

## Leaving Terrorism Behind: The Healthy Identity Intervention Model of Change<sup>1</sup>

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### *Abstract*

Providing rehabilitation for individuals who commit terrorist offences presents challenges. These challenges include the varied and complex pathways into terrorism, which require flexible and comprehensive interventions that address the multitude of factors driving change. Underpinning these interventions, a Model of Change (MoC) can provide a theoretical and practical framework to guide the processes, mechanisms, and outcomes of the intended change. Without a clear MoC, interventions risk being fragmented and ineffective, failing to address the specific needs of those who commit terrorist offences. This article explores the challenges of rehabilitation for terrorist offending through the lens of the Healthy Identity Intervention (HII) MoC, highlighting its central role in guiding effective rehabilitation efforts within His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). Grounded in theoretical principles, HII aims to support participants to desist and disengage from terrorism. The article considers the distinctive features of terrorist rehabilitation and the contribution of HII. It critiques the strengths and limitations of HII, emphasising the need for empirical validation and adaptation to diverse offending profiles. It concludes by outlining future directions for refining the HII MoC and its broader implications for evaluating and advancing appropriate practices, ultimately contributing to the understanding of effective rehabilitation and the promotion of a safer, more inclusive society.

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### Introduction

Rehabilitation for individuals convicted of terrorist offences is a relatively new and rapidly evolving area of practice (Silke et al., 2021). In recent years, significant efforts have been made to synthesise existing knowledge and identify factors that support disengagement and

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desistance from terrorism (Busher et al., 2024; Khalil et al., 2023; Morrison et al., 2021). Despite these advancements, understanding remains largely theoretical and underpinned by limited empirical evidence, leaving key questions about what rehabilitation efforts should consist of, what constitutes meaningful change, how it can be reliably facilitated, and how success should be measured. Addressing these gaps is critical, as the consequences of continued terrorist offending are often severe and far reaching, despite relatively low recidivism rates (Silke & Morrison, 2020).

Effective rehabilitation approaches are essential for enhancing public safety and supporting social reintegration. These approaches can be accommodated within the public health model, considered one of the more influential conceptual frameworks for countering terrorism (Hardy, 2023). Counter terrorism initiatives are typically categorised into three levels within this public health model framework; either primary, secondary, or tertiary interventions (Harris-Hogan et al., 2015). Primary interventions focus on prevention at the societal and community levels, aiming to mitigate conditions that foster radicalisation. Secondary interventions, by contrast, are aimed at those who show “symptoms” of radicalisation and those showing an interest in terrorist groups or causes but have not yet fully committed to them. For individuals already engaged in extremist activities or terrorist offences, tertiary-level interventions are then relied upon, alongside legal measures such as prosecution and custodial sentences, as well as restrictions and conditions for release on license. The primary aim of tertiary interventions is to support individuals in making significant changes in their lives that promote desistance from terrorist offending and disengagement from terrorist groups and ideologies. However, the goals of rehabilitation are inherently subjective, with success being interpreted differently by policymakers, practitioners, and the individuals themselves (McNeill, 2009).

Whilst significant progress has been made in understanding the factors that support disengagement from terrorism (Busher et al., 2024; Khalil et al., 2023; Morrison et al., 2021), there remains a key gap in the literature regarding the theoretical frameworks that guide practical interventions. Specifically, little attention has been paid to the underlying Models of Change (MoC) that inform how rehabilitation programmes conceptualise and facilitate transformation in individuals convicted of terrorist offences. This article addresses this gap by examining the MoC underpinning the Healthy Identity Intervention (HII), offering an internal

perspective on how theoretical principles are translated into practice within HMPPS. By analysing terrorist rehabilitation challenges through the HII MoC lens, this article contributes to understanding what constitutes meaningful change and how it can be effectively facilitated. This analysis has important implications for both the refinement of existing interventions and the development of evaluation frameworks that can better capture the multidimensional nature of rehabilitation outcomes.

Given these complexities in terrorist rehabilitation, a structured approach is essential. Models of Change provide this structure, offering a framework to understand how desired outcomes are achieved, clarify underlying assumptions, and helping establish measurable indicators of progress (Baudon, 2024). Such frameworks ensure that interventions are not only evidence-informed or evidence-based but also adaptable to the diverse needs of forensic populations, enhancing their relevance and effectiveness. A MoC can be integral to research and evaluation to build on our understanding of effectiveness of rehabilitative approaches, guide further development, as well as helping respond to new challenges.

This article focuses on the Healthy Identity Intervention (HII), a key component of the rehabilitation offer for individuals serving sentences for terrorist convictions within His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). By examining the MoC underpinning HII, the article explores its contribution to addressing some of the challenges more prevalent in terrorist rehabilitation. Whilst HII is the primary focus of this MoC, this intervention is one element of a collection of actions that can contribute to rehabilitation. This article covers the development, application, and potential of HII to support meaningful and sustainable change. The content draws on the practical experience of all three authors working for the Counter Terrorism - Assessment and Rehabilitation Centre (CT-ARC) within HMPPS, including their involvement in the design, development, implementation, and ongoing refinement of HII. These observations are presented as illustrative examples to complement the theoretical discussion, rather than as systematically collected empirical data. Where formal evaluation findings are referenced (e.g., Keane et al., 2023), these are clearly distinguished from developer and practitioner reflections. Whilst the authors' dual roles in design and delivery offer valuable insights into HII's application, they acknowledge the potential for bias and have sought to maintain balance by incorporating external evaluations and critically examining both the strengths and limitations of the intervention.

