

STANDARDS FOR LIVED EXPERIENCE IN P/CVE

Guidance and Practical Examples
for Involving Former Extremists and
Survivors



2026 Version

ABOUT THE STANDARDS

People with lived experience can meaningfully contribute to preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE). However, when organizations ask them to join P/CVE teams, they need to think carefully about roles, support, boundaries, public engagement, and potential risks.

These standards help organizations create the conditions for former extremists and survivors to contribute in ways that are professional, supported, and safe.

Developed with researchers, practitioners, organizations, and people with lived experience, the standards were refined through use and feedback in P/CVE settings and provide a common foundation that can be adapted across different contexts, roles, and resources.

CORE PRINCIPLES

The standards are intended to support reflection and continuous improvement rather than serve as a compliance checklist. They are grounded in five core principles for responsible organizational practice, which shape the detailed standards and guidance that follow.

- ▶ Recruiting, screening, and onboarding thoughtfully
- ▶ Creating a respectful and ethical working environment
- ▶ Providing professional supervision and support
- ▶ Protecting wellbeing and reducing harm
- ▶ Supporting safe and informed public engagement



HOW TO USE THE TOOLKIT

We recommend that every organization work through the toolkit in three steps:

1. Start with the **Organizational Readiness Guide** to consider whether the necessary structures, resources, and support are in place.
2. Review this **Standards and Guidance** document to understand the practices that support responsible involvement.
3. Complete the **Organizational Self-Assessment** to identify strengths, gaps, and areas for further development.



HOW THE STANDARDS ARE STRUCTURED

The five sections cover recruitment, screening, and onboarding; wellbeing and duty of care; professional conduct and role expectations; supervision, support, and oversight; and public engagement and media activities.

The standards apply to all individuals with lived experience. Only Section 1, Recruitment, Screening, and Onboarding, includes additional standards specific to former extremists.

Each standard includes:

- **Why this matters** – explains the purpose of the standard.
- **In Practice** – provides practical examples of how it can be applied.



Section 1

Recruitment, Screening & Onboarding

1.1 *The organization ensures that roles and responsibilities are matched to an individual's skills, experience, and readiness.*

WHY IT MATTERS

Good role fit supports effective work. Placing someone in a role they are not ready for can set them up to struggle rather than succeed.

IN PRACTICE

- **Not every role suits every person.** Someone may be an excellent speaker but not yet be ready for one-on-one client work.
- **Lived experience complements professional skills.** It should complement—not replace—the skills, training, or expertise the role requires.
- **Readiness changes over time.** Someone who is not suited to one role today may be ready for it later with experience and support.

1.2 *The organization clearly explains the responsibilities and tasks associated with a role.*

WHY IT MATTERS

Clear expectations help individuals understand what the role involves and whether it is right for them.

IN PRACTICE

- **Clarify the scope of the role.** Explain its purpose, main tasks, and what falls outside the role.
- **Make sure you mean the same thing.** Terms such as “mentor,” “support,” or “casework” may mean different things in different organizations.
- **Agree on how you will work together.** Discuss boundaries, reporting lines, and decision-making before work begins.



Section 1

Recruitment, Screening & Onboarding

1.3 *The organization explains the known challenges and risks associated with a role, and the support available through the organization.*

WHY IT MATTERS

Working in P/CVE can involve emotional, professional, reputational, and safety-related challenges. Discussing these in advance helps individuals prepare for challenges that may arise.

IN PRACTICE

- **Be honest about the challenges.** Difficult conversations, public attention, online abuse, emotional strain, or (re-)traumatization may be part of the work.
- **Explain what support is available.** Discuss supervision, mentoring, wellbeing resources, reporting procedures, and any other support the organization provides.
- **Revisit the conversation.** Challenges and support needs can change as the role develops.

1.4 *The organization conducts appropriate screening and risk assessment before involving individuals with lived experience in P/CVE work.*

WHY IT MATTERS

Once someone becomes part of an organization, the organization takes on responsibility for supporting them and managing the risks that come with the role. A poor fit can have consequences for the individual, clients, staff, and the organization.

IN PRACTICE

- **Match screening to the role.** A volunteer speaker may require a different level of screening than someone providing one-on-one support or working with vulnerable clients.
- **Use more than one source of information.** Interviews, references, and other relevant information can help inform the assessment.
- **Be respectful and transparent.** Explain why information is being collected, how it will be used, and who will have access to it.



Section 1

Recruitment, Screening & Onboarding

1.5 *The organization clearly explains whether a role or activity is paid, reimbursed, or voluntary before it begins.*

WHY IT MATTERS

Clear information about payment and expenses helps prevent misunderstandings and shows respect for people's time, expertise, and contributions.

