practices and the political context in which they operate;
- attempting to limit isolation of the individual, preferably through family involvement; and
- providing financial incentives and support to individual members and their families.

Findings from the Rapid Evidence Assessment into factors associated with leaving street gangs, religious cults, right-wing extremist groups and organised crime groups

A summary of the outcomes and findings of the second REA is as follows.

The evidence base on the factors involved in exit from street gangs, religious cults and right-wing extremist groups is slightly more robust than that on leaving Al Qa’ida-influenced terrorist groups. While this evidence base has limitations some ‘promising practices’ can be identified, which are potentially transferable to terrorist groups. There is little evidence to inform assessments of transferability of lessons from street gangs, religious cults and right-wing groups to terrorist groups. This REA is cautious about claiming transferability, but lessons from these other groups may be viewed as potentially promising practices.

The sources on leaving street gangs, religious cults and right-wing extremist groups suggest that the following are associated with exit from those groups. As such, they might play some role in the process of exit from Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups.

- Ties to family and friends outside the group can act as a 'pull' factor to leaving the group, or assist in the process of leaving once the individual has made a decision to exit. However, the picture is complicated, because individuals commonly have strong ties to other group members, which can encourage continued membership. Individuals must be viewed within the context of their particular relationships.
- There is evidence that individuals may simply 'grow out' of membership of street gangs, religious cults and right-wing groups, as they mature and/or their priorities change. Some people may experience shifting priorities and behaviours as they age, and this in itself may facilitate detachment or a gradual drift away from the group.
- Employment may play a role in exit from street gangs, religious cults and right-wing groups. Employment keeps people busy, provides ties to non-criminal (or non-extremist) peers and influences, and provides a source of income independent of the group.
- Individuals may be more likely to exit (or be more susceptible to calls for them to leave) when they become disillusioned with the group in some way – with the self-sacrifice that it demands, or with the ideology of the group.
- Exit might be more likely after a triggering event, such as a violent incident or 'near miss'. Individuals might be more susceptible to change at such a point.
- Membership may induce emotional and physical exhaustion and lead to 'burnout' and then to exit from the group. The strain of participating in high-risk activities may eventually become too much.
- Changing roles within a group might be a first step towards exit.

The following factors are cited as important in the sources that describe interventions with street gangs and/or right-wing extremist groups. They provide some potentially useful ideas that could inform interventions with Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups. However, the available evidence does not allow the REA to conclude that these factors are always successful in encouraging exit from street gangs or right-wing groups.

- Interventions must address several interlinked factors – for example, attitudes and beliefs, as well as practical problems related to accommodation, education and employment.
- Interventions should aim to improve social ties with family and friends outside the group. Best of all, interventions could actively involve family members.
- The provision of employment opportunities may support the exit process.
- Interventions could work with the wider community and involve many different agencies.

- Interventions could be targeted at trigger points – such as immediately following a violent incident, imprisonment, arrest or a change in family circumstances.
- An intervention must be designed to address the features of the particular group, based on information about who joins and why.
- Interventions operated by former members of the group may have a greater chance of successful engagement with members. Former members have credibility with current members, and have detailed knowledge of the motivations and aims of the group.

Lessons learned: factors associated with exit

Table 1 summarises which factors were mentioned in which fields of literature as being associated with exit. For each of these factors, methodological weaknesses in the sources mean that the REA is unable to draw conclusions about the extent to which these factors play a causal role in the process of exit from these groups (or indeed any role at all). However, they are associated with exit in the available research.

Positive social ties, the process of ageing and changing priorities are factors mentioned across all the areas of the literature (except organised crime). The prevalence with which they are mentioned suggests that they could be factors worthy of further investigation and research.

Disillusionment and changing roles are factors mentioned in the Al Qa’ida-influenced terrorism literature, as well as in relation to religious cults and right-wing groups.

Employment, education and burnout are not mentioned in the exiting terrorism literature. Their transferability from other groups to Al Qa’ida-influenced groups depends on assessments of the similarities between these different groups.

Table 1: Overview of factors associated with exit from different groups

	Positive social ties	Maturity and change in priorities	Disillusionment	Changing roles	Employment/education	Burnout
Al Qa’ida-influenced terrorist groups	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x
Street gangs	✓	✓	✓ ^a	x	✓	x ^b
Religious cults	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Right-wing extremist groups	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓
Organised crime	x	x	x	x	x	✓

^a Disillusionment features in the street gang literature if members tiring of the risk of violence is included.

^b Equally, tiring of the risk of violence could be characterised as burnout.

Lessons learned: interventions to encourage exit

There is no robust evidence as to what makes an effective intervention for encouraging individuals to exit Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups. Therefore, there are no interventions that this report confidently recommends as effective in supporting this process. The available descriptions of de-radicalisation programmes provide a good starting point for suggesting characteristics of programmes that warrant more robust testing.

Additionally, the 'good practice' reported in research into interventions with street gangs and right-wing groups is potentially promising practice, which could be employed in the field of terrorism and evaluated for its transferability and effectiveness.

1.1 **Background**

The Government's counter-terrorism strategy has a preventative strand that aims to stop individuals supporting terrorism.

Research in the field of Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorism (and terrorism generally) has focused on the role of individual radicalisation and the social and psychological factors behind such radicalisation. Very little academic research has been completed into the factors leading individuals to desist and disengage from Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups, or indeed into interventions designed to draw an individual away from such terrorism.

1.2 **Research questions**

This report, prepared for the Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism (OSCT) in the UK Home Office, presents the findings of a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) of the existing literature and research concerning the factors associated with movement away from Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups.

As agreed with the OSCT, this REA focuses on terrorism which arises from the Al Qa'ida ideology or Al Qa'ida affiliates' ideology. This is in accordance with the wishes of the commissioning team at the OSCT and in line with the Contest II strategy (HM Government, 2009, p 9), which states that the threat to the UK comes from:

- the Al Qa'ida leadership and its immediate associates, located mainly on the Afghanistan/Pakistan/ border;
- terrorist groups affiliated to Al Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, North Africa and Yemen;
- 'self-starting' networks or even lone individuals motivated by an ideology similar to that of Al Qa'ida, but with no connection to that organisation;
- terrorist groups that follow a broadly similar ideology to Al Qa'ida, but that have their own identity and regional agenda.

This REA addressed two overarching research questions, posed by the Home Office OSCT.

- What are the psychological,¹ social² and physical³ factors associated with leaving Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups?
- What interventions have been employed to encourage individuals to leave Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups, and is there any evidence as to their effectiveness?

1.3 Approach, scope and methodology

In order to answer these questions, an REA was undertaken looking at the literature on leaving Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups. The evidence base available is small, therefore the Home Office OSCT asked for a separate, second REA of the literature on leaving street gangs, religious cults, right-wing extremist groups and organised crime groups. (See brief definitions of each of these groups in Box 1 on page 3. Matters of definition are further discussed in detail in Chapter 3.)

The second REA sought to identify lessons that could be potentially transferable to leaving terrorist groups, and thus inform policy and practice in relation to the preventative element of the counter-terrorism strategy.

¹ Psychological factors are defined as those that relate to an individual's cognition and emotions. Psychological factors include perceived rewards and benefits of participation, fear of violence, feelings such as disillusionment, disappointment or regret, having attitudes that are favourable to violence, or personal values or priorities.

² Drawing on the criminological literature (Rock, 2007), this report defines social factors broadly to include anything related to collective behaviour and interaction. These include an individual's relationships with family, peers and institutions (such as school or the police). They also include neighbourhood effects and characteristics, such as poverty and inequality.

³ In the gangs and cults literature this report uses the term 'physical' to refer to those factors that do not relate to an individual's cognition. An example would be imprisonment, where physical separation from the gang is ensured. Similarly, being ejected from the gang or the cult by other members would be classified as physical factors. In the terrorism literature, Horgan (2009a) uses the term 'physical factors' to describe how the changing roles within an organisation (for example, moving from direct action to a side function) may cause the individual to migrate from the organisation.

Box 1: Definitions of street gangs, religious cults, right-wing extremist groups and organised crime groups

This REA uses the following definitions.

Street gangs: any durable, street-oriented youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part of its group identity.

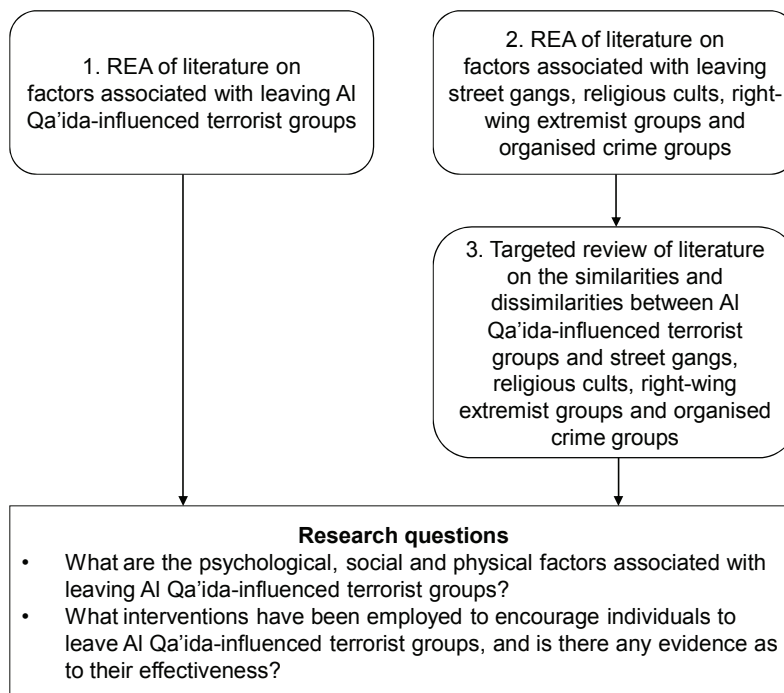
Cults and new religious movements (NRMs): inwardly-focused groups centred on a charismatic and authoritarian leader. They are faith-based communities that are spiritual and entail ethical, philosophical or political stances.

Right-wing extremist groups: groups that are racist or neo-Nazi and involved in violence or acts of terrorism.

Organised crime groups: the definition of organised crime groups is highly contested. This report uses the criteria suggested by Levi and Maguire (2004, pp. 398–99), where there are two or more people involved in continuing significant illegal activities, irrespective of national boundaries. Such a group is capable of defending its members, enterprises or profits and, to this end, may use violence, coercion or corruption. It has both core and peripheral members.

A targeted literature review⁴ was also undertaken into the similarities and dissimilarities between violent extremist groups and youth gangs, religious cults, right-wing groups and organised crime groups, to inform thinking about the transferability of findings. This three-part process is demonstrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Three-part approach to the research questions



⁴ This is what the Government Social Research Network guidance (Rapid Evidence Assessment Toolkit: http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/my-civil-service/networks/professional/gsr/resources/REA_Toolkit_sitemap.aspx, accessed 29 July 2010) would refer to as a 'literature review' or 'quick scoping review'. The researchers searched for sources that offered a definition of street gangs, religious cults, right-wing groups and organised crime groups. They also searched for sources that made reference to the similarities or differences of these groups.

1.3.1 Scope of the Rapid Evidence Assessments

An REA is a relatively quick overview of existing research on a constrained topic. REAs aim to be rigorous and explicit in method and thus systematic, but make concessions to the breadth of the process by limiting particular aspects of the systematic review process.

The OSCT commissioned REAs into literature on exit from Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups, street gangs, religious cults, right-wing groups and organised crime groups. The search terms employed also resulted in the inclusion of relevant literature on disengagement from non-Al Qa'ida-influenced groups. There are a number of other areas of literature that might hold relevant and transferable lessons for how individuals leave Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups, but which were excluded from the scope of this review. These could be topics for future, similar reviews. For example, the large body of literature on desistance from offending and recidivism. The decision to exclude these was made by the OSCT in order to define a scope for the REA that was manageable within the time and budget available. The groups that are included were selected by the OSCT on the basis of an assessment that they would be most likely to yield transferable lessons.

Within this scope defined by the OSCT, the RAND research team further refined the scope of the REA. Box 2 sets out the topics that fell outside the scope of the REA.

Box 2: Literature not included in the REAs

The following literature was outside the scope of the REA:

- losing faith or turning away from religions;
- the risk factors for *joining* these groups (the REA was only interested in leaving);
- preventing membership of these groups (the REA was interested in potential interventions to encourage exit by those who were already a member of groups);
- the end of these groups rather than the exit of individual members from those groups;⁵
- group-level (rather than individual level) de-radicalisation/disengagement;⁶
- radicalisation rather than the process of de-radicalisation/disengagement.

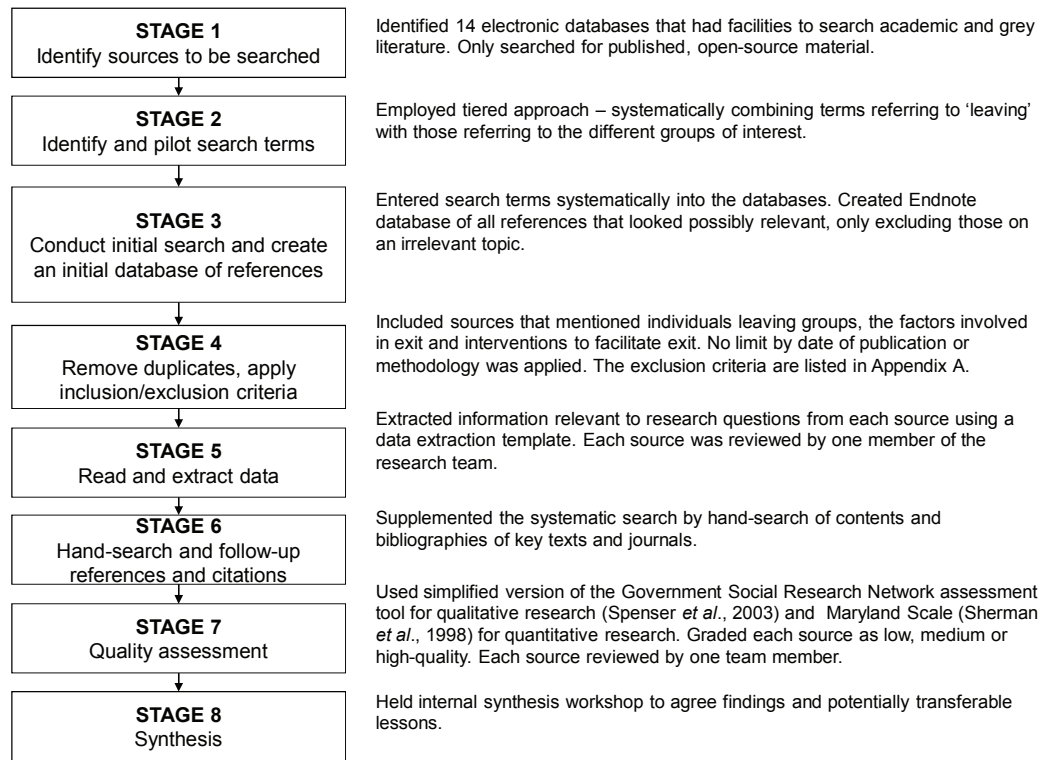
1.3.2 Rapid Evidence Assessment methodology

A detailed account of the methodology employed in the REAs is provided in Appendix A. Figure 2 provides a summary of the stages involved in the REAs.

⁵ There is a distinction between an individual decision to leave an organisation and a decline of an organisation itself. The REA did not address the latter question, although there is an extensive literature about how terrorist groups end and some research (albeit less than in the field of terrorism) in relation to how street gangs end.

⁶ One of the anonymous Home Office reviewers noted that there is a limited but potential useful literature on the fracture, demise, reintegration and reconciliation of groups.

Figure 2: Summary of approach to the Rapid Evidence Assessment



It will be noted that the REA is limited to published, open-source material. The reason for this is that the OSCT wanted to be able to publish the REA and the inclusion of unpublished research and evaluation (for example, carried out within government departments) may have restricted this. Each study included in the REA was read and assessed by one reviewer, which has the potential to introduced bias. However, the research team did mitigate this risk by co-reviewing in a workshop two sources from each type of group, in order to ensure consistency in approach.

1.4 Overview of amount and quality of literature identified

1.4.1 System for classifying literature

Table 2 describes the way that sources were categorised.

Table 2: System for categorising literature

Empirical	A source that describes original empirical research – either primary (for example, interviews with terrorists), or secondary (for example, reviewing interview tapes or police files)
Programme review	A source that describes (but does not provide robust evaluation of) a de-radicalisation programme. Generally, such sources describe where a programme took place, who participated, what the programme involved, etc. While they are useful accounts and provide a starting point for designing interventions, all the programme reviews received a low-quality grading. ⁷ This is because the information contained within them is not verified or independent – it is often supplied by the Government operating the programme

⁷ See Appendix B for a detailed description of the weaknesses of the available sources.

	<p>Several sources classified as 'programme reviews' report on outcomes from de-radicalisation programmes. The researchers treat such reports cautiously. None of the sources are based upon empirical research in which programme participants were compared with a control group, or in which participants were robustly compared before and after their involvement (a quasi-experimental design)</p> <p>While sources often report on the proportion of participants who have been de-radicalised, there is no independent verification that programme participants were in fact previously members of extremist groups – or if they were, that they have indeed 'left', especially in the absence of longer-term follow-up data</p>
Systematic review/REA	A source that reviews literature in a systematic and replicable way in order to answer a question. It includes a search strategy and inclusion and exclusion criteria
Narrative literature review	A source that collates relevant studies and draws conclusions from them. These sources do not have a systematic process for identifying literature. Such sources do not assess the quality of the literature discussed in any systematic way. All the narrative reviews were graded low-quality on the grounds of lack of systematisation, lack of information about the scope and methods of the review, and lack of discussion of the limits of such a review
Personal account	<p>In this category the researchers have included some reports of conferences.</p> <p>Sources such as biographies or autobiographies, where an individual explains why and how they left a group. These were graded low-quality because the information contained within them cannot be verified</p>

1.4.2 Number of sources found in each category

Table 3 shows the number of sources included in and excluded from the REAs. (A list of included sources can be found in Appendix B, and a list of the excluded sources can be found in Appendix C.) In addition to the sources listed in Table 3, 21 useful sources were identified in the targeted literature review (these are listed at the end of Appendix B).

Table 3: Numbers of sources identified in the Rapid Evidence Assessments

	Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups	Street gangs	Religious cults	Right-wing extremist groups	Organised crime groups
Empirical – qualitative	5	10	5	4	7
Empirical – quantitative	0	3	0	1	0
Empirical – mixed methods	0	1	0	0	0
Programme review	10	–	–	–	–
Systematic review	0	0	0	0	2
Narrative review	9	4	5	3	0
Personal accounts	0	0	0	0	2
Total sources included	24	18	10	8	11
<i>Excluded sources^a</i>	<i>78</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>5</i>

^a This is the total number of sources excluded in Stage 4 and Stage 5, Figure 2.

1.4.3 Quality of evidence base on leaving Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups

For the reasons outlined below, the available research and literature provide a limited basis for the development of policy and practice in relation to encouraging people to leave terrorist groups.

Appendix B sets out the grading (low, medium or high quality) of each source included in the REA (graded using a modified version of the Government Social Research Network framework for assessing research evidence, Spenser *et al.*, 2003), and provides a detailed account of the weaknesses and strengths of the evidence base. It also specifies whether each source deals specifically with Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups. The following points provide a summary of the content and quality of the sources.

Limited amount of robust research focusing on Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorism

Of the empirical studies identified in the REA, only Curcio (2006) and Jacobson (2008) looked solely at Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups. Both of these studies were analyses of secondary data. Curcio's work, judged to be of medium quality, involved analysing tapes of interrogations conducted with individuals held within Guantanamo Bay – thus there are questions about the reliability and validity of the source material, given the conditions under which it was collected. Jacobson's work, assessed to be of low quality, is a (semi-journalistic) examination of cases of individuals who have decided to leave terrorist organisations.

Garfinkel (2007), Demant *et al.* (2008), and Horgan (2009b) also conducted primary research by speaking to ex-members of extremist groups. However, these studies included interviews with some Islamic extremists, as well as members of other extremist groups. This REA sought to include literature that specifically looks at Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups, so these studies do not focus on the primary research question. However, comparing exit routes from different groups could be considered a strength of these studies, since they draw lessons from across groups.

All the programme reviews included in the REA reported on interventions for Islamic terrorists. Of the narrative literature reviews included in the REA, the majority reviewed research relating to terrorism generally – including, but not limited to, Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorism.

Limited amount of research interest in leaving terrorist groups

The majority of research in this area focuses on why individuals join such groups and the process of radicalisation.

Limited empirical basis

The researchers agree with Horgan (2005, p 37) that the best way to find out about the factors involved in leaving a terrorist organisation is to speak to terrorists and former terrorists. Of the five empirical studies identified in the primary REA, only three interviewed individuals reported that they had left terrorist groups (of any kind). Clearly, conducting empirical research with members or former members of terrorist groups is very challenging.

