

Busher, J. , Choudhury, T. and Thomas, P. (2022) 'SURVEILLANCE AND PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM: THE EVIDENCE FROM SCHOOLS AND FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGES IN ENGLAND' in *The Cambridge Handbook of Surveillance and Race* (edited by Michael Kwet), pp. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

## **SURVEILLANCE AND PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM: THE EVIDENCE FROM SCHOOLS AND FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGES IN ENGLAND**

**[key words: counter-terrorism, countering violent extremism, Prevent, Prevent Duty, Counter-terrorism and Security Act 2015, radicalization, Muslims, Islamophobia, anti-Muslim racism, schools, education, colleges, safeguarding, risk assessment]**

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Since 2001, the British state has increased its powers of surveillance for the purposes of countering terrorism. Much of this has been through expansions of the powers of police and security services to engage in covert surveillance and access the personal data of those suspected of involvement in terrorism. Alongside this, however, the last decade has also seen the development of more diffuse practices of monitoring and surveillance as part of efforts to identify and provide support to those deemed 'vulnerable' to being drawn into terrorism. Under Prevent, the UK Government's strategy for preventing violent extremism (PVE),<sup>1</sup> much of the responsibility was initially placed on the police and on the communities identified as having particularly high levels of vulnerability, which in practice meant Britain's Muslim communities.<sup>2</sup> Subsequently, however, responsibility for PVE has increasingly been shifted onto a broad swathe of professionals engaged in the delivery of public services, including social workers, youth workers, healthcare workers, prison staff, school teachers, and college and university lecturers.<sup>3</sup>

The culmination of this 'responsibilisation' of frontline professionals,<sup>4</sup> for the time-being at least, has been the introduction of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (CTSA 2015). Popularly referred to as the 'Prevent duty', this placed a legal duty on schools, colleges and other stated authorities to show "due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism".<sup>5</sup> The statutory guidance accompanying this duty set out two primary areas of responsibility for schools and colleges. First, to identify individuals considered vulnerable to radicalization, and refer them to Channel, the UK government's counter-radicalization mentoring

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<sup>1</sup> *CONTEST: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism*, London: HM Government, 2018; Prevent does not apply to Northern Ireland, which is judged to have a different terrorism threat.

<sup>2</sup> *Preventing Violent Extremism: Winning hearts and minds*, (London: Department for Communities and Local Government, April 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Paul Thomas, "Changing experiences of responsibilisation and contestation within counter-terrorism policies: The British Prevent experience," *Policy and Politics* 45 no. 3 (2017): 305.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas, "Changing experiences of responsibilisation,".

<sup>5</sup> Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, s26.

programme. Second, they were required to actively promote ‘fundamental British values’ – defined by the government as ‘democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs’ – on the grounds that this would reduce students’ ‘vulnerability’ to extremism.<sup>6</sup>

In this chapter, we discuss how the introduction of the Prevent duty has shaped surveillance and monitoring practices in schools and colleges in England, and how such practices intersect with the politics and practices of race, religion and difference. The discussion draws on the emerging academic and grey literature on this topic, as well as on our own original empirical data from fieldwork conducted in the duty’s initial implementation phase in 2016 and 2017. These data include 70 in-depth interviews with educationalists in 14 schools and colleges in London and West Yorkshire, 8 interviews with local Prevent practitioners from across England,<sup>7</sup> a national online survey of school and college staff (n=225) and discussions of emergent findings with 6 stakeholder groups.<sup>8</sup>

## **The Prevent strategy: its evolution and critics**

In order to discuss how the Prevent duty has shaped surveillance and monitoring practices in schools and colleges in England, it is first necessary to provide some context, both in terms of the evolution of the Prevent strategy and the debates that preceded and surrounded the introduction of the Prevent duty.

Intended “to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism”,<sup>9</sup> Prevent was first included in the UK government’s overall counter-terrorism strategy (CONTEST) in 2003, as one of the strategy’s 4 strands.<sup>10</sup> It came to prominence in the UK context, however, after the 7 July 2005 London bombings as policy concerns about “home-grown” terrorism came to the fore. Since then, similar preventative strategies have been adopted by many other Western states,<sup>11</sup> and have become a key pillar of

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<sup>6</sup> Department for Education, *The Prevent duty: Departmental advice for schools and childcare providers*, (London: Department for Education, 2015); Revised Prevent duty guidance for England and Wales (April 2021): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance/revised-prevent-duty-guidance-for-england-and-wales>

<sup>7</sup> Local government-based Prevent staff (funded by the national Government’s Home Office) who support Prevent implementation at the local level.

<sup>8</sup> For a detailed discussion of research methods, see Joel Busher et al., *What the Prevent duty means for schools and colleges in England: An analysis of educationalists’ experiences*. (Coventry: Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations, Coventry University, 2017), accessed April 28, 2021.

<https://pureportal.coventry.ac.uk/en/publications/what-the-prevent-duty-means-for-schools-and-colleges-in-england-a>

<sup>9</sup> Her Majesty’s Government, *Prevent Strategy*, Cm 8092, 2011, 6.

<sup>10</sup> The others being Pursue, Protect and Prepare.

<sup>11</sup> Didier Bigo et al., *Preventing and Countering Youth Radicalisation in the EU*, (Brussels: European Parliament, 2014), accessed April 28, 2021.

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/JOIN/2014/509977/IPOL-LIBE\\_ET\(2014\)509977\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/JOIN/2014/509977/IPOL-LIBE_ET(2014)509977_EN.pdf).

