

Violence Fixated Individuals: The Internet, Online Platforms and Pathways to Violence

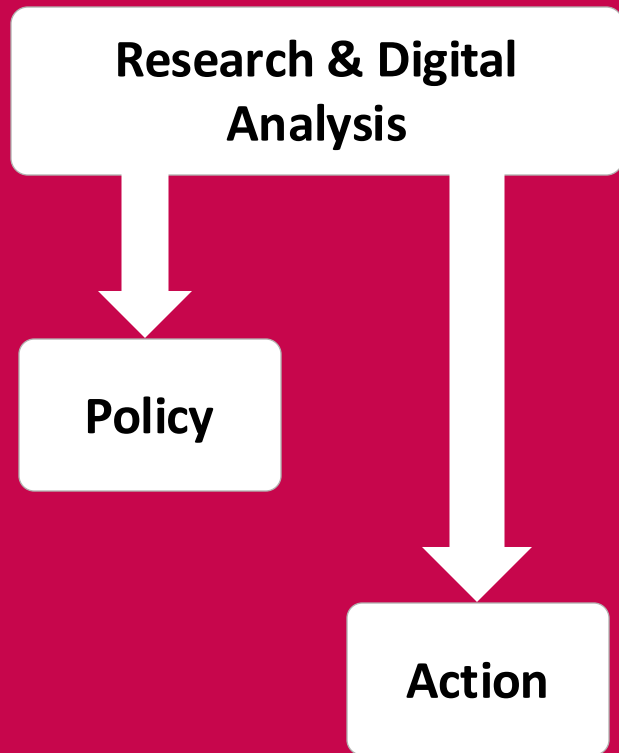
Southport Inquiry Seminar

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What We Do



Threat Detection, Analysis and Prevention

Identifying online threats, targeted hate and extremist violence at scale; protecting communities; safeguarding democracy.

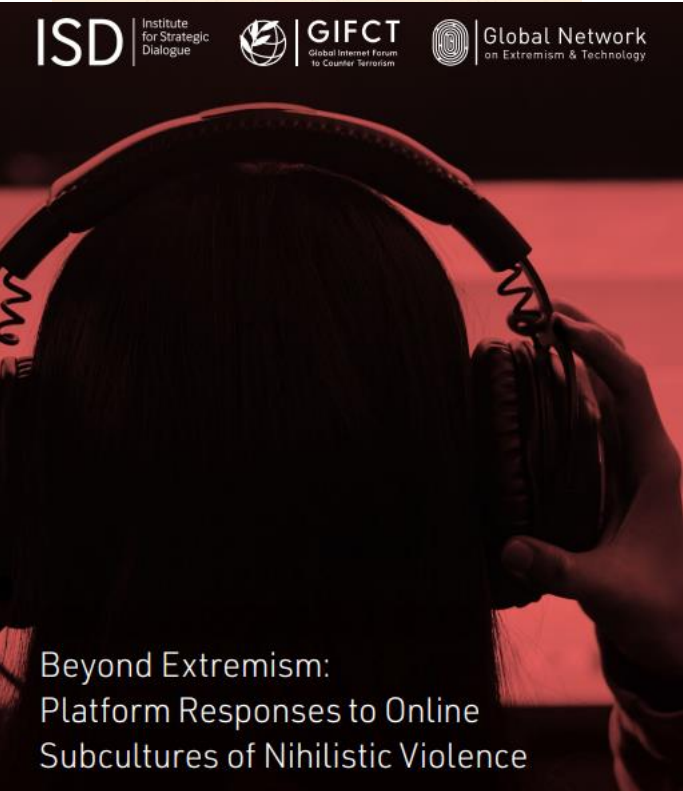
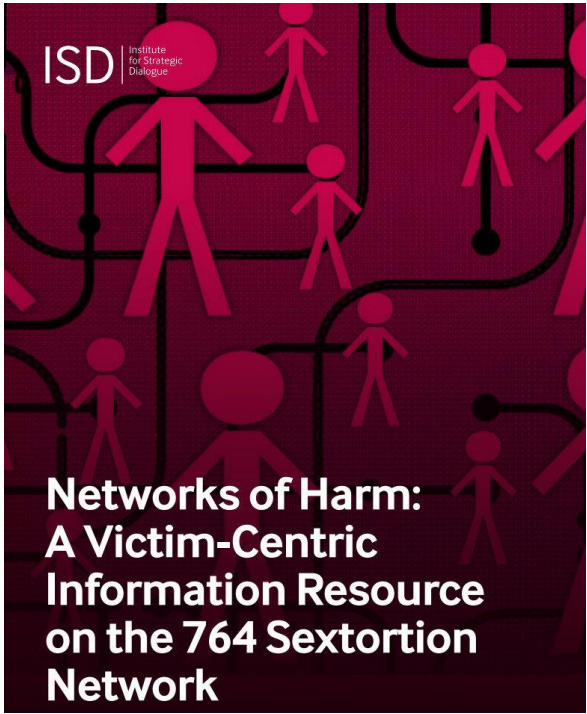
Policy, Platform Accountability and Regulation

Shaping and enforcing digital policies and regulation to counter extremism and information ops and to improve technology accountability.