Causality cannot be inferred

In order to isolate factors that are causal in an individual leaving a group, research must gather information about those who have left a terrorist group and those who have not. None of the empirical studies into exit from Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups interviewed non-leavers (something which is acknowledged to be practically very challenging). It could be that the factors reported to be associated with leaving such groups were in fact experienced by leavers and non-leavers, were not causal (or even related) to leaving the group, and therefore mistakenly identified as such by interviewees or researchers.⁸

⁸ A good illustration of the importance of gathering information about leavers and non-leavers is to compare one of the 7/7 bombers with one of the members of the 9/11 plot who decided not to go through with the attack. The 7/7 bomber, Siddique Khan, made a video in which he says farewell to his daughter and justifies his subsequent actions prior to conducting the attack. The potential 9/11 plotter Mushabib al-Hamdan

The lack of literature that allows causality to be inferred is largely due to the obvious practical and methodological difficulties of conducting research into the members and former members of violent groups. Current members are difficult, if not impossible to identify – and if they can be identified, there are considerable risks involved in contacting and interviewing them. Even former members may be difficult for researchers to locate, as many choose not to speak about or publicise their membership. Those who do come forward to be interviewed, or who produce their own accounts of their membership and decision to exit, might be quite different both from those who are still members and from other former members.

Lack of robust evaluation of interventions, including no counterfactual

No robust evaluations of interventions to facilitate exit from terrorist groups (most of which are implemented in countries including Egypt, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore and Yemen) were identified in this review. The research team found many 'programme reviews', but these are highly descriptive and do not include reliable evidence as to the costs and outcomes of interventions. There are several methodological challenges in evaluating the effectiveness of interventions to encourage exit from terrorist groups, which partly explains the limited research base.

1.4.4 Quality of the evidence base on leaving street gangs, religious cults, right-wing extremist groups and organised crime groups

Overall, the available evidence base as to the factors associated with leaving street gangs, religious cults and right-wing extremist groups is slightly more robust than the terrorism literature. The research team believes that it provides, at most, 'promising practices' that are potentially transferable to policy and practice in encouraging individuals to exit Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups.

In relation to leaving organised crime groups, the evidence base appears to be even more limited than that relating to Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups; very few studies on leaving organised crime groups were identified

Appendix B sets out the grading of each source identified in the REA, and provides a detailed account of the limitations and strengths of the evidence base. These points are summarised in Table 4.

similarly contacted his family prior to conducting the attacks, but after finding out that his mother was ill, he decided not to return to Afghanistan despite repeated pressure from Al Qa'ida. In this case, an interview with al-Hamlan might lead the researchers to believe that ties to family caused him to leave the group, yet Khan's case shows that the picture is not as straightforward as this.

Table 4: Summary of the quality of the evidence base in relation to leaving street gangs, religious cults, right-wing extremist groups and organised crime groups

Street gangs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited research into desistance from street gangs • A largely US research base • Causality cannot be inferred • Some robust evaluations of interventions, which attempt to control for the counterfactual
Religious cults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority of research was conducted in the 1970s and 1980s • All the studies reviewed used self-selecting samples • Some studies contained a control group • The majority of empirical studies looked at the Unification Church • There were no robust evaluations of interventions
Right-wing extremist groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited research into desistance from right-wing extremism • An entirely northern European research base • Causality cannot be inferred • Some robust evaluations of interventions, which attempt to control for the counterfactual
Organised crime groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only one primary empirical study that covers exit from organised crime • Evidence base is drawn largely from personal accounts • Available evidence is only from those who have made some form of exit – therefore, they do not allow researchers to isolate associated or causal factors • Lack of research about criminal careers in organised crime • Interventions do not primarily aim to encourage exit from organised crime groups

1.5 Structure of this report

Chapter 2 sets out the findings from the REA into the factors associated with leaving Al Qa’ida-influenced terrorist groups and the evidence as to the effectiveness of interventions.

Chapter 3 discusses the similarities and differences between Al Qa’ida-influenced terrorist groups on the one hand, and street gangs, religious cults, right-wing groups and organised crime groups on the other. This discussion draws on a targeted literature review and informs assessments about the transferability of lessons from these other groups.

Chapter 4 sets out the findings from the second REA – the factors associated with leaving street gangs, religious cults, right-wing extremist groups and organised crime groups. The structure of Chapter 4 follows that of Chapter 2: it is based upon what is currently known about the movement away from Al Qa’ida-influenced terrorism. For each factor associated with leaving terrorist groups, the researchers looked for supporting or opposing evidence from the other literatures.

Chapter 5 sets out the findings from the second REA about interventions to facilitate exit from street gangs, religious cults, right-wing groups and organised crime groups.

Chapter 6 provides a summary of the lessons learned – the ‘promising practices’ that could be potentially transferable to developing policies to encourage individuals to exit Al Qa’ida-influenced terrorist groups.

CHAPTER 2 **Factors associated with leaving Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups**

This chapter presents the findings of the Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) into the factors associated with leaving Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups and interventions designed to encourage exit from such groups.

Among those writing in this field there is a wide range of terminology used to indicate 'leaving', including disengagement, de-radicalisation and desistance. Horgan (2009b, p 152) makes the following distinctions: de-radicalisation is the "social and psychological process whereby an individual's commitment to and involvement in violent radicalisation is reduced to the extent that they are no longer at risk of involvement in violent activity"; disengagement from terrorism is a process where "an individual experiences a change in role of function which is usually associated with a reduction in violent participation" (*ibid.*, p 152).

Not all authors employ terminology in this way, although most do make a distinction between a psychological process and a behavioural process (while recognising that these commonly co-occur). This chapter is supported by Appendix B, which sets out the quality of each source referred to here.

2.1 **Social factors**

2.1.1 **Positive social ties**

A number of sources (Garfinkel, 2007; Demant *et al.*, 2008; Fink and Hearne, 2008; Jacobson, 2008; Horgan, 2009a; Noricks, 2009) note that ties to family or friends might act to pull individuals away from involvement in terrorism, including involvement in Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorism.

A review by Jacobson (2008) of the personal accounts of individuals who have left terrorist groups suggests that terrorist cell members who maintain contact with friends and family outside the organisation are more likely to withdraw. For example, the potential 9/11 plotters Sa'ud al-Rashid and Mushabib al-Hamlan abandoned the plot after contacting their families, despite clear instructions to the contrary and pressure from Al Qa'ida (*ibid.*, 2008). Similarly, Sajid Badat, the reluctant shoe bomber, appears to have made the decision to abandon the plot once he returned to his home country and resumed contact with his family (*Ibid.*, 2008).⁹ It appears that Al Qa'ida may have noticed this trend: before

⁹ These accounts are listed, with others, in Appendix F.

9/11, Mohammed Atta famously forbade the 18 hijackers in the USA from contacting their families to say goodbye (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, 2004).¹⁰

In a programme review of de-radicalisation interventions for Pakistani militants, Beg and Bokhari (2009) note the importance of social ties in drawing young men out of violent groups and into new communities. They also note that these ties are seen as the anchor for those who have disengaged.

Garfinkel (2007) conducted seven telephone interviews with former members of religious militant groups (including two former Islamic extremists), all of whom were now working for 'peaceful change'. This study provides some of the best available evidence on the factors associated with exit from terrorist groups, since it speaks first hand to former members (although Garfinkel did not speak to any non-leavers, which means that causal conclusions cannot be drawn). She found that positive personal relationships were important in the movement from violence to peace across many different kinds of extreme groups: "change often hinges on a relationship with a mentor or friend who supports and affirms peaceful behaviour" (*ibid.*, p 1).

However, the sources also acknowledge that solidarity between group members – social ties within the group – might deter leaving. Abuza (2009) highlights the importance of solidarity in keeping a group together in his programme review of interventions for members of the Indonesian group Jemaah Islamiyah. This is a highly interconnected group with friendship and kinship ties reinforced through strategic marriages. Abuza argues that due to strong social ties, often the success of disengagement depends on the degree to which former terrorists are welcomed back into society.

The conflicting evidence about the role of family and friends in disengagement, in addition to the weak design of the available empirical studies, leads the research team to conclude that each individual needs to be considered within the context of their particular social ties. For some, social ties may play a role in exit from a terrorist group.

2.1.2 Changing personal priorities

Sources focusing on multiple violent terrorist organisations suggest that changing personal priorities, such as the desire to begin leading a quieter life, begin a family or take up employment, may be associated with leaving Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups.

In a narrative review of the available literature (including his own work), Horgan (2009a) reports that individuals felt a changing sense of personal priorities, sometimes after a period away from the group. Abuza (2009, p 39) reports preliminary evidence from the Singapore rehabilitation programme and suggests, on the basis of government reports, that the success of this programme has been due in part to individuals 'ageing out' of extremism: leavers tended to be older than the average extremist, and most of the individuals who left were employed and married. Responsibilities toward a spouse and having a child were cited by the individuals interviewed in a study in the Netherlands as reasons to de-radicalise or not to radicalise any further (Demant *et al.*, 2008). However, there is by no means firm

¹⁰ These are compelling accounts but they should be interpreted with caution, keeping in mind that there may be a difference between what interviewees say and the real reasons for their actions.

evidence that becoming a parent is associated with exit – some of the 7/7 London bombers had children.

2.2 Psychological factors

On the basis of interviews with former terrorists and their supporters, Horgan (2009b) argues that psychological factors play a role in individuals' decisions to leave Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorism, but that there may be a time-lag between psychological disengagement and actually leaving the group. Individuals may consider leaving a group or moderate their views prior to actually walking away from violent activities (Demant *et al.*, 2008).

2.2.1 Disillusionment

Disillusionment is the factor most commonly cited in the literature as being associated with disengagement from all types of terrorism. It is also said to be one of the most psychologically important (Horgan, 2009b). Individuals can be disillusioned with the way that the group operates, the ideology of the group, the behaviour of the leader or the rules of the group. In some of the sources reviewed for this REA, new recruits report a discrepancy between their fantasy of mobilisation to 'the cause' and their 'on the ground' experience. Some members report that this was a factor in their decision to leave.

In her analysis of transcripts of interrogations with 600 young men held at Guantanamo Bay, Curcio (2006, pp 56–57) found that some sought to leave terrorist groups because of the lack of food and rough physical conditions at training camps. This evidence must be treated cautiously, since there are questions over the reliability of information given by individuals under such conditions. In their description of de-radicalisation and rehabilitation programmes in the Muslim world (a source classified as a low-quality programme review), Barrett and Bokhari (2009) report that incipient feelings of disillusionment or desire for "an alternative narrative" are quite common.

Muslim individuals interviewed in the Netherlands who were formerly radical, but *not* violent or linked to any organised or strongly cohesive group, cited ideology as the most important reason for their de-radicalisation (Demant *et al.*, 2008). In this study, out of five interviewees, one respondent reported that he became less radical because he realised that he belonged in the Netherlands. Two others said that they realised they were not "on the proper path", a fourth found a non-violent way to practice his faith, and the last reportedly realised that there was not only one single truth, but that multiple truths exist. In this study, rejection of specific violent action was said to play a major role in de-radicalisation, but there may be various motives behind this: motives of an ideological nature (for example, violence is inherently bad), or a strategic nature (for example, violence will not lead to the future that is desired). Demant *et al.* also report that disappointment in a movement can cause doubts as to the feasibility of its ideals; in addition, people can become disappointed in the group's power if it has little political influence.

Jacobson (2008) notes that disillusionment with group leaders seems to feature significantly in accounts of desistance by those who have left Al Qa'ida.¹¹ For example,

¹¹ Appendix F provides a list of personal accounts of individuals who have left terrorist groups.

Mohammed Nasir Bin Abbas reported that his decision to leave the Indonesian movement Jemaah Islamiyah was due in large part to the movement's decision to bomb a nightclub in Bali in 2002. L'Houssaine Kherchtou defected from Al Qa'ida reportedly because of Osama Bin Laden's unwillingness or inability to provide funds for his wife to have a caesarean during her pregnancy (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, 2004). While these are compelling accounts, they should be interpreted them with a degree of caution and not used as a basis for claims as to the factors that *caused* exit. There may be a difference between what interviewees say, what they feel is an appropriate response at a given point in time or with particular interviewers, and other possible reasons for their actions.

2.3 Physical factors

2.3.1 Changing roles

Horgan (2009a) describes physical factors as those where there is a change in the role of an individual within a terrorist organisation. Moving from direct action to involvement in a side function is a common occurrence in terrorist networks, according to findings from Horgan's interviews with terrorists and their supporters (judged as medium-quality in this REA; Horgan, 2009b). This may be due to internal concerns (for example, organisational reshuffling) or external ones (for example, avoiding surveillance or suspicion of the security services). As a result of these not necessarily linear moves, Horgan argues that an individual may voluntarily or involuntarily (via arrest or death) migrate out of the organisation.

A programme review of initiatives to rehabilitate Jemaah Islamiyah detainees reports that the role that an individual plays in an organisation may be related to their likelihood of leaving. Abuza (2009) noted that in Singapore, few of the individuals reported to have left the group had 'operational' roles; rather, the vast majority of rehabilitees were junior members, sympathisers or logistical supporters, not hardened jihadists and cell leaders.

On the basis of the available evidence, the driving factor for this 'role' phenomenon is unclear. For example, it is possible that the strength of an individual's belief may drive their role in an organisation, and it is this strength of belief that is associated with leaving the group rather than their role in it.

2.4 Interventions

De-radicalisation programmes, which aim to move individuals away from Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorism, have become more popular in recent years (International Center for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, 2010; International Peace Institute, 2010). Such programmes have been attempted in many countries, including Egypt, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore and Yemen.¹² More detail about programmes from each of these countries is provided in Appendix E.

¹² The countries listed here have interventions to address Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorism. Appendix E provides a few examples of programmes to address de-radicalisation from other terrorist groups, including in Colombia, Italy, Northern Ireland and Spain.

These programmes vary widely in their subjects, aims, sizes and forms, but some common themes have been identified in the literature (Barrett and Bokhari, 2009; International Peace Institute, 2010). For example, most programmes have an ideological element that seeks to de-legitimise theological arguments in favour of violence and change individuals' political opinions. Some include the provision of social services, for example, providing participants with jobs and housing (Noricks, 2009; International Peace Institute, 2010). Many of these interventions have aims other than encouraging exit and thus are outside the scope of this REA.¹³

All the sources identified during this REA that provide information about the interventions associated with leaving Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorism are descriptive: they describe the activities involved in interventions and sometimes report on the number of participants who were 'rehabilitated' or left the group (see Appendix E). These sources cannot be called evaluations because they do not look at the counterfactual or make any attempt to establish cause and effect (what would have happened to participants if they had not been involved in the programme). The descriptive nature of these accounts is at least in part due to the methodological challenges involved in establishing a counterfactual for these programmes. However, there is scope for more information to be collected and made available about interventions which could facilitate better evaluation. For example, information about how individuals were selected for the programme and drop-out rates, as well as longer follow-up periods to look at long-term effects of the intervention.

Another limitation on the lessons that can be drawn from the literature stems from the fact that the interventions described are very diverse and context-specific, making it difficult both to compare interventions and to draw lessons that can be generalised. The term *de-radicalisation* has been attached to a range of programmes that have very different criteria for participation and context-specific objectives, and varying and equally context-dependent expectations of desirable and possible outcomes (Bjørge and Horgan, 2009b). This lack of alignment of contexts, criteria and aims makes it difficult to compare different initiatives. Little research has been conducted to measure the success of different interventions. The very definition of success often changes with the aims of the particular programme, thus there is little clarity about what successful disengagement or de-radicalisation means.

It is for these reasons that the research team assessed all such programme reviews to be of poor quality. However, with these caveats, this chapter outlines some common features of the interventions described in the sources that researchers working in this area consider to be good practice – and in absence of more robust evidence, this expert opinion is worth attending to. This chapter is supported by Appendix E, which provides more detail about the de-radicalisation programmes mentioned, including who was targeted, their main activities and any claims about their effectiveness. However, there is no independent verification of these claims.

¹³ These interventions range from preventing radicalisation in prison (Indonesia and Singapore) to establishing public counter-radicalisation strategies aimed at deterring potential recruits (the Netherlands). Additionally, accounts of de-radicalisation in Egypt often discuss the decline of entire organisations, rather than individuals leaving such groups (International Peace Institute, 2010).

2.4.1 Interventions focus on ideology and behaviour

Many researchers argue that interventions with terrorists must be multimodal (a term from criminology, which describes programmes that address a number of different needs and problems). Bjørge and Horgan (2009b) argue that interventions that focus only on changing ideology (for example, theological debate with jihadists) are unlikely to work; to be successful they must also attempt to influence behaviour and address the issue of ties to the militant group, family members and friends.

Pendleton (2008) looks at programmes to encourage Jemaah Islamiyah detainees in Indonesia and Singapore to give up (at least some of) their ideology. Information about this programme is provided by the Government and is therefore unverified, but Pendleton argues that a combination of the influence of authority, building trust, identifying and targeting vulnerabilities in individuals' adherence to the theology or ideology¹⁴ and administering incentives, has been successful. Similarly, Yemen's Committee for Dialogue employs ideological debate with those arrested on suspicion of involvement with Al Qa'ida (Boucek *et al.*, 2009), aiming to change detainees' interpretation of Islam. Boucek *et al.* do not discuss the effectiveness of this programme, although they describe it as 'innovative'.

2.4.2 Interventions aim to engage with individuals on matters of religion

Barrett and Bokhari (2009) argue that the key to any successful rehabilitation programme appears to be engagement with the individual, addressing both their way of thinking and their circumstances. Gunaratna (2010, p 365) argues that "Governments must be willing to bring learned and knowledgeable Islamic scholars and clerics to the frontline"; similarly, others highlight the importance of religion (Al-Huda, 2010; Boucek, 2010). The counselling programme to re-educate supporters of Islamic extremism in Saudi Arabia seeks to de-radicalise extremists through engaging them in "intensive religious debates". Boucek (2009, p 222) reports that 3,000 prisoners have participated in this counselling programme, of whom 1,500 have renounced their former beliefs and been released. However, Boucek notes that it is extremely difficult to make any independent or robust assessment of effectiveness. In particular, little is known about the sustainability of effects; perhaps individuals claim to have left extremism in order to obtain rewards or acceptability, only to return to it at a later date. Correcting misperceptions of Islam was central to programmes in Egypt (see Appendix E).

The most significant reason for de-radicalisation reported by the Muslim respondents interviewed by Demant *et al.* (2008) was an altered view with respect to their ideological principles. This suggests that governments must ensure an open ideological religious dialogue through a persuasive discussion partner. For example, some programmes make use of people who were once adherents of the same movement or ideology, since such a person is more likely to be regarded as credible and is well acquainted with the content of that ideology (*ibid.*, 2008, p 181).

¹⁴ The most vulnerable 'dimensions' of an ideology available for manipulation are the affective and evaluative dimensions, or the ideology's appeal to an individual's emotional and psychological needs, and its judgements levelled against outsiders, respectively (Pendleton, 2008, p xi).

2.4.3 Interventions are tailored to different kinds of Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorists

De-radicalisation programmes must pay attention to context: both the community from which subjects are drawn, and the political climate in which they operate (International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, 2010; International Peace Institute, 2010). According to the literature, interventions should also be differentiated by type of group member: for example, they should be different for leaders, members and supporters of terrorist groups because “different levels of extremism require different responses” (Gunaratna, 2010, p 366), and the message of the intervention should be tailored to each of these different audiences. A review of programmes in Indonesia argues that it is vital to train prison administrators “to look at terrorist prisoners as individuals and tailor prison programs to their needs ... there is no single intervention that can produce a rejection of violence among a disparate group of people who have joined radical movements for many different reasons”. (International Crisis Group, 2007, p 16)

2.4.4 Interventions may benefit from the provision of financial incentives

The provision of financial incentives and support is a feature of some interventions: by supporting members' families (either through stipends, education assistance or employment), several government-initiated programmes were able to help ensure that participants had an income source other than that from their illicit connections (Abuza, 2009; Barrett and Bokhari, 2009).¹⁵ The available literature does not indicate the ‘appropriate’ size of financial incentives or whether they should be in the form of cash or benefits in kind such as housing. There could be a risk that providing financial incentives may lead to unsustainable results: for example, because an individual may return to terrorism once those benefits are withdrawn. Moreover, the provision of financial incentives might be controversial – seen as ‘rewards’ for terrorists by local communities (International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, 2010).

2.4.5 Interventions aim to limit isolation and facilitate reintegration into society, often through family involvement

Demant *et al.* (2008) argue that it is important to prevent isolation of the individual and to ensure reintegration, that society is as open as possible to taking someone in again after disengagement, and that individuals have commitments outside extremist circles. The review of de-radicalisation programmes by the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence finds that different kinds of social networks are ‘leveraged’ by different programmes.

All the programmes identify the family as an important focal point (International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, 2010, p 54) and most of the programmes cited include an element of familial involvement (Barrett and Bokhari, 2009; Bjørgo and Horgan, 2009b). Some programmes assume that radicalised individuals are estranged from their families and therefore should be helped to rebuild relationships, whereas other interventions assume that families are radical too and need to be reformed (International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, 2010, p 54). It is likely that both of these assumptions will be correct in different circumstances, which highlights the importance that interventions are tailored to context.