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## Challenges in Rehabilitation for People Convicted of Terrorist Offences

### *Complexity of determining change*

Rehabilitation for individuals convicted of terrorist offences presents certain challenges due to the diversity in the backgrounds of those convicted, the nature of their offending behaviours, and their psychological needs. The cohort of those who have committed terrorist offences also come from a range of social, cultural and personal contexts. These different backgrounds mean their paths into terrorism can be shaped by a variety of factors, such as political, religious, and social influences (Horgan, 2009). Terrorism offences can include political or moral motivation, which is a feature that is unique to this cohort and differentiates them from individuals convicted of other forms of violence (Silke & Morrison, 2020). This diversity necessitates interventions that balance individual differences whilst also addressing shared characteristics or pathways that may be present across the cohort (McNeill, 2012).

Furthermore, the nature of change in this context is multidimensional and involves more than behavioural shifts. Whilst desistance from offending is critical, it is only one aspect of the broader process of rehabilitation. Ceasing offending behaviour does not necessarily equate to deradicalisation from a terrorist ideology, which involves a fundamental shift in beliefs and attitudes (Horgan & Braddock, 2010). Authentic change often requires cognitive, emotional and social transformations that extend beyond simply ceasing criminal behaviour (Maruna, 2001). For instance, an individual may stop engaging in terrorist activities but still have difficulties with entrenched antisocial attitudes, emotional regulation or reintegration into society. In addition, cognitive and emotional shifts required for deradicalisation often involve complex changes in beliefs and attitudes that are difficult to measure and evaluate (Horgan & Braddock, 2010). For these reasons, rehabilitation efforts must address the multiple dimensions of changes that individuals may make in their lives to achieve its aims, ensuring that interventions are flexible and comprehensive enough to facilitate personal growth in all these areas.

### *Measuring Success*

Evaluating the effectiveness of rehabilitation interventions for tertiary prevention of individuals convicted of terrorist offences presents challenges in defining and measuring success (Silke & Morrison, 2020). Traditionally, recidivism rates have served as a primary metric for assessing the effectiveness of rehabilitation programmes. However, in the context of terrorist offending, recidivism offers a narrow and often insufficient measure of success. For example, recidivism is generally recorded by further convictions, however those who are killed while carrying out a further terrorist offence will not be subject to conviction.

Beyond measuring recidivism and the challenges with this, there are broader and more nuanced outcomes that play a function in the rehabilitation process which remain underexamined as measures of success for those convicted of terrorism offences. Improvements in mental health, successful social reintegration and shifts in beliefs are important components of rehabilitation (Fortune et al., 2011). For example, mental health improvements, including reduced trauma or anxiety, and the development of prosocial behaviours, such as forming healthy relationships or contributing positively to society, are essential to the rehabilitation process but are challenging to quantify. Similarly, shifts in beliefs, such as moving away from terrorist ideologies, represent a complex, multifaceted process that traditional metrics often fail to capture. Determining whether these shifts are genuine and if someone has truly disengaged from terrorism or is merely concealing continued adherence to extremist beliefs is also challenging (Koehler, 2017).

Determining appropriate outcomes needs to take place alongside a more holistic approach to measuring success. This approach should integrate diverse measures, encompassing emotional, cognitive, and social transformations, alongside behavioural indicators. Such a comprehensive framework would provide a deeper understanding of rehabilitation outcomes and address the fundamental challenge of distinguishing genuine rehabilitation from superficial behavioural compliance (Ward & Maruna, 2007).

### *Stakeholder Perspectives and Societal Scrutiny*

Another challenge in the rehabilitation of individuals convicted of terrorism offences lies in the divergent perspectives on what constitutes successful rehabilitation. Different stakeholders, including policymakers, practitioners, the wider public and those who commit

such offences, may have conflicting views on the goals of rehabilitation and how success should be defined. Whilst policymakers and the public may prioritise security objectives, such as preventing recidivism and ensuring public safety, practitioners often focus on therapeutic goals, including reducing psychological distress or improving social integration (McNeill, 2009). These differing priorities create tensions in the design and implementation of interventions, as stakeholders may advocate for conflicting measures of success and resource allocation.

In addition, the societal and political context surrounding terrorism can greatly influence the measures of success and the expectations placed on rehabilitation. Given the highly charged nature of terrorism-related offences, rehabilitation efforts are often under intense public and political scrutiny. Public confidence in such programmes often hinges on their ability to deliver rapid, visible results, such as assurances of reduced risk and successful reintegration. However, as rehabilitation is often a long-term process, these external pressures can sometimes result in unrealistic expectations about the pace and nature of change, which may conflict with the more gradual, individualised nature of meaningful rehabilitation (El-Said, 2015).

In summary, the rehabilitation of individuals convicted of terrorist offences presents multiple, interrelated challenges, including the difficulty of defining success amidst divergent stakeholder perspectives and the societal pressures driven by heightened security concerns. These challenges must be carefully considered when developing and implementing effective intervention models that aim to facilitate sustainable change within this cohort.

## **The Need for a MoC**

### *Why a MoC is Critical*

The development and implementation of a MoC is critical in the rehabilitation of individuals convicted of terrorist offences, to enable evaluation and improvement of interventions. A well-defined MoC provides both theoretical guidance and a practical framework for understanding the processes of change in those convicted of terrorism or terrorism-related offences. It offers a structured pathway that outlines the processes, mechanisms and expected outcomes of rehabilitation, providing clear direction to

practitioners and policymakers (Baudon, 2024). Without such a model, interventions risk being fragmented or misaligned with the individual needs of those undergoing rehabilitation, ultimately diminishing their effectiveness.