EU<sup>12</sup> and UN counter-terrorism strategies,<sup>13</sup> leading the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism to observe that the discourse on preventing and countering violent extremism is now “pervasive in political, legal and policy settings”.<sup>14</sup> Advocates for Prevent and similar programmes internationally have argued that they prevent terrorism, with Neil Basu, the national head of the UK’s Counter Terrorism Police, saying that the Prevent programme is the “best chance” of reducing the terrorism threat.<sup>15</sup>

The Prevent strategy has, however, from its inception faced considerable criticism from civil society actors,<sup>16</sup> Parliamentary committees<sup>17</sup> and international observers.<sup>18</sup> Of particular relevance to this chapter, one of the most prominent of these criticisms has been that Prevent has effectively extended surveillance powers and securitized a growing set of community relations through the imposition of reporting requirements.<sup>19</sup> The UK government has rejected such claims and in its response stressed that Prevent does not criminalize those subject to interventions.<sup>20</sup> Nonetheless, a Parliamentary inquiry was unable to rebut the claims of Prevent’s critics, and instead called for an independent review while urging the government to take “urgent steps to clarify how information required under Prevent does not constitute ‘intelligence gathering’ of the type undertaken by the police or security services”.<sup>21</sup>

Alongside this, there have been claims that a disproportionate focus by Prevent on Muslims and Muslim communities has contributed to transform Muslims into a

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<sup>12</sup> Council of the European Union, The European Union Counter-Terrorism Strategy, 14469/4/05 REV 4, 30 November 2005.

<sup>13</sup> UNGA A/RES/60/288 (20 September 2006).

<sup>14</sup> Fionnuala Ni Aolain, *Human rights impact of policies and practices aimed at preventing and countering violent extremism: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism*, UN Doc A/HRC/43/46, February 21, 2020.

<sup>15</sup> Neil Basu, “Prevent is our best hope against terror threat,” *Counter-Terrorism Policing News*, August 7, 2019, accessed April 22, 2021, <https://www.counterterrorism.police.uk/neil-basu-prevent/>

<sup>16</sup> Muslim Council of Britain, *The Impact of Prevent on Muslim Communities: A Briefing to the Labour Party on how British Muslim Communities are Affected by Counter-Extremism Policies*, (London: Muslim Council of Britain, 2016) accessed March 23, 2021. <http://archive.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/MCB-CT-Briefing2.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> See House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee, *Preventing Violent Extremism: Sixth Report of Session 2009-10*, (London: The Stationary Office, 2010), Parliament Joint Committee on Human Rights, *Counter-Extremism, 2<sup>nd</sup> Report of session 2016/17*, (London: The Stationary Office, 2017).

<sup>18</sup> See: Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*, UN Doc CRC/C/GB/CO/5, July 12, 2016; Mania Kai, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association on his follow-up mission to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*, UN Doc A/HRC/35/28/Add.1, June 8, 2017.

<sup>19</sup> Arun Kundnani, *Spooked! How not to Prevent Violent Extremism*, (London: Institute of Race Relations, 2009); “Government anti-terrorism strategy ‘spies’ on innocent,” *Guardian*, October 16, 2009, accessed April 28, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2009/oct/16/anti-terrorism-strategy-spies-innocents>

<sup>20</sup> See for example the evidence of Charles Farr, Director of OSCT to the Parliamentary Inquiry on Prevent, House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee, *Preventing Violent Extremism*, Ev. 76. Q374.

<sup>21</sup> House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee, *Preventing Violent Extremism*, 63.

“suspect community”<sup>22</sup> – claims which have been consistently rebutted by the UK government, particularly since a review of Prevent in 2011 explicitly directed attention towards all forms of extremism (see below), but which have persisted.<sup>23</sup>

A further set of criticisms have focused on the science underpinning the strategy’s approach of requiring front-line workers to identify individuals ‘vulnerable’ to radicalisation but not yet involved in terrorism.<sup>24</sup> Here, critics point to the fact that there is little academic consensus over what comprise reliable indicators of vulnerability to radicalization.

A major review of Prevent, undertaken after the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government came to office in 2010 and published in 2011, resulted in a significant refocusing of Prevent, albeit this did little to quell criticism of the strategy. Three aspects of this refocusing are particularly significant for the purposes of this chapter. First, while it made clear that “the majority of our resources and efforts will continue to be devoted to preventing people from joining or supporting Al Qa’ida, its affiliates or related groups”, it spelled out that “Prevent will address all forms of terrorism”.<sup>25</sup> Second, the scope of Prevent was substantially broadened from a focus on countering “violent extremism” to include challenging “extremist (and non-violent) ideas that are also part of the terrorist ideology”,<sup>26</sup> defined by the government as “vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values”.<sup>27</sup> Heavily influenced by the thinking of then Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove,<sup>28</sup> who had previously linked terrorism to broader Muslim community practices and dispositions,<sup>29</sup> this laid the foundations for the promotion of “fundamental British values” to become an integral part of PVE in Britain. Third, funding for community-based Prevent work, previously administered via the then Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), was removed and policy responsibility was centralised within the Home Office; a move which also prepared the ground for a subsequent shift in responsibility for frontline PVE policy delivery from communities to professionals working in the delivery of public services.

The new policy approach mapped out by the 2011 Prevent Review evolved further still as a result of three subsequent developments. First, following the murder in 2013 of off-duty soldier Lee Rigby by two young British Muslim converts, a report by the Prime Minister’s task force on tackling radicalisation and extremism led the

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<sup>22</sup> Christina Pantazis and Simon Pemberton “From the ‘Old’ to the ‘New’ Suspect Community: examining the impacts of recent UK counter-terrorist legislation,” *British Journal of Criminology* 49, (2009): 646;

<sup>23</sup> Paul Thomas, “Britain’s Prevent strategy: Always changing, always the same?,” in *The Prevent duty in education: Impact, enactment and implications*, ed. Joel Busher and Lee Jerome (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

<sup>24</sup> Leda Blackwood, Nick Hopkins, and Steven Reicher, “From Theorizing Radicalization to Surveillance Practices: Muslims in the Cross Hairs of Scrutiny,” *Political Psychology* 37, no. 5 (2016): 597; Rik Coolsaet, *All Radicalisation is Local: The Genesis and Drawbacks of an Elusive Concept*, (Brussels: Egmont, 2016); Arun Kundhani, *The Muslims are Coming!* (London: Verso, 2014).