IN PRACTICE

- **Cover reasonable costs.** Travel, accommodation, meals, childcare, or lost income may create barriers to participation.
- **Consider time beyond the activity itself.** Preparation, travel, and recovery after emotionally demanding work may also require time.
- **Do not rely on goodwill.** Individuals should not feel pressured to work for free because they want to help or "give back."

1.6 *The organization provides an initial period of onboarding, support, and mutual assessment before assigning complex, high-pressure, or independent responsibilities.*

WHY IT MATTERS

Some challenges only become clear once someone begins the work. A gradual start gives them time to adjust to the organization, understand the role, and build confidence before taking on more demanding responsibilities.

IN PRACTICE

- **Take it one step at a time.** Start with manageable tasks and build responsibility as the individual gains experience.
- **Check in regularly.** Early conversations can help identify questions, support needs, or concerns before they become bigger issues.
- **Review the fit together.** Give both the individual and the organization a chance to decide whether to continue, adjust the role, or step back.



Section 1: Recruitment, Screening & Onboarding

Additional Standards for Former Extremists

The following standards apply specifically to organizations involving former extremists in P/CVE and address additional ethical, legal, and safety considerations. They build on the standards above while avoiding unnecessary barriers to participation.



1.7 *The organization ensures that former extremists involved in P/CVE have demonstrably distanced themselves from ideologies that condone violence and accepted responsibility for their actions.*

WHY IT MATTERS

Continued support for violence or unwillingness to take responsibility can undermine trust and create risks for clients, colleagues, and the organization.

IN PRACTICE

- **Recognize different pathways to change.** Individuals demonstrate change in different ways and timeframes.
- **Look beyond stated beliefs.** Consider behavior, relationships, accountability, and sustained change.
- **Use informed judgment.** Decisions should draw on multiple sources of information rather than a single conversation or assessment.

1.8 *The organization conducts appropriate background screening and vetting procedures consistent with the responsibilities of the role and applicable laws.*

WHY IT MATTERS

Background screening can identify concerns that may not be apparent during recruitment, inform decisions about role suitability, and help organizations meet legal obligations to protect clients, staff, and the organization.

IN PRACTICE

- **Match vetting to the role.** Higher-risk positions may require more extensive checks.
- **Assess findings thoughtfully.** A past conviction or concern should not automatically exclude someone. Consider its relevance, how long ago it occurred, evidence of change, and whether remaining risks can be managed.
- **Protect personal information.** Keep records confidential. Share information only when necessary.



Section 1: Recruitment, Screening & Onboarding

Additional Standards for Former Extremists

1.9 *Before involving former extremists in P/CVE work, the organization reviews the individual's history of involvement and disengagement to understand the context and assess suitability for the role.*

WHY IT MATTERS

Past involvement in violent extremism may be relevant to some roles but not others. Understanding that context helps organizations make balanced and informed decisions.

IN PRACTICE

- **Understand the history.** Duration, role, level of involvement, violence, and disengagement may provide important context.
- **Approach sensitive topics respectfully.** Explain why the information matters and avoid asking for unnecessary detail.
- **Stay anchored in the present.** Suitability should reflect who the person is today and what the role requires.

1.10 *The organization clearly communicates limits to confidentiality, including when personal information may need to be shared to address safety concerns, legal obligations, or criminal activity.*

WHY IT MATTERS

While organizations may sometimes need to share information to address safety concerns or meet legal obligations, individuals have a right to understand these limits before they disclose sensitive information.

IN PRACTICE

- **Discuss confidentiality early.** Clarify who may have access to personal information and how it will be handled.
- **Have a clear process.** Staff should know what to do when information raises a safeguarding, safety, or legal concern.
- **Handle information responsibly.** Share only the information that is necessary and only with those who need to know.



Section 2

Wellbeing and Duty of Care

2.1 *The organization considers emotional, psychological, and safety risks, including (re-)traumatization, before involving individuals with lived experience in new roles or responsibilities.*

WHY IT MATTERS

Organizations can unintentionally cause harm when they involve someone in work without considering how the role may affect their wellbeing or safety.

IN PRACTICE

- **Assess risks together.** Ask the individual what situations may be difficult and consider risks specific to the role or setting.
- **Plan support together.** Discuss what support will be available, who will provide it, and when additional help should be sought.
- **Look beyond the workplace.** Consider how the role may affect the individual's family, employment, privacy, or recovery, and plan accordingly.

2.2 *The organization creates opportunities for staff to discuss wellbeing, workload, boundaries, and challenges associated with P/CVE work and to seek support when needed.*

WHY IT MATTERS

People may hesitate to raise concerns if they fear being seen as unable to cope. Normalizing these conversations can make it easier to seek support.

IN PRACTICE

- **Don't wait for a problem.** Include regular check-ins about wellbeing, workload, and boundaries in supervision or team meetings.
- **Practice what you promote.** Respect working hours, avoid unnecessary after-hours communication, and model healthy boundaries.
- **Make it safe to ask for help.** Encourage leaders and supervisors to talk openly about navigating challenges and seeking support.



