

FACT SHEET

Self Initiated Terrorists (SITs)

What is a SIT?

Self Initiated Terrorists (also known as lone actors) are either associates of a terrorist network who are acting independently or individuals with no links to external organisations at all, but who have been influenced by extremist material.

Many SITs have an **unclear, unfixed, or unstable ideology** which may change to suit their own needs.

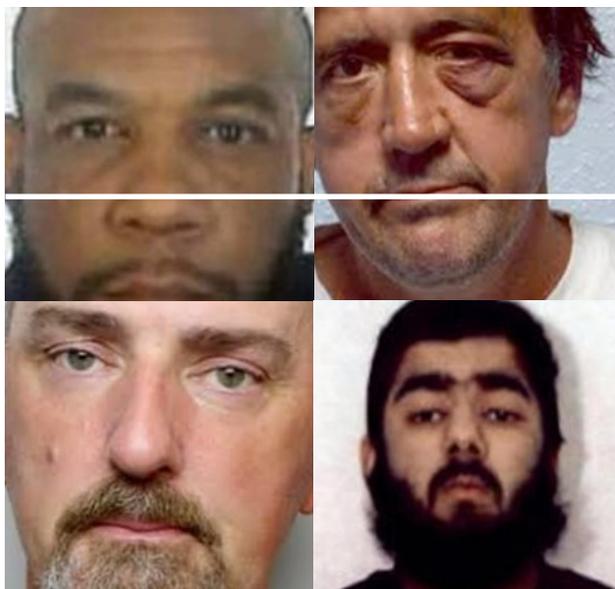
Overwhelmingly, **the internet** is the source of their inspiration and planning.

Self-radicalisation can take months or years, or it can happen in the space of weeks. SITs occur worldwide.

Identifying and stopping a SIT can be extremely difficult as they often have **little or no communication with wider extremist networks** and may present little evidence of their ideology to the outside world. On the other hand, there is evidence that a SIT may 'leak' their intentions shortly before an attack.

The challenge for security agencies is the sheer quantity of open-source, user-generated content on the internet which must be searched to find material that may have terrorism relevance. This is a labour intensive and time consuming task.

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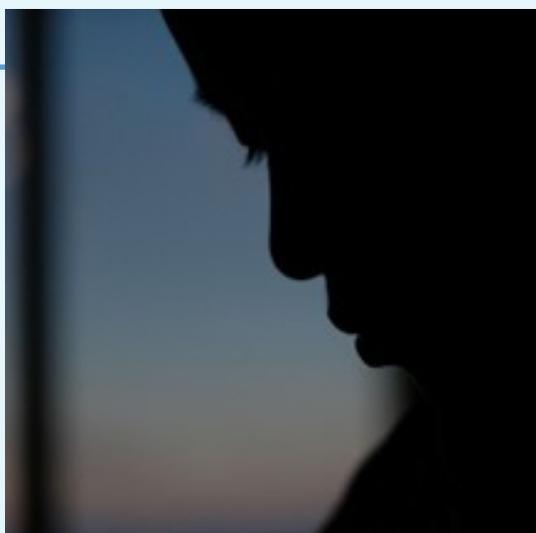


SIT attacks

Clockwise from top left: Khalid Masood, Darren Osborne, Usman Khan and Thomas Mair have all carried out SIT attacks in the UK

Following attacks carried out by SITs, the following themes were identified as present in many instances:

- o Socially isolated
- o Mental ill-health (including un-diagnosed)
- o Many are young males in their teens or twenties
- o Strong sense of grievance or sense of persecution (whether justified or unjustified) by specific individuals, authority, Government, or society as a whole
- o Sense of superiority over others
- o Conviction that they can see the world as it really is whilst others cannot
- o Tendency to catastrophise - often view the state of society in an extremely negative light
- o Preoccupation with gaining fame or notoriety and righting a perceived wrong



Sources

(Disclaimer: Hampshire County Council is not responsible for and does not endorse the contents of any sites listed).

<https://rusi.org/projects/lone-actor-terrorism>

https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/about-ran/ran_h-and-sc/docs/ran_h-sc_risk_assessment_lone_actors_11-12_12_2017_en.pdf

https://www.ucl.ac.uk/jill-dando-institute/sites/jill-dando-institute/files/prime_d5.1_lone_actor_radicalization_data_inventory_public.pdf

Examples of SIT attacks:

- *June 2016 murder of Jo Cox, MP*
- *June 2017 Finsbury Hall attack*
- *November 2019 Fishmongers Hall attack*
- *February 2020 Streatham High Street attack*



PREVENT TEAM

Email:
prevent@hants.gov.uk