

E

M

M

A

Casemanagement and information sharing within multi-agency networks in the field of P/CVE

Maarten De Waele
Katrien Van Mele

Case management and information sharing within multi-agency networks in the field of P/CVE

Maarten De Waele, Katrien Van Mele

Case management is the right tool because you look at those individuals and groups in the community with many different partners and through the lens of integrated security. Initially, our MAW was intended to discuss serious cases. Based on these experiences, we can now place more emphasis on prevention, on preventing illegal acts

(Mayor of Kinrooi Jo Brouns, 2022)

I. Introduction

Effective case management requires a process-oriented approach from registration to aftercare in various steps. These steps are mostly not determined by law but have grown in practice. In each of these steps, information is exchanged. This happens constantly and in all stages of the process. In the beginning of a case, immediately after a notification, the collection of all relevant information is crucial in order to make a good assessment of the situation. It is, therefore, important that information about both risk and protective factors is shared. In this paper, we look at a number of crucial elements in case management.

II. Case definition

In case management, it is noticeable that the biggest sources of discussion are the registration and the closing of cases. After all, we are talking about discussing preventive measures, i.e. prior to any possible future criminal behaviour. In practice, it is not always easy to determine whether certain signs of concern do or do not meet the theoretical or legal definition of "radicalisation" or the "prevention of terrorism". Predictions of future behaviour are difficult to make. This is why the multi-agency approach to radicalisation often differs from other MAW approaches, such as the approach to intra-family violence or the approach to criminal multiple offenders. The latter often have a clearly defined, fixed definition of the problem, while the approach to radicalisation is often more fluid.

Radicalisation is often not an isolated phenomenon. So an individual who is radicalising should not be approached exclusively and automatically from the perspective of 'radicalism'. Practical experience teaches us that it is better not to stigmatise someone with the label of radicalised person, especially in the early stages of radicalisation.

One respondent indicated it as follows:

"I always think: don't push people in precrime situations into a registration that might be to their disadvantage in the future."

If there are clearly other phenomena at work (such as a problematic family situation or identity formation, to name but a few), it is best to use the initial problems to approach the individual. Naming something that at that moment is still only slumbering reinforces the potential drift towards violent radicalisation. Judging someone too quickly, and labelling them as radicalised, can all too easily lead to nominating them to be discussed in MAW. This must be avoided at all costs.

The same goes for the radicalised person themselves. Radicalised individuals don't usually think of themselves as being radicalised. So, confronting them with that label can cause deterrence.

III. The (mandated) links within the chain

Links or participants in the MAW are representatives of various services or organisations that add value to the realisation of an intangible social product. A chain can only be fully closed when all links are part of the whole. This ensures that no further questions on the case (individual or group) remain unanswered (De Groof et al., 2015).

Preceding the start of MAW, it is important that the participants of the MAW and their colleagues from their organisation/institution who don't sit at the MAW table are able to spot signs in time and know how to act on them. Informative activities about support and signalling can be organised so that they receive sufficient support, are aware of the situation, have room to ask questions and know where to turn if they pick up signals (Van Broeckhoven, 2015). Local coordinators must therefore ask the following questions: Who will participate in the consultation and in what capacity? Does the member take on a role as representative of their facility or sector, or do they mainly bring their own voice to the debate? Is the participant mandated by their organisation/department to take decisions; to what extent or do they have to give feedback first? By which regulations are the attending members bound (Cocon Vilvoorde vzw, 2017)?

When forming a MAW group, it is crucial to clarify which organisation each member represents. Facilitating mutual trust is crucial in newly formed groups. Openness and equality in communication to everyone around the table contribute to this. It is also important how members view the problem and how they have already been confronted with situations in the context of radicalisation. Well-informed partners and the definition of each other's roles not only create a stronger network, but also provide clarity about the responsibility to be taken and the credibility of (the members in) the network.

In addition to the MAW participants it is important to include the broader network. The group of professionals that is supposed to be able to pick up signs of radicalisation is a lot bigger than the group that actually takes part in MAW case meetings. These front-

line workers are closest to the public and have the best feel for what is going on in the local population. They are the eyes and ears of the local community. Including their signals is crucial for a correct assessment of local tensions and possible hot spots.

IV. Quality assessment

Each case is unique and requires a tailor made approach. Careful assessment and the qualification of a case is crucial in determining the right approach. Most case consultations at the moment happen as follows: the information submitted by one party is supplemented as far as possible by additional information from other parties and a decision is then taken after a discussion as to which approach is to be applied or not.

However, we also notice that MAW groups are looking for ways to quantify or objectify the discussion at the table a little more. Some MAW groups choose to use some form of predetermined criteria. A "criteria-based structure" which can help to support the assessment of cases with greater objectivity. By this we mean a tool that helps to visualise the different aspects of a case. This tool often includes a set of questions to be completed, analysing various life domains of an individual. There are two major categories:

- **Risk assessment tools** are developed to assess the extent to which an individual still poses a threat to society or himself. An example of such is the VERA 2R tool which is mainly used in a detention context to assess the risk of relapse or recidivism.
- **Screening instruments** do not have the immediate objective of identifying the security risk of an individual. Rather, the aim is to find out which individual strengths and vulnerabilities are already known and which information is still missing in order to obtain a better picture of the individual.