¹⁵ See also the example of Colombian programmes in Appendix E, which included social development activities.

In addition to family, some interventions have attempted to strengthen tribal links or involve community organisations (International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, 2010, p 54). There is no evidence on which to assess whether this is an effective strategy.

2.4.6 Interventions involve monitoring, sanctioning and aftercare

Interventions often involve some form of continued monitoring of recidivism (Barrett and Bokhari, 2009).¹⁶ For example, the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence (2010) reports that the Saudi programme demands many commitments from former prisoners, including check-ups with the security services and meetings with interlocutors such as religious clerics. Often, some form of sanction or threat of punishment for breaching conditions of release is involved (Bjørge and Horgan, 2009a; Neumann, 2010).

2.5 Conclusion

The REA into the factors associated with leaving Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups found a limited evidence base for policymakers to draw upon to inform the 'Prevent' element of the Government's counter-terrorism strategy. There is little empirical research into exit from Al Qa'ida-influenced groups, and the few empirical studies that do exist only cover members who have left the group. Without knowing how typical they are of non-leavers, the causal role of factors that are reported to be associated with exit cannot be understood.

Yet, speaking to those who have left such groups provides a starting point and some useful insights into the exit process. Within the identified sources, disillusionment, ties to family and friends outside the group, changing personal priorities and changing roles within a terrorist organisation, are all reported to be associated with the process of disengagement from Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups. One conclusion that seems to emerge from the sometimes conflicting evidence on these points is that the role of these different factors should be assessed at an individual level – within the context of an individual's relationships, motivations and politics. For some individuals whose family members are also part of the group, these relational ties cannot act as a 'pull' factor for exit.

While there are many descriptions of de-radicalisation interventions, there is no robust evaluation of their effectiveness – that is, studies based upon independent and verifiable information that collect some primary data about the content of the programme and the experiences of participants, and attempt to examine the causal impact of the intervention. The sources identified in this REA suggest that there are a number of common features of interventions that experts in this field believe may contribute to successful de-radicalisation: these could be used as a 'shortlist' of good practice that warrants further investigation and evaluation. Of course, programmes operating in other countries cannot be simply transported to the UK and implemented here. Programmes to encourage exit must attend to local context and would need to be tailored to the UK context, both politically and in recognition of the diverse communities in the UK.

¹⁶ It is not clear whether Barrett and Bokhari mean purely monitoring, or monitoring and some kind of ongoing support.

The next chapter discusses the similarities and differences between Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups and other groups considered in the second REA (street gangs, religious cults, right-wing extremist groups and organised crime groups).

CHAPTER 3 **Exploring the basis for comparison between Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups and other groups**

In commissioning the second Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) into the factors associated with leaving street gangs, religious cults, right-wing extremist groups and organised crime groups, the Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism (OSCT) wanted to identify lessons from these areas of literature that might bolster the evidence base underlying policy and practice in preventing Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorism.

This chapter discusses the similarities and differences between these groups and Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups in order to inform assessments of whether there are transferable lessons for the 'Prevent' element of the UK counter-terrorism agenda.

3.1 **Definitions**

Definitions of the different groups included in the secondary REA are set out below. The research team have used these definitions as guides rather than strict criteria.

3.1.1 **Street gangs**

The REA adopts the definition of a street gang developed by the Eurogang project¹⁷ because it represents some consensus among academics as to the key features of street gangs. The definition is as follows: "A street gang is any durable, street-oriented youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part of its group identity".

3.1.2 **Religious cults**

Cults and new religious movements (NRMs) are inwardly-focused groups centred on a charismatic and authoritarian leader. They are faith-based communities that are spiritual and entail ethical, philosophical or political stances (Bromley, 2006). Whereas 'cults' are commonly understood to be exploitative and manipulative, the term 'new religious movement' is used most often to describe groups that do not employ such techniques and are therefore less controversial (Olson, 2006). Largely, it seems that the term 'cult' has

¹⁷ See <http://www.umsl.edu/~ccj/eurogang/euroganghome.htm> (accessed 2 April 2011). Eurogang is a consortium of more than 100 American and European researchers and policymakers from more than 12 nations. Eurogang is a minimal approach to distinguish youth gangs from other troublesome groups of youths (Klein and Maxson, 2008, p 4).

become unfashionable and politically incorrect. This report uses these terms interchangeably, employing the terminology used in a particular source.

3.1.3 Right-wing extremist groups

This REA employs Bjørge's (2009, p 30) characterisation: groups that are racist or neo-Nazi and involved in violence or acts of terrorism. The right-wing scene is constituted by a multitude of types of groups, ranging from structured, definable organisations such as political parties, to counterculture youth scenes such as skinhead gangs. This REA has not included other (and potentially very different) groups such as the Ku Klux Klan or Christian militia groups in North America.

3.1.4 Organised crime groups

The definition of organised crime groups is highly contested. This REA used the criteria suggested by Levi and Maguire (2004, pp 398–399): two or more people involved in continuing significant illegal activities, irrespective of national boundaries. Such a group is capable of defending its members, enterprises or profits and, to this end, may use violence, coercion or corruption. It has both core and peripheral members.¹⁸

3.2 What the literature has to say about whether lessons are transferable

The potential relevance of criminological research into desistance from crime has been mentioned by several academics working in this area. Horgan (2009b, p 156) argues that desistance research may offer lessons for conceptualising de-radicalisation (from terrorism generally, not Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorism specifically) although he notes that there are “distinctions between the politically motivated offender and the ordinary criminal” (*ibid.*, p 161; see also Rosenfield, 2004).

Other researchers, such as LaFree and Miller (2008, p 201), argue that there are many similarities between terrorism and more conventional forms of crime “with respect to theories, methods, patterns of offending and effects on society”. For example, they suggest that the deterrence/rational choice model in criminological theory may be applicable to terrorism since “the decision to engage in terrorism, like the decision to offend in general, is by rational actors weighing the perceived benefits of their actions against the perceived costs” (*ibid.*, p 220). They also suggest that social bonds and informal control theory might be relevant to analysing the drivers of terrorist offending, by drawing attention to the role of forming and strengthening meaningful relationships with non-criminal peers and influences.

LaFree and Durgan (2004) argue that crime and terrorism (in general, not Al Qa'ida-influenced particularly) have conceptual similarities: for example, research on both terrorism and crime is interdisciplinary and terrorism, like common crime, is disproportionately committed by young males. On this basis, they argue that criminological research methods and approaches could be applicable to the study of terrorism and that the existing knowledge base of criminology could “quickly expand what

¹⁸ Levi and Maguire's definition also includes making more than £1 million of criminal proceeds. This element is not included in the definition used in this REA because there is no way of knowing the proceeds of the groups mentioned in the sources.

is known about the patterns, causes and consequences of terrorism” (*ibid.*, p 70). However, as a caveat they point out that terrorism is commonly a means to a broader political goal and that crime is not. Furthermore, terrorism more often has an international dimension than everyday criminal activity.

The relevance of religious cults, street gangs and right-wing groups is mentioned by Bjørge and Horgan (2009b, p 5): “[M]any of the factors and processes involved in leaving terrorist organizations, religious ‘cults’, racist groups and criminal youth gangs appear strikingly similar in spite of great differences in ideological content, background and aspirations”.

Their argument is that disengagement from terrorism is partly about group dynamics and social processes (*ibid.*, p 6). There are sufficient similarities across different groups in order that insights about how people might join, participate and leave could be transferable.

Research into organised crime groups is not mentioned by Bjørge and Horgan as a potential source of transferable lessons. LaFree and Durgan (2004, p 60) mention organised crime in passing, but do not discuss its potential relevance.

3.3 Conceptual similarities and differences between groups

Based upon the targeted literature review, Table 5 sets out some of the characteristics of Al Qa’ida-influenced terrorist groups, street gangs, religious cults, right-wing groups and organised crime groups. The points of comparison listed in the left-hand column are by no means intended as comprehensive. There is considerable diversity within these groups. This is intended as preliminary analysis of some features of these groups in order to aid assessments of transferability; the motivation and goals of these different groups was not within the scope of the literature review as commissioned by the OSCT, and the findings from the targeted review suggest that even within each type of group there is a great deal of diversity in the reasons why people join, stay and leave. The nature of a particular street gang or organised crime group might reflect the area in which it operates, the cultural or ethnic identity of its members, and so forth.

3.3.1 Organisation and membership and implications for exit

Al Qa’ida-influenced terrorism has become one of the greatest challenges for governments, largely due to its ability to form transnational groups that can mobilise, operate and network independently (Gunaratna, 2002). The 9/11 attacks in New York and Washington D. C., the Istanbul bombings of November 2003, the Madrid bombings of 3/11 and the 7/7 London bombings reflect a shift in terrorism from predominantly hierarchically structured, politically and nationalistically motivated groups, to ‘groups’ that are made up of global networks of independent cells.

It is difficult to draw conclusions as to the similarities between the organisation and membership of Al Qa’ida-influenced terrorist groups and that of other groups.

Research has found street gangs to consist of “fluid, loose, messy and interlinked networks” (Aldridge and Medina, 2008, p 17), and that they have “ephemeral leadership, high turnover and only moderate cohesiveness” (Klein *et al.*, 2006, p 164). Similarly, right-wing groups have a vague and informal structure and organisation (Bjørge, 2009): research

conducted in Scandinavia found that many racist or nationalistic groups emerged out of what were initially non-political and criminal street gangs (Bjørge and Carlsson, 2005).

The implication of the existence of such loose structures is that it can be difficult to determine when members have left the group (or indeed if they are members at all). For example, in their account of research into street gangs in St Louis, Missouri in the USA, Decker and Van Winkle (1996) found that 'leavers' refrained from participating in illegal activities, but still maintained friendships with current gang members. Even after leaving the gang, prior antagonisms sometimes continued to be played out in neighbourhoods, drawing the former gang member back into the fold, either permanently or for short periods of time.¹⁹ In addition, there is evidence that individuals who no longer claim to be a member of a street gang might persist in some offending (Hagedorn, 1994).

This flexibility in the status of 'member' is echoed in findings that peripheral gang members who do not occupy core roles could simply 'drift away' (Schneider, 1999, p 167), which is similar to findings from the terrorism literature (Horgan, 2009a, p 20). The ease with which members can drift away depends on the particular gang and the role played by the individual.

In the organised crime literature, different sources report different organisational structures. There is evidence that membership of some organised crime groups is similarly ephemeral. Hobbs (1998) reports that there are some individuals who sometimes operate alone and sometimes collaborate with 'established criminal firms': these individuals are not gang members, but are part of a criminal network.

Table 5: Characteristics of Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups, street gangs and religious cults, right-wing groups and organised crime groups

	Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups	Street gangs	Religious cults	Right-wing groups	Organised crime
Group structure/organisation	Transnational, loose, self-starting organisation Networks of independent cells	Fluid, loose and messy organisation Interlinked networks	Inwardly focused, tight-knit groups with a charismatic and authoritarian leader	Generally vague and informal with some 'bounded' groups, which have more structure	A great deal of variety: some flexible/decentralised ^a Some groups based on peer relationships ^b
Membership	Predominantly male and Islamic fundamentalist ^c Mixed evidence as to social background ^d and educational attainment ^e	Primarily youth, more often male, although some female gangs ^f More often from deprived backgrounds	More commonly young people	Primarily youth under 25 years old	Membership can span many ages (older than street gangs) ^g
Use of violence	Use or threaten violent action or serious	Violence reported between	Some cults have been violent –	May use or threaten use of violence	Very common to use violence to protect

¹⁹ However, the participants in Virgil's (1998) research reported a rather different process of leaving, that of 'beating out' (beating up) members who wanted to leave was common. This underlines the diversity between different street gangs.

	damage to property	members and by members	although rare		members, enterprises or profits ^h
Goals and motivations of the group	Ideologically motivated	Need for physical protection/peer support (some small financial rewards)	Spiritual or ideological motivation	Adolescent demonstrations of masculinity or peer support; not necessarily driven by political ideology	Personal enrichment ⁱ

^a Adamoli *et al.* (1998, p 11); Dorn *et al.* (2003)

^b Adler (1993, p 145)

^c See Galvin (1983) for discussion of the role of female terrorists; Crenshaw (2000) for discussion of the controversy over defining a ‘terrorist profile’

^d Maleckova (2005)

^e Krueger and Maleckova (2002)

^f Sharp *et al.* (2006)

^g Amir (1989); Kleemans and de Poot (2008)

^h See Levi (1998, p 335)

ⁱ Adler (1993), Dorn *et al.* (2005)

3.3.2 Use of violence

There is consistent and reliable evidence to suggest that street gangs are connected with violence (Thornberry *et al.*, 2003): aggressive and violent youths are at greater risk of joining gangs, and youth gangs themselves promote and facilitate violence. However, within a street gang, violence is used for a different purpose than in terrorist groups. The latter uses violence to achieve a political cause; within a gang, violence is often a means for illegal activity and maintaining territory (Klein *et al.*, 2006, pp 413–414). Recent research in the UK found that the causes of much gang violence were within- and between-gang disputes regarding friends, family and romantic relationships (Aldridge and Medina, 2008, p 19).

While many religious cults and NRMs do not engage in or promote violence (Melton and Bromley, 2002), there are examples of cults that have carried out attacks on the public. For example, the Aum Shinrikyō NRM was responsible for the 1995 nerve gas attack on the Tokyo subway, and a NRM based in Oregon led by Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh infected local food with salmonella. There are also many instances of mass-suicides within NRMs, for example in the case of the Branch Davidians at Waco, Texas. There are some reports of violence between members of NRMs (Dawson, 2003). For example, Breault and King (1993) report on an instance where an NRM stockpiled illegal weapons in a disagreement with another movement.

Some right-wing groups use violence as a tool for initiation and as a mechanism to keep members bonded to the group, as well as a form of hate crime (Bjørngo and Carlsson, 2005).

When considering the transferability of lessons about exit from these groups, it might be helpful to think about similarities in the meaning of violence for the individuals engaged in it. For example, for each of these groups violence is used as a means to an end.

3.3.3 Goals and motivation

Membership of a cult, like membership of a terrorist group, is motivated by spiritual, ethical, philosophical or political causes. To the extent that religious cults and NRMs draw inspiration from spiritual movements, they have something in common with terrorist groups, which draw inspiration from a particular ideology or political movement.

Membership of street gangs, in contrast, is reported to be driven by the need for physical protection, peer support or financial rewards. Similarly, researchers (Bjørge, 2002; Kimmel, 2007) have argued that participation in neo-Nazi groups has more to do with adolescent demonstrations of masculinity or the need to belong than it does with political ideology. In interviews with right-wing group members in Denmark, Norway and Sweden, (Kimmel, 2007), none of interviewees denied the Holocaust or used any other catchphrases from national socialism. In fact, researchers described their political views as liberal or progressive.

Membership of organised crime groups is consistently reported to be wholly or mainly motivated by individual financial gain (Adler, 1993).

3.4 Conclusion

The characterisation of Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorism, street gangs, religious cults, right-wing extremist groups and organised crime groups in this chapter highlights some possible similarities between these groups as well as some important differences. The goals and motivations of the different groups were not within the scope of the REA, and thus a detailed analysis of this issue is not included in this report. However, the targeted literature review conducted to support this chapter highlights that there is considerable variation between different street gangs, cults, right-wing extremist groups and organised crime groups which makes generalisations about the motivations and goals of such groups difficult.

This report proceeds on the basis that the findings from research into leaving street gangs, religious cults, right-wing extremist groups and organised crime groups *might* usefully inform the 'Prevent' element of the Government's counter-terrorism strategy, but that such lessons can only be described as suggestions or potentially promising practice.

CHAPTER 4 **Factors associated with leaving street gangs, religious cults, right-wing extremist groups and organised crime groups**

This chapter synthesises the literature reviewed in the Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) into the factors associated with leaving street gangs, religious cults, right-wing extremist groups and organised crime groups. It may be helpful to refer to Table 10, Table 11, Table 12 and Table 13 in Appendix B, which summarise the methodology and quality assessment of each source mentioned in this chapter.

4.1 **Social factors**

The social factors associated with exit that may be relevant for Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorism are the following:

- positive social ties;
- maturing, family and employment.

4.1.1 **Positive social ties**

In his high-quality, ethnographic study of gangs in Chicago and Los Angeles in the late 1980s, Virgil (1998) found that members who had left had often developed ties with other social institutions or groups, such as a job or family. On the basis of his results, Virgil argued that gang members needed a substitute for the peers in, and support provided by, the gang if they are to leave the group. The role of peer relationships was identified also in a (non-systematic) review of gang literature by Bartolome-Gutierrez and Rechea-Alberola (2006). The role of positive social ties interacts with the ageing process; as young people grow to adulthood they spend less time with the group of friends involved in the gang, and the influence of the group becomes less relevant as their common activities are less frequent. In addition, moving away from the group of friends (and from violent behaviour) is associated with other changes that tend to come with growing older, such as developing a relationship with a stable partner.

As with the studies on Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorists, while social ties to conventional society can act as a 'pull' factor, encouraging exit from gangs, social ties to peers within the gang can reinforce membership. Two empirical studies (Aldridge and Medina, 2008; Grekul and LaBoucane-Benson, 2008) report that having a family member in a gang is a

risk factor for gang involvement. The role of social ties in reinforcing membership is mentioned also in the organised crime literature: in their study of drug trafficking (based upon analysis of five anti-trafficking operations and interviews with law enforcement personnel. Dorn *et al.* (2003, p 353) found that ethnicity and nationality seemed to be important for maintaining trust within trafficking groups (they did not comment on the role of social ties outside the organisation). Based on this, they pose a challenge to law enforcement to respond to the cultural and social underpinnings of criminal networking, and to “counter the social basis for contacts and trust, rooted in specific communities” (*ibid.*, p 353).

In the cults literature, Wright (1984) found that members who reported remaining close to their family throughout their membership (even though their family disapproved of their membership) were more likely to disaffiliate. Wright’s research provides some of the best available evidence on exit from cults, being based upon interviews with both cult-leavers and those who were still members. Beckford’s (1985) study of former members of the Unification Church (Moonies) found that some reported that they had left because they began to feel homesick, or felt remorse about having abandoned close relatives. Beckford’s research also has a sound methodological base: he gathered data from several countries over a period of about a decade, including interviewing former members and the parents of current members.

Jacobs (1987) reports that contact with people outside the cult contributes to withdrawal. Contact with the outside world, for example, through employment, may allow the development of relationships with non-members, or may highlight to members their loss of freedom.

Based upon a review of interventions for members of neo-Nazi groups, Bjørge *et al.* (2009) suggest that one of the strongest ‘pull’ factors for quitting such groups is having a family. As with gangs, nationalist and right-wing extremists often describe their relationship to the group as being tantamount to belonging to a family (Bjørge and Carlsson, 2005). To many, this is the most supportive ‘family’ they have ever had, and in some cases this family metaphor is taken literally (sharing households with nationalist and right-wing extremist brothers and sisters). Positive personal relationships that involve establishing new bonds of loyalty (such as a girlfriend or boyfriend) can provide incentives for members to break bonds with their ‘other’ extremist family.

On the basis of interviews with current and former members of racist groups, Bjørge (2009) argues that negative sanctions (such as parental scolding and social isolation) may cause some of those who join racist groups to reconsider their membership, but that this is more effective in relation to new recruits who have not established strong ties of loyalty. However, there is a risk that these negative sanctions may have the unintended effect of pushing new recruits even further into the stigmatised group and strengthening loyalty to it. Bjørge argues that this is more likely to be the case if recruits are not provided with alternative options to joining the group.²⁰

Boehnke *et al.* (1998) report on findings from a quantitative analysis of longitudinal panel data on German schoolchildren, which indicate that pro-delinquent leisure activities were

²⁰ This is consistent with theories of reintegrative shaming (see Braithwaite, 1999).

the primary risk factor for right-wing extremism. School success and parental monitoring were identified as protective factors, reducing adolescent participation in pro-delinquent peer activities.²¹

The relevance of social ties in exit from organised crime groups is unclear. On the one hand, in her ethnographic study, Adler (1993, p 173) found that where drug dealers had maintained some contact with the world outside dealing and a link to legitimate employment, those links supported their exit. Links to family and children did not steer individuals away from their deviant organised crime careers, but they did provide a bridge back to society when they decided to leave.

On the other hand, Adler and Adler (1983, p 202) identified that friendship ties within the organised criminal group bound individuals into dealing, and that this formed a barrier to exit. Evidence collected by Kleemans and de Poot (2008, p 75) in their study of the careers of organised criminals highlights the importance of social relations in facilitating *entry* to organised crime groups: “without access to suppliers and clients/customers, one cannot really get started”.