<sup>25</sup> Her Majesty’s Government, *The Prevent Strategy*, 6.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> The government definition of extremism also included “calls for the death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas”, HM Government, *The Prevent Strategy*, 107.

<sup>28</sup> Saeeda Warsi, *The enemy within: A tale of Muslim Britain*, (London: Allen Lane, 2017).

<sup>29</sup> Michael Gove, *Celsius 7/7*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2006).

government to conclude that local authorities and other public bodies were not contributing robustly enough to support the Prevent strategy.<sup>30</sup>

In 2014, the the UK government interpreted efforts by socially conservative elements of Muslim communities in Birmingham to utilize faith to improve educational attainment in a number of Muslim-dominated state schools as evidence of broader “extremism” – often referred to as the “Trojan horse” affair.<sup>31</sup> This resulted in The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted), placing greater emphasis on the requirements of schools and colleges both to reduce the risk of radicalization through the promotion of fundamental British values and to “safeguard” students identified as being at risk of being drawn into processes of radicalization. The potential significance of this change for schools and colleges was brought home as early as 2014, after one London school found itself placed in “special measures” following an Ofsted inspection in which its quality rating was downgraded from “Outstanding” to “Inadequate”, largely due to shortcomings in its safeguarding policies related to Prevent.<sup>32</sup>

Around the same time, public and policy perceptions of the need to upscale PVE efforts were also accentuated by the deepening Syria crisis and the fact that several hundred Britons travelled to the Middle East (or attempted to do so) to join the so-called “Islamic State”.<sup>33</sup> This included significant numbers of young people in education, thereby further consolidating calls for educational institutions, as well as other public services working with potentially vulnerable young people, to be given a greater role in the fight against violent extremism.

The CTSA 2015 can be seen therefore as a product both of the evolution of thinking within government, and as a response to external pressures and challenges. When the duty came into force in July of that year, it was shrouded in controversy, with much of the debate around the duty reflecting long-held concerns about the impacts of Prevent. Some teachers and school/college leaders, as well as prominent academics, the National Union of Teachers (now the National Education Union) and civil society organisations, initially expressed multiple concerns: that shifting previously existing counter-terrorism responsibilities onto a statutory footing placed undue pressure on educational institutions and teachers; that many educators may not have the skills or confidence to facilitate the type of discussions that the duty appeared to entail; that the pressure to report terrorism-related concerns might contribute to the “securitising” of education and could have a “chilling effect” on free speech in the classroom; that the Prevent duty may deepen stigmatisation and suspicion of British Muslims; and that the new measures might even intensify

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<sup>30</sup> Her Majesty's Government, *Tackling Extremism in the UK: Report from the Prime Minister's task force on tackling radicalisation and extremism*, 2013.

<sup>31</sup> Shamim Miah, *Muslims, Schooling and Security: Trojan Horse, Prevent and Racial Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Pivot, 2017).

<sup>32</sup> Richard Adams and Sally Weale, “Church of England school taken aback by Ofsted rating amid extremism row,” *The Guardian*, November 20, 2014, accessed March 23, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/nov/20/church-england-school-john-cass-ofsted-downgraded-extremism>.

<sup>33</sup> “Who are Britain's Jihadis,” BBC News, Oct 12, 2017, accessed March 23, 2021, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-32026985>.

feelings of suspicion towards the state, thereby playing into the hands of those seeking to recruit young people into terroristic activities.<sup>34</sup> The human rights organisation Liberty went so far as to warn that the duty risked turning teachers and childminders “into an involuntary army of spies”.<sup>35</sup>

During the first year of the duty, these criticisms were given further fuel by a sharp rise in the number of young people referred to Channel, and a number of media reports of cases, some bordering on the absurd,<sup>36</sup> in which students, almost always of Muslim background and some as young as 4 years old, were questioned by the police after seemingly quite innocent comments made in the classroom.<sup>37</sup> In 2016, David Anderson QC, then the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, reported a strong feeling in Muslim communities that the Prevent duty entailed “spying” on them.<sup>38</sup>

The Home Office and Department for Education responded by arguing that the duty “doesn’t and shouldn’t stop schools from discussing controversial issues”,<sup>39</sup> and repeatedly emphasised that the duty applies to all forms of extremism. They also urged educationalists to think of the duty largely as an extension of existing policy and practice. The requirements around the identification and referral of individual students deemed vulnerable to radicalization were framed as an extension of existing “safeguarding” responsibilities,<sup>40</sup> a concept increasingly used by welfare and education professionals over the past three decades in relation to “vulnerabilities” to social problems such as child abuse and neglect, child sexual exploitation, gang violence and drug use. The requirements to reduce vulnerability to extremism through the promotion of “fundamental British values” were also framed simply as a re-emphasizing of existing responsibilities. Over time, government also put in place significant training and guidance resources to support schools, colleges and other “specified authorities”.

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<sup>34</sup> *The Independent*, ‘PREVENT will have a chilling effect on open debate, free speech and political dissent’, July 10, 2015, accessed April 28, 2021, <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/letters/prevent-will-have-a-chilling-effect-on-open-debate-free-speech-and-political-dissent-10381491.html>.