In addition, some other MAW groups have developed a scale or radicalisation continuum that is based on their own casuistry and suited to a specific local context. This may be a catalogue of criteria against which a case is assessed or a discussion guide that gives the case consultation a clear and uniform structure.

MAW can also use additional supporting analysis instruments. In the RAN paper on social diagnostics (Ruf and Walkenhorst, 2021), we see some potentially interesting materials including a qualitative analysis. Social diagnostics strive to systematically collect, analyse and interpret data on a certain individual. Like medical diagnostics, social diagnostics aim to assess an individual, his or her internal state, social position, social context and all categories of factors relevant to radicalisation and deradicalisation. The paper cites a number of methods used in social diagnostics:

- **Network maps** are a visual representation of the individual and his/her social environment, which may help MAW actors assess existing relationships.

- **Biographical timelines** may help identify pivotal moments in a person's life and understand the challenges and subjective narratives of their biographies.
- **Inclusion charts** can be used to explore the relationship an individual holds with society, without ascribing personality traits or characteristics.

Either way, these forms (tools, scales and analytic instruments) are intended to ensure that the participants in a case consultation speak a 'shared language' and that a verification of all the elements of a case that are considered crucial is possible. This forms the basis for an objective assessment of the case.

V. Beware of tunnel vision

An important point of attention for MAW is made by Groen, Franck and Simons (2017) in their book on the approach of Family Justice Centres. They point out a potential danger. In a chain approach, excessive attention is often paid to dealing with absolute high-risk situations. Here lies a potential bias of overestimating a phenomenon. The added value of a chain approach is to draw lessons from urgent cases to develop strong preventive and proactive actions in the context of security in the family, prevention of violent radicalisation, etc.

VI. Closing cases

Closing a case is not easy. From the viewpoints of both security and care, it is crucial to have a rough picture of the history of clients or individuals who are to be followed up. However, from the moment there are no longer any concerns about the individual in the context of radicalisation, the reason to discuss an individual in the MAW consultation group is also removed.

Many local coordinators have indicated that it is generally easier to get onto the list of alleged radicalised persons than to be removed from it. There seems to be an overall lack of hard criteria on when to close a case and a widespread fear that positive developments can be reversed in the future (fear to 'let go'). A respondent in the EMMA project stated that the way we look at case closure today can often be problematic:

The closing of a case is rather an assessment that no further assistance is needed at the time of the decision and not a guarantee for lifelong deradicalization. He therefore expressed his believe that cases deserve the benefit of the doubt.

Regardless of how we look at this decision, it will always be a fraught one. As stated earlier, these are often pre-crime situations where it is simply difficult to make predictions about future behaviour and where nothing can guarantee 100% that individuals or groups will refrain from illegal actions.

In the EMMA network, ways were identified that could help this choice. U-Turn Dortmund, for example, pointed out that they would like to see three questions answered positively when it comes to how the success of a particular follow-up or guidance service can be measured; The individual that is the subject of the case...

- 1) joins a (peer) group that is not connected with radical groups;
- 2) is willing to reflect critically on ideology or;
- 3) is willing to rethink the role that she/he played in a radical context.

VII. Conclusion

To conclude this paper, we list the most important elements for the success of case management, a task that is by no means easy and where adjustment and adaptation to new circumstances is crucial:



Find a shared language about how you view the phenomenon with understanding of both the safety and care perspective.



It is crucial that all life domains of the individual are covered by the partners in the chain. Test if your network succeeds by doing a network analysis of your MAW.



Consider the use of supporting tools that can objectify the assessment process at the table, also when it comes to closing cases.



Be aware that in a MAW you will only see a certain proportion of cases (high risk cases). Therefore, avoid overreaction in your approach to the phenomenon.



Evaluate your work critically and be aware of new evolution in the field.

Bibliography

Cocon Vilvoorde vzw (2017), *Project R. Naar een multi-agency approach in Vilvoorde in het kader van een preventieve aanpak inzake radicalisering*, Geraadpleegd op <https://www.kennisplein.be/Documents/Draaiboek%20Project%20R.pdf>

De Groof, K., Stas, K., Blow, H. & Brepoels, P. (2015), *Ketenaanpak bij familiaal geweld: rol en positie van de hulpverlening*, *Handboek familiaal geweld*, Brussel: Uitgeverij Politeia nv.

Groen, B., Franck, P. & Simons, D. (2017), *One safe place for hope and empowerment. Development of multidisciplinary approach of domestic violence, child abuse and sexual abuse in European family justice centers*, Brussel: Uitgeverij Politeia nv.

Ruf, M. and Walkenhorst, D., *The potential of social diagnostics for P/CVE*. Retrieved from: [The potential of social diagnostics for P/CVE, 2021 \(europa.eu\)](#).

Van Broeckhoven (2015), *Handvaten voor een lokale aanpak van radicalisering*. Retrieved from [Handvaten voor een lokale aanpak van radicalisering \(vvsg.be\)](#)



A publication of the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities for the ISF-P subsidised EMMA project in cooperation with Ghent University, Violence Prevention Network and RadarAdvies.

For more information about the project look at our webpage or contact:

Maarten De Waele & Katrien Van Mele
Coordinators EMMA project
maarten.dewaele@vvsg.be
katrien.vanmele@vvsg.be

Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG vzw)
Bischoffsheimlaan 1-8
1000 Brussels
Tel 02-211 55 00

No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means without the written permission of the publisher.

March 2022