4.1.2 **Maturing, family and employment**

There is much evidence to suggest that as young people mature, they ‘grow out’ of involvement with some of the groups included in this REA. In their national survey, Thornberry *et al.* (2003) found that street gang membership was not, on average, long-lived. In Decker and Van Winkle’s (1996, p 285) work (in which both current and former gang members were interviewed), 40% of gang members said that they knew someone who had left the gang, and of these, 60% said that the reason was that they had ‘grown out of it’ with the contingencies of adult life, such as jobs and families. Cults have been found to have a high membership turnover.

Family and parenthood

Becoming a parent may be associated with leaving a street gang. An exploratory study by Moloney *et al.* (2009) – which did not claim to distinguish cause and effect – looked into the experiences of 91 gang members in San Francisco who became fathers.²² Their findings suggest that fatherhood and the greater social responsibilities that this brings can be a turning point for some men. Deane *et al.* (2007) found that family ties and children were reported by some interviewees to have been significant in their decision to leave the gang – the birth of a child acting as a ‘trigger point’ for change. However, this finding should be interpreted carefully: Deane and his colleagues’ research was with individuals who were voluntary participants in a programme for aboriginal gang members, and who might not be representative of other gang-involved individuals.

Similar findings are reported by Fleisher and Krienert (2004) on the basis of data gathered from a multi-year field study in Illinois, which used self-reported data from female gang members. Of the 26 inactive gang members interviewed in this study, 63% attributed

²¹ The model was tested in a heterogeneous panel of secondary school children ($N = 590$) surveyed in 1992 and 1993.

²² The research by Moloney *et al.* would have been more compelling had they asked some former gang members who had just embarked on a long-term relationship but not had children, and some who had done neither, as well as some gang members who had children or long-term relationships and remained in a gang.

pregnancy or 'settling down' as their primary reason for desistance. However a separate research project, which tested these findings using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth and employing regression analyses, found no support for Fleisher and Krienert's assertions of the causality of motherhood as a potential desistance mechanism (Varriale, 2008).

In short, evidence of the role of children and family in exit from street gangs should be treated cautiously. It could be that becoming a parent is itself an indicator of an irresponsible lifestyle, rather than a planned step in an individual's life course.

Maturity and ageing

In Bjørge *et al.*'s (2009) study of 50 individuals (some of whom were former members of right-wing racist groups, and some were people who were seriously thinking about quitting such a group), some right-wing activists reported feeling that they were getting too old for involvement in such groups and their activities. In Bjørge *et al.*'s sample this happened at about the age of 30. They found that most individuals quit racist groups eventually (therefore, they recommend that the purpose of interventions should be to encourage individuals to quit sooner rather than later).

The exact causal mechanisms at work in this 'ageing out' process are not entirely clear, and therefore there should be caution in interpreting the finding that young people 'grow out of it' or that parenthood 'causes' leaving. As people age, it is increasingly likely that they will have ties to social institutions through family and employment. These ties exert informal social control and mean that individuals have a 'stake' in legitimate society.²³

It appears that the average age of members of organised crime groups is older than that of street gangs, cults and right-wing groups. Reviewing the biographies and autobiographies written by individuals once involved in organised crime, Amir (1989, p 69) finds that eventually, "most of the aged in organized crime fade away" although a few did not retire and remained active members into older age – perhaps changing their role within the organisation, but not completely withdrawing (*ibid.*, p 79). Adler and Adler (1983) describe their subjects having 'aged' during their career and eventually deciding to quit. Of the dealers and smugglers that they observed, 90% decided at some point to quit the business (*ibid.*, 1983, p 200). However, Kleemans and de Poot (2008, p 74) argue that organised criminal activities "generally take place in the later stages of life [and] they evidently do not 'wear off by themselves in due course'".

It cannot be assumed that Adler and Adler's research data, first collected in the 1970s, is transferable to modern organised crime groups: for example, the use of the Internet might have significant effects on the routes in and out of gang behaviour. It is also difficult to compare and contrast the findings of these two very different studies; Adler and Adler's conducted 40 years ago in California, and Kleemans and de Poot basing their findings on criminal careers extracted from Dutch police investigation reports. So, if it does occur at all

²³ Although outside the scope of this REA, it is worth noting that in the field of desistance from crime, the theory of age-graded informal social control, which claims that desistance from crime is associated with important turning points in life such as marriage, family, employment and military service, has been highly influential. It was developed by Laub and Sampson (2003), who based it upon a longitudinal study from birth to death of 1,000 disadvantaged men born in Boston during the Great Depression era.

(and the findings seem conflicting here), desistance from organised crime groups due to maturity appears to occur at much later stages in life than exit from street gangs or right-wing groups.

Employment

Employment is not mentioned in the identified sources that discuss exit from Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups as a factor associated with leaving,²⁴ but there is some evidence that it is associated with leaving street gangs, religious cults and right-wing extremist groups. Employment keeps people busy, may provide ties to non-criminal (or non-extremist) peers and influences, and provides financial means.

Some of the former gang members interviewed by Schneider (1999) reported that they had benefited from the support of mentors, who (among other things) helped young people access employment opportunities; some interviewees told Schneider that they made a conscious choice to take a legitimate job. That employment might be associated with leaving street gangs was also reported in Huff's (1998) study of gangs in Colorado and Ohio in the 1980s to the 1990s. Huff's high-quality and well-regarded study found that a significant number of gang members and at-risk non-gang youths said that they would give up selling drugs if they could earn the minimum wage doing something else. In addition, employment was central to the programme for the aboriginal gang members studied by Deane *et al.* (2007, p 139): "It is critical in their situation of poverty to have access to a legitimate livelihood. The job also helps build links to acceptance in mainstream society".

However, the evidence base as to the association between gaining employment and leaving a gang is not conclusive. Schneider (1999) interviewed people who had been in gangs in New York in the 1950s, and thus his findings might not only be out of date, but reliant on interviewees' accurate and truthful reporting of past events. Schneider does not say whether the interviewees thought access to employment caused them to leave. Deane *et al.*, (2007) interviewed young people who volunteered for an anti-gang programme and who therefore might not be representative of other gang members who would not volunteer for such a programme. It is likely that those who volunteer for a programme do so because they are ready (or have already begun) to change.

Literature reviews by Bromley (2004) and Wright (2007) identify a possible link between leaving a cult and having opportunities for employment – the latter notes that the "inability to develop meaningful employment within movements ... led members to seek more conventional careers outside the movement" (Bromley, 2004, p 302).

Similarly, many activists are aware that being known as neo-Nazis or racists may jeopardise their employment prospects (Bjørsgo, 2009), and this knowledge may incentivise them to leave the group. Some intervention programmes for right-wing extremists in Germany aim to persuade sympathisers who are not yet that deeply involved in the right-wing scene to

²⁴ However, some programmes operating in the UK to prevent terrorism do include work to improve employment opportunities. For example, Lambeth has a specific programme, Together As One, which aims to look at the way that broader issues are affecting Muslim communities, such as employment, health, access to services and civic engagement (see Turley, 2009).

leave, using mechanisms such as a telephone hotline and advice on looking for employment (Bjørge, 2002).

There is some (limited) evidence that gaining legitimate employment could play a role in leaving organised crime. Adler (1993, p 142) found that some upper-level drug dealers had left crime and founded legitimate businesses or careers. However, Kleemans and Poot (2008) point out that it would be rational to continue with organised crime if offenders have the opportunity to develop profitable criminal activities.

The conclusion drawn from the available evidence is that for members of street gangs, religious cults and extremist right-wing groups, gaining employment may be associated with leaving the group. Several hypotheses can be formulated to explain how employment might facilitate exit: for example, through providing legitimate income and involving an individual in new non-gang networks and relationships. However, gaining employment may be a symptom of another underlying factor (such as changing priorities or disillusionment), which is the more immediate or significant driver of exit.

4.2 Psychological factors

From this review it appears that the psychological factors that may be relevant for Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorism are the following:

- disillusionment;
- burnout.

These are discussed in the sections below.

4.2.1 Disillusionment

Disillusionment features strongly in reports of leaving cults and right-wing groups, although limitations of the evidence base mean causal conclusions cannot be drawn.

While the drivers of disillusionment are quite diverse – including tactics, disappointment with the leader, unexpectedly harsh physical conditions and so forth – at some level, all the drivers relate to a gap between what members thought they would get, do or experience within the group, and the reality of life in the group. Exploiting this gap and generating or building on disillusionment could be a potentially promising practice to facilitate exit from Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups.

Disillusionment between reality and fantasy

Based on a sample of 23 young members, mainly male, who had voluntarily left Hindu-based new religious movements (NRMs) after an above-average length of participation, Jacobs' (1987) research suggests that the failure of the cult to meet members' affective or emotional needs was an important factor associated with leaving: 45% of his sample pointed to this as the main reason for their leave-taking. Bromley (2004) provides an example in his narrative literature, where the leadership of a NRM demanded that members conform to dress requirements and abstain from certain activities, and this led several members to leave. Continuing demands from leadership for individual self-sacrifice, for example, regarding sexual relationships, reportedly led some members to withdraw (Bromley, 2006). Unmet expectations are common sources of defection identified by former members of NRMs. One former member interviewed by Wright (1991, p 133)

said that his disappointment in the daily drudgery of work without immediate returns was one reason for leaving.

Disillusionment features strongly in Adler's (1993, p 131) research on upper-level drug traffickers. Initially, participation in the drug world brought thrills and status, but the allure faded over time. Adler and Adler's subjects simply became bored – the novelty wore off through exposure to the mundane, everyday business aspects of drug trafficking (Adler and Adler, 1983, p 202).

Disillusionment over ideology

For the former cult members interviewed by Beckford (1985), NRM leaders' failure to sufficiently tackle and resolve ideological questions was reported to be associated with their decision to leave. 'Disillusionment over ideology' might also apply to instances of members leaving a NRM because a prophesy does not come true (Bromley, 2004).

On the basis of a narrative literature review of programmes to encourage exit from right-wing groups, Bjørgo (2002) reports that while some activists lose faith in the ideology and politics of the group – they stop believing in the cause – it is probably more common that beliefs change after, and as a consequence of, leaving the group.

While not the same as ideological disillusionment or change, in his review of Mafia memoirs, Firestone (1993, p 214) argues that a value shift has meant that greater numbers of Mafiosi are testifying against their former co-conspirators. This breakdown in traditional values is evident in the fact that the Mafia members were not willing to make personal sacrifices for the good of others in the group: for example, they were unwilling to go to prison, instead choosing to cooperate with prosecution authorities to avoid a sentence of their own. This REA does not assign too much weight to this evidence, given the partial and potentially biased view provided by the personal memoirs that Firestone reviews.

Disillusionment over tactical issues

Disillusionment can also occur as a result of internal conflict within the group. In a narrative review of the cult literature, a breakdown of relationships with other cult members is reported to be associated with the decision to leave (Wright, 2007). In a study of 40 former members from 17 NRMs, Jacobs (1987) identified 'catalysing' disagreements between rank-and-file members and the hierarchy over issues such as the regulation of intimacy and social life, time commitments, doctrine, power and status and gender roles.

Beckford (1985) reports in his study that disillusionment resulted from disapproval with the methods used by the group and its leaders. His respondents cited numerous reasons for disillusionment, including: leaders' indifference to members' work achievements; leaders' harsh criticism of those members deemed insufficiently enthusiastic, courageous or intelligent; breaking community rules; implementation of sudden managerial decisions; and disparities in living conditions between rank-and-file members and leaders.

Bjørgo (2009) found that the common forms of disillusionment reported by former and current members of racist groups were: with the inner workings and activities of the group; feeling that the group lacked focus on its core mission or ideology; or becoming frustrated by a lack of dedication, loyalty or cohesion within the group.

Disillusionment with risk or level of violence and the importance of triggering events

The finding that street gang members left the group because they could no longer accept the risk of violence to which gang membership exposed them might be classified as a form of disillusionment.

In interviews with Decker and Lauritsen (2002), two-thirds of the former gang members from St Louis, Missouri said that they left because of the level of violence that they had experienced directly, been threatened with, or which had been experienced by family members or friends. In the same study, gang members were asked what should be done to reduce gang membership. The majority of respondents said that talking to individuals about the hazards of life in the gang – particularly about how much violence was involved – might deter them from involvement (Decker and Van Winkle, 1996, p 265).

Similarly, in the right-wing extremism literature Bjørge (2009) found that individuals may feel that things have gone too far, especially in terms of the level of violence: this was reported by his interviewees to be a common reason for leaving.

Although there is no direct mention of the risk or level of violence being associated with exit from terrorist groups, there is perhaps a transferable lesson in the idea that there may be 'triggering events' (such as a violent incident) after which a member's commitment to the group is particularly weak. Garfinkel's (2007, p 1) interviews with former members of radical Christian, Muslim and Jewish groups suggest that "stress, crisis and trauma appear to play an important role in the process of change". Thus, a time of trauma may represent a key point for intervention when the individual might be most amenable to change.

Reporting on research consisting of in-depth interviews with two young, middle-class drug dealers in Georgia in the USA, Jacques and Wright (2008) discuss how being a victim of violence might become a triggering event that causes exit: it might alter the perceived balance of rewards and punishments of organised crime, or cause a member to ask 'who they are' – potentially leading to cognitive transformations and a decision to leave. From the organised crime literature, Adler (1993, p 131) also reports that dealers and smugglers became increasingly sensitised to (even paranoid about) the extreme risks they faced when they learned about cases where friends and associates had been arrested, imprisoned or killed. For some, the rewards of trafficking no longer seemed to justify the strain and risk involved. This did not always lead to immediate exit from the group, but in the ten-year follow-up, having a 'near miss' was cited as a cause for some dealers' exit from their work.

However, violent incidents have been found to strengthen bonds between members, both in the literature on street gangs (Klein and Maxson, 2008) and right-wing groups (Bjørge, 2002, p 10). What exactly it is about a particular incident of violence that might have a 'triggering effect' is unclear, as is the impact of its coincidence with other social and psychological changes.

4.2.2 Burnout

Burnout arises due to excessive stress or emotional involvement. This is not cited as a factor in individual desistance from Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorism; however, it has been cited as a factor in the literature on religious cults, right-wing groups and organised crime groups. Further, the idea of becoming burnt out may have some psychological similarity

with disillusionment, which is cited as important in the process of exit from Al Qa'ida-influenced groups.

Burnout is a common feeling among leavers from right-wing movements. The attraction of an exciting life of high tension and uncertainty makes normal life seem dull, but many frontline activists soon feel exhausted and can no longer take the pressure (Bjørge, 2009).

Emotional depletion has been reported by research participants as leading them to leave cults and NRMs. This can lead to either voluntary disaffiliation, where an individual leaves because they decide that they need a break from the group, or involuntary leaving, if it is decided that their emotional depletion places too great a burden on the leadership (Wright, 2007).

There are similar ideas in the limited literature on organised crime. For the upper-level dealers and smugglers in Adler's (1993, p 132) research, "the process of aging in the career was one of progressive burnout". When Adler followed up her interviewees ten years later, none were still in the drug-dealing business. In their original study, Adler and Adler (1983, p 20) reported that dealers and smugglers became increasingly aware of the restrictions and sacrifices that their occupations required and tired of living a fugitive life – overstimulation led to exhaustion.

In addition, burnout can be characterised as the process of street gang members becoming tired of, and no longer willing to tolerate, the risk of violence posed by gang membership.

4.3 Physical factors

The physical factors that may be relevant for Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorism are the following:

- imprisonment and other forms of involuntary exit;
- role changing.

4.3.1 Imprisonment and other forms of involuntary exit

In the street gang literature, going to prison has, at least, a temporary incapacitating effect to the extent that in prison gang members cannot interact freely with other gang members outside the prison and cannot commit violence against those outside prison. Some of the gang members studied by Schneider (1999) reported that the risk of returning to prison became more than they were willing to accept. Of course, gang membership can persist in prison and prison can provide a context in which gangs thrive. With the help of members on the outside, an imprisoned gang member could arrange for offences to be committed outside prison.²⁵ This mirrors concerns that prisons provide an environment in which radical and extremist views can be incubated (Hannah *et al.*, 2008).

The limited evidence available as to why individuals leave organised crime groups suggests that law enforcement activities may cause individuals to exit the group involuntarily. In their literature review on drug trafficking, Dorn *et al.* (2005) found that some traffickers quit because of law enforcement. In her personal account of 'leaving the mob', Andrea Giovino's decision to co-operate with the prosecuting authorities was made after she was

²⁵ Prison gangs are outside the scope of this REA.

arrested in a raid on her home. Vincent Teresa's Mafia career ended when he was caught by the authorities. In his review of 'Mafia memoirs', Firestone (1993, p 212) finds some support for the argument that moves to arrest and prosecute Mafia members led many to testify against members of the group. However, in Adler's (1993, p 115) research into upper-level drug dealing, arrest and incarceration sometimes led to merely a temporary suspension of organised criminal activities.

Another form of involuntary exit reported by Adler (*ibid.*, p 160) is that an individual is ousted by the drug-dealing community because they are considered untrustworthy. Also, it might be the case that a lack of profitable criminal opportunities forces individuals to pursue different, perhaps legitimate, careers (Kleemans and de Poot, 2008).

4.3.2 Role changing

The literature on Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorism, right-wing groups and religious cults suggest that a change to the role that an individual occupies in the group – for example, a change from an operational role to a peripheral role – can motivate exit from the group. Within a cult, those who hold positions in the hierarchy of the organisation can be demoted by the leader. This demotion might cause the person to leave (Bromley, 2006).

In the right-wing extremist literature, individuals may leave if they are vulnerable to losing status and position within the group. When a person's standing and reputation is low, the option of quitting is more tempting than in a period when they are respected by their friends (Bjørge, 2009).

The evidence of the association between a role change and the decision to exit is limited and this REA is unable to draw conclusions on this factor. It is likely that a voluntary change of role is driven by another, underlying factor, which might be more important in explaining exit.

4.4 Conclusion

The evidence base on the factors involved in exit from street gangs, religious cults and right-wing extremist groups is slightly more robust than that on Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorism. However, there is very little research on those leaving organised crime groups.

The '*social*' factors, which are mentioned in the literature as being associated with exit from all four of these groups, are positive social ties and changing personal priorities.

Reviewing the evidence on the role of positive social ties in the process of exit reveals a complicated picture. There is evidence from some high-quality studies of street gangs, religious cults and right-wing extremist groups that positive social ties – to family, friends or colleagues not involved in the group – are associated with exit from those groups for some people. These relationships might provide both the motivation to exit and for support once an individual has left. However, for others, whose main social bonds are with other group members, family and friendship links can prolong membership. Overall, the conclusion drawn from the available evidence is that individuals should be viewed within the context of their particular social ties and relationships, which are potentially important levers or 'pull' factors in exit. This corresponds with the available (albeit limited) evidence on exit from Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups.

The same overall message emerges from the available evidence as to the role of changing personal priorities in exit. Research into religious cults, right-wing extremist groups and street gangs quite consistently finds that membership of these groups is not long-lived. There is insufficient research into organised crime groups to draw any conclusions, but the available evidence suggests a different pattern of membership, with individuals joining later in life and continuing in the group for a much longer period of time.

Even in relation to street gangs, religious cults and right-wing extremist groups – where there is good evidence of ‘ageing out’ – there is still a poor understanding of the underlying causal mechanisms at work. Developmental maturity could be the driver, or some research suggests that becoming a parent might facilitate exit, but this is an inconsistent finding. As with the role of social ties, parenthood appears to have a different effect upon different people. Moreover, employment might play a role – either in its own right, or in combination with (or as a result of) ‘growing up’ – but there is no conclusive evidence as to its importance.

The two *psychological factors* associated with exit in the literature which we have discussed in this chapter are disillusionment and burnout.

‘Disillusionment’ has been taken to describe a number of different phenomena reported in research into religious cults, right-wing extremist groups and (to some extent) street gangs. Research into cult-leavers identifies disillusionment with a group’s ideology or tactics, as well as a dislike of the reality and hardships of group membership, to be associated with exit. Similarly, disillusionment is the factor most commonly cited in the literature as being associated with disengagement from all types of terrorism.

Included under ‘disillusionment’ is a finding from the street gang research that some individuals left the group because they became tired of, or no longer able to accept, the risk of violence. The REA explored the idea that disillusionment with the level of violence might be promoted by some particular ‘triggering event’, which might provide an opportunity for intervention. Yet, as with the social factors, there is no easy ‘rule’ to apply across groups and individuals. Certain violent incidents might strengthen the group and promote membership.

Perhaps the idea of exit being precipitated by an individual becoming burned out is closely related to becoming tired of the level of violence. Burnout arises due to excessive stress or emotional involvement, or because the novelty and excitement of membership has simply worn off. It has been cited as a factor in exit from religious cults, right-wing extremist groups and organised crime groups.

The physical factors reported to be associated with exit include modes of involuntary exit – for example, leaving a street gang because of imprisonment – and exit after shifting roles within a group. The available literature fails to tell whether exit was caused by a role change, or whether the role change was caused by other factors such as disillusionment, for example.

These factors, identified as being associated with exit from street gangs, religious cults and right-wing extremist groups, might be considered promising practice, which also potentially play a role in exit from Al Qa’ida-influenced terrorism.