<sup>35</sup> Robert Mendick, “Anti-Terror Plan to spy on toddlers is ‘heavy handed’,” *Daily Telegraph* January 4, 2015, accessed March 23, 2021. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/11323558/Anti-terror-plan-to-spy-on-toddlers-is-heavy-handed.html>

<sup>36</sup> See for example, Ben Quinn, “Nursery ‘raised fears of radicalisation over boy’s cucumber drawing’,” *The Guardian* March 11, 2016, accessed April 27, 2021. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/mar/11/nursery-radicalisation-fears-boys-cucumber-drawing-cooker-bomb>

<sup>37</sup> Open Society Justice Initiative, *Eroding Trust: The UK’s PREVENT Counter-Extremism Strategy in Health and Education*, (New York: Open Society Foundations, 2016) accessed March 23, 2021, <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/reports/eroding-trust-uk-s-prevent-counter-extremism-strategy-health-and-education>.

<sup>38</sup> Joe Watts, “Muslims see anti-extremism scheme Prevent as a ‘spying programme’,” admits terror law watchdog”, *Independent*, October 6, 2016, accessed March 23, 2021, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/muslims-prevent-scheme-seen-as-spying-says-terrorism-law-watchdog-a7347751.html>

<sup>39</sup> Rachel Williams, “School heads raise alarm over new duty to protect students from extremism,” *The Guardian*, June 9, 2015, accessed March 23, 2021. <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/jun/09/schools-duty-police-extremism-anti-terrorism-laws>.

<sup>40</sup> Her Majesty’s Government, *The Prevent Strategy*, 84.

The extent to which this response by the government has assuaged criticism of and concerns about the duty remains unclear, however. On the one hand, there is evidence that a substantial portion of staff working in schools and colleges have broadly accepted the government's framing of the duty as an extension of policy and practice that pre-dated the introduction of the duty<sup>41</sup> – a theme to which we return below. On the other hand, criticisms of the duty have persisted, particularly from a number of academics<sup>42</sup> and civil society organisations,<sup>43</sup> and the relative absence of criticism of the duty from educators has been interpreted by some observers not as a sign that the duty is unproblematic, but that the monitoring and surveillance that it entails has simply been normalised and therefore no longer attracts the kind of opposition and resistance that might otherwise have been expected.<sup>44</sup>

### **Monitoring and Surveillance practices under the Prevent Duty**

We can turn now to the core questions of this chapter, about how the Prevent duty has shaped practices of monitoring and surveillance within schools and colleges, and how these practices of monitoring and surveillance have intersected with the politics and practices of race, religion and difference. We organise this discussion around two key themes to emerge from our research. The first of these concerns a tension in the data and the wider existing evidence regarding the extent to which the monitoring and surveillance undertaken under the auspices of Prevent does or does not constitute a continuation of prior professional practice. The second concerns the extent and ways in which these practices of monitoring and surveillance continue to focus disproportionately on Muslim students.

### ***Professional continuity vs new 'cultures of vigilance'***

Before the Prevent training, it is fairly easy going: things would be on trust and yeah, the old days of being able to walk round the building. [...But] with instructions from Prevent, you now start to walk round and look at people and look at sites and places and think, 'well where is the risk, how is the risk being managed?' (R13, Estates Director, College, Yorkshire)

All of the schools and colleges in which we undertook fieldwork had put in place a series of measures in order to meet their new statutory obligations. Existing safeguarding policies and governance structures had been revised and updated to ensure compliance with the new requirements; the staff had received or were about to receive training to enable them to identify the signs or indicators of possible vulnerability to "being drawn into terrorism" – under the Prevent duty, schools and colleges are required to ensure that all members of staff, including teaching, managerial and support staff receive basic Prevent training – and were being

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<sup>41</sup> Joel Busher, Tufyal Choudhury and Paul Thomas, "The enactment of the counter-terrorism "Prevent duty" in British schools and colleges: beyond reluctant accommodation or straightforward policy acceptance," *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 12, no. 3 (2019): 440.

<sup>42</sup> Alice Ross, "Academics Criticise Anti-radicalisation Strategy in open letter," *The Guardian*, September 29, 2016, accessed April 22, 2021 <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/sep/29/academics-criticise-prevent-anti-radicalisation-strategy-open-letter>.

<sup>43</sup> Jamie Grierson, "Human rights groups to boycott government's Prevent review," *The Guardian*, February 16, 2021, accessed April 22, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/feb/16/human-rights-groups-to-boycott-government-prevent-review>.

<sup>44</sup> "Prevent," *Liberty*, accessed 22 April, 2021, <https://www.libertyhumanrights.org.uk/fundamental/prevent/>

encouraged to be alert to these signs at all times. In most schools and colleges there had also been renewed emphasis placed on online safety, with software introduced that would block access to presumed extremist content on the internet and alert safeguarding staff when students entered words or phrases deemed to be of concern.

But to what extent did these new monitoring and surveillance practices constitute a departure from or a continuation of existing practices? After all, schools and colleges were already environments increasingly saturated with surveillance and concomitant practices of discipline. Recent decades have been marked by a significant expansion in surveillance technologies and practices to identify, verify, categorise and track school students: technologies and practices that some argue are today an integral part of how such institutions train students to think and behave in ways that, it is believed, will both help them to flourish and enable them to make a positive contribution to society.<sup>45</sup> The picture that emerges from our study is far from straightforward.

On the one hand, across all of the schools and colleges in which we undertook fieldwork, it was clear that Prevent-related monitoring and surveillance was intimately intertwined with wider safeguarding practices and processes. As indicated above, Prevent-related responsibilities were incorporated within existing school/college safeguarding policies, and while in some cases existing safeguarding teams were expanded in recognition of the increased workload that the Prevent duty entailed, in every institution oversight of Prevent-related activities sat within the institutional safeguarding team. Similarly, Prevent training was in most cases delivered as part of, rather than separate to, annual training to renew safeguarding competencies, and reporting of Prevent-related concerns followed existing safeguarding reporting pathways.