Training, Education and Communications

Changing behaviors through strat comms interventions; preventing violence by delivering best practices and training at the front line; building resilience through education.

ISD Research, Policy and Practitioner-Focused Resources



**Spotting the Signs:
Recognizing and
Responding to Subcultures
of Nihilistic Violence**



What is 764 and the Com Network? How to protect your child

Steven Rai | 27th February, 2026

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An Increasingly Hybridised Online Extremism Landscape

Alongside a sustained challenge from established violent extremist groups with clearer ideological motivations, we have seen dramatic evolutions in the wider threat landscape – closely tied to key developments in the online environment:

- **Rise in post-organisational terrorism and violence** – Looser structures tied to fluid online communities, with extremists forming opportunistic coalitions.
- **Hybridisation** – Extremist movements cross-fertilizing with other harmful actors (such as hostile states, sexual predators, and other criminal networks).
- **Aesthetic overlap** – mimicking aesthetics between extremism, nihilistic subcultures and misogynist or school shooter-style plotters.
- **Ideologically amorphous** – Growing threats from (mass) violence not hitting threshold of extremist ideology which would usually trigger interventions.

Spectrum of Nihilistic Violence & Ideological Extremism

ISD defines extremism as advocacy of **political and social change** in line with an **ideology** that claims the **superiority and dominance** of an **identity-based 'in-group'** over an **'out-group'**. Extremism advances a **dehumanising** othering mindset incompatible with pluralism and universal human rights, and can be pursued through violent or non-violent means.

ISD defines nihilistic violence as **violent acts lacking an ideological motivation** and driven **by a misanthropic worldview** – a spectrum rather than a binary distinction from extremism.

Spectrum of Targeted Mass Violence

Ideologically-Motivated Violence

Nihilistic Violence

- **Motive Framework:** ideological goal
- **Targets:** reflect ideological goal
- **End Goal:** political/social change
- **Identifying features:** narratives

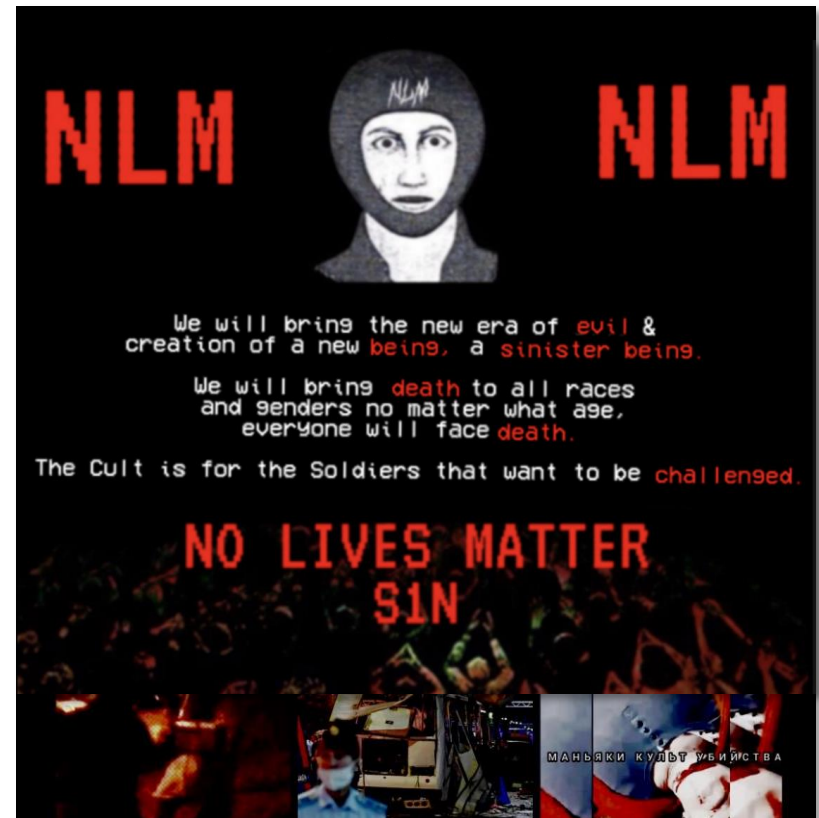
- **Motive Framework:** misanthropy
- **Targets:** random or personal
- **End Goal:** notoriety, clout
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Understanding Nihilistic Violence