The next chapter looks at the findings from the REA relating to interventions to encourage exit from street gangs, religious cults, right-wing extremist groups and organised crime groups.

CHAPTER 5 **Interventions that encourage individuals to leave street gangs, religious cults, right-wing extremist groups and organised crime groups**

It is only in relation to street gangs and right-wing extremist groups that the Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) has identified any evaluations of the effectiveness of interventions. Very little literature on potentially transferable interventions could be found for religious cults, and in relation to organised crime the REA could not find any sources that described interventions designed to encourage exit.

The REA did find literature on how to encourage former members of organised crime groups to testify against the group. Such programmes are considered by some to provide an 'exit strategy' for career criminals and help them to establish a place in legitimate society (Fyfe and Sheptycki, 2005, p 29). However, there is little research evaluating such measures, and the research that does exist is concerned with successful prosecution and physical safety of witnesses rather than whether the intervention successfully induced exit (*ibid.*, 2005, p. 27). Sources that discuss how to tackle organised crime generally look at the effects of interventions on the workings of the organised crime group or supply and demand of illicit goods, rather than the effects on encouraging exit from organised crime groups.²⁶

Therefore, this chapter outlines some interventions used to encourage exit from street gangs, religious cults and right-wing groups. On the basis of the research on street gangs and right-wing groups some potentially promising practices are suggested for interventions to encourage exit from Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorism. The chapter should be read in conjunction with Appendix B, which sets out the quality (as assessed by the research team) of each of the sources mentioned in this section.

²⁶ Fyfe and Sheptycki (2005) cite figures from the USA that 21% of individuals on a witness protection programme re-offended. They claim that this puts into some doubt the role of witness protection in facilitating permanent exit from organised crime. However, the effectiveness of witness protection cannot be judged by this statistic alone – it would need to be compared with some measure of re-offending rates without the programme, which Fyfe and Sheptycki do not provide.

5.1 Interventions to facilitate leaving street gangs

While there have been hundreds of programmes (mainly in the USA) aiming to address the gang problem, very few of these have been subject to robust, independent evaluation that would allow outcomes to be causally attributed to the programme. The aim of many interventions is to reduce gang violence. Therefore, some evaluations do not comment at all on whether or not individuals left the group as the result of interventions. It is also important to note that many interventions are voluntary, and so those who participate are unlikely to be the more hardened members, and may not be typical of other gang members.

Despite these limitations, a number of promising strategies are suggested in the literature (Howell, 1998), and this section outlines these by describing the theories that underlie different interventions and the kinds of factors that interventions might target to encourage exit from gangs. Where there has been an independent evaluation of an intervention, this is mentioned. Appendix H provides more information about some of the street gang interventions discussed in this section.

5.1.1 Interventions that strengthen social ties

A number of interventions have sought to strengthen social ties to non-gang family and peers illustrated by two examples from the USA. The first is the Youth Gang Drug Prevention Programme, which ran projects across the USA including the provision of counselling, family education and mentoring. An independent evaluation of this programme, which used a quasi-experimental treatment and control comparison design across sites,²⁷ documented reductions in delinquency and drug use but no impact on gang involvement (Klein and Maxson, 2008, p 252). The second is the Gang Violence Bridging Project, described by Klein and Maxson (2008), which involved enrolling gang members in a state college programme and providing social skills and mentoring. There has been no independent evaluation of the programme.

Pitts (2007) reports on an intervention in the UK. The Manchester Multi-agency Gang Strategy offers diversionary educational, recreational and vocational activities to young people in, or on the fringes of, youth gangs. This voluntary programme involves co-operation between agencies such as the police, Youth Offending Services, education and social services. Pitts claims that of those targeted by the programme, only 10% have re-offended. However, he provides no evidence to support this claim, and it does not appear that factors other than the programme, which could have caused a reduction in re-offending, have been considered. Moreover, he does not comment on whether those who did not re-offend also left the gang.

Similarly, the 'X-it' gang desistance programme, run in the London Borough of Lambeth and described by Pitts, uses street- and club-based youth work to target young people who are heavily involved in gangs, as well as those on the margins. Pitts (2007) reports that of 25 participants, 18 desisted after involvement in this programme. He does not say how many of these 18 were 'on the margins' of the gang or how many were core members.

²⁷ The evaluation was conducted by Cohen *et al.* (1995). However, this REA relies on the detailed account of this study provided by Klein and Maxson (2008).

While this appears to be promising, this evaluation did not control for other factors that may have influenced desistance, such as changes in policing, drug availability, and so on.

5.1.2 Interventions that provide employment opportunities

Employment is, of course, a ‘type’ of social tie, but it is discussed separately because some gang intervention programmes have been geared specifically towards improving employment prospects (Lafontaine *et al.*, 2005). For example, Homeboy Industries, a nationwide not-for-profit institution in the USA, assists at-risk and formerly gang-involved youth through job placement, training and education.²⁸ There has been no independent evaluation of this intervention.

Another example is the El Monte Boys’ Club in California, which ran a programme in which gang members arrested by the local police were referred for jobs by the police, in collaboration with Boys’ Club staff.²⁹ Again, there has been no independent evaluation.³⁰

Deane *et al.* (2007) describe a programme in Canada for aboriginal youth, which provides a modest income, the opportunity to learn marketable skills, referral to educational opportunities and reinforcement of pro-social values. Importantly, this programme does not require participants to have ‘left’ the gang, only that they have desisted from crime.³¹ The research by Deane *et al.* does not provide any firm basis on which to comment on the success of this programme, but in interviews with 12 members of local aboriginal gangs who had participated in the programme, the interviewees themselves identified provision of employment as an element of the programme that was beneficial.

5.1.3 ‘Comprehensive’ interventions

On the basis of their own study and review of research into street gangs, Klein and Maxson (2008, pp 128-129) argue that “long term, successful gang control will not be achieved by intervention with youth, but by intervention with the nature of gang-spawning communities”. This wider, more holistic approach to addressing street gangs is taken in so-called ‘comprehensive’ interventions. One such intervention from the USA is the Spergel Model (named after a professor from the University of Chicago who designed the programme). This comprehensive gang model is based on five key interrelated strategies: community mobilisation; social intervention; provision of social opportunities; law enforcement; and organisational change and development. The community mobilisation element aims to improve partnerships between the police, the state’s attorney’s office, juvenile and adult probation services, juvenile parole services and schools in making the community safe from gangs (Spergel *et al.*, 2005).

This programme has been subject to an evaluation which compared young people involved in the programme with similar young people not in the programme located in a comparable community. However, the evaluation experienced problems in matching these

²⁸ See <http://www.homeboy-industries.org/index.php>. Accessed 2 April 2011).

²⁹ See <http://www.bgcsgv.com/>. Accessed 2 April 2011).

³⁰ The programme is described by Klein and Maxson (2008, pp 252–253).

³¹ Some of the 12 programme participants interviewed by Deane *et al.*, said that they were no longer a ‘gang’, just friends who spent time together. According to the Eurogang definition, this is no longer a street gang since involvement in crime had ceased, so the gang itself had effectively ended.

control and experimental populations, which proved to be different in terms of prior criminal records and gender. Further, small sample sizes prevented the evaluation team from completing their preferred statistical analysis. On top of this, the programme was not implemented as planned: suppression (enforcement) was relied on too heavily and outreach by youth workers was underused relative to the intended approach; grass-roots groups were not included as planned; little attention was paid to an appropriate mix of strategies for different youth; and there was insufficient planning of how different agencies would work together at the street level.

With these significant caveats, the evaluation team concluded that the programme had no effect on the gang or delinquency problem at the level of individual youth in the programme (Spergel *et al.*, 2005).

5.1.4 Intervening after potential 'triggering' events

Several researchers argue that there appears to be a window of opportunity for intervention in the immediate aftermath of a violent incident. As described in section 4.2.1, above, Decker and Lauritsen (2002) found that many of their interviewees reported that experiencing violence (directly or indirectly) played a role in their decision to leave the gang. On this basis, Decker and Lauritsen argue that an approach to intervention in the aftermath of a violent incident is worth pursuing, although they stress that this is merely a suggestion for a strategy that is worth trying and further testing, rather than one for which they have a strong evidence base. The young people interviewed in their study did not give sufficient detail about how a violent incident influenced their decision to leave for the researchers to make specific claims about the likely effectiveness of post-violence interventions. Therefore, the REA identifies intervention in the aftermath of violence as a potentially promising practice.³²

Imprisonment potentially could be a triggering event. The REA identified imprisonment as a potential physical factor associated with leaving gangs. Placido *et al.* (2006) describe a number of interventions in prison in the USA, but examine the success of these in reducing in-prison infractions and recidivism on release, rather than their effect directly on gang membership.³³

5.1.5 Recommendations of best practice in gang interventions

Based on their own work and a review of other research, Klein and Maxson (2008) outline a number of characteristics that should feature in any gang intervention. Three are mentioned here that might bear lessons for interventions with Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorists. First, a programme must have a clearly articulated *theory of intervention* – a statement of the mechanism through which an intervention will change gang members' behaviour. This theory must be able to be implemented in a practical way and its achievement measured. Some interventions to facilitate exit from Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups have a poorly articulated definition of success, therefore, thinking about a theory of intervention might be beneficial.

³² In the gang literature reviewed for this REA, the violent triggering events were instances where gang members were victims of violence, or witnessed others being victims. However, it might be possible that an instance where the gang member perpetrates a violent act also could be a trigger point.

³³ Infractions could be a sensible proxy of gang membership in the absence of other information.

Second, programmes to tackle gangs must be based on both generic information about gangs and specific information on the local gang and community – such as who its members are, why they are members, what they do and why they do it. This corresponds with arguments that interventions with terrorists must be tailored to the profile of the group, its motivation, ideology and the political context in which it operates.

Finally, a common feature of gang interventions is that they involve a range of criminal justice agencies (such as the police, prosecutors and probation) as well as services such as health, education, social services and so on. This was a feature of the Spergel Model and the interventions in Manchester and London described in Section 5.1.3. The premise of such a multi-agency approach is that several different problems and issues are all associated with gang involvement, and therefore each of these must be addressed in order to facilitate exit.

5.2 Interventions to facilitate leaving religious cults and new religious movements

In the literature reviewed for this REA only two types of intervention were identified to encourage religious cult members to leave. First, ‘deprogramming’, used in the 1970s, involved the involuntary confinement of cult members for up to ten days, during which time families, leaders of the intervention and counsellors tried to convince the cult or New Religious Movement (NRM) members to renounce their beliefs and membership. Deprogramming is no longer used due to the legal and ethical problems stemming from its involuntary nature. Deprogramming might offer some lessons for interventions for Al Qa’ida-influenced terrorists who have been convicted and imprisoned (and thus are already ‘involuntarily’ held). However, the REA did not identify any evaluations of deprogramming.

Second, exit counselling – under which religious cult members meet with a counsellor to discuss religious cults and psychological manipulation – is another intervention. Thus members are better equipped to make an informed choice about whether or not to sustain membership of their group. Counselling often involves the families of cult members and is undertaken with the consent of the member (Clark *et al.*, 1993). None of the sources included in the secondary REA evaluate the success of exit counselling.

5.3 Interventions to facilitate leaving right-wing extremist groups

Most individuals leave racist groups eventually, so the purpose of many interventions is to encourage individuals to leave sooner rather than later (Bjørge, 2002). Researchers argue that it is useful to focus on youths because they make up the majority of recruits and are more vulnerable to influence (Bjørge, 2009).

‘Exit’ projects have been established in several European countries, beginning in Norway in 1996 and now implemented (with considerable modifications) in, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden (Bjørge, 2009). Some exit programmes are described in Appendix G.

Exit's main contribution has been to build on multiple, systematic strategies for reducing recruitment and reinforcing disengagement from violent and racist groups (Bjørge, 2002). According to most researchers, the success of Exit has been based, in large part, on its treatment of Nazism as an adolescent search for manhood rather than a commitment to ideology (Kimmel, 2007). There has been an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Exit programme (discussed below).

5.3.1 Interventions that involve family members

Most of the German and Scandinavian programmes involve family members, particularly parents and partners. The Norwegian Exit programme worked through local agencies to train more than 700 practitioners in prevention and intervention related to racist and violent groups. One of the methods employed under this programme was establishing parental networks, which provided a forum for sharing information, family cohesion and support. Practitioners claimed that this type of network was successful. About 130 parents representing 100 young people joined between 1995 and 2000, and by the end of that period only 10 of these youths were still involved in the racist scene. There is no evidence as to whether the network was causal in the youths' decision to quit the groups, but it may have been a factor in their desistance³⁴ (Bjørge, 2002).

Similarly, an intervention called the 'Empowerment Conversation' was developed for racist youth groups in Norway. The idea is when any professional – a police officer, educator or similar – detects that a youth is involved in right-wing activities; they can summon the parents and youth to have a conversation to enable a change in behaviour (Bjørge and Carlsson, 2005). Researchers claim that in some cases, this 'early intervention' initiative has reduced recruitment to racist youth groups to almost zero (*ibid.*).

5.3.2 Interventions that are run by key community influencers

In the Swedish Exit programme, key members of staff have a background as former participants in the neo-Nazi movement. This personal experience is said to provide credibility when they talk to young people (Bjørge, 2002, p. 23). Exit's period of active involvement lasts between 6 and 12 months. The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (2001) carried out an evaluation of Exit.³⁵ Relying on the reports of project practitioners, this evaluation reported that of the 133 people who had been given assistance by Exit between 1998 and 2001, 125 left the White Power movement. The evaluation involved interviews with 17 people who felt that the help they had been given by Exit played a decisive role in their chances of successfully leaving the movement. The evaluation concluded that "the work of the Exit project has been both relatively extensive as well as successful" (*Ibid.*, 2001, p 48). However, the evaluation also highlighted problems with the implementation and operation of Exit: practitioners who were former members of right-wing groups had credibility with young people, but did not necessarily have skills in management and organisation (Bjørge *et al.*, 2009, p 138).

³⁴ It is not known how many young people might have aged out of involvement in right-wing extremism in this period anyway.

³⁵ Only the summary of this research is available in English, so the research team had limited information about its methodology. However, Bjørge *et al.* (2009, p 138, footnote 15) report that the evaluation was criticised for its weak methodology and lack of independent data.

5.3.3 Interventions should be tailored

The importance of tailoring interventions is mentioned by Bjørge and Carlsson (2005) in their work on racist youth groups. They talk extensively about the need to understand the local problem, perhaps through mapping and analysis, in order to understand why young people joined a group in the first place.

5.4 Conclusion

A review of the available literature and research into interventions to facilitate exit from a group have identified a number of 'good practices' for interventions with street gangs and right-wing extremist groups, which are potentially promising. These practices could be employed in the field of Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorism and evaluated for their transferability and effectiveness.

Interventions to address the problems of street gangs are common in the USA, and increasing in the UK. However, most programmes do not primarily aim to encourage individuals to leave the gang (although that may be one possible objective), thus research and evaluation into gang interventions often mention the effects on exit only in passing, or not at all.

However, the elements of anti-gang programmes are reasonably consistent – they frequently provide education and training and seek to improve family relationships – although the evidence as to the effectiveness of these interventions in causing exit from street gangs is inconclusive. Similar kinds of factors are targeted by interventions that aim to encourage exit from right-wing extremist groups. These programmes have been evaluated, but the available research does not provide robust evidence that addressing these factors caused individuals to exit.

The available research provides some suggestions about the nature and operation of programmes to encourage exit; there may be potential to intervene effectively in order to encourage exit after a triggering event. It might also prove effective if a programme is run by former group members who have credibility with current members. Finally, it seems important to tailor interventions to local problems and contexts.

CHAPTER 6 **Summary of lessons learned for preventing Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorism**

This Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) has reviewed the available literature on the factors involved in exit from Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups, street gangs, religious cults, right-wing extremist groups and organised crime groups. This chapter summarises the conclusions that can be drawn from this literature, which might be relevant to the 'Prevent' strand of the Government's counter-terrorism strategy. The researchers acknowledge that there may be relevant lessons from research into, for example, other terrorist groups and desistance from crime, which were not within the scope of this REA.

6.1 A limited evidence base on Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorism

This REA has highlighted some factors associated with leaving terrorist groups, which might be taken into account by policy makers seeking to prevent terrorism. However, sources identified constitute a limited evidence base for developing policy on preventing Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorism – they provide a starting point for further investigation into, rather than a robust account of, why individuals leave such groups.

Conducting research with members of terrorist groups is practically challenging and potentially dangerous for researchers. There is little research into the factors associated with leaving Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups, and terrorist groups in general. While the few studies that have asked former terrorists why they left the group provide some interesting insights, their design does not allow the identification of those factors that played a role in individuals leaving the groups. To understand this, it is necessary to have some way of comparing those who have left and those who have not. A full evaluation should also report whether those who left did so permanently.

6.2 Can we learn from literature on street gangs, religious cults, right-wing extremist groups and organised crime groups?

The evidence base on the factors associated with leaving street gangs, religious cults and right-wing groups is a little more robust; there are more empirical studies into these groups. This literature could be used to provide a short list of factors that might be

associated with exit from Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups, which may warrant further attention, discussion and research.

There is very little research into how and why individuals leave organised crime groups. On the basis of the sources identified in the REA, the researchers do not think this area of literature provides any transferable lessons for the prevent strategy.

6.3 Factors associated with leaving across the different groups

Table 6 summarises the factors discussed in Chapters 2 and 4. That a factor is mentioned does not mean that there is strong evidence that it is linked with leaving the group.

Table 6: Overview of factors associated with exit from different groups

	Positive social ties	Maturity and change in priorities	Disillusionment	Changing roles	Employment/education	Burnout
Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x
Street gangs	✓	✓	✓ ^a	x	✓	x ^b
Religious cults	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Right-wing groups	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓
Organised crime	x	x	x	x	x	✓

^a Disillusionment features in the street gang literature if members tiring of the risk of violence is included.

^b Equally, tiring of the risk of violence could be characterised as burnout.

6.3.1 Positive social ties, maturity and change in priorities

These, and the changing priorities that go with the ageing process, are factors mentioned across all areas of the literature (except organised crime). The prevalence with which they are mentioned suggests that they could be factors worthy of further investigation and research. Increasing commitment to, and support from, family and friends outside terrorist groups, street gangs, religious cults and right-wing groups is reported by participants in the available research to be associated with leaving. Becoming a parent may give cause for members of these groups to re-evaluate their priorities; emotional support from family can ease the transition of exit. However, the influences of these positive relationships outside the group, operating as 'pull' factors for exit, compete with the appeal of, and commitment to, peer relationships within the group and loyalty to the group, providing strong 'pull' factors for continued membership (for example, the 7/7 bombers Khan and Lindsay both had small children).

6.3.2 Disillusionment

This is mentioned in the literature on Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorism and religious cults. Disillusionment may relate to the way that the group operates, the ideology of the group, and the behaviour of the leader or the rules of the group. It is not possible to say on the basis of the available evidence whether the feelings of disillusionment reported are the cause of leaving or a symptom of another, more important and underlying cause of exit.

6.3.3 Changing roles

These feature in the terrorist, religious cults and right-wing group literature.

6.3.4 Employment, education and burnout

These are not mentioned in the exiting terrorism literature. Their transferability to Al Qa'ida-influenced groups depends on assessments of the similarities between these different groups. Gaining employment or taking part in training or education is reported to be associated with leaving street gangs, religious cults and right-wing groups. The weakness of the evidence base means that the REA cannot say that gaining employment causes leaving. It could be that members who have already decided to leave are more likely to get a job – in which case, leaving 'causes' employment.

While employment and education are not reported in the available research as factors associated with leaving Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups, provision of financial support is described as a common feature of interventions for such terrorists (although it is not known whether it is an effective feature), and employment could be a source of providing financial support. However, some research suggests that those who participate in terrorist activities are often well educated, even better educated than average. This should serve as a reminder not to assume that because education is reported to be associated with leaving street gangs, it also will be associated with exit from terrorist groups. As discussed in Chapter 3, such individual-level differences between the kinds of people who participate in Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorism, and the typical membership of street gangs, may limit transferability.

6.4 Interventions to encourage exit from Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups

No independent evaluations of interventions that aim to facilitate leaving Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorism have been identified in this REA. Most accounts of interventions from countries such as Egypt, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and Yemen, are provided by (or rely in information from) the Governments and authorities operating the programmes, with no independent verification. Thus there is no model for intervention that can confidently be recommended.

However, based on descriptions of de-radicalisation interventions and the opinions of researchers working in this field, a number of potentially promising factors and characteristics are set out. These characteristics, drawn from many different countries, would need to be appropriately tailored to the UK context if they are to form elements of a successful intervention.

6.4.1 Multimodal interventions

These could address both ideology and behaviour. Interventions must attempt to influence behaviour and address the issue of social ties to the militant group, family members and friends. Additionally, they might engage with individuals on matters of religion and theology, particularly by involving clerics or imams with whom individuals can build a relationship.

6.4.2 Tailored to different kinds of groups

These could include the particular motivation of the group and individual members, perceived grievances, particular ideology and the political context in which they operate.