The overlap with existing safeguarding monitoring and surveillance practices was also evident in the basic technologies of surveillance: in the schema used by staff to identify which behaviours and which individuals warrant attention and the techniques through which such behaviours are observed and recorded, such as electronic logs of any concerns about individual students. As respondents repeatedly pointed out, and as often emphasised in Prevent training, there is considerable similarity between what were deemed the signs and indicators that a young person is being drawn into terrorism and the behaviours that they had previously been trained to identify and be alert to as indicators of vulnerability to other safeguarding issues, such as sudden changes in behaviour, appearance, and friendship groups.

It is unsurprising therefore that many of the educationalists we interviewed emphasised the continuity with existing practice:

I see it as a wider viewpoint of taking care of the kids, and I don't particularly think of it as being any different to looking out for abuse or anything else that the children might, or grooming or, it's just another facet to the whole child

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<sup>45</sup> Emmeline Taylor, *Surveillance Schools: Security, Discipline and Control in Contemporary Education*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 7.

protection remit in my opinion. (R60, Learning Resource Centre Manager, High School, London)

Indeed, in our survey data, 86% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “*The Prevent duty in schools or colleges is a continuation of existing safeguarding responsibilities*”. This broad finding has now been replicated across multiple studies,<sup>46</sup> and there is little doubt that this “narrative of continuity”, equating the Prevent duty within existing safeguarding requirements, helped to soften possible opposition to the duty among educators.<sup>47</sup> It certainly helped education professionals to see the high attrition rate within the referral system as unproblematic, even as this has comprised one of the main concerns of Prevent’s critics. In 2015/16, the academic year after the duty’s introduction, for example, only 14% of referrals were deemed suitable for further consideration by a Channel Panel, and only a third of those considered by the Panel led to a Channel intervention. Thus, from the 7,631 safeguarding Prevent referrals made in 2015/16 (one third of which were from the education sector), only 381 (5%) resulted in an intervention through the Channel programme.<sup>48</sup> While critics of Prevent have often seized on this as evidence of the disproportionality of the duty, when seen through a safeguarding lens, such a ratio of referrals to interventions becomes normal, and indicative that the referral system is working as it should.

Yet we also found evidence of four key ways in which the monitoring and surveillance associated with the Prevent duty differed from pre-existing practices of educational monitoring and surveillance.

Firstly, we found evidence that the Prevent duty had contributed to an important **refocusing of pre-existing monitoring and surveillance practices**. While most of what were understood as the potential indicators of vulnerability were broadly similar between Prevent-related concerns and those relating to other safeguarding issues, Prevent-related monitoring and surveillance focused particular attention on the expression of ideas that could be deemed extreme, and signs that could be considered indicators of some form of crisis of belonging. As such, reflecting some of the criteria set out in the framework used within the Channel programme to assess an individual’s level of risk of radicalization, alongside low self-esteem and a desire for adventure and excitement, school and college staff also saw explorations of identity, faith and belonging, as potential indicators of vulnerability to radicalization.<sup>49</sup>

What also contributed to this refocusing of surveillance practices was the emphasis placed on the teaching of “fundamental British values” as a way of building “resilience to extremist ideas”.<sup>50</sup> For several respondents, this translated into a

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<sup>46</sup> See Joel Busher and Lee Jerome, ed., *The Prevent duty in education: Impact, enactment and implications* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020); Suraj Lakhani, “Social capital and the enactment of prevent duty: an empirical case-study of schools and colleges,” *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 13, no. 4, (2020): 660.

<sup>47</sup> Busher, Choudhury and Thomas, The enactment of the counter-terrorism “Prevent duty”.

<sup>48</sup> Individuals Referred to and support through the *Prevent* programme, April 2015 to March 2016. Statistical Bulletin 23/17, London: Home Office.

<sup>49</sup> Her Majesty’s Government, *Channel Vulnerability Assessment Framework*, 2012: 2.

<sup>50</sup> Rachel Pells, “Children must be taught British values at school to develop resilience against terror, says Ofsted chief,” *Independent* June 23, 2017, accessed April 28, 2021,

requirement to identify or “listen out for” expressions of opinions, ideas and ideologies that were deemed “inappropriate” or that “we didn’t think were healthy” (R33, Head of Year, High School, Yorkshire). As one teacher explained, “it’s basically listening out for anything that doesn’t sound quite in line with British Values” (R8, Senior Leader, High School, Yorkshire).

Secondly, for some respondents the introduction of the Prevent duty was associated with an **intensification of monitoring and surveillance** in comparison with pre-existing forms of monitoring and surveillance. While Prevent was widely described as a safeguarding issue, respondents often identified it as a safeguarding issue that required particular vigilance. This was partly a product of the perceived severity of the risk, not just to the student and their family but also to the member of staff and the school/college if one of their students did become involved in acts of terrorism, and particularly if they as an institution were identified as having failed to spot signs that the student was at risk. Multiple respondents spoke about the emotional and moral pressure that they felt under given the high stakes, often citing the intense scrutiny placed on decisions made or not made by schools and colleges where current, or even former, students travelled to Syria.

[W]hen the families were disappearing to Syria, and I felt schools were always blamed for everything. They seem to be pointing at the school, like, “Why didn’t they know, why hadn’t they spotted anything?” And that’s a concern, I think... we’ve done blanket emails to staff to cover things..., I emailed, ‘Remember to listen out for extremism in any form, and if you do hear anything, just listen carefully. Log it, and let us know what’s going on, and then we can take it on.’ And we’re doing it that way, it’s ears to the ground, really, as much as anything. (R8, Senior Leader, High School, Yorkshire)

This perceived need for extra vigilance was also a product both of the apparent difficulty of detecting the threat, and its apparent ubiquity. Government guidelines emphasized that “there is no single way of identifying an individual who is likely to be susceptible to a terrorist ideology” – presumably in part as a way of heading off criticisms about stereotyping – but in doing so also made the threat feel much more difficult to detect.<sup>51</sup> This was compounded by concerns among some respondents that “genuine” cases would likely be well versed in how to avoid detection – a view informed both by warnings in the guidelines that those “at risk of radicalisation may display different signs or seek to hide their views”,<sup>52</sup> and by high profile cases in which one or more students had been radicalized, and in some cases travelled to Syria, without apparently displaying any signs that this was happening.