Subcultures of nihilistic violence have emerged as a central threat targeting and manipulating vulnerable young people online – who often constitute **both victims and perpetrators.**

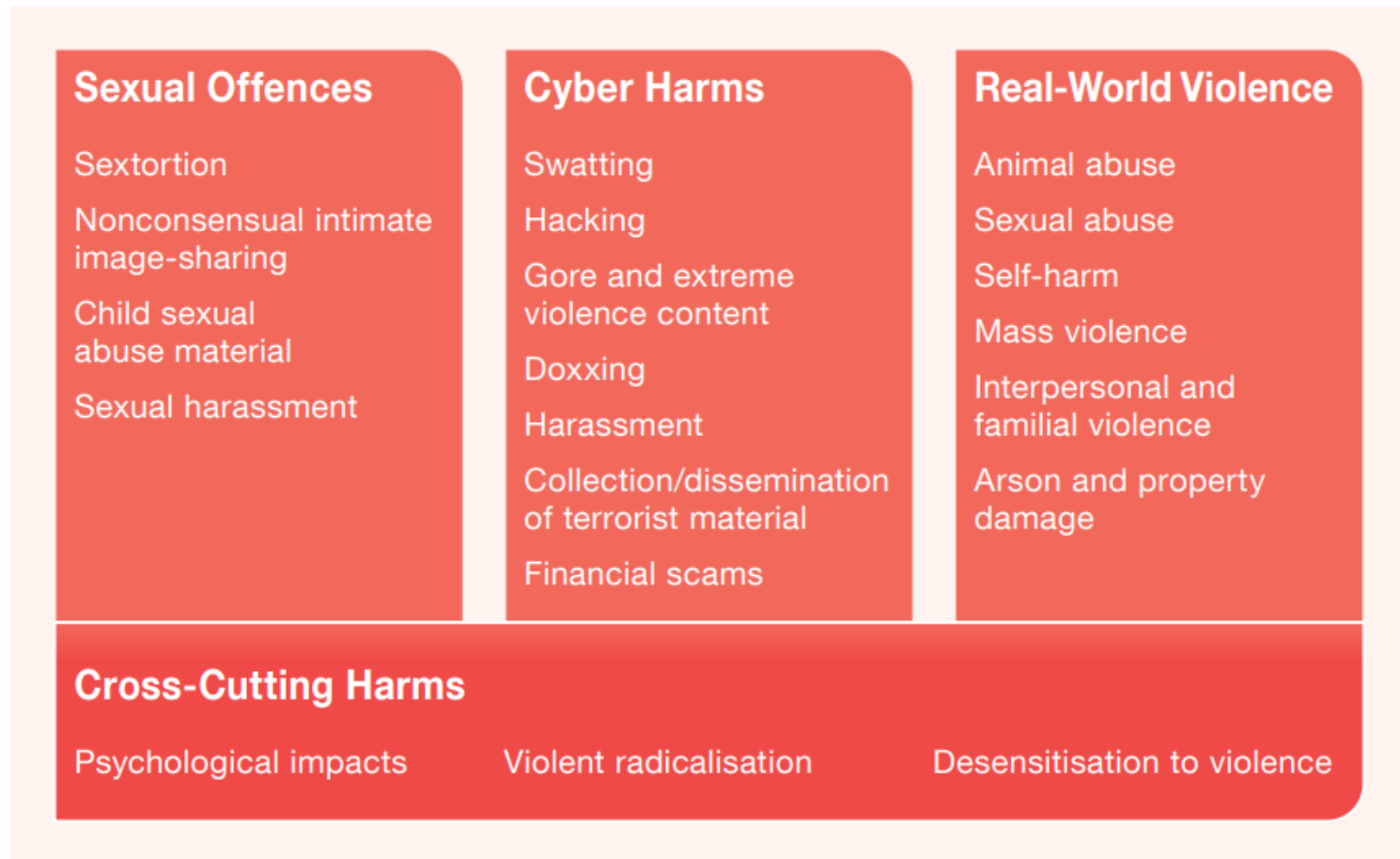
While occupying parallel digital spaces and producing similar types of harm, these subcultures of nihilistic violence are **distinct from ideologically motivated extremism.**

This unique threat requires **bespoke responses and interventions** rather than simply expansions and adaptations of existing terrorism- and violent extremism-focused frameworks.