6.4.3 Providing financial incentives and support

This is a feature of many interventions. The idea behind the provision of financial incentives is that by supporting members' families, programmes are able to help ensure that participants have an income source other than that from their illicit connections. However, there is no evidence upon which to determine whether or to what extent the provision of financial incentives supports the process of exit. It is included as a promising practice because it is a feature of many existing programmes.

6.4.4 Involving family

This could be done in part to limit isolation of the individual, but also to provide ties to society outside the groups.

6.5 Lessons from interventions to encourage exit from street gangs and right-wing extremist groups

There are some evaluated interventions to facilitate exit from street gangs and right-wing groups from which 'promising practices' can be identified, that could be employed in the field of Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorism.

- Right-wing extremist interventions often involve family members, particularly parents and/or romantic partners.
- Interventions must address several interlinked factors. Among these factors, they should particularly aim to improve social ties with family and non-gang friends. Best of all, they could actively involve family members. Interventions might be multimodal, addressing several factors; in order to do so, they may require the involvement of several agencies.
- Providing employment opportunities may support the exit process.
- Interventions could be targeted at trigger points, such as immediately following a violent incident, imprisonment or arrest, or a change in family circumstances.
- An intervention must be designed to address the features of the particular group, based on information such as where it is based, who the members are, why they joined, what they get from the group, and so forth.
- It might improve the chance of success if an intervention is operated by former members of the group – this provides credibility in the eyes of current members. It should involve key community 'influencers', such as former activists or other credible persons with appropriate backgrounds.

There is some overlap between these promising practices and features that experts consider to be key to successful de-radicalisation programmes:

- the involvement of family members;
- the importance of tailoring interventions to the group; and
- the involvement of individuals who will have 'credibility' with group members.

These could provide a shortlist of potentially promising features worthy of further investigation.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Rapid Evidence Assessment methodology

A Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) is a comprehensive, systematic and critical assessment of available evidence within a limited timeframe. This appendix describes how this REA was conducted.

The research questions that this REA sought to address are as follows.

- What are the psychological, social and physical factors associated with leaving Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups?
- What interventions have been employed to encourage individuals to leave Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups, and is there any evidence as to their effectiveness?

To answer these questions a three-stage process was used.

- A REA was conducted of research into Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups.
- A REA was conducted of research into the factors associated with leaving street gangs, religious cults, right-wing extremist groups and organised crime groups. This was requested by the Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism (OSCT) because of the lack of research on leaving terrorist groups. The scope of the REA initially included only street gangs and religious cults. On completion, the OSCT asked for the scope to be extended to include right-wing groups and organised crime groups.
- A targeted literature review was conducted looking at the possible similarities and dissimilarities between Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups and the groups examined in the second REA.

This three-stage process is outlined in Figure 1, in Chapter 1 (page 3).

The approach to conducting the REA had eight stages, as shown in Figure 2 in Chapter 1 (page 5). Each stage is described in detail below.

Stage 1: Identify sources to be searched

The first stage was to identify sources that could be searched to identify the literature relevant to the topics of interest.

The following 14 electronic sources were selected, covering academic and peer-reviewed literature, 'grey' literature and government reports.

- Cambridge Scientific Abstracts;
- Homeland Security Digital Library;
- Ingenta Connect;
- ISI Web of Knowledge/Web of Science;
- JSTOR;
- National Criminal Justice Reference Service (searched through Criminal Justice Abstracts);
- PsycInfo;
- Social Science Abstracts;
- National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and responses to Terrorism (START) Centre, Maryland;
- Policy Hub;
- Open Sigle;
- Home Office Research, Development and Statistics (RDS);
- RAND Corporation;
- Google Scholar.

Stage 2: Identify and pilot search terms

The second stage was to select terms that could be used to search these sources, in order to identify the relevant literature. Search terms were selected after piloting a long list of terms in a few of the sources to be searched. The piloting aimed to ensure that the terms identified the relevant literature, and did not return too many irrelevant hits.

Table 7 sets out the 'tiered' approach employed in using search terms. Tier 1 terms relate to the process of leaving, either physically or ideologically. Tier 2 terms refer to the groups of interest. The research team has indicated in a few cells of the table how the terms were combined. The shaded areas in the table indicate that a particular combination of search terms was not used. This was because the piloting indicated that the term 'disassociation' was not used in relation to Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups within the available literature, and thus this combination of search terms returned few relevant hits.

Searching for literature about leaving terrorist groups, street gangs, religious cults, right-wing groups and organised crime groups is problematic, because many books and research projects examining these groups mention the process of leaving but do not use 'leaving' or a similar term as a keyword or in the title. To account for this the approach was supplemented by extensive 'hand-searches' of the bibliographies of relevant literature and the indices of relevant journals (described further below).

Table 7: Tiered search terms employed in the Rapid Evidence Assessment

	<i>Tier 1</i>	Disengag*	Disassociat*	Disillusion*	Desist*	Deradicalis* OR radicalis*
<i>Tier 2</i>						
Terror*		e.g. Disengag* AND terror				

Extrem*					
Islam*					
Jihad*					
Violen*					
Organised OR organised crime					
Gang*		Disassociat* AND gang*			
Cult*					
New religious movements					
Right-wing OR right wing					

Stage 3: Conduct initial search and create an initial database of references

In the third stage the search terms were entered into each of the identified databases. The research team kept detailed notes of how the search terms were entered into the databases to ensure transparency, and to ensure that the approach could be replicated. The approach taken to searching each of the sources is set out in Table 8.

Only Google Scholar was searched using a different approach. While the RAND team believe that it is useful to use this search engine, it is important to search so that the number of hits is manageable. As will be seen from Table 8, searches were limited to ‘social sciences, arts and humanities’. The research team reviewed only the first 100 hits when sorted by relevance. This strategy was decided upon having reviewed many different pages of hits for some of the search terms. This indicated that the first 100 hits generally contained all relevant hits.

Table 8: Description of search process for each source

Database	Notes on search method
Cambridge Scientific Abstracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced search • Enter search terms in separate boxes, connecting with AND • Searched in keywords (searches Title, Abstract, Descriptors) • Able to use wildcards (*) • Subject areas: social sciences • Date range: earliest to 2010 • Limit to: English only
Homeland Security Digital Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search the HSDL Advanced search • Search “All of the Words” • Enter search terms in same box, connecting with AND • Search full word, without use of * • Search in Title or Summary • Search the General Collection
Ingenta Connect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced search • Able to use wildcards (*) • Connected terms with Boolean – AND • Searched in title, keyword or abstract
ISI Web of Knowledge/ Web of Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search ISI Advanced Search • Enter search terms in same box, connecting with AND • Search with * • Search topic • Search all years

Database	Notes on search method
JSTOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advanced search Enter search terms in separate boxes connecting with AND Search in abstract Search for links outside of JSTOR (default option)
PsycInfo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advanced search Enter search terms in separate boxes connecting with AND Search in abstract
Social Science Abstracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Search in all fields Entered terms in separate boxes, connected with AND Limited to English Able to use truncation (*)
START Centre, Maryland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Search site using Advanced Google Search Enter search terms in same box, connecting with AND For Disengag*, do not show any hit with the term 'MORAL' Do not use * (it does not work). Spell out full words and use American spelling (as it is an American organisation) Note: no published studies on this site. However it did include some information on ongoing research
Policy Hub	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Search through Google.co.uk Advanced search Enter search terms in "all these words" box, connecting with AND Search within a domain: http://www.nationalschool.gov.uk/policyhub/
Open Sigle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advanced search Enter search terms in separate boxes connecting with AND Search in abstract
Home Office RDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used advanced function on Google to search http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/
RAND Corporation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Search RAND database (RAND staff only) Enter search terms in same box, connecting with AND Search abstract, all years
Google Scholar	<p>FOR De-radicali* and Disassoc* and Desist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use Advanced Search option Enter search terms in same box, no connection term Return only articles in: Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities Search all forms of 'de-radicalise' (de-radicalise, de-radicalise, deradicalise and deradicalise) Search only top 100 Search anywhere in the article <p>FOR Disentag* and disillusion*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use Advanced Search Enter search terms in "with all of the words" box, connecting with AND, excluding "moral disengagement" Search in "anywhere in the article" Limit to "Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities" Only look at top 100 results

The research team used the reference management software Endnote to keep a record of the references identified. Each relevant 'hit' was downloaded or entered manually into Endnote. The following information was about each article or reference:

- type of work – book, report, journal article, etc;
- author;
- title;
- year of publication;
- where published and publisher, or journal title and volume number;
- search terms that generated this hit;

- database through which it was found, or book in which it was cited;
- abstract (if available).

At this initial searching stage the research team made some decisions as to exclusion. The initial Endnote library included all references judged possibly relevant by the research team. Hits that were on a clearly irrelevant topic were excluded (for example, the term ‘disengagement’ returns many articles about military disengagement from a conflict, or the term ‘disillusionment’ returns many articles about disillusionment with a political process). Decisions about relevance were based on title and abstracts where available. Where there was no abstract, the introductory paragraphs or conclusions were read.

Stage 4: Remove duplicates, apply inclusion and exclusion criteria

When the searching was complete, the research team removed duplicates from the Endnote database.

Inclusion criteria

Does the source mention:

- individuals leaving the group;
- the factors involved in exit;
- interventions to facilitate exit?

The researchers did not define any criteria relating to date of publication or methodology used.

Exclusion criteria

To keep the REA ‘rapid’, the research team applied narrow inclusion criteria to select references to read and review. These focused on the core research question: how people leave terrorist groups, street gangs, religious cults, right-wing groups and organised crime groups. This meant *excluding* the following peripherally relevant bodies of literature:

- general literature on desistance from crime;
- general literature about losing faith or turning away from religion;
- literature on the risk factors for joining these groups;
- literature on preventing membership of these groups (the REA focused on interventions for those who were already a member of groups);
- literature on the end of these groups rather than the exit of individual members from those groups;
- literature on group-level rather than individual-level de-radicalisation;
- literature on radicalisation rather than the process of de-radicalisation.

These strict criteria were demanded by the time and budgetary constraints of this project, and allowed the REA to focus on the core research question about leaving groups.

The REA included only literature written in English. The research team did not apply any criteria relating to research methods or design, or to date of publication.

Multiple references from the same author that were based on the same research or data were excluded.

Although it is desirable in a REA for all references to be screened by two people working independently, limited resources in this project meant that references were screened by one of three researchers. Consistency in screening among members of the research team was ensured by discussing a sample of screened references in internal meetings.

The following were excluded:

- 78 sources on terrorism;³⁶
- 51 sources on street gangs (largely excluded literature was about desistance from crime generally – ‘gang’ was a keyword in many of these sources);
- 19 sources on religious cults;
- 10 sources on right-wing groups;
- 5 sources on organised crime groups.

A list of excluded sources can be found in Appendix C.

Full-text copies of the included references were identified.

There were 12 sources that the research team could not access. This was because the source was not available in the RAND Corporation library or the Cambridge University Library. These were excluded on the basis that, without the original source, the team could not make judgements about the quality of the research. A list of the sources that were unavailable is provided in Appendix D.

Stage 5: Read and extract data

Research team members read each of the references that met the inclusion criteria. On reading some sources, it became clear they did not meet the inclusion criteria after all, and such references were excluded at this stage. Some of these were later used in the targeted literature review.

The team extracted information from each source using the data extraction template shown in Box 3 to ensure a systematic approach and consistency between researchers. Each source was read for data extraction by one member of the research team.

³⁶ A large number of these sources were excluded because they were about the process of radicalisation, rather than de-radicalisation, or were about the end of terrorist groups generally (or a kind of biography of such groups), rather than individuals exiting such groups.

Box 3: Data extraction template

1. Kind of literature:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empirical • Narrative literature review • Systematic literature review • Programme review • Personal account
2. If empirical, details of methodology (in accordance with assessment tool):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research questions • Research methodology • Sampling frame, sample selection, sample size, etc. • Data collection methods • Methods of analysis
3. Factors associated with exit:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social factors • Psychological factors • Physical factors
4. Where interventions to facilitate exit are described:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where did they take place? • What did the intervention consist of? • What is said about effectiveness and how robust is this?

Stage 6: Hand-search and follow-up references and citations

As mentioned above, the research team were aware of the potential limitations of using search terms to identify all the relevant literature. Therefore, the systematic search of databases was supplemented by hand-searching the contents and bibliographies of relevant texts and articles on Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorists, street gangs, religious cults, right-wing groups and organised crime groups.

More relevant literature was identified through the hand-search than using the search terms in the religious cults search. For Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorism, street gangs, right-wing groups and organised crime groups, a high proportion of the useful and relevant references were identified though following up citations. Rather than a reflection on the selection of search terms, this reflects the lack of literature on leaving these groups (compared with the literature on the risk factors for joining), and the fact that the research that does exist is often a small part of larger research studies, therefore it is hard to isolate and identify separately from broader research in the area.

As with the sources identified in the systematic search, the full text of the sources identified through hand-searching were obtained and relevant information was extracted.

Stage 7: Quality assessment

For those sources that reported primary or secondary empirical research, the research team took steps to make an assessment of the quality of that research. Most of the empirical studies employed qualitative methodology. Four were quantitative studies. Each source was checked by one reviewer – this introduces the potential for variance in the approach taken by each reviewer. To mitigate this, the team held an internal workshop and co-reviewed two sources from each group, in order to enhance the consistency of approach taken to quality assessment.

Assessment of qualitative studies

The team developed an assessment tool based upon the framework developed by the Government Social Research Network for assessing the quality of qualitative research (Spenser *et al.*, 2003). This tool is shown in Figure 3 (page 73). The team made amendments to this framework by reducing the number of questions asked of each research study, in order to allow for rapid assessment.³⁷ The assessment was based on an examination of six aspects of the research:³⁸

- research design;
- sampling;
- data collection;
- analysis;
- findings;
- reporting.

Each of the bullet points was assigned a score of 0 to 3 (where 0 = the matter was not mentioned at all, and 3 = a fair to good amount of detail was given).

The assessment tool relies heavily on the way in which a study is reported. It relies on information given by the researchers and the researchers' reflections on the quality, limitations and implications of their research. Therefore, some studies may be graded as having low robustness, simply because a particular aspect of the methodology of the research is not discussed in the report.

Grading the research on terrorism proved difficult. Researchers often say little about their methodology in terms of how they contacted their interviewees, how they recorded interviews, and so forth. In short, there is little basis for 'grading' these studies, as little information is provided about research methods.

Assessment of quantitative studies

To assess the small number of quantitative studies the Maryland Scale was used (Sherman *et al.*, 1998).

Figure 3: Quality assessment questions for qualitative studies

RESEARCH DESIGN
1. How defensible is the research design? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Was the methodology and data collection designed to answer research questions?</i> • <i>Discussion of limitations of the research design</i>
SAMPLING

³⁷ The team reduced the number of questions asked in the original Government Social Research Network service framework: some questions in the original framework could easily be amalgamated; some were too detailed for a rapid assessment; some did not seem relevant to the kind of literature reviewed.

³⁸ In addition to these six, the original framework looked at auditability (how adequately the research process has been documented), ethics, and reflexivity and neutrality. The research team incorporated assessments of these three aspects into the assessments of the six mentioned above.

<p>2. What was the plan for sampling, and was it appropriate?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of study locations and how and why chosen • Description of population of interest and how intended sample relates to it • Description and account of why the sample selected <p>3. What sample was actually achieved?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed profile of achieved sample/case coverage • Maximise inclusion – was the sample representative of the study population? • Discussion of missing coverage and implications
DATA COLLECTION
<p>4. How well was the data collection carried out?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mechanics of data collection: who collected data/procedures and instruments for collection/method of recording? • How might the method of collection and recording have affected data?
ANALYSIS
<p>5. How well has the approach to, and formulation of, the analysis been conveyed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did they come up with their constructs and definitions – do they derive from data? <p>6. Contexts of data sources: how well are they retained and portrayed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do they draw in context in analysing and interpreting data? <p>7. Depth and complexity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well has detail, depth and complexity of the data been conveyed?
FINDINGS
<p>8. How credible are the findings?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a clear link between data and findings? • How do the findings relate to existing knowledge? <p>9. What scope is there for drawing wider inference – ability to generalise?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence supplied to support claims for wider inference (from study or corroborating sources) • Discussion of limitations on drawing wider inference <p>10. For evaluations only: how clear is the basis of evaluative appraisal?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of how assessments of effectiveness/success have been defined and measured • How clear are the assumptions/theoretical perspectives/values that have shaped the form and output of the evaluation?
REPORTING
<p>11. How clear and coherent is the reporting?</p>
<p>TOTAL SCORE:</p>

Assessment of programme reviews

Programme reviews describe where a programme took place, who participated, what the programme involved, and so forth. All the programme reviews received a low-quality grading.³⁹ This is because the information contained within them is not verified or independent – it is often supplied by the Government operating the programme. Several sources classified as ‘programme reviews’ report on outcomes from de-radicalisation programmes. The research team treated such reports cautiously. None of the sources are based on empirical research in which programme participants are compared with a control group, or in which participants were robustly compared before and after their involvement (a quasi-experimental design). While sources often report on the proportion of participants that have been de-radicalised, there is no independent verification that programme participants were previously members of extremist groups – or if they were, that they have indeed ‘left’ – especially in the absence of longer-term follow-up data.

Therefore, the team is not able to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of programmes from these reviews. However, these reviews are useful in describing the common features of

³⁹ See Appendix B for a detailed description of the weaknesses of the available sources.

interventions for Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorists, and thus provide a starting point or a source of promising practice for policy development in this field.

Assessment of literature reviews

Literature reviews were divided into systematic reviews/REAs and narrative reviews.

Systematic reviews/REAs are sources that review literature in a systematic and replicable way in order to answer a question. They include a search strategy and inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Narrative reviews do not have a systematic process for identifying literature. Such sources do not assess the quality of the literature discussed in any systematic way. All the narrative reviews were graded low-quality on the grounds of lack of systematisation, lack of information about the scope and methods of the review, and lack of discussion of the limits of such a review. In this category the team have included some reports of conferences.

Stage 8: Synthesis

Once the reading, data extraction and quality assessment had been completed, the team held an internal synthesis workshop to explore the similarities and differences across the literatures.

Appendix B: Characterising the quantity and quality of evidence

Characterising the literature on leaving Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorism

Table 9 sets out the grading and category assigned to each source by the research team in the primary Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA). It also sets out whether each source was about Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorism or terrorism in general.

Table 9: Quality of sources identified in the Rapid Evidence Assessment into violent extremism

Author(s)	Quality	Type	Focus on Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorism or terrorism generally
Abuza (2009)	Low	Programme review	Qa'ida-influenced terrorism : programmes for Jemaah Islamiyah members
Al-Huda (2010)	Low	Narrative literature review	Qa'ida-influenced terrorism : <i>primarily</i> about peacemaking by Islamic actors, but mentions other religious extremists
Barrett and Bokhari (2009)	Low	Programme review	Qa'ida-influenced terrorism: programmes in the Muslim world
Beg and Bokhari (2009)	Low	Programme review	Qa'ida-influenced terrorism : programmes in Pakistan
Bjørøgo and Horgan (2009a) and (2009b)	Low	Narrative literature review	Terrorism generally, including Al Qa'ida-influenced
Boucek (2009)	Low	Programme review	Qa'ida-influenced terrorism: programmes in Saudi Arabia
Boucek (2010)	Low	Programme review	Qa'ida-influenced terrorism : programmes in Saudi Arabia
Boucek, Beg and Horgan (2009)	Low	Programme review	Qa'ida-influenced terrorism: programmes in Yemen
Curcio (2006)	Medium	Empirical qualitative: <i>analysis of transcripts of interrogations with 600 young men held at Guantanamo Bay</i>	Qa'ida-influenced terrorism : jihadists held at Guantanamo Bay
Demant, Sloodman, Buijs and Tillie (2008)	Medium	Empirical qualitative: <i>in-depth interviews with five former Islamic extremists, analysis of autobiography of Ed Hussain</i>	Terrorism generally, including Al Qa'ida-influenced
Fink and Hearne (2008)	Low	Narrative literature review	Terrorism generally, including Al Qa'ida-influenced
Garfinkel (2007)	Medium–high	Empirical qualitative: <i>telephone interviews with former members of militant groups, all of whom now are working for 'peaceful change'</i>	Interviewees included former Islamic extremists, as well as Jewish, Christian and those fighting for Palestinian independence
Gunaratna and Ali (2009)	Low	Narrative literature review	Qa'ida-influenced terrorism : discussion of change in Islamic militant groups in Egypt

Author(s)	Quality	Type	Focus on Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorism or terrorism generally
Hassan and Pereire (2006)	Low	Programme review	Qa'ida-influenced terrorism : programmes to de-radicalise Islamic extremists in Singapore
Horgan (2009a)	Low	Narrative literature review	Terrorism generally, including Al Qa'ida-influenced
Horgan (2009b)	Medium	Empirical qualitative: <i>29 case studies using interviews with terrorists and their supporters, families, etc.</i>	Qa'ida-influenced terrorism : programmes in Yemen
International Crisis Group (2007)	Low	Programme review	Qa'ida-influenced terrorism : programmes in Indonesian prisons
International Peace Institute (2010)	Low	Narrative literature review	Qa'ida-influenced terrorism : programmes in some Muslim-majority states
Jacobson (2008)	Low	Empirical qualitative: <i>review of personal accounts of individuals who have left terrorist groups. Based on secondary sources</i>	Qa'ida-influenced terrorism : focuses on former members of Al Qa'ida
National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (2004)	Low	Narrative literature review	Qa'ida-influenced terrorism
Neumann (2010)	Low	Programme review	Qa'ida-influenced terrorism
Noricks (2009)	Low	Narrative literature review	Qa'ida-influenced terrorism : programmes in Yemen
Pendleton (2008)	Low	Programme review	Qa'ida-influenced terrorism : programmes for Jemaah Islamiyah prisoners in Singapore and Indonesia

The evidence base as to why individuals leave Qa'ida-influenced terrorism very limited. There are seven main flaws in the available literature:

- limited amount of robust research focusing on Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorism;
- limited amount of research interest in leaving groups;
- limited empirical basis;
- causality cannot be inferred;
- reliance on personal accounts;
- lack of robust evaluation of interventions, including no counterfactual; and
- lack of peer-reviewed literature.