At the same time, the seemingly mundane nature of some of the vulnerability indicators – sudden changes in behaviour or friendship groups are hardly unusual among teenagers – also made the threat feel ubiquitous. As several respondents observed, “the things that you are looking out for could apply to a whole range of things” (R32, Teacher, High School, Yorkshire). The ubiquity and opacity of the indicators, when combined with beliefs that “the smallest sign can lead to something

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<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/children-taught-british-values-school-resilience-terror-ofsted-chief-amanda-spielman-a7804656.html>

<sup>51</sup> Department for Education, The Prevent Duty: Departmental Advice for Schools, 6.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

bigger” (R63, Head of Subject, High School, London) and that “not all radical extremists are bad people – it can happen to anybody and its just, it’s a kind of, it’s a situation anyone could find themselves in” (R24, Teacher, High School, Yorkshire) made the threat feel constant and seemingly all-encompassing, yet at the same time uncomfortably easy to overlook. Once one adds in the possible repercussions of “missing something”,<sup>53</sup> this provided a powerful motivation for the adoption of what multiple respondents described as an approach of “better safe than sorry”.

Now every single little thing we report back because we also need to cover ourselves. We don’t want to happen [to us] what happened to Bethnal Green [an East London school that faced particular scrutiny after three female students travelled to join ISIS]. They are saying that ‘we had no idea’, when there were probably lots of signs there. (R50, DSL, school, London)

There was absolutely nothing to be concerned about, but I think what the Prevent agenda does, is, as a teacher it makes you feel anxious and that you will miss something in some way, that you will get into trouble because you’ll miss something. (R5, Senior leader, High School, Yorkshire).

Quite what this additional vigilance looked like varied across institutions and individuals. For some, it was about going beyond putting in place technical solutions to achieving cultural change – cultivating what one respondent described as “an ethos inside the school of flagging conversations that are concerning” (R63, Head of Subject, High School, London). For some, the fact that students who were becoming radicalized were likely to be actively seek to avoid detection meant that staff had to find ways to “listen more carefully to what the child is saying to someone else [other than members of staff]”, and to “listen to their conversations with peers to see what comes out of that” (R30, Teaching Assistant, Primary School, Yorkshire), whether that was through listening in to conversations among students or encouraging students themselves to be aware of and be willing to report signs of radicalization. For others it was about inculcating a “culture of vigilance” around security issues more broadly on the basis that if people are aware of and report on “something not quite right or suspicious” there is always the chance that “it could be a Prevent issue as well” (R6, Deputy Head, High School, Yorkshire).

Several respondents described how their appreciation of these apparent risks had translated into a tendency to err on the side of caution and report concerns even where they suspected there was, in fact, little risk on the grounds that “it’s not serious, but it could be serious” (R55, Deputy Head, High School, London). In such a situation, creating a paper trail to audit if something did happen served at least to limit their exposure to such risks. As one respondent recalled:

so even though I actually kind of put, as my opening sentence [in the referral notes], “I realise this is very vague, but,” and then just trying to put the conversation that I’d had with this little boy, because it might be absolutely something and nothing, but at least that’s saying on that particular date that was flagged up. (R28, Teaching Assistant, Primary School, Yorkshire)

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<sup>53</sup> See quotation below

As another respondent explained:

I know there needs to be that element of confidentiality, but at the end of the day, whenever something happens, nobody questions why people shared information; they always question why they didn't. (R29, Deputy Head, Primary School, Yorkshire)

Thirdly, and following on from the previous point, the perceived seriousness of the risk and need for extra vigilance also appears to have contributed to a **hardening of responses by some staff to student resistance to the practices of surveillance**. Student resistance to practices of surveillance in educational settings is likely as old as educational settings themselves. As Taylor notes,<sup>54</sup> there are multiple ways in which students resist the expansion of surveillance in educational settings today, including repositioning security cameras, placing gum on them or showing awareness of the areas that are free of camera surveillance. Crucially, she also notes that acts of resistance are often not considered serious misbehaviour by students, but are rather understood as a form of mischievousness.

Our interviews found numerous examples of students, aware of being watched and observed for indicators of radicalization, engaging in acts that can be interpreted as forms of resistance to Prevent-related surveillance. We found students playing on the fear and concerns of teachers, reproducing the indicators as a way of winding up school and college staff and testing the boundaries of the policies. In one school, a student downloaded software to enter words flagged by IT monitoring filters into the search engines on school computers with such frequency that in the end, the terms used had to be removed from the list of banned words. In another school, knowing that staff had completed their Prevent training and had obligations to report on any concerns about support for terrorist groups, students walked around the school whispering "ISIS" as they passed staff members.

Interviewees recognised that, for some students, Prevent provided a further arena in which to test the boundaries of what was permissible and possible – in which to engage in "mischief":

But I think for some they just say it as a joke also. Everyone wants, it just that part of the anti-establishment vibe isn't it? Just inherently hilarious. "Don't say anything the police are going to get us," it's just a bit of a joke. (R45, Teacher, High School, London)

While many instances were treated as examples of mischief, we also encountered instances of harder institutional responses. In one institution such actions were met with warnings to students about potential police involvement:

But [students] do make jokes about it. They will say things and they know it's inflammatory and they know it will get them into trouble. Another boy [...] who is very difficult. When he is in a situation he doesn't want to be in he will make comments [...] He will say things like, 'I want to blow this place up, but don't

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<sup>54</sup> Taylor, *Surveillance Schools*, 18.

report me to the police'. [...] it's become [...] a joke badge of honour it's quite difficult to unpick what you report and what you don't report. And what you do about that because it's not serious, but it could be serious.