A Wide Spectrum of Harms

Nihilistic violent communities produce a **much broader range of harms** than ideologically motivated extremists – spanning sexual exploitation, cybercrime and various forms of real-world targeted violence (including animal abuse and familial violence).

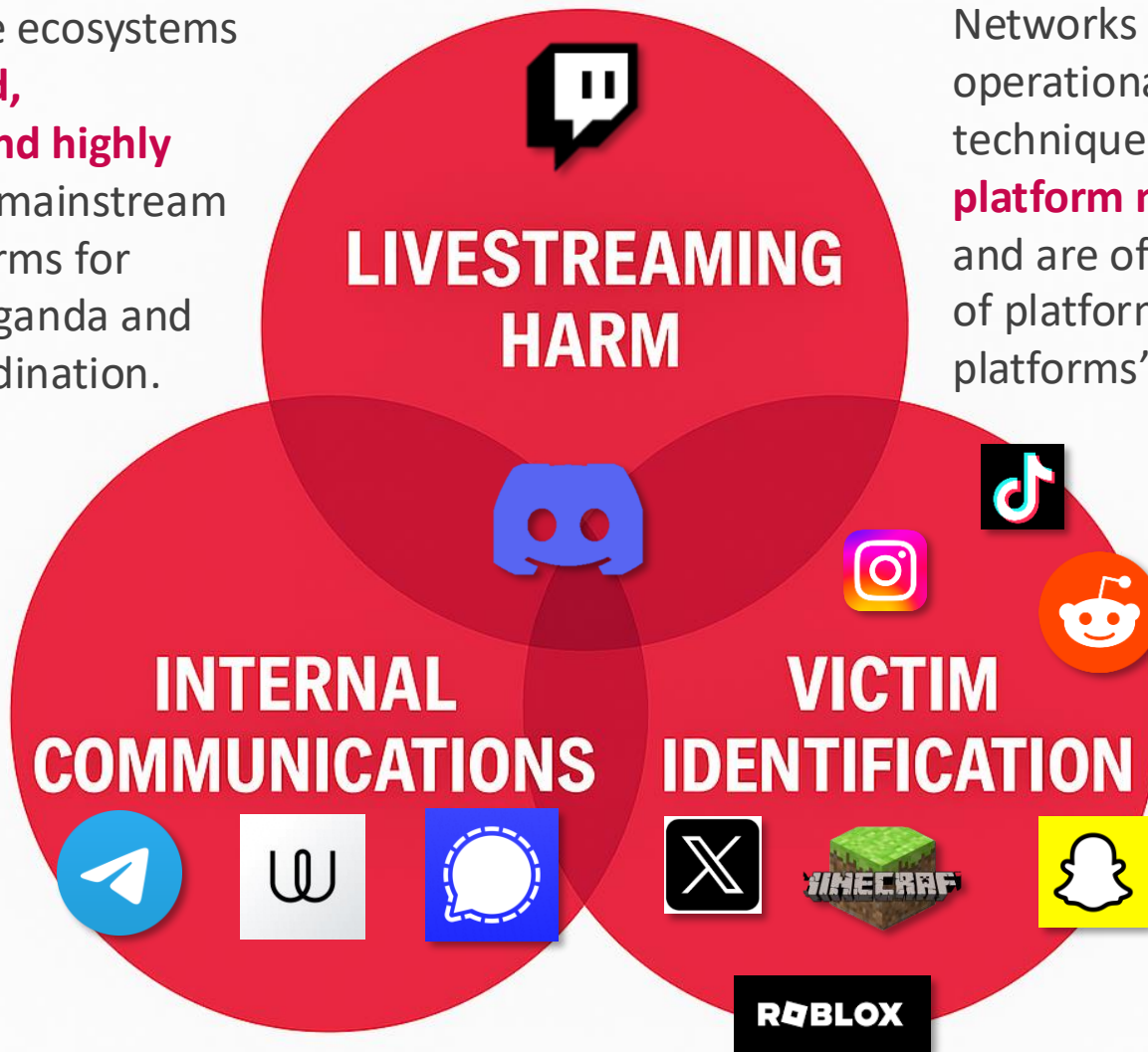


Online pathways to violence

Enabling: Cross-Platform Pathways

Nihilistic violence ecosystems are **decentralised**, **cross-platform** and **highly agile**, leveraging mainstream and fringe platforms for grooming, propaganda and operational coordination.

Networks use variety of operational security techniques to **evade platform moderation efforts** and are often acutely aware of platform specific platforms' terms of service.