A MoC ensures rehabilitation efforts are evidence-based and theoretically sound, minimising harm while maximising the potential for positive change. Research into the effectiveness of rehabilitation models, such as the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) framework, has shown that directing interventions at the right individuals, with the right intensity and focus, leads to achieving meaningful outcomes (Andrews & Bonta, 2006; Bonta & Andrews, 2017). Without a coherent MoC, interventions may fail to adequately address the core risk factors that drive terrorist offending, potentially causing harm or negligible outcomes. An effective MoC not only enhances the likelihood of positive change but also ensures that the risks associated with intervention are managed and minimised.

In addition, a comprehensive MoC establishes consistent and transparent processes for assessing and monitoring progress. By defining specific steps, milestones and outcomes, it ensures that interventions are cohesive in design, delivery and evaluation, promoting accountability and alignment with rehabilitation goals.

### *Components of an Effective MoC*

An effective MoC must include several key components to ensure it is both theoretically sound and practically applicable

1. Clarity of Assumptions and Pathways: The foundation of any MoC rests on clear assumptions about the processes of change and the pathways that lead to rehabilitation. These assumptions need to be grounded in empirical evidence and an understanding of the factors that contribute to both the development of extremist ideologies and the disengagement from them. By clearly mapping out the causal pathways that lead from offending to rehabilitation, the MoC can provide a roadmap for practitioners to follow in their work with individuals. This clarity helps to ensure that interventions are not only addressing the right issues but are also following a coherent and structured approach that maximises the potential for success.

2. Adaptability to Individual Needs: One of the critical features of an effective MoC is its flexibility and adaptability. Individuals convicted of terrorist offences are a highly diverse group, and rehabilitation programmes must be tailored to meet their specific needs. A “one-size-fits-all” approach is insufficient in this context, as it fails to account for variations in psychological, social and contextual factors that influence an individual’s pathway into and out of terrorism. Therefore, an effective MoC should be dynamic, offering customisable intervention pathways based on individual assessments of risk, need, and responsiveness. This adaptability ensures that the intervention addresses the specific factors contributing to each individual's offending behaviour, while also providing room for adjustments as they progress through the rehabilitation process.

3. Measurable Indicators for Progress and Outcomes: A well-designed MoC includes measurable indicators that allow for tracking the progress of individuals and evaluating the effectiveness of the intervention. These indicators should span across behavioural, cognitive, emotional, and social domains of change, enabling practitioners to monitor multiple aspects of the rehabilitation process. In addition to traditional measures like recidivism, which focus on reoffending rates, an effective MoC should include metrics for other dimensions of change, such as shifts in beliefs, mental health improvements, and social reintegration. These indicators allow for a more holistic evaluation of success and ensure that interventions can be adapted in response to progress or setbacks.

Clear, measurable outcomes enhance accountability and transparency in rehabilitation. Policymakers, practitioners and the public can track progress, ensuring resources are allocated effectively and interventions are refined based on evidence. This also allows for the identification of the most effective components within the rehabilitation process.

To summarise, an effective MoC is vital for guiding the rehabilitation of individuals convicted of terrorist offences, ensuring that interventions are evidence-based, individualised and capable of achieving meaningful and measurable outcomes. By providing clarity of assumptions and pathways, ensuring adaptability to individual needs, and incorporating measurable indicators for progress, a MoC enhances the likelihood of achieving long-term

success in rehabilitation efforts, and ultimately supports the successful disengagement of individuals from terrorist offending and ideology.

## **Development and Application of the Healthy Identity Intervention (HII)**

### *Origins and Rationale*

HII was developed in 2008 in response to the need for a rehabilitation programme for individuals convicted under Terrorism Legislation in England and Wales, and those involved in terrorism-related offences. At the time, there were no established models or interventions specifically addressing the social and psychological drivers of terrorist offending. HII was therefore conceived by integrating existing criminological theories, psychological models and casework focused on terrorism, as well as lessons from general offending rehabilitation (Dean, 2014).

HII's central aims have remained consistent: to reduce the likelihood of reoffending by decreasing an individual's willingness to engage in criminal behaviour, and to promote disengagement from extremist ideologies, groups or causes. The intervention's goals align with Horgan's (2024) concept of deradicalisation - facilitating a change in an individual's commitment to extremist beliefs and groups. Through individualised engagement, HII supports participants in building emotional tolerance, understanding and expressing their core values, and finding prosocial ways to meet their needs, while fostering personal agency.

The intervention's development has always been responsive to evolving needs and challenges. This approach incorporates insights from ongoing evaluations and shifts in the profile of individuals involved in terrorism, such as those radicalised through online platforms (Kenyon et al., 2022) or those lacking clear ideological motivation (Meleagrou-Hitchens & Ayad, 2023). Therefore, HII embraces continuous refinement to align with current research, ensuring its effectiveness in supporting desistance and disengagement from terrorist activities.

### *Theoretical Foundations of HII*

HII is grounded in several well-established theoretical models, most notably the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) model of rehabilitation, which emphasises tailoring interventions to the individual's risk level, criminogenic needs, and responsivity factors (Andrews & Bonta,

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2006). Central to HII's design, this model ensures interventions are proportionate to participants' assessed risk, with higher-risk individuals typically receiving a more intensive programme, including optional modules. The Extremism Risk Guidance - Revised (ERG-R)<sup>3</sup> (Kenyon et al., 2025) informs HII's approach by identifying specific risk factors linked to terrorist offending, providing a foundation for developing individualised intervention plans that directly address participants' areas of need. To enhance responsiveness, HII adapts for diverse learning styles and protected characteristics, tailoring delivery for specific cohorts such as women, young adults, and neurodiverse individuals. A trauma-informed approach is embedded within the intervention to foster deeper engagement and support effective rehabilitation in the context of terrorism (Koehler, 2020).