INT: How do you handle that?

R1: We tell them don't be silly with that. [...] you will end of with the police knocking on your door. And they are like no I didn't mean it [...] I am just being stupid, I am just joking. (R55, Deputy Head, High School, London)

We also encountered examples where staff had determined that the actions or comments of students did not comprise a serious or "genuine" concern, but nevertheless took further action. In some cases, this was explained in terms of an underlying didactic reasoning: the student was apparently reported in order to help them understand the parameters of "appropriate" and "inappropriate" behaviour. In one such example, a student made comments during a class in front of the staff and students that they should pray for him, as he would soon be in Syria. Further discussions with the student led the school to determine that this was just a student playing up, trying to upset the staff in the class and that there was no concern that the student had a serious intention to travel to Syria. However, the school still decided to bring the parents in for a discussion:

R: In speaking to that child it became really apparent really, really, quickly that they were winding the TA [teaching assistant] up. I could have said that's a child who is just being naughty. But, I wanted to make the point for the child that actually what you say matters.

INT: So it's actually a didactic line.

R: Yes. What you say matters. People are listening to you, every single thing that you are saying, and they will make judgements about you based on what is coming out of your mouth. Then we got the parents in and his dad wasn't happy with him. [...] his dad was thinking you see why the school has done this and he was saying yes, I can see why. [...] very quickly he was saying I am sorry, I will apologise to the TA. I was saying, "okay I get that, but what if you do that and then I find out that in six months' time that you have left home and you are in Syria. What do I do now? How does that play out?" (R49, Deputy Head, High School, London)

The most striking example of this was a case in which a Muslim student had made a video with friends in which, at some point during the video, they had pretended to be promoting ISIS, telling viewers that if they wanted to join ISIS they should call them on the number or click on a link that would appear at the end of the video. It was clear to staff at the school that this was supposed to be a joke – apart from anything else the number at the end of the video was a false number and there was no link to follow. However, the case still entered the referral pathway. It led to the involvement of the Safer Schools police officer, the local Prevent team and, at some point during this process, the parents of the student were called in. When asked about why the case had been handled in this way, the respondent explained,

I knew it was a joke but I thought they need to know that certain things are not funny and that you can't put certain things on YouTube like that. So, I looked

at it and I thought, okay funny but not funny... I was more concerned not because I think they were going to be radicalised in any way. I was more concerned about their understanding of why that was not appropriate. (R65, support worker, school, London)

In both examples, the staff viewed themselves as protecting the students by making them aware of how their actions would be interpreted in the wider world given their Muslim identity and Islamophobia in society. For the school and colleges staff, these were important lessons for Muslim students in avoiding 'risky identities' and performing 'safe identities'.<sup>55</sup> It suggests that a safeguarding policy, introduced to protect people from being drawn into terrorism, has been stretched to protect Muslim students from provoking racialised suspicion and discrimination. However, teaching Muslims to avoid actions, even jokes, that could be misconstrued as an indicator of extremism, actually reinforces a moderate/extremist binary, and in doing so legitimatises the need for surveillance of Muslim religious practices and identities for signs of extremism.

Fourthly, the other way in which the monitoring and surveillance practices associated with Prevent appeared to diverge from those associated with other safeguarding issues was **how difficult it was to access information with which to develop a realistic assessment of local risk**. As respondents observed, in other areas of safeguarding, such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) or youth 'gang' violence, the relevant authorities could provide risk assessments that often included local prevalence data. Such information was used by safeguarding leads to inform their own judgements about what comprised a proportional response to those issues within their own institutions.

This was not the case with Prevent, however. Some institutional safeguarding leads had been told that they were in a "priority" area or a "category one" area, but these categories themselves had been left unexplained, and neither could they access comparative data for neighbouring areas. In the absence of such information, some respondents arrived at the conclusion that maybe such designations were simply based on the size of the local Muslim population, after all.

With Prevent, I mean, there's no data available, there's no, it's all secret squirrel. We're a category two, or category one borough, so it's a high risk borough, but low referrals under eighteens, very low. I don't know what the over eighteen referral rate is, do you know? And there's no comparative data so you can't compare it to other boroughs: it's very, it's all quite clandestine so I can't tell you if things are better elsewhere. [...] What is the actual risk? Like, we know, for example with female genital mutilation we know how many, up to about three years ago, two years ago, were affected in [name of borough]. So like, wow, you know, it's huge, so we've got to sort this out, you know? But we don't know how many are affected [in terms of Prevent-related concerns], I don't know how many are affected, and all I know is that we're category one, or whatever, but there's no, I can't find a ..., there's ..., no-one's given us a description of what that is. Well why is it a category one? What is it? I think it's

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<sup>55</sup> Gabe Mythen, Sandra Walklate and Fatima Khan "'I'm a Muslim, but I'm Not a Terrorist': Victimization, Risky Identities and the Performance of Safety" *British Journal of Criminology* 49, no. 6 (2009): 736.

just based on the number of Muslims, but I don't know. Is it? (R61, DSL, secondary school, London)

The picture that emerges then is one in which, while the monitoring and surveillance practices undertaken in response to the Prevent duty were intertwined with and understood in the context of wider safeguarding practices, there is some evidence at least of important ways in which the introduction of the Prevent duty also refocused surveillance practices and further foregrounded ideas about the need for vigilance.