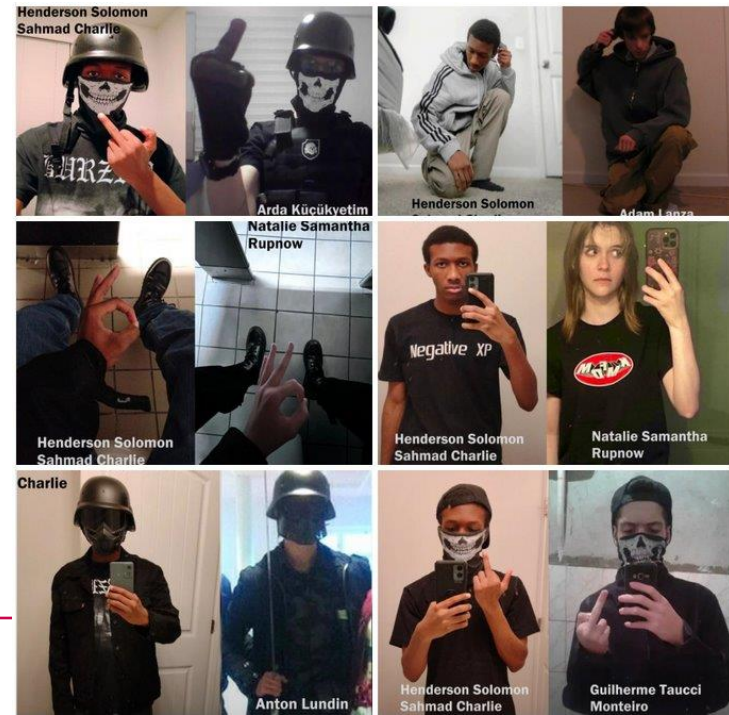
Reinforcing: Com, 764 and the True Crime Community

Com and 764:

- Emerging from **Com network in 2021**, forcing victims to produce child sexual abuse material, and increasingly perform acts of violence. **More than 200 arrested in 28 different countries** for sextortion, CSAM possession or violence linked to the network.
- Increasingly advocating for real-world violence** – at least three European stabbing spree carried out by **764-affiliated group No Lives Matter**, and four mass-violence plots and attacks across the US, **with attackers glorified in stylised graphics and videos.**

True Crime Community:

- Violent subset of broader subculture **obsessed with high-profile killers**, linked to at least **15 school shooting attacks or plots** since January 2024.
- Overlap with adjacent ecosystems** such as **gore communities** and extreme-right **Saints Culture** aesthetics, but motivated by nihilistic misanthropy rather than supremacy.



Accelerating: Playbook for Escalation



CYBER



EXTORTION



**REAL
WORLD**

A New Era Of Terror.

✗ N.M.K REQUIREMENTS

(IRL Content)

{Brickings} - Cars/Houses.

{Vandalism/Graffiti} - Must Include NMK.

{Arson} - Cars/Houses/Woods.

{Beatings} - Clear Video.

{Stabbings} - Clear Video.

{Murders} - Clear Video.

HOW DO I JOIN?

IF YOU FIT THE REQUIREMENTS AND IS DETERMINED"
TO JOIN THE NLM DIVISION. DEDICATING YOURSELF"
TO CARRYING OUT ITS REVOLUTION IN ITS ENTIRETY"
YOU WILL SWEAR THE OATH. AFTER YOU SWEAR THE
OATH IT IS YOUR PEROGATIVE TO BUILD YOUR SHOES

I CAN NOW PRESENT TO YOU THESE VARIOUS TASKS

PROVE YOURSELF

BRICKINGS
ARSONS
BEATINGS
STABBINGS
GRAFFITIS

ANNIHILATE THE MUNDANE WORLD

Spectrum of Nihilistic Violence & Ideological Extremism

Spectrum of Targeted Mass Violence

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Key Distinctions

- Ideology reduced to violent aesthetic
- Lower barrier to entry
- Shortened timeline to violence
- Younger profile and gender diversity

Key Similarities

- Overlapping communities
- Shared aesthetics
- Emulation of tactics
- Similar vulnerabilities

Online indicators (and their reliability)

Interpreting Indicators of Nihilistic Violence Subcultures

- **Indicators:** Signs someone might be part of a subculture of nihilistic violence (e.g. extreme interest in gore, desire for online notoriety, obsession with mass killers).
- **Accelerants:** Co-morbidities with subculture involvement that often presage violence (e.g. self harm, suicidal ideation, eating disorders, psychosis, isolation).
- **Triggers:** Destabilising events, increasing the risk of imminent harm to themselves or others (e.g. sudden life changes, social stresses, financial crises)
- **Intervention challenges:** Community conditions reducing help seeking behaviour (lack of trust in authority figures, paranoia over surveillance, victim/perpetrator dynamics reducing likelihood of voluntary cooperation).