Alongside the RNR framework, HII integrates the Good Lives Model (GLM), a strength-based approach to rehabilitation (Ward & Stewart, 2003), which examines social-ecological factors influencing terrorist behaviour. The GLM emphasises that individuals are motivated by the pursuit of primary life goals, such as autonomy, purpose or belonging, which they may attempt to achieve through harmful or illegitimate means when pro-social pathways seem inaccessible. In the context of terrorism, this framework helps identify how unmet needs, grievances, or distorted goal-seeking behaviour can drive individuals toward terrorist ideologies and violence, aiming to redirect these pursuits toward constructive, socially acceptable alternatives. This model has become increasingly important in understanding terrorist offending and supports the development of protective factors, helping individuals identify legitimate goals that may have previously been sought through terrorist ideologies (Marsden & Lee, 2022).

Moreover, desistance theory plays a crucial role in HII, as it informs the intervention's focus on encouraging participants to reflect on their past behaviours and consider new pathways to personal fulfilment, thus reducing their risk of reoffending (Bonta & Andrews, 2017). The assumption here is that if we know what circumstances deter or prevent individuals from offending, we can try to facilitate these through intervention. The focus is on understanding when and why individuals may come to a point in their lives when they decide they no longer want to offend and no longer want to identify with those aspects in their life

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<sup>3</sup> The ERG-R is a risk assessment framework that replaced the Extremism Risk Guidance 22+ (ERG22+), following roll-out in March 2025 across HMPPS.

which contribute to offending. HII focuses on facilitating these circumstances which may support individual desistance.

### Key Features of HII

1. Focus on Therapeutic Alliance and Identity Transformation: A foundational element of HII is the strong, trust-based relationship between facilitator and participant. Research highlights that trust is vital for successful disengagement from terrorist involvement (Silke et al., 2021). HII emphasises the therapeutic alliance as a catalyst for change, allowing participants to confront cognitive dissonance between their personal and extremist group identities. This identity transformation process is central to deradicalisation, as individuals are supported in reassessing their values, beliefs and goals. By examining the factors that led them to becoming engaged with a terrorist group or cause, participants are encouraged to create new, prosocial identities that align with their core values, fostering the potential for long-term disengagement.

2. Application to Diverse Contexts: In line with the RNR model's responsivity principle, the intervention considers the individual's personal learning styles and needs, tailoring the intervention accordingly. HII is designed to be flexible and responsive, adapting to the specific needs of different individuals. This includes adjustments based on personal characteristics, such as neurodiversity, age, gender, and trauma history. These adaptations are left to the discretion of the facilitator who will take into account the participant's specific needs. For example, they may adapt their questioning technique to meet learning points and aims, use visual aids and handouts, allocate personal assignments in specific ways or based on particular situations and be creative in how they draw out learning. Facilitators are also encouraged to consider how they can be responsive to demographics of participants, e.g. when working with female participants they may spend time in supervision considering how identity and social stigma may have gender-specific facets and to plan how to account for these in the delivery of sessions. When working with young people facilitators will consider the developmental needs of the individuals and naturally occurring shifts in their needs with age. The young age of some HII participants may in itself offer sources of resilience which facilitators can consider, including the fluidity and malleability of identity, lifestyle habits and

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new pro-social roles and responsibilities as they enter adulthood. The intervention also incorporates a trauma-informed approach, acknowledging that many individuals involved in terrorism have experienced significant life challenges that can affect their cognitive and emotional responses. By adapting to these diverse contexts, HII ensures that its delivery is accessible and effective for a wide range of participants.

3. Modular and Targeted Approach: HII utilises a modular structure, allowing facilitators to select and deliver specific content tailored to the needs identified in each participant's assessment. This ensures that the programme is targeted and personalised, addressing the key factors contributing to an individual's involvement in terrorism while promoting engagement with relevant life skills, emotional regulation and pro-social values. This flexible approach allows facilitators to adapt the programme dynamically, ensuring it remains responsive to participants' evolving needs.

### **Positioning HII Within the Rehabilitation Landscape: Commonalities, Contrasts and Contributions**

1. Commonalities and Differences in Goals and Methods: HII shares several foundational elements with general offending rehabilitation models, notably the RNR and GLM frameworks. As outlined previously, HII supports a tailored approach that considers an individual's risk level, personal needs, and responsiveness. The intervention also prioritises cognitive restructuring, aiming to alter beliefs and behaviours that support extremist ideologies, similar to the ways general rehabilitation programmes aim to address antisocial attitudes in other offending cohorts.

However, HII distinguishes itself by its specific focus on identity transformation, a central aspect of disengagement and deradicalisation. While general offending rehabilitation programmes focus on behaviour modification and social reintegration, HII primarily addresses identity-based factors that drive terrorist offending. This focus is reflected in its design, which encourages participants to re-examine their life stories, challenge terrorism supportive beliefs, and develop new, prosocial identities. Additionally, HII integrates a strengths-based approach (via the GLM), which is not commonly found in conventional