Limited amount of robust research focusing on Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorism

Table 9 shows that five empirical studies were identified in the review of terrorism literature. Of these empirical studies, Curcio (2006) and Jacobson (2008) looked *only* at Qa'ida-influenced terrorists, and both of these studies were analyses of secondary data. Demant *et al.* (2008), Garfinkel (2007) and Horgan (2009b) all conducted primary research. In each case their interviewees included some Islamic extremists, as well as others. All of the programme reviews included in the primary REA discussed interventions for Islamic terrorists. Of the narrative literature reviews, the majority of sources reviewed research relating to terrorism generally – including, but not limited to, Al Qa'ida-influenced terrorism.

Limited amount of research interest in leaving terrorist groups

Disengagement and desistance is a new area of counter-terrorism studies. While radicalisation or the reasons why individuals join terrorist groups has captured the attention of researchers, few have studied the commonalities between the process of disengagement and their possible impact on reducing the size of violent groups. LaFree and Miller (2008, p 204) state that “in recent years an increasing number of researchers have observed that there are far fewer studies of how terrorism ends than how it begins”. Concerns about personal safety and lack of access to classified or sensitive information have acted as barriers to research in this field.

Limited empirical basis

The research team agrees with Horgan (2005, p 37) that the best way to find out about the factors involved in leaving a terrorist organisation is to speak to terrorists and former terrorists. The paucity of studies employing such a methodology means that knowledge about leaving terrorist groups is based on interviews with 60 or 70 people at most (not all of whom had once been terrorists; some interviewees were the friends and family of former terrorists). Individually these three studies are fairly well designed, to the extent that they sought to gather detailed information about the experience and motivation of leavers. However, there should be caution in making statements about whether the findings can be generalised or are transferable from this research, simply because there are so few leavers to whom researchers have spoken.

Causality cannot be inferred

An important limitation of the evidence base is that the available studies only provide information about individuals who have left terrorist groups; there is no information about those who have not left. This means that it is not known how typical of other members the leavers are; neither is it known whether non-leavers experienced similar factors, but did not leave the group. Without this ‘control’ element of the study, it is impossible to know whether the stated factors for leaving the group are actually causal drivers of leaving, or are simply widespread thoughts and experiences among those who leave as well as those who do not.

Reliance on personal accounts

While asking someone why they left a terrorist group is perhaps the best way to gather information on the factors associated with exit, there is always a risk that an interviewee will not tell the truth, will not know with certainty, or may not be able to articulate clearly the factors that caused them to leave. The evidence base does not allow the team to draw reliable conclusions that the factors identified by interviewees were in fact related, let alone causal, in their leaving the group. In this field of research, where the numbers are small and the ability to triangulate is limited, it is much more difficult to build confidence in the validity of self-reported information in the way that much other research is able to do.

Lack of robust evaluation of interventions, including no counterfactual

No evaluations of interventions to facilitate exit from terrorist groups were identified in this review. The majority of the literature on interventions is what the team has called ‘programme reviews’: reports which describe programmes on the basis of official, unverified information.

Crucially, none of these programme reviews consider the counterfactual; what would have happened to individuals, had they not participated in the intervention. This means that when a programme review reports that, for example, 30 out of 40 people on a de-radicalisation programme left the terrorist group, it is not known whether these 30 would have left regardless of the intervention or indeed, whether the 10 who did not leave would have done so but for the intervention.

Not only did the research team find no studies that look at a counterfactual or control group, but also there are no reported longitudinal studies that look at the long-term effects of 'rehabilitation' programmes targeted at terrorists. In the absence of this latter type of study it is impossible to know whether or not the intended outcome of facilitating leaving terrorist groups is sustainable.

Therefore, the REA was not able to draw any robust conclusions from the available literature about the long-term effectiveness of interventions in facilitating exit from terrorist groups.

Lack of peer-reviewed literature

Much of the literature identified and included in this REA is 'grey' literature. Unlike those published in journals, although many of these papers are written by credible scientists or policy officials, they are not peer-reviewed. This, combined with a lack of robust empirical data, means that findings should be treated particularly carefully.

Some research may be published in the field of disengagement in the next few years. For example, a longitudinal study of terrorist disengagement by Horgan (forthcoming). Research is under way into detainees who have been involved with Jemaah Islamiyah (Kruglanski, forthcoming).

Characterising the literature on leaving street gangs

There is a slightly more robust evidence base as to the factors associated with leaving street gangs than those associated with leaving Qa'ida-influenced terrorism, although the available literature still only provides the basis for limited conclusions. The following points summarise its key weaknesses:

- limited research into desistance from street gangs;
- a largely US research base;
- causality cannot be inferred;
- some robust evaluations of interventions, which attempt to control for the counterfactual.

Limited research into desistance from gangs

Despite a large body of scholarship about street gangs, desistance from gangs has not been widely studied. Of the 16 empirical studies identified in this review, only 2 focus solely on leaving the gang: Deane *et al.* (2007), Decker and Lauritsen (2002) and Moloney *et al.* (2009).

A largely US research base

Although there is an increasing body of empirical work on European street gangs, including gangs in the UK, none of the three empirical studies that examine leaving the gang are from the UK. Differences between the UK and the USA in terms of ethnic and cultural composition, government policies, health and education systems, gun control, drug use, legislation and policing must all be considered when thinking about the transferability of US research to a UK or European context (Grekul and LaBoucane-Benson, 2008, p 60).

Causality cannot be inferred

Of the three empirical studies that focus on leaving street gangs, two gathered data from both those who had left the gang and those who had not: Moloney *et al.* (2009) spoke to both current and former gang members, although they do not say how many of each; and Decker and Lauritsen (2002) spoke to 99 gang members and 24 former members. The third study is by Deane *et al.* (2007), and they only gathered data from aboriginal gang members participating in a voluntary programme.

Data collection from leavers and non-leavers enables researchers to draw slightly more reliable conclusions about whether the factors reported to be associated with leaving the gang were genuinely important. However, the available evidence base does not allow firm conclusions that can be generalised about the factors that caused exit, given the small number of studies.

As with the terrorism literature, in the street gangs literature there is reliance on the reasons and explanations given by those who have left gangs. These accounts may be deliberately embellished or downplayed, or interviewees simply may not be able to identify or articulate the real reasons why they left a gang. However, these sources can provide important insights: if there is consistency across different members and former members' accounts, then this may add to confidence in the findings.

Some robust evaluation of interventions, which attempt to control for the counterfactual

Unlike the evidence base on terrorism, there have been some evaluations of gang interventions that take into account the counterfactual. Braga *et al.* (2001), Bullock and Tilley (2002), Cohen *et al.* (1995) and Spergel *et al.* (2005) all made attempts to control for other factors.⁴⁰ Thus, strictly they fall outside of the inclusion criteria for the REA. In addition, interventions are specific to the characteristics of the gang problem in a particular area, and therefore it cannot be assumed that lessons are transferable.

Thus, in comparison to the Qa'ida-influenced terrorism literature there is more empirical research available to provide insight on leaving gangs. There are several informative studies that involve interviews and ethnographic work with gangs, including former members. The existence of a number of different studies, which have been conducted at different times, in

⁴⁰ None of these evaluations specifically looked at exit from gangs. Braga *et al.* evaluated 'Operation Ceasefire' in Boston, MA, which aimed to reduce gun-related violence. Bullock and Tilley described and analysed a strategy for reducing gang-related shootings and violence in Manchester. Cohen *et al.* evaluated the US National Youth Gang Drug Prevention Program, which aimed to prevent juveniles from joining gangs in the first place and to mobilise communities in anti-gang efforts. Spergel *et al.* evaluated the Bloomington–Normal Comprehensive Gang intervention in Illinois, which was the only one to include measures to encourage exit (albeit alongside aims to suppress gangs and prevent membership).

different locations and into different gangs, allows the identification of recurring findings and themes – and thus more confidence that the findings from this body of research are not merely idiosyncratic, but demonstrate something wider about the process of leaving a gang. However, given the small number of studies focusing on leaving, this is not a conclusive or even necessarily a strong evidence base. Instead, there are a number of potential factors to inform policy and some promising practice that merits further consideration.

Table 10 lists the sources about leaving street gangs.

Table 10: Quality of sources identified in the Rapid Evidence Assessment into street gangs

Study	Internal quality	Overview of methodology
Aldridge and Medina (2008)	Medium	Empirical qualitative: <i>ethnographic fieldwork with Manchester gangs</i>
Bartolome-Gutierrez and Rechea-Alberola (2006)	Low	Narrative literature review
Cohen, Williams, Beckman and Crosse (1995)	Medium	Empirical quantitative: <i>evaluation of intervention using crime statistics and interviews</i>
Deane, Bracken and Morrissette (2007)	Medium–high	Empirical qualitative: <i>interviews and fieldwork with those involved in a programme for aboriginal gang and former gang members in Canada</i>
Decker and Van Winkle (1996)	High	Empirical qualitative: <i>interviewed gang members and former gang members St Louis, Missouri between 1990 and 1993</i>
Decker and Lauritsen (2002)	Medium	Empirical qualitative: <i>uses data collected in the St Louis, Missouri study (above), supplemented by follow-up data collected in 1998</i>
Fleisher and Krienert (2004)	Low	Empirical qualitative and quantitative: <i>data gathered from a multi-year field study in the USA about gang-involved women</i>
Grekul and LaBoucane-Benson (2008)	Medium	Empirical qualitative: <i>interviews with former gang members, police officers and correctional service personnel</i>
Howell (1998)	Low	Narrative literature review
Huff (1998)	High	Empirical qualitative: <i>interviews with gang members, non-gang members and at-risk youths in Colorado and Ohio, including longitudinal tracking study of hard-core members</i>
Klein and Maxson (2008)	Low	Narrative literature review (albeit extensive)
Lafontaine, Ferguson and Wormith (2005)	Low	Narrative literature review
Moloney, MacKenzie, Hunt and Joe-Laidler (2009)	Medium–high	Empirical qualitative: <i>interviews with 91 gang members in San Francisco who became fathers</i>
Pitts (2007)	Low	Empirical qualitative: <i>fieldwork with gang members and practitioners in Walthamstow, London</i>
Schneider (1999)	Low	Empirical qualitative: <i>fieldwork with New York gangs in the post-war period</i>
Spergel, Wa and Sosa (2005)	Medium	Empirical quantitative: <i>evaluation of large intervention programme in the USA, largely based on quantitative information about crime rates</i>
Variale (2008)	Medium	Empirical quantitative: <i>analysis of the effect of motherhood using data from National Youth Crime Survey in the USA</i>
Virgil (1998)	High	Empirical qualitative: <i>ethnographic fieldwork with gangs in Chicago. Interviews with gang members, their families and criminal justice practitioners</i>

Characterising the literature on leaving religious cults and new religious movements

As with street gangs, there are a greater number of empirical studies into leaving religious cults and new religious movements (NRMs) than there are into leaving terrorist groups. The evidence base is still limited. The research team highlight four features of the literature on NRMs:

- the majority of research was conducted in the 1970s and 1980s;
- all the studies reviewed used self-selecting samples;
- some studies contained a control group;
- there were no robust evaluations of interventions.

Majority of the research was conducted in the 1970s and 1980s

The majority of primary research into religious cults was conducted in the 1970s and 1980s. Much of the foundational research on NRMs focused on the groups that were launched in the 1960s and 1970s, so these studies examined first-generation movements (Wright, 2007).

All the studies reviewed used self-selecting samples

A weakness of the research base is that it largely relies on self-selected samples of individuals who have left a cult. Studies recruited participants through advertisements in newspapers and public notice boards. It is not known how typical or representative these people are of those who join NRMs or of those who have left. Thus the team cannot conclude that a factor reported to be associated with individuals leaving the group can be generalised to other members.

Some studies contained a control group

Four studies reviewed for this REA gathered information from both those who had left and those who were still members of a NRM. More confidence can be taken in the findings of such research to the extent that it may be able to identify factors that were reported by leavers, but not by those who did not leave, and thus provide insight into the factors that were indeed associated only with leaving.

There were no robust evaluations of interventions

The review we did not find any studies which evaluate interventions to encourage exit from cults. Table 11 lists the sources about leaving cults.

There were several references to which the research team could not gain access to the full text or copies of the documents. Some references were PhD theses that were not available electronically. Some were books that were not even held by the Cambridge University Library (a copyright library). For this reason the team has relied upon literature reviews more than they might otherwise have done. This further diminishes the ability to make robust assessments of the quality of the evidence base.

Table 11: Quality of sources identified in the Rapid Evidence Assessment into religious cults

Study	Internal quality	Overview of methodology
Beckford (1985)	Medium	Empirical qualitative: <i>Data gathered in 1975–1984 in France, Japan, the UK, USA and former West Germany. Interviews with 26 former members of cults, 13 of their relatives, the parents of 35 practising members, 26 anti-cult activists, and several journalists and public officials. Various publications were analysed: reports of legal cases,</i>

		<i>autobiographies of former cultists, journalists' articles and cult and anti-cult propaganda</i>
Bromley (2004)	Low	Narrative literature review
Bromley (2006)	Low	Narrative literature review
Clark, Giambalvo, Giambalvo, Garvey and Langone (1993)	Low	Empirical qualitative: <i>an exit counsellor's account of the factors associated with leaving cults, based on his experience</i>
Gallagher and Ashcraft (2006)	Low	Narrative literature review
Jacobs (1987)	Medium-high	Empirical qualitative: <i>40 interviews of former religious devotees from 17 religious movements who voluntarily left the movement</i>
Melton and Bromley (2002)	Low	Narrative literature review
Wright (1984)	Medium	Empirical qualitative: <i>90 interviewees, half of whom had voluntarily departed from one of three NRMs, and the other half of whom were still engaged in these groups</i>
Wright (1991)	Medium-high	Empirical qualitative: <i>intensive, in-depth interviews with voluntary defectors and current members (N = 45 each) from three NRMs</i>
Wright (2007)	Low	Narrative literature review

Characterising the literature on leaving right-wing extremist groups

There is a slightly more robust evidence base as to the factors associated those leaving with right-wing extremist groups than those associated with leaving Qa'ida-influenced terrorism, although the available literature still only provides the basis for limited conclusions. This literature is based on research conducted in northern Europe on neo-Nazi youth gangs. The following four factors summarise status and strength of the evidence base:

- limited research into desistance from right-wing groups;
- an entirely northern European research base;
- causality cannot be inferred;
- some robust evaluations of interventions, which attempt to control for the counterfactual.

Limited research into desistance from right-wing extremism

Despite a large body of scholarship about right-wing extremism, desistance from right-wing extremism has not been widely studied.

A largely northern European research base

All of the studies included in the secondary REA are based on neo-Nazi youth groups in northern Europe. Differences between northern Europe and the UK in terms of ethnic and cultural composition, government policies and so forth must be taken into account, as well as the type of right-wing groups that operate in each country.

Causality cannot be inferred

Of the five empirical studies that focus on leaving neo-Nazi youth groups, two gathered data from both those who had left the group and those who had not (Björge, 2009; Boehnke *et al.*, 1998).

As with the prior literature, readers have to rely on the explanations given by those who have left the groups. These accounts may be deliberately embellished or downplayed, or interviewees simply may not be able to identify or articulate the real reasons why they left.

Some robust evaluation of interventions, which attempt to control for the counterfactual

Unlike the evidence base on terrorism there have been some evaluations of right-wing extremist interventions that attempt to take into account the counterfactual. These evaluations are not in English, but the findings from these evaluations can be found in other sources (Bjørge, 2009; Bjørge *et al.*, 2009). Interventions are specific to the characteristics of the extremism problem in a particular area, and therefore it cannot be assumed that lessons are transferable.

There are several informative evaluations from Germany, Norway and Sweden on the Exit projects, which involve interviews and ethnographic work with former neo-Nazi members. As with the gang literature, the existence of a number of different studies that have been conducted at different times, in different locations and into different groups, allows the identification of recurring findings and themes, and thus more confidence that the findings from this body of research tell something about the process of leaving.

Table 12 lists all the sources about leaving right-wing groups.

Table 12: Quality of sources identified in the Rapid Evidence Assessment into right-wing extremist groups

Study	Internal quality	Overview of methodology
Bjørge (2002)	Low	Narrative literature review
Bjørge (2009)	Medium–high	Empirical qualitative: <i>based on interview data with 50 individuals – some who were racist activists in the past but had left the group, and others who were still activists but seriously thinking of quitting. The study focused on right-wing groups that cater to young people. It also relied on secondary data about former activists</i>
Bjørge and Carlsson (2005)	Low	Narrative literature review: <i>description of interventions and models for exit</i>
Bjørge, Van Donselaar and Gurenberg (2009)	Low	Narrative literature review: <i>some empirical evidence (interviews) were used to gather information about programmes</i>
Boehnke, Hagan and Merkens (1998)	Medium	Empirical quantitative: <i>test model tests risk factors of membership of right-wing extremist groups among German youth in a heterogeneous panel of secondary school children (N = 590) surveyed in 1992 and 1993</i>
Demant, Slooman, Buijs and Tillie (2008)	Medium	Empirical qualitative: <i>interviews with former far-right politicians, former ‘hooligans’ and experts</i>
Kimmel (2007)	Medium	Empirical qualitative: <i>based on archival and online materials published by neo-Nazi groups, and interviews with members of these groups in Denmark, Norway and Sweden</i>
Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (2001)	Low ^a	Empirical qualitative (based on information available in English summary): <i>interviews with individuals who have left the White Power movement and their parents. Also interviews with practitioners in schools and other places where Exit is operating</i>

^a Only the summary of this research is available in English, which provides limited information about its methodology. However, Bjørge *et al.* (2009, p 138 footnote 15) report that the evaluation was criticised for its weak methodology and lack of independent data. Therefore the research team assigned a low rating to encourage caution in reliance on the findings from this research.

Characterising the literature on leaving organised crime groups

In relation to leaving organised crime groups the evidence base appears to be weaker than that relating to Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups. The identified sources provide little insight to the research questions for the following reasons:

- only one primary empirical study covers exit from organised crime;
- the evidence is largely drawn from personal accounts;
- available evidence is only from those who have made some form of exit;
- lack of research about criminal careers in organised crime;
- interventions do not primarily aim to encourage exit from organised crime groups.

Only one primary empirical study covers exit from organised crime

Only Adler (1993) and Adler and Adler (1983) draw upon primary research with individuals who have left organised crime – in that case, drug dealing. This provides an extremely limited evidence base, given the diversity of types of organised crime groups. The findings are rooted in the social, political and economic circumstances in the USA at the time of the research, and concern a group of primarily non-violent drug dealers.

Evidence is largely drawn from personal accounts

A number of individuals previously involved in organised crime groups have written memoirs about their time in the Mafia and other organisations.⁴¹ These are the 'best' evidence available and offer some insight into how and why individuals leave, but are highly unreliable sources. Readers are entirely reliant on the author's accounts and, in many of these, discussion of the process of exit is extremely limited. Some academics have argued that they can be a useful source of data (for example, Firestone, 1993), but not necessarily about exit.

Available evidence is only from those who have made some form of exit

When Adler (1993) recontacted the drug dealers in her sample 10 years later, all of them had left organised crime. Personal accounts are written by those who have decided, for example, to testify against their former Mafia colleagues. There are no accounts from current members.

Lack of research about criminal careers in organised crime

The individual dimension of organised crime has received little attention from academics and researchers (von Lampe, 2006). If attention is paid to the individual characteristics of organised criminals at all, the emphasis tends to be on the importance of capacities, skills and attitudes (von Lampe, 2009), rather than the factors associated with leaving. There are calls for further research on desistance from trafficking and other forms of organised crime (Dorn *et al.*, 2005, p. 39).

⁴¹ The REA included two such memoirs (Giovino, 2004; Teresa and Renner, 1973), as well as sources that reviewed or analysed such accounts (Amir, 1989; Firestone, 1993).