**Spotting the Signs:
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Where responsibility lies

Identify, Disrupt, Mitigate: Where Responsibility Lies

In establishing where responsibility should lie between platforms, regulators and public authorities, key questions to answer include:

Identification

- Who has greatest access to relevant insights (i.e. data access)?
- Who has the most comprehensive window on potential online risk?

Disruption

- Who has the power to disrupt harmful networks or add friction to attempts to engage with harmful content and communities online?
- What disruptive powers can be adapted from other established toolkits (e.g. counter-extremism, counter-child abuse efforts)?

Mitigation

- Who is best placed to mitigate these harmful online pathways, including by providing timely targeted support to those at acute risk?

Platform Policies: Opportunities and Limitations

	X	Instagram	TikTok	Reddit	Tumblr	Roblox	Discord	Snapchat	SoundCloud	Telegram
Animal abuse	Somewhat – bestiality is banned but serious mutilation is restricted to adults	Yes – under coordinating harm and promoting crime	Yes – under violent and criminal behaviour	No	Yes – under violent content and threats, gore and mutilation	Yes – under violent content and gore	Yes	Partially – only sale of endangered animals mentioned	Yes – under violence and threatening behaviour	Not explicitly mentioned
Sexual abuse	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No/Partially – only under harassment	No/Partially – under general abuse restriction	Not explicitly mentioned, but may fall within illegal harms provisions	Yes – under sexual content policy	Yes	Not explicitly mentioned but could fall under promotion of violence
Self-harm	Yes – under suicide	Yes – under suicide, self-injury and eating disorders	Yes – under suicide and self-harm	No	Yes – under promotion or glorification of self-harm	Yes – under suicide, self-injury, and harmful behaviour	Yes	Yes – under threats, violence & harm	Yes – under suicide, self-harm, eating disorder promotion, and other harmful behaviour	Not explicitly mentioned but could fall under promotion of violence
Mass violence	Yes – under violent content	Partially – tier 1 of dangerous organisations policy prohibits content that “glorifies, supports or represents [attempted] multiple-victim violence”	Partially – under violent and criminal behaviour	No	Partially – when targeted at a protected group	Yes – under real-world sensitive events	Not explicitly mentioned but likely falls under broader violence provisions	Not specifically mentioned	Yes – under violence and threatening behaviour	Not explicitly mentioned but could fall under promotion of violence
Interpersonal violence	Yes – under violent content	Yes – under violence and incitement	Yes – under violent and criminal behaviour	Partially – reference to threats of violence and hate based on identity or vulnerability	Yes – under violent content and threats, gore and mutilation	Partially – under threats, bullying and harassment	Yes	Not specifically but hate speech references include violence on the basis of certain characteristics	Yes – under violence and threatening behaviour	Not explicitly mentioned but could fall under promotion of violence
Arson/ property damage	Yes – under violent content	Yes – under coordinating harm and promoting crime	Yes – under violent and criminal behaviour	No	Yes	Yes – under threats, bullying and harassment	Yes	Not explicitly mentioned but may fall under illegal activities category	Not explicitly but could fall within violence and threatening behaviour	Not explicitly mentioned but could fall under promotion of violence

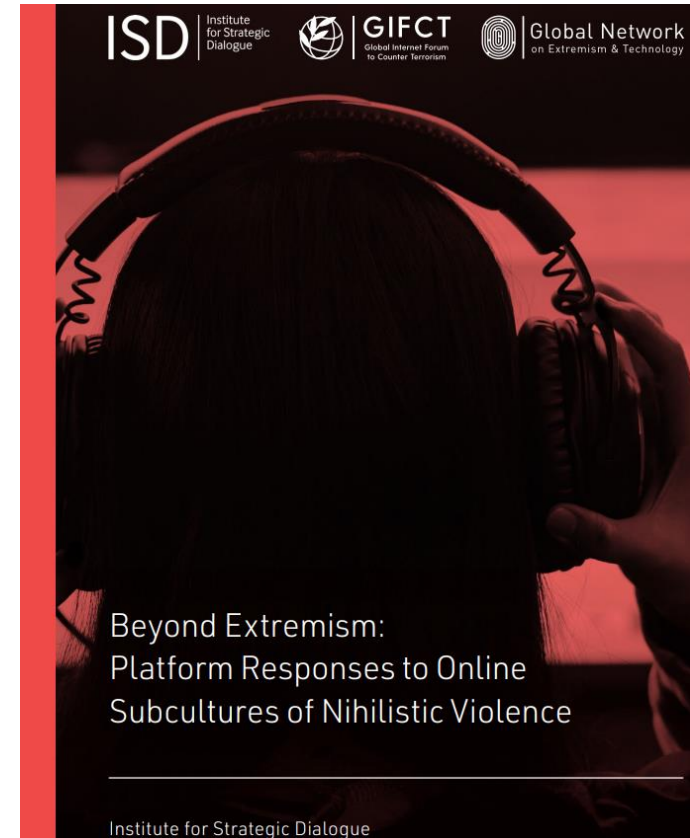
Role of Platforms in Identification, Disruption, Mitigation

Adopt behavioural approach to threat assessment: Shift from group-focused response frameworks to models addressing behavioural indicators, pro-violence content, nihilistic aesthetic and a more diverse array of harms.