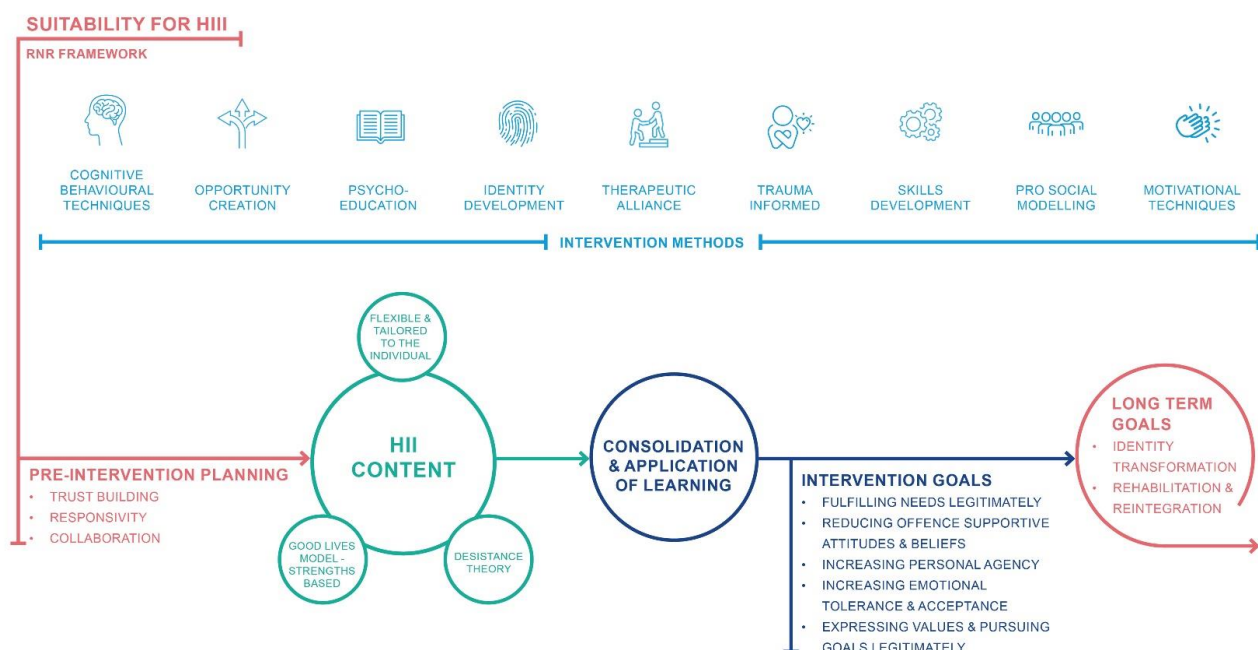
criminal rehabilitation models. This approach supports participants in identifying and pursuing life goals in ways that do not rely on extremist ideologies, highlighting motivational interviewing and resilience building as core components of the intervention (Bonta & Andrews, 2017; Ward et al., 2007).

2. Contribution of HII to the Broader Field of Rehabilitation: HII makes a significant contribution to the broader field of rehabilitation by extending well-established principles of rehabilitation in forensic settings, such as risk assessment, needs-based interventions and strengths-based approaches, into the specialised field of terrorism rehabilitation. Its focus on identity and ideological transformation introduces a nuanced dimension to rehabilitation theory that addresses the psychosocial drivers of terrorist offending, including social identity, group loyalty, and ideological commitment (Horgan, 2024). Furthermore, HII contributes to the growing body of literature on deradicalisation by demonstrating how rehabilitation programmes can effectively intervene in the personal and social processes that lead individuals to engage in terrorism. The incorporation of a trauma-informed approach, the use of pre-intervention sessions to assess personal circumstances, and the flexibility to adapt the intervention based on individual learning styles further underscore its potential to influence participants' pathways toward desistance and disengagement from extremist groups (Koehler, 2020).

The growing evidence of HII's impact on desistance from terrorism, as demonstrated through evaluations of participant outcomes (Keane et al., 2023), offers promising insights for the development of future interventions for terrorist offending and extremist ideologies. HII's successful application in both custodial and community settings further highlights its applicability across different environments, offering a versatile model for tackling radicalisation at multiple stages of the rehabilitation process.

*HII MoC*

Figure 1 below illustrates the key components of the HII MoC. It is followed by a fictitious case study (Mr. A) which demonstrates a participants journey through HII, from the point of considering suitability up to completion and consolidation of learning. **Figure 1: HII MoC Illustration**



- Assessment and Suitability: Mr. A is a 24-year-old male affiliated with extreme right-wing groups online, currently in custody following a conviction for disseminating terrorist materials several years earlier. His pathway to terrorist offending was identified through the completion of the ERG-R risk assessment, which highlights areas of criminogenic need requiring intervention and relevant protective factors. The assessment informs whether HII aligns with Mr. A’s specific needs. Additionally, the sequencing of HII is carefully considered and information from a recent assessment and diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Condition will enable the intervention to be delivered in a way that is responsive to his cognitive and emotional processing style.
- Collaborative Planning and Responsivity: During pre-intervention sessions, an intervention and responsivity plan is collaboratively developed with Mr A. These

sessions foster trust and encourage his active involvement in planning, including the selection of modules and content relevant to his needs. This collaborative process continues throughout the intervention, ensuring alignment with HII goals and tracking progress towards achieving them.