Section 2

Wellbeing and Duty of Care

2.3 *The organization makes reasonable efforts to connect individuals with lived experience to appropriate support services when personal challenges affect their wellbeing or ability to perform their role.*

WHY IT MATTERS

Organizations are not expected to meet every need. Keeping all support within the organization can blur boundaries, while external support can provide additional expertise, privacy, and choice when needed.

IN PRACTICE

- **Know where to refer.** Maintain up-to-date information about relevant external services and providers.
- **Keep appropriate boundaries.** When needs go beyond the organization's role, connect individuals with independent support rather than trying to manage everything internally.
- **Offer support without pressure.** Respect that individuals may choose whether or not to use available services.

2.4 *The organization takes reasonable steps to provide follow-up and support after public talks, interventions, campaigns, or other potentially stressful activities involving staff with lived experience.*

WHY IT MATTERS

High-profile activities can have lasting emotional, professional, reputational, or safety-related impacts on the individual or their families. Some effects may only become apparent after the activity has ended.

IN PRACTICE

- **Plan follow-up in advance.** Decide who will check in and when before the activity takes place.
- **Check in more than once.** Reactions may emerge hours or days later, so an immediate check-in may not be enough.
- **Respond to concerns.** Adjust support, workload, or responsibilities when needed.



Section 3

Professional Conduct and Role Expectations

3.1 *The organization ensures that all staff follow the organization's ethical guidelines and professional standards and contribute to a safe and respectful environment for clients and colleagues.*

WHY IT MATTERS

P/CVE work can involve complex ethical situations. Shared standards help staff know what is expected and respond consistently when difficult situations arise.

IN PRACTICE

- **Set expectations from the start.** Discuss the organization's ethical guidelines and professional standards during onboarding.
- **Lead by example.** Managers and supervisors should model the behaviours they expect from others.
- **Respond consistently.** Address concerns fairly, respectfully, and consistently with organizational policies.

3.2 *The organization ensures that all staff work within the scope of their role and seek support or make a referral when a situation falls outside their expertise or responsibilities.*

WHY IT MATTERS

Taking on work beyond someone's training, expertise, or authority can lead to poor decisions or harm. Staff need to know that asking for help or involving someone else is part of good practice.

IN PRACTICE

- **Make it okay to step back.** Staff should not feel responsible for meeting every need or solving every problem.
- **Use the team.** Encourage staff to seek advice or supervision rather than managing difficult situations alone.
- **Make referrals easy.** Staff should know what internal or external support is available and how to connect people to it.



Section 3

Professional Conduct and Role Expectations

3.3 *The organization ensures that all staff follow the organization's ethical guidelines and professional standards and contribute to a safe and respectful environment for clients and colleagues.*

WHY IT MATTERS

P/CVE work often involves highly sensitive information. Poor handling of that information can cause harm, undermine trust, and create legal or safety concerns.

IN PRACTICE

- **Limit access.** Only share confidential information with people who need it for their role.
- **Make expectations clear to staff.** Explain how confidentiality applies in everyday situations and who to ask when they are unsure.
- **Support confidential supervision.** Clarify how staff can seek supervision or discuss challenging situations without compromising confidentiality.

3.4 *The organization avoids defining individuals solely by their lived experience and, where appropriate, uses professional titles that reflect their current role and contributions.*

WHY IT MATTERS

How organizations describe staff shapes how they are perceived by colleagues and the public. Recognizing individuals for their current role and contributions helps reduce stigma and supports a professional identity beyond lived experience.

IN PRACTICE

- **Use role-based language.** Introduce people by the work they do, rather than leading with their lived experience.
- **Think beyond job titles.** Professional identity is also shaped by websites, conference introductions, social media, and media interviews.
- **Respect individual preferences.** Discuss how people wish to describe their lived experience in professional settings.



Section 4

Supervision, Support, and Oversight

4.1 *The organization maintains appropriate oversight and takes reasonable steps to identify and address concerns related to safety, wellbeing, ethics, professional conduct, or potential harm.*

WHY IT MATTERS

Problems can escalate when concerns are missed, dismissed, or have nowhere to go. Good oversight helps organizations respond early and learn from problems when they arise.

IN PRACTICE

- **Take concerns seriously.** Respond promptly, fairly, and consistently.
- **Provide more than one reporting option.** Where possible, staff should have a way to raise concerns beyond their direct supervisor and access to independent mediation when concerns cannot be resolved internally.
- **Use concerns to improve practice.** Review patterns and strengthen organizational systems.

4.2 *The organization provides regular opportunities to discuss work, cases, professional challenges, wellbeing, and support needs with colleagues or supervisors.*

WHY IT MATTERS

Regular supervision helps staff catch problems early, avoid working in isolation, and know that the organization is there to support them when challenges arise.