Strengthen moderation and enforcement: Integrate ban-evasion markers into moderation practices including addressing the proliferation of burner account activity.

Develop dynamic ecosystem disruption strategies: Coordinate cross-platform takedowns informed by intelligence-led mapping, using collaborative frameworks for wholesale network disruption.

Invest in research and cross-sector collaboration: Improve information-sharing to track evolving codes, platform usage and threat dynamics. Provide researchers with meaningful platform data to enable a joined-up, sectoral approach to rapidly evolving threat.



Upstream Intervention Opportunities for Platforms

Beyond content-focused approaches, platforms should prioritise upstream prevention and early intervention. Opportunities for proactive efforts include:

- **Enhancing platform-level safeguards:** Considering opportunities for impactful platform-facilitated safety interventions – such as providing expert resources and developing community education campaigns around evolving nihilistic violence threats.
- **Empowering community-level interventions:** Equipping moderators in fandom-driven spaces with bystander intervention tools and off-ramping resources to prevent violence.
- **Innovate counter-communications:** Considering opportunities for amplifying authentic, community driven counter-speech that engages subcultural humour and aesthetics, while avoiding ideological deradicalisation messaging ill-suited to this nihilistic threat.
- **Build bridges to support services:** Providing a wider range of safeguarding support within relevant communities and ensuring relevance to specific vulnerable subcultures.

Upstream Intervention Opportunities for Platforms

	UK
Child exploitation	Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command (CEOP); National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC); Childline
Nonconsensual intimate image sharing and CSAM	Internet Watch Foundation (IWF); Revenge Porn Helpline
Cybercrimes	The Cyber Helpline
Self-harm	Mind; Papyrus UK; Samaritans
Eating disorders	Beat
Psychological support	Papyrus UK; Samaritans

From 'Beyond Extremism: Platform Responses to Online Subcultures of Nihilistic Violence', ISD for GNET, February 2026.