- Intervention Delivery: Throughout the intervention, emphasis is placed on fostering a strong therapeutic alliance, using a motivational approach. Mr A is supported to reflect on his engagement with terrorism and the factors contributing to his offending, including online behaviours. Sessions are designed to support him to explore pro-social ways to meet his needs and consider commitments he can make to support his disengagement from terrorism. He is supported to develop dissatisfaction with engaging in terrorism, by experiencing dissonance to support disillusionment with the groups cause, considering factors which increased his involvement such as his behaviour with others online. The work Mr. A undertakes is underpinned by cognitive behavioural techniques and psychoeducation, which supports the generation of new identity commitments and helps him re-examine and redefine his sense of personal identity away from the terrorist group. The trusting and compassionate therapeutic relationship supports Mr A to navigate difficult feelings of shame and guilt he experiences. Being given opportunities to develop skills to better manage emotions and think critically is also supportive of Mr A developing his personal agency and considering how he can fulfil his needs legitimately.
- Consolidation and Post-Intervention Support: As HII concludes, Mr. A has the opportunity to reflect on potential challenges he may face in the future and to plan how he will manage these. He identifies his support network, which can help him achieve his desired future. A final review meeting with Mr A and the case management team assess his progress and address any outstanding needs. This meeting facilitates a smooth transition to post-intervention support, where the case management team will continue to reinforce Mr. A's learning and commitments to desistance and disengagement.

### *Implementation of HII*

HII's pilot phase in the early 2010s showed positive results, with participants responding favourably to the intervention's motivational and engaging format. A key finding from the pilot was the importance of the facilitator-participant relationship in driving change (Dean et al., 2018). However, responses also indicated that some content was repetitive, leading to modifications in the intervention structure. Since its accreditation in 2019, HII has undergone rigorous review and quality assurance processes, ensuring that it is delivered consistently and effectively.

A recent interim outcome evaluation (Keane et al., 2023) indicated that participation in HII led to positive changes in participants' attitudes and behaviours, although challenges in data collection limited the overall scope of the findings. Recommendations from this evaluation, such as increased focus on skills development for participants who are already disengaging from terrorism, have been integrated into the intervention's ongoing evolution.

### *Lessons Learned During Its Design and Application*

The design and application of HII have provided several important insights. First, the emphasis on personal agency and identity transformation has proven instrumental in motivating participants to engage in the rehabilitation process. Facilitators have also learned that the intervention must balance risk management with the creation of opportunities for identity change, self-reflection and skill development. The growing importance of skills acquisition has been recognised, particularly for individuals already disengaging from terrorist ideologies, as this empowers them to pursue prosocial goals in a legitimate way.

Additionally, implementing HII in diverse contexts, particularly within custodial settings, has provided valuable lessons about the impact of the prison environment on disengagement. The structured nature of custody offers opportunities for reflection and physical distance from terrorist groups, both of which can serve as catalysts for change. However, challenges related to prison violence and overcrowding highlight the need for ongoing attention to the environmental factors influencing programme success.

Finally, continuous refinement based on quality assurance data and external evaluations ensures that HII evolves in line with emerging research on terrorism rehabilitation. The Phoenix Model of Disengagement and Deradicalisation (Silke et al., 2021),

developed through a systematic review identifying eleven major themes in disengagement and deradicalisation, provides a credible rationale for HII's approach. As an actor catalyst within this framework, HII supports the disengagement process while addressing multiple aspects of the model, particularly in developing dissonance between personal and terrorist group identities. This theoretical foundation validates the programme's focus on identity transformation and the development of a supportive network for participants, reinforcing its position as a critical intervention for people convicted of terrorist offences.

### **Strengths and Limitations of the Healthy Identity Intervention (HII)**

#### *Strengths*

1. Alignment with Core Principles of Effective Rehabilitation: HII is underpinned by established theoretical frameworks, including the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) model and the Good Lives Model (GLM) of rehabilitation. These models highlight the importance of addressing criminogenic needs while promoting prosocial values, which are central to HII's design. The programme tailors its approach to individual risk levels and personal needs, ensuring a customised, responsive delivery. By focusing on identity transformation, a core tenet of the programme, HII aims to shift participants' self-perception away from terrorist ideologies, aligning with current literature on the importance of identity change in the desistance process (Silke et al., 2021). This focus on identity transformation has been identified as a critical factor in supporting disengagement from terrorism and promoting long-term desistance from terrorist activity (Cherney & Koehler, 2023).

2. Evidence of Adaptability and Impact: A key strength of HII is its demonstrated adaptability across diverse contexts and participant demographics. The programme has been successfully implemented in both custodial settings and the community, with its modular structure allowing for flexibility in addressing varying participant needs. This adaptability has been a significant factor in its positive reception by participants, with recent short-term evaluations indicating that the intervention leads to measurable shifts in attitudes, behaviours and identity (Keane et al., 2023). Furthermore, HII's focus on developing a strong therapeutic alliance between facilitators and participants has been recognised as essential in fostering engagement

and facilitating meaningful change. The programme's capacity to be delivered with individuals across a broad spectrum of backgrounds underscores its potential for wider application in the rehabilitation of those convicted of terrorism and terrorism-related offences.

### *Limitations*

1. Areas Requiring Further Empirical Validation: Whilst HII has shown promise in short-term evaluations, further empirical validation is necessary to establish its long-term efficacy and generalisability. Existing studies, including those reported by Keane et al., (2023), have been primarily focused on short-term outcomes, with limited longitudinal data available to assess the lasting impact of the intervention. Additionally, the number of participants completing HII annually across custody and community settings remains relatively small, particularly when compared to other offending behaviour programmes offered to other cohorts. This constrains the sample sizes for longer term evaluation. Other challenges include the difficulties with conducting a randomised control trial (RCT), given the potential consequences of not offering individuals convicted of terrorism offences an intervention for which they have been assessed as suitable. Further research, particularly involving larger and more diverse convicted samples, is essential to fully understand the long-term effects of HII on desistance from terrorism. Further research should also focus not only on what works in rehabilitation for this cohort, but also understanding how the intervention works (Marsden & Lewis, 2023).