IN PRACTICE

- **Use real situations for reflection.** Discuss what went well, what was difficult, and what could be done differently.
- **Make space for difficult questions.** Staff should feel able to raise uncertainty, mistakes, or concerns and ask for guidance.
- **Support continuous development.** Use supervision to identify learning needs, celebrate progress, and plan next steps.



Section 4

Supervision, Support, and Oversight

4.3 *The organization ensures that individuals with lived experience who work directly with clients receive appropriate clinical or professional oversight and have access to additional expertise when needed.*

WHY IT MATTERS

Client-facing work can involve complex situations that benefit from different perspectives and areas of expertise. Professional or clinical oversight gives staff access to guidance when needed and helps organizations deliver safer, more effective services.

IN PRACTICE

- **Start with shared responsibility.** New client-facing staff should gradually take on responsibilities with appropriate oversight.
- **Make collaboration part of the role.** Ensure individuals have access to colleagues or other professionals when managing complex situations.
- **Bring in outside expertise when needed.** If the organization does not have appropriate clinical or professional expertise, arrange external supervision, consultation, or referral.

4.4 *The organization provides or facilitates access to ongoing professional development opportunities for staff, including individuals with lived experience.*

WHY IT MATTERS

Lived experience is one form of expertise, but it does not replace ongoing learning. Professional development helps staff strengthen their knowledge, skills, and confidence throughout their careers.

IN PRACTICE

- **Tailor development to the individual.** Consider their current role, learning needs, and professional goals.
- **Offer different ways to learn.** Development may include training, mentoring, conferences, peer learning, or supervised practice.
- **Support progression.** Give staff opportunities to apply new skills and take on new responsibilities when ready.



Section 5

Public Engagement and Media Activities

5.1 *The organization respects the right of individuals with lived experience to decide what aspects of their experiences they share and to decline public-facing activities without pressure or adverse consequences.*

WHY IT MATTERS

Once personal information becomes public, individuals may have limited control over how it is used or shared. Protecting their choices can help safeguard privacy, wellbeing, and future opportunities.

IN PRACTICE

- **Revisit consent.** Check before each public-facing activity rather than assuming previous agreement still applies.
- **Agree on boundaries in advance.** Discuss what is off-limits, what may be recorded or quoted, and how the individual wants to be introduced.
- **Shield individuals from unnecessary pressure.** Where appropriate, act as the point of contact for media requests, speaking invitations, or other public enquiries.

5.2 *Before participating in public-facing activities, the organization ensures that individuals with lived experience are informed about the potential risks and consequences of “going public.”*

WHY IT MATTERS

Consent is only meaningful when people fully understand what they are agreeing to, including consequences that may emerge later.

IN PRACTICE

- **Discuss the full picture.** Consider potential personal, professional, emotional, digital, and safety-related consequences.
- **Consider who else may be affected.** Discuss possible consequences for family members or others close to the individual.
- **Allow time to decide.** Avoid asking individuals to commit to public-facing activities without enough time to consider the implications.



Section 5

Public Engagement and Media Activities

5.3 *The organization provides or facilitates access to appropriate preparation and training for individuals with lived experience who engage in public events or media activities on behalf of the organization.*

WHY IT MATTERS

Public events and media can be unpredictable. Preparation helps individuals manage difficult questions, protect their boundaries, and feel more confident about what to expect.

IN PRACTICE

- **Prepare together.** Discuss the audience, purpose, key messages, topics that are off-limits, and what information stays private.
- **Practice challenging situations.** Rehearse difficult questions, interviews, or unexpected situations before the event.
- **Provide practical guidance.** This may include media training, presentation skills, online safety, or safeguarding advice.

5.4 *The organization takes reasonable steps to prepare for and respond to negative media attention, harassment, and other risks associated with public-facing activities conducted on behalf of the organization.*

WHY IT MATTERS

Public-facing work can expose individuals to problems they should not be expected to manage alone. Without organizational backing, they may be left to deal with consequences created by work they undertook on the organization's behalf.

IN PRACTICE

- **Plan ahead.** Agree who will respond and what steps will be taken if negative media attention, online harassment, or safety concerns arise.
- **Provide support throughout the activity.** Ensure individuals know who to contact and have organizational support available during public events or media activities if challenges arise.
- **Continue support when problems persist.** Provide practical help and involve appropriate security, legal, or other expertise when needed.

Feedback and Questions

This is a living document and may be updated as practice develops. We welcome feedback from organizations using this document, including suggestions for additional questions, areas that need clarification, or challenges that emerged during implementation.

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This document is part of the Lived Experience in P/CVE toolkit, developed by Katharina Sengfelder (Exit Nexus) and Gordon Clubb (University of Leeds), in collaboration with INDEX / Violence Prevention Network gGmbH.

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