Interventions do not primarily aim to encourage exit from organised crime groups

Interventions and evaluations of their effectiveness focus on the impact on demand and supply of illicit goods and services, and on the organised crime group as a whole, rather than on individual members.

Table 13 lists all the sources about leaving organised crime groups.

Table 13: Quality of sources identified in the Rapid Evidence Assessment into organised crime groups

Study	Internal quality	Overview of methodology
Adler (1993)	High	Empirical qualitative: <i>ethnography of upper-level drug dealers in south-west USA in the 1970s and 1990s. Study conducted over six years. As well as participant observation, researchers conducted in-depth interviews with 24 dealers. Researchers recontacted 13 participants 10 years later, none of whom were still dealing</i>
Adler and Adler (1983)	High	Empirical qualitative: <i>ethnography of upper-level drug dealers in south-west America in the 1970s</i>
Amir (1989)	Low–medium	Empirical qualitative: <i>review of biographies, autobiographies and sociological studies on organised crime groups</i>
Dorn, Bucke and Goulden (2003)	Low–medium	Empirical qualitative: <i>case studies from five major anti-trafficking operations; consultations with law enforcement personnel from HM Customs & Excise and the National Crime Squad; and workshops with police officers</i>
Dorn, Levi and King (2005)	High	Systematic review/REA
Firestone (1993)	Low	Empirical qualitative: <i>analysis of 12 accounts of former Mafia members' memoirs</i>
Fyfe and Sheptycki (2005)	High	Systematic review/REA
Giovino (2004)	Low	Personal account
Jacques and Wright (2008)	Medium	Empirical: <i>in-depth interviews with two young, middle-class drug dealers in Georgia in the USA</i>
Kleemans and de Poot (2008)	High	Empirical qualitative: <i>research into the criminal careers of about 1,000 offenders involved in 80 cases of organised crime. Information taken from Dutch police investigations of criminal groups</i>
Teresa and Renner (1973)	Low	Personal account

List of sources identified in the targeted literature review

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Appendix C: List of excluded sources

Qa'ida-influenced terrorism

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Appendix E: List of de-radicalisation programmes

This appendix provides some more information about the de-radicalisation programmes discussed in sources identified during the primary Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA). In addition, it provides some information about programmes for non-Qa'ida-influenced groups.

Table 14: Examples of de-radicalisation programmes

Source(s) of information	Country and name of programme	Programme dates	Programme leaders	Programme targets	Activities and techniques	Measures of success	Success
Alonso (2009)	Northern Ireland	Late 1980s	Irish Government UK Government	IRA and Sinn Fein leadership	Security activities Negotiation to cease violence Recasting terrorist leaders as 'men of peace' in media and political circles	Cessation of violence Signing of peace agreements	Peace process successful but still some violence – for example, the attack on British soldiers in 2009 by the Real IRA
Alonso (2009)	Spain	Late 1960s	Spanish Government	ETA leadership	Security activities Negotiation to cease violence Strengthening political wing of party	Cessation of violence Signing of peace agreements	Unsuccessful intervention Ongoing violence Ceasefires repeatedly broken
Barrett and Bokhari (2009)	Tajikistan	2003–present	Moderate Islamists	Moderate Islamists	Government-run dialogues between moderate Islamists	Unknown	Unknown
Barrett and Bokhari (2009) Abuza (2009)	Indonesia	2007–present	Mainstream religious groups working closely with senior policy officials	Terrorist members	Poverty alleviation through employment Stopping propaganda by terrorist members	Unknown	Unknown

Source(s) of information	Country and name of programme	Programme dates	Programme leaders	Programme targets	Activities and techniques	Measures of success	Success
Boucek (2009)	Saudi Arabia Saudi Counselling Programme	2003	Saudi Government Clerics Former militants on advisory committee	Terrorists and sympathisers in prisons	Engaging in intensive religious debates Psychological counselling Economic aid to family if a breadwinner is incarcerated Continued economic and employment support upon release	Rate of release following renunciation of beliefs Recidivism rate	Mixed results: Some detained prisoners and sympathisers have refused to participate Of those who have participated, roughly 1,500 out of 3,000 participants have renounced their former beliefs and been released 1–2% recidivism rate as of November 2007
Boucek (2009) Johnsen and Boucek (2008)	Yemen Committee for Religious Dialogue	September 2002	President Saleh al-Hitar, former Supreme Court Justice Yemeni ulamas (Muslim scholars)	Islamist terrorist prisoners	Religious dialogue with Yemeni ulamas	Rate of release after concession of Yemeni state legitimacy and renouncing violence	364 detainees released through programme President al-Hitar states that 40% of jihadists were reformed through the programme (note that younger generation were more resistant)
della Porta (2009)	Italy	Late 1970s	Italian Government	Terrorists at all organisational levels	Reducing sentences to those who renounced violence, collaborated with authority or confessed guilt Creation of homogeneous areas in prisons – grouping together those who de-radicalised	Rate of politically violent groups that have dissolved	Leftist political groups dissolved by mid-1980s as a result of intervention

Source(s) of information	Country and name of programme	Programme dates	Programme leaders	Programme targets	Activities and techniques	Measures of success	Success
Gunaratna and Ali (2009)	Egypt	1997–present	Leaders of terrorist organisations supported by the Government Islamic University of al-Azhar	Extremist leaders Young people General public	Leaders – dialogue and debate with own group Young people – education focused on moderation al Azhar – correcting misperceptions of Islam, dialogue with leaders	Number of jihadi incidents Terrorist groups having renounced violence	Al-Gamaa Al-Islamiyya leaders persuaded to renounce violence through interaction with al-Azhar and broader political events For Al-Jihad Al-Islami, some success in converting members No jihadi incidents in the Nile Valley since Luxor in 1997, arguably due to the programme
Hassan and Pereire (2006)	Singapore	Formation of Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG) in 2003 Dates for other Singaporean initiatives unknown	RRG – Muslim scholars (Pergas) and volunteers from various Islamic bodies supported by the Government Internal Security Department Muslim community leaders	Extremist detainees General public	Producing ideological counter-material Promoting racial harmony Manual for rehabilitation Financial support for families of detained Jemaah Islamiyah members Close communication between police and Muslim community leaders	Rate of release from RRG religious counselling Unknown for the other initiatives	RRG religious counselling – mixed results: 3 participants released while 3 had their restriction extended

Source(s) of information	Country and name of programme	Programme dates	Programme leaders	Programme targets	Activities and techniques	Measures of success	Success
International Crisis Group (2007)	Indonesia	2004–2007 (possibly still ongoing)	Police Muslim scholars Former Jemaah Islamiyah members	Prisoners involved in terrorism Schools (Muslim scholars' publications)	Persuading terrorists that the Government is not anti-Islamic through addressing terrorists' socio-economic concerns Co-opting leaders to influence movement and obtain intelligence Publications on correct interpretation of jihad (minor)	Ability to co-opt Jemaah Islamiyah members into de-radicalisation effort through prison programme Level of influence of co-opted insiders on the movement Other initiatives – unknown	Co-optation of high-profile Jemaah Islamiyah members Ali Imron and Nasir Abas, who now work with authorities on de-radicalisation Ali Imron's arguments about why Bali was wrong convinced some key Jemaah Islamiyah members (this illustrates the importance of co-opting insiders)
Ribetti (2009)	Colombia Colombian Government Reincorporation Programme	1999	Colombian Government	Members of insurgent groups Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia and Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias (recruited either individually, voluntarily or collectively) disbanding the group as a result of negotiation	Social services and economic support (now changing from benefit-oriented to more flexible, individualised approach)	School attendance Enrolment in vocational training Enrolment in health care Homicide rates	Lowest murder rate in 20 years, from 28,837 in 2002 to 17,209 in 2006 (last available statistic) Homicide rate dropped by 13% in demobilised areas (Note that logistical difficulties hindered uptake of services – in July 2007, only 32% of beneficiaries enrolled in school, 32% in vocational training and 41 in health care)

Source(s) of information	Country and name of programme	Programme dates	Programme leaders	Programme targets	Activities and techniques	Measures of success	Success
Zannoni (2007)	The Netherlands	2005–present	Dutch Government Teachers Social workers Police	Unknown	Integrated strategy of increasing awareness, intervention and de-radicalisation Representatives from different spheres of radical's life included in the process	Unknown	Unknown

Appendix F: List of accounts of disengagement from Qa'ida-influenced terrorism

Table 15 in this appendix sets out a non-comprehensive, but indicative, list of 'accounts' of individuals who have disengaged from Qa'ida-influenced terrorist groups.

Table 15: Examples of accounts of disengagement from Qa'ida-influenced terrorism

Source	Name	Affiliation	Reason for disengagement
Horgan (2009b)	L'Houssaine Kherchtou	Al Qa'ida	Disillusionment – mismatch between fantasy and reality
Horgan (2009b)	Sayyid Imam al-Shaif (Dr Fadl)	Al Qa'ida	Disillusionment – mismatch between fantasy and reality
Horgan (2009b)	Mansoor Dadullah	Al Qa'ida	Dismissed from the Taliban involuntarily
Horgan (2009b, p 33)	Mohammad Nasir Bin Abbas	Jemaah Islamiyah	Disillusionment – mismatch between fantasy and reality
Horgan (2009b, p 34)	Kuldip Singh	Khalistan Liberation Force	Desire to start a new life
Jacobson (2008)	Essam al-Ridi	Al Qa'ida	Disillusionment arising from internal disagreement over tactical issues
Jacobson (2008)	Mushabib al-Hamlan	Al Qa'ida	Returned to contact with his family
Jacobson (2008)	Sa'ud al-Rashid	Al Qa'ida	Returned to home country
Jacobson (2008)	Sajid Badat	Al Qa'ida	Returned to contact with his family
Jacobson (2008)	Noman Benotman	Al Qa'ida-affiliated Libyan Islamic Fighting Group	Lack of respect for the group's leadership
Jacobson (2008)	Abu Hadhifa	Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb	Disillusionment arising from internal strategic, political or ideological differences
Jacobson (2008)	Jamal al-Fadl	Al Qa'ida	Embezzling funds from Al-Qa'ida during years in Sudan, based on his displeasure with his salary, stealing approximately \$100,000 total

Appendix G: List of programmes to encourage exit from right-wing extremist groups

This appendix provides some information about programmes to encourage exit from right-wing extremist groups. It includes programmes discussed in the literature identified in the second Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA). It is an indicative, not comprehensive list of programmes.

Table 16: Examples of programmes to encourage exit from right-wing extremist groups

Source(s) of information	Country and name of programme	Programme dates	Programme leaders	Programme targets	Activities and techniques	Evidence of success
Bjørgero, Van Donselaar and Gurenberg (2009) Bjørgero (2002)	Norway Exit programme	1997–present	Local agencies – police, child welfare services, teachers – who received training from Exit	Young people who were members of groups Parents of such young people	Aiding and supporting young people who wanted to leave racist/violent groups Supporting parents of children in such groups and establishing network of parents Disseminate knowledge and methods to professionals working with youths	Trained more than 700 practitioners 130 parents representing 100 young people participated in networks between 1995 and 2000 Of those 100 youths only 10 were still involved in racist scene
Bjørgero, Van Donselaar and Gurenberg (2009) Bjørgero and Carlsson (2005)	Norway Preventative or ‘empowerment’ conversations	2003–present	Norwegian police	Young people who had been involved with violent right-wing organisations	Parents and young people were approached. Purpose was to inform about negative consequences of involvement, to motivate young people to break from the group	No formal evaluation According to the police 95 young people claimed that they wanted to break from the group as a result of the conversation; 12 claimed they would consider leaving; 11 had already disengaged when approached by the police; 17 said they wanted to continue involvement

Source(s) of information	Country and name of programme	Programme dates	Programme leaders	Programme targets	Activities and techniques	Evidence of success
<p>Bjørgero, Van Donselaar and Gurenberg (2009)</p> <p>Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (2001)</p>	<p>Sweden</p> <p>Exit programme</p>	1998–present	<p>Exit organisation worked directly with young people</p> <p>Most staff members were themselves former members of neo-Nazi or White Power movement</p>	Young people who want to leave or have already done so	<p>Provides direct support to young people in relation to problems such as alcohol abuse, involvement in crime and violence, accommodation, isolation and rebuilding family relationships</p> <p>Lecturing to schools and parent groups</p>	<p>Evaluated by the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (although only summary available in English)</p> <p>This evaluation reported that 133 were people given assistance between 1998 and 2001. Of these, 125 left the White Power movement and reported to have stopped criminal behaviour, 4 returned to the right-wing group, 1 joined another gang and 2 became drug addicts (1 was not accounted for)</p> <p>Based on Exit's statistics and accounts by Exit practitioners, by spring 2008 about 600 people are reported to have turned to Exit Sweden. Only 2 are known to have returned to the right-wing movement</p>
<p>Bjørgero, Van Donselaar and Gurenberg (2009)</p>	<p>Germany</p> <p>Exit-Deutschland</p>	2000–present	<p>Exit-Deutschland is a non-governmental organisation</p> <p>Started by a former neo-Nazi</p>	Young people in skinhead groups or nationalist parties	<p>Young people must contact Exit voluntarily</p> <p>Engages with the young person to analyse their own situation. Helps individuals to get employment, build up a social network</p> <p>Victim awareness</p> <p>Family of young people are often involved</p>	<p>Programme organisers claim to have pulled about 280 young people from the right-wing scene. Claimed to have failed in only 8 cases</p>

Source(s) of information	Country and name of programme	Programme dates	Programme leaders	Programme targets	Activities and techniques	Evidence of success
Bjørngo, Van Donselaar and Gurenberg (2009)	Germany Assteigerprogramm für Rechtsextremisten vom Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (BfV)	Early 2000–present	Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Federal Security Service)	Leaders of extreme right-wing organisations Members of right-wing organisations	Approaches leaders or groups actively and tells them about the possibility of withdrawing Members must proactively approach the programme. They are interviewed to make sure they are serious about wanting to leave and fill out a questionnaire which the BfV checks for accuracy Any offences that come to light are dealt with by the courts A profile of the individual is developed and the programme then focuses on problems identified – including overcoming addiction, gaining employment or education, building social connections outside the extreme-right group and accommodation Goals that an individual must reach are set out in a contract Partners are involved in the programme	No information available about work with leaders Information about work with ordinary members provided by BfV: 230 individuals have contacted BfV; 100 were not admitted to the programme after a first interview. Of the 130 who were admitted, 30 did not complete; 100 have left right-wing extremism or are still being guided by the programme

Source(s) of information	Country and name of programme	Programme dates	Programme leaders	Programme targets	Activities and techniques	Evidence of success
Bjørgero, Van Donselaar and Gurenberg (2009)	Germany North Rhine-Westphalian disengagement programme	2001–present	North Rhine-Westphalian Ministry of Interior	Young people and adult members of extreme groups	Contracts are drawn up with young people Programme participants must report crimes, but only serious ones are prosecuted Programme started by cleaning individuals' homes of all right-wing belongings (music, clothes, posters, etc.) Effort made to 'build up positive identity by experiencing success and creating alternative, new values' Help with drugs and alcohol, accommodation, employment, etc.	About 30 people have withdrawn from the right-wing scene after involvement with the programme (as at 2009)
Bjørgero, Van Donselaar and Gurenberg (2009)	Germany Hessian disengagement programme (IKA Rus)	2003–present	IKA Rus staff members in co-operation with police	One branch targets people who have been involved for only a short amount of time, and another branch targets those with a longer history of involvement	Tells young people about the negative consequences of group membership Supports members to deal with alcohol and drug problems Draws up a personality profile to guide further work Safety of individuals, ideology and dealing with past criminal acts is all part of the programme	Interviewed about 150 short-term members who have left the scene By mid-2006, reported to have pulled about 50 people from the right-wing scene

Appendix H: List of programmes to encourage exit from street gangs

This Appendix provides some information about programmes to encourage exit from street gangs. It includes programmes discussed in the literature identified in the second Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA). It is an indicative, rather than a comprehensive, list of programmes.

Table 17: Examples of programmes to encourage exit from street gangs

Source(s) of information	Country and name of programme	Programme dates	Programme leaders	Programme targets	Programme activities	Measures of success	Evidence of success
<p>Klein and Maxson (2008)</p> <p>Spergel <i>et al.</i> (2005)</p>	<p>USA (piloted in Little Village, Chicago)</p> <p>The Spergel Model: the Comprehensive Community-wide Approach to Gang Prevention, Intervention and Suppression program</p>	1992	Professor Spergel at the University of Chicago, funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention	Committed gang members, at-risk youth	<p>Community mobilisation</p> <p>Provision of opportunities</p> <p>Social intervention (. counselling)</p> <p>Law enforcement</p> <p>Organisational change and development</p>	<p>Rates of arrest</p> <p>Perceptions of young people, gang members and neighbourhood on gang activity</p> <p>Employment rates for targeted youth</p> <p>School dropout rates for targeted youth (note: problems with data collection and incomparable measures)</p>	<p>Pilot case showed improvements in dropout rates (52.3% to 25.8%) and employment rates (30.9% to 63.3%)</p> <p>No measurable effect on growth of gang membership (note: problems of co-operation between agencies and a lack of proper implementation)</p>
<p>Klein and Maxson (2008)</p>	<p>USA (Boyle Heights, LA)</p> <p>Homeboy industries</p>	1992–present	Father Gregory Boyle	Gang members, at-risk youth	<p>Job training and placement</p> <p>Social, psychological and legal services</p>	Unknown	Unknown

Source(s) of information	Country and name of programme	Programme dates	Programme leaders	Programme targets	Programme activities	Measures of success	Evidence of success
<p>Klein and Maxson (2008)</p> <p>Lafontaine, Ferguson, and Wormith (2005)</p>	<p>USA</p> <p>Gang Resistance Education and Training Program (GREAT)</p>	1991	Police authorities in Phoenix, AZ funded and guided by Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms	All young people (programme took place as part of the school curriculum)	Lessons on consequences of gang membership and strategies for conflict resolution and obtaining basic needs (aimed at both prevention and disengagement)	<p>Self-reported attitudes to police and gangs</p> <p>Self-reported rate of gang membership and involvement (assessed by repeated annual questionnaire over five years)</p>	No significant effect on reducing gang involvement, albeit more pro-social attitudes four years after the intervention in comparison to control group
<p>Lafontaine, Ferguson, and Wormith (2005)</p>	<p>USA (Denver, CO)</p> <p>Gang Rescue and Support Project (GRASP)</p>	1991	Former gang members	Young people	Small group meetings and peer mentoring	<p>Self-reported reduced gang involvement</p> <p>Self-reported rate of arrests (based on a questionnaire completed by 37 participants before and after the intervention)</p>	Believed to be linked to a decrease in gang involvement and arrests (22 pre-intervention versus 7 post-intervention) and an increase in school involvement and employment

Source(s) of information	Country and name of programme	Programme dates	Programme leaders	Programme targets	Programme activities	Measures of success	Evidence of success
Lafontaine, Ferguson, and Wormith (2005)	USA (several cities) Boys and Girls Club of America (BGCA) and Gang Intervention Through Targeted Outreach (GITTO)	1990s	BGCA supported by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Former gang members for outreach	Young people in several US cities in high-risk areas (recruited by direct outreach and referrals from various agencies)	Drug treatment Tattoo removal Remedial education Life skills and job training Social activities Mentoring Advice Providing a safe place at the club	Self-reported rate of leaving gangs Self-reported reduction in gang behaviour Self-reported engagement in positive school activities Self-reported involvement with criminal justice system	Direct outreach at school most successful: 34% reported leaving gangs Reported reduction in gang behaviour Less delinquent behaviour Less contact with criminal justice system More engagement in positive school activities
Lafontaine, Ferguson, and Wormith (2005)	Toronto, Canada Youth Ambassador's Leadership and Employment Project	Unknown	Former gang members	Men and women aged 15–23 who are gang involved and out of school	36-week leadership development and employment preparation project Continued involvement of participants post-intervention through ambassadorship to their community	Unknown	Unknown
Lafontaine, Ferguson, and Wormith (2005)	USA (Brooklyn, NY) Aggressive Replacement Training	Unknown	Unknown	Gang members	Skills streaming Goal-setting Anger control Moral education (discontinued in 2001 due to value-based content)	Skills acquisition and performance Behaviour Arrest rates	Improvement in advanced social skills, aggression and stress management skills, goal-setting and planning skills

Source(s) of information	Country and name of programme	Programme dates	Programme leaders	Programme targets	Programme activities	Measures of success	Evidence of success
Pitts (2007)	London, UK Lambeth X-it programme	Unknown	Multi-agency	Young people involved in gangs	Aims to promote personal development and educational opportunities Uses mentors		Reported that 18 out of 25 participants desisted from gang involvement during their time with X-it
Pitts (2007)	Manchester, UK Manchester Multi-Agency Gang Strategy	2001–present	Full-time seconded staff from police, Youth Offending Service, local authority, housing, social services	Young people in or on the fringes of gangs	Educational, recreational and vocational activities Voluntary programme		Made contact with more than 200 young people in its first 12 months