2. Integration with Other Interventions: Successful rehabilitation requires a person-centred approach and coordination across services, including the appropriate sequencing of interventions. Consideration is ongoing as to how HII can best be integrated with other interventions offered to this cohort, such as the Theological and Ideological Intervention (TII, Criminal Justice Joint Inspection, 2023) and the Home Office-led Desistance and Disengagement Programme (DDP, Home Office, 2024). Since 2016, the DDP has provided tailored interventions to individuals in custody or on license in the community for terrorist or terrorism-connected offences. These interventions are guided by the ERG-R, which helps identify individual needs and informs the sequencing of support. For example, if psychosocial needs are driving the offending behaviour, HII may be prioritised. If the offending is considered more ideologically motivated, TII may be more appropriate. TII, delivered by

Intervention Providers, focuses on challenging distorted religious or ideological beliefs. These providers may also offer mentoring and practical support. In some cases, HII is delivered alongside other services, such as substance misuse treatment, personality disorder pathways or mental health services. Coordinating these efforts poses logistical challenges, which can affect the consistency and effectiveness of HII's delivery. Careful planning, resource allocation and strong communication across service providers are essential. Further research on optimal sequencing and alignment of HII with other rehabilitative offers would be beneficial, together with the development of a MoC that supports a more holistic approach to rehabilitation from terrorist offending.

3. The Social Ecology of Rehabilitation: An important limitation that should be borne in mind is recognising that HII represents just one piece of the broader rehabilitation framework. It is essential to consider how this programme aligns with other rehabilitation efforts, specifically those aimed to address the social-ecological conditions required to support reintegration. Successful rehabilitation relies on a holistic approach, where social-ecological factors play a pivotal role in enhancing outcomes (Lewis & Marsden, 2021). These factors include engaging families, securing employment opportunities, providing stable accommodation, and ensuring access to transportation, all of which significantly influence the reintegration process (Cherney, 2021). To increase the effectiveness of HII it would therefore be useful to ensure the intervention is implemented as part of a multi-dimensional social-ecological approach. Post-intervention support has already been enhanced for HII, but further efforts are needed to strengthen coordination between case management teams in prison and probation, mental health services, the police, and other community organisations, to increase chances of successful rehabilitation and sustained desistance.

4. Participation Challenges and Population Reach: Whether an individual participates in HII is their choice, which means that not all who may benefit from the intervention choose to participate. It is possible that those who decline may include individuals with the strongest levels of commitment to a terrorist group or cause, deeper distrust of authorities, or those who perceive no personal benefit in rehabilitation efforts. This non-participating population potentially represents those at higher risk of reoffending or those who could benefit most from

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intervention. Facilitators must rely on motivational approaches to encourage involvement, which may be insufficient for individuals with entrenched extremist identities. Understanding the demographics and motivations of those who refuse to engage with HII represents an important area for future research, as does the development of strategies to increase uptake among resistant populations while maintaining ethical standards of voluntary participation. Developing alternative approaches for those who consistently refuse to engage with standard interventions remains a challenge within the rehabilitation framework.

### Comparative Analysis with Other Models of Change

#### *Distinctive Features of Terrorist Rehabilitation Compared to Other Models of Offending Behaviour Interventions*

1. Beyond Traditional Rehabilitation Approaches: While HII builds upon established rehabilitation frameworks (e.g. RNR, Good Lives Model), terrorist offending presents distinct challenges that require specialised approaches. Unlike general criminal behaviour, which may be primarily driven by factors such as economic need, peer influence, or substance abuse, terrorist offending often involves complex ideological commitments and strong group identities (Horgan, 2008). This means that while general rehabilitation principles remain relevant, they must be significantly adapted and enhanced to address the psychological and social dynamics of terrorism.

Individuals convicted of terrorist offences often occupy distinct social environments, such as extremist networks or isolated online communities, which reinforce and perpetuate their beliefs and actions. Rehabilitation models must, therefore, integrate strategies that can disrupt these ideological attachments while simultaneously addressing the broader social and psychological factors that may have contributed to radicalisation in the first place (Morrison et al., 2021). These challenges necessitate specialised models tailored specifically to address the multi-dimensional nature of terrorism.

2. International Approaches and Alternative Models: Different countries have developed varied approaches to terrorist rehabilitation. For example, Saudi Arabia's prevention, rehabilitation and aftercare (PRAC) programme emphasises religious counselling and family

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involvement (Boucek, 2008), while Singapore's Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG) focuses on correcting misinterpretations of religious concepts (Buck Song, 2015). Indonesia's approach incorporates cultural and community elements, using individuals with lived experience of being involved in terrorist activities as mentors in their rehabilitation programmes (Aminah et al., 2023). The Dutch Terrorists, Extremists and Radicals (TER) approach focuses on supporting disengagement by building positive working relationships with those convicted of terrorist offences and to establish a connection with Dutch societal values (van der Heide & Kearney, 2020). This is done alongside providing support with education or employment and strengthening familial bonds. These diverse approaches highlight how cultural context shapes rehabilitation strategies and offer valuable insights for programme development.

The experience of these international programmes reveals several key elements of successful rehabilitation for terrorism. Effective programs consistently demonstrate the importance of integrating cultural and religious sensitivity throughout the rehabilitation process. They highlight the necessity of building strong post-release support networks and actively involving community members in the rehabilitation journey. Successful approaches also balance attention to both ideological concerns and practical needs, recognising that sustainable change requires addressing both aspects simultaneously.