Implications for Regulation

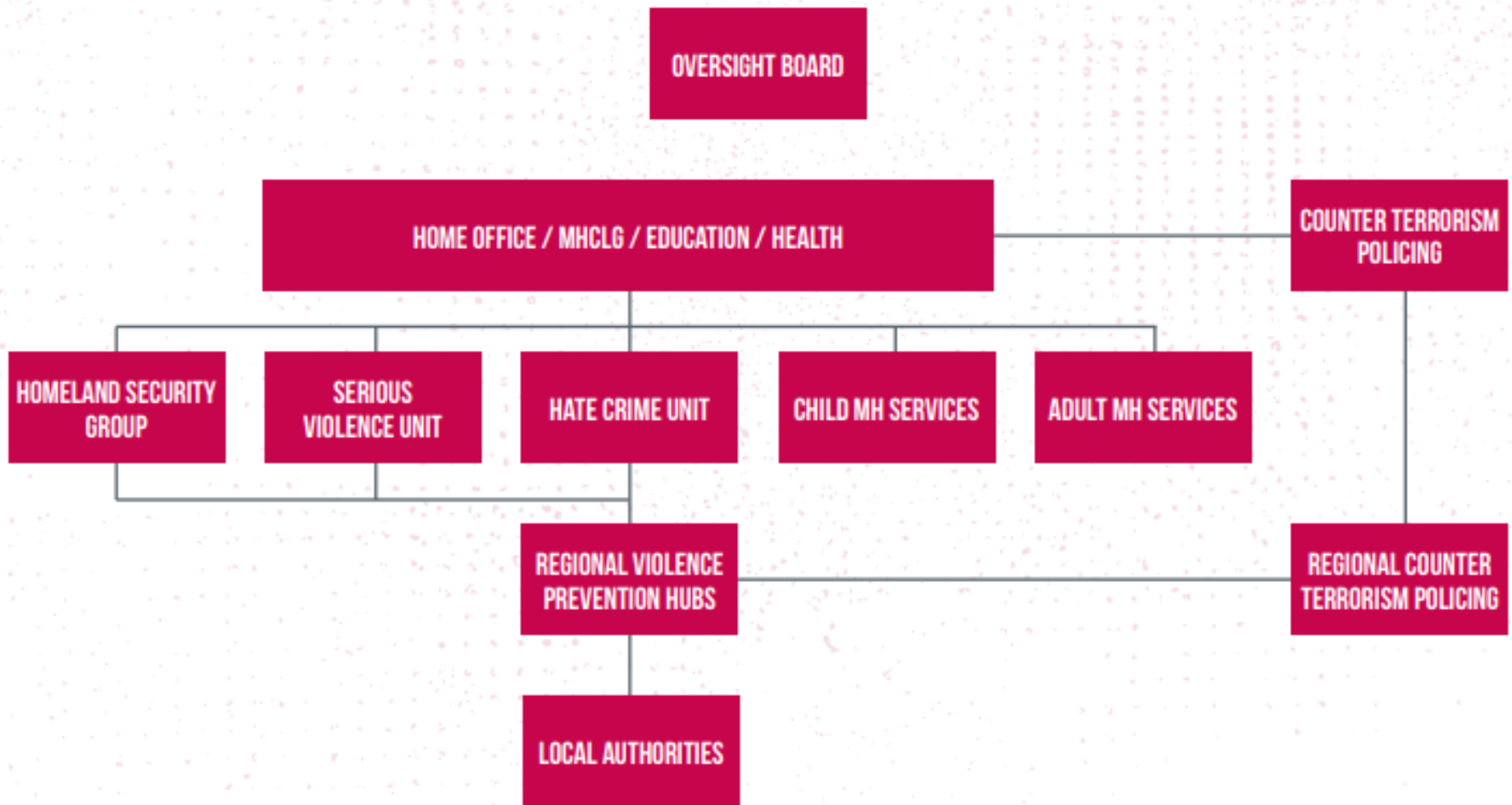
- Given centrality of online spaces to hybridized threat landscape, digital regulation needs to be **agile enough to respond to evolving threats**.
- Nihilistic violent communities **toeing line of legal boundaries** and **gaming algorithmic systems** to engage wider audiences, showing **limit of content-focused approaches**.
- Ofcom enforcement of Online Safety Act provides opportunity to ensure **systemic approach to platform regulation**, rooted in risk assessment and safety-by-design.
- Nihilistic violence threats **cut across different elements of OSA Codes of Practice**:
 - **Child safety duties** require children are protected from accessing harmful material
 - **Illegal content duties** protect users from terrorism and child sexual abuse content
- Prominence of alternative platforms within these ecosystems means it is essential that Ofcom is effectively resourced to deal with **longer tail of smaller platforms**.
- Ofcom should revise its approach to categorising content that is legal, but harmful to children (including ensuring '**violent content**' considered '**primary priority content**.')

Implications for Prevention

An overly narrow counter-terrorism approach focused solely on ideological threats, **fails to reflect dramatic shifts** in the landscape of extremism-adjacent violent threats.

- It is crucial that prevention frameworks reflect the **diminishing role of organised groups** and **increased prominence of harmful online communities**.
- Hybridised threat requires **cross-agency coordination beyond traditional counter-terrorism**; public safety, health and social care, education and social media regulation.
- Countering terrorist and violent extremism programming must be **aligned with violence prevention efforts** which seek to addressing many of the same underlying challenges.
- Integrating local Multi Agency Safeguarding Hubs, Channel / Serious Violence / Prevent Oversight Boards and Community Safety Partnerships, would **triage threats agnostically**.
- **Transnational nature of nihilistic violence** threats also demands **coordinated responses from international governmental partners**, including European and Five Eyes countries.

Cross-Government Prevention Framework



'A potential model for greater cross-departmental collaboration at both national and local levels', from 'Emerging Extremism-Related Threats in the UK: Implications for Policy Responses' ISD, July 2025.

Implications for Interventions

Interventions aimed at **addressing groups with a clear ideological programme** must adapt to **de-centralised networks** and **self-initiated individuals**.

- **Ideological disengagement** interventions futile when ideology not core to violence. Public health approach needed for risk factors e.g. **social isolation** or **mental health**.
- **Younger profile** demands safeguarding approach, accounting for **additional vulnerabilities** and **recognition of dual victim-perpetrator** role.
- **Practitioners must be empowered** to better understand evolving risk factors, with risks proactively communicated to caregivers and frontline professionals.
- **More diverse touch points required** when risks like self-harm and animal abuse are key indicators, need to widen constituencies flagging risk (e.g. vets, family services).
- In parallel to **individuated targeted interventions**, new generation of **positive interventions** required to **shift centre of gravity of harmful communities online**.

Thank you.