## Future Directions

### *Refining and Validating HII*

1. Next Steps for Empirical Research and Evidence Gathering: Whilst HII has shown promise in the rehabilitation of individuals convicted of terrorist offences, further empirical validation is required to assess its long-term effectiveness and generalisability across diverse populations and contexts. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies that track the outcomes of individuals who have participated in HII over extended periods. These studies should evaluate not only short-term changes in commitment to offence-supportive beliefs but also the sustainability of identity transformation and disengagement from terrorism involvement.

A key area for future research is refining HII to better assess and measure changes in participants' identities, behaviours, and beliefs over time. This involves developing suitable

and effective metrics to evaluate shifts in extremist views, identity transformation and the development of protective factors. Longitudinal studies are crucial for understanding how well these changes are sustained beyond the time that an individual is participating in the programme and for tracking the effectiveness of HII in preventing recidivism and re-engagement with terrorism.

In addition to outcome evaluations, it is essential to conduct process evaluations to better understand the mechanisms through which HII operates. Research should investigate the roles of therapeutic alliance, cognitive restructuring, and identity re-narration in facilitating meaningful behavioural change. Qualitative data from participant interviews could offer valuable insights into how individuals experience the intervention and how shifts in personal identity influence broader life choices. This deeper understanding of the internal processes of HII will inform the refinement of its methods and content, ensuring that it remains applicable and effective across different cohorts and settings.

2. Areas for Theoretical Development: The theoretical framework underpinning HII, particularly its focus on identity transformation as a means of rehabilitating those convicted of terrorist offences, presents several avenues for future development. There is a need to further explore the intersection between social identity theory, narrative psychology, and terrorist rehabilitation to strengthen the theoretical foundation of HII. Future research could examine how specific aspects of social identity, such as ingroup/outgroup dynamics, national identity, and religious identity, influence the radicalisation and deradicalisation processes. This would provide a more nuanced understanding of how identity-driven motivations can be reshaped within therapeutic settings.

Moreover, the integration of trauma-informed approaches into HII could be expanded upon, exploring how individuals' personal histories of trauma and victimisation influence their vulnerability to terrorist ideologies. Developing a more comprehensive trauma-informed identity model could offer new pathways for rehabilitating individuals who have been exposed to violence or oppression, helping them to reframe their personal narratives and rebuild a healthier sense of self.

### *Broader Implications for Rehabilitation*

1. Application of HII Principles to Other Offending Cohorts: Beyond terrorist rehabilitation, the principles and techniques utilised in HII hold significant promise for broader applications in correctional rehabilitation. The emphasis on identity transformation, self-reflection and cognitive restructuring is relevant not only to individuals convicted of terrorist offences but also to those involved in organised crime, gang violence, and even general criminal offending. Future research could explore how these principles can be adapted for use in other offending cohorts, particularly those with strong group affiliations or ideologically driven motivations.

Further, the integration of trauma-informed approaches, which has proven effective in both general offending and terrorist rehabilitation (Koehler, 2020), could enhance the personalisation of HII for those with histories of trauma or victimisation. This is particularly relevant when considering the intersection of neurodiversity and criminal behaviour. The ability of HII to accommodate individual learning styles and cater to participants' protected characteristics could be extended to other high-risk offending groups.

2. Opportunities for Cross-Disciplinary Insights: The continued development of HII offers valuable opportunities for collaboration across various disciplines, including criminology, psychology, social work, and neuroscience. By examining the neurobiological underpinnings of identity transformation and resilience, future research can provide more concrete evidence of how interventions like HII may lead to measurable changes in brain functioning, behaviour, and decision-making processes. Interdisciplinary approaches will allow HII to continue evolving, drawing from diverse perspectives and refining the tools and methods used to support identity reconstruction.

Moreover, lessons from research on protective factors in relation to terrorism (Paalgard Munden et al., 2023) should be incorporated into future iterations of HII. The inclusion of strategies to identify and cultivate protective factors - such as supportive relationships, stable social identities, and access to non-violent, meaningful goals - could further enhance the effectiveness of the intervention. These insights will be essential for improving the resilience of participants and facilitating the transition from extremist ideologies to pro-social lives.

To summarise, while HII shows great potential in its current form, ongoing refinement through empirical research and theoretical development will ensure that it continues to meet the needs of individuals convicted of terrorist offences as well as possible and can be adapted for broader rehabilitation purposes. By strengthening the alignment with RNR principles, incorporating strength-based models, and focusing on cognitive transformation, HII can become a leading intervention not just for terrorism-related offences but also for a wider range of offending populations.

## Conclusion

Terrorist rehabilitation presents unique challenges due to the individualised and multifaceted nature of pathways into terrorism. HII offers a tailored, flexible approach that addresses these challenges by prioritising identity transformation and addressing the cognitive, emotional, and social factors driving terrorist offending. Drawing from key rehabilitation models like Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) and the Good Lives Model (GLM), HII focuses on building a therapeutic alliance and fostering self-reflection, helping participants re-examine their personal and social identities. By incorporating strength-based methods and cognitive transformation principles, HII supports disengagement and deradicalisation, addressing individual needs and facilitating the development of protective factors.

The contribution of HII to the field of terrorist rehabilitation is significant, offering an adaptable framework that aligns with leading rehabilitation theories while emphasising individualised interventions. Its ongoing development reflects a commitment to evidence-informed practice, and future research should focus on validating its long-term effectiveness and exploring its potential applications to other offending cohorts. By encouraging cross-disciplinary collaboration, HII can be expanded to support rehabilitation in diverse contexts, enhancing its reach and effectiveness. Continued research, refinement, and collaboration will be essential for HII's evolution, ensuring its place as a leading model for addressing the complexities of terrorist rehabilitation and broader reintegration efforts.

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