### ***The Surveillance of Muslim Religious Practice and Identity***

As described above, since the launch of the Prevent duty, the Home Office, Department for Education and assorted Prevent practitioners have been keen to emphasise that the Prevent strategy and duty apply to all forms of extremism. This was also emphasised during interviews in all of the schools and colleges in which we undertook fieldwork. Indeed, mindful of the widespread public perception that Prevent is primarily about AQ/ISIS-inspired extremism, and keen to ensure that Muslim students did not feel as though they were being singled out,<sup>56</sup> staff often described measures that they had taken to avoid such outcomes. This included the foregrounding of democracy, active citizenship, equality and anti-racism in classroom activities designed to address the Prevent duty; seeking out materials that foster a balanced understanding of the threats posed by extremism, terrorism and radicalization; emphasising to students that AQ/ISIS-inspired terrorism should in no way be seen to be representative of Islam or Muslims; introducing students to some of the Prevent training materials that they believed conveyed that the duty was not “targeting” Muslims; and some of the Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs)<sup>57</sup> described working closely with colleagues to help them to feel confident in their own professional judgement in order to reduce the number of unnecessary referrals. Yet, in spite of these efforts, we still found evidence that Muslim students were a particular focus of attention, and that there were subtle and unintentional, yet significant, differences in surveillance practices with regards to Muslim and non-Muslim students. A crucial part of surveillance is, as John Fiske observes, the “coding” of that which is “normal” and that which is “abnormal” or “dangerous”.<sup>58</sup> Our data suggest that the indicators of vulnerability outlined through Prevent training and, ironically, during efforts by staff to protect students from perceived public prejudice towards Muslims (see above), often served to make Muslim students “hyper-visible”.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Our research report (Busher et al, What the Prevent Duty means for schools, 55) identified that 57% of survey respondents thought that the Prevent duty was ‘considerably more likely’ or ‘more likely’ to stigmatise Muslim students in general.

<sup>57</sup> Designated Safeguarding Leads are the senior members of staff within a school or college with responsibility for safeguarding and liaison with external welfare agencies. In most instances, staff would report their concern to the DSL.

<sup>58</sup> John Fiske, “Surveilling the City: Whiteness, the Black Man and Democratic Totalitarianism,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 15, no. 2 (1998): 67, 72.

<sup>59</sup> Tina G Patel, “Surveillance, Suspicion and Stigma: Brown Bodies in a Terror-Panic Climate” *Surveillance & Society* 10, no 3/4 (2012): 215. See also: Fahid Qurashi, “The Prevent Strategy and the UK ‘War on Terror’: Embedding Infrastructures of Surveillance in Muslim Communities”, *Palgrave Communications* 4 no. 17 (2018): 1.

The Prevent strategy, as well as the training and guidance around the Prevent duty, attempts to draw a distinction between signs of extremism on the one hand and the expressions of conservative religious views on the other, with policymakers placing particular emphasis on the argument that Prevent is not about policing conservative religious views. However, our interviews point towards the difficulties that arise in trying to draw such clear distinctions. There were frequent and numerous examples in which (Islamic) religious practices, beliefs and views of students, or their ethnic background, drew the attention of school and college staff and prompted further investigation and questioning.

A Muslim teacher in one school recalled, for example, receiving Prevent related training where he was given a sheet explaining key Islamic terms like *Shahada* and *Sharia*. He understood this to be a list of words they needed to listen out for. A member of support staff with responsibility for monitoring the use of computers remembered seeing images and unfamiliar Arabic words on a screen that a student was viewing:

I thought that word, I don't even know what that word means, but I thought it had negative connotations and it was a Muslim girl (R60, Learning Resource Centre Manager, High School, London)

In another school, religious practices identified as signs of possible "extremism", sufficient to warrant further investigation or monitoring, included opposition from parents to a student playing musical instruments:

[Y]ou're aware, that it's insane, because it might be signs that things are going on, but it might be signs that the dad's beliefs are so strong that he doesn't want him to learn to play a musical instrument. (R28, Teaching Assistant, Primary School, Yorkshire)

The same teacher recalled hearing a young male Muslim student mention his father's absence from home and began to consider whether the father had travelled to Syria as a foreign fighter. As the interviewee acknowledged, "my mind did make a massive leap, that it sounded really strange and maybe he had gone to Syria, but also maybe he was in prison".

In fact, the interview data point toward the potential for even mundane student 'Muslimness', Islamic signifiers or practices to be sufficiently unfamiliar from the norms of the teacher that they are seen to require further consideration and information. One interviewee described how young Muslim men growing a beard "in a particular way" could be a trigger for suspicion:

[W]e do have boys who come to school and suddenly turn up and they have grown a bit of a beard. So we kind of question that but we haven't really got anywhere to go [...] we have become much more vigilant because when I do see a boy who is growing a beard and he is only fifteen or fourteen, it does make me a bit suspicious. When it is worn in a particular way. So, we do sort of keep an eye on them and we do have chats with them and we do try and sound out what their thinking is. (R50, Deputy Head, High School, London)

One of the DSL's interviewed recalled receiving a referral from a member of staff because "one lad were learning Arabic because he wanted to learn the Quran in its original language and that were flagged." (R12, Student Well-Being and Safety Lead, College, Yorkshire). In another school, writing *Allahu-akbar*, a phrase used in daily prayers by Muslims, in an exercise book triggered concern and further investigation. Another respondent revealed their concern in seeing a female student suddenly come to school wearing a headscarf:

[W]hat you feel is, you know, you're honestly looking at the situation thinking, you've got a girl who has a half-Pakistani heritage, and yet you're deeming her at risk of radicalisation because she's exploring that part of her culture. That feels, you almost feel racist for thinking that. Do you see what I mean? Thinking that you'll get it wrong, and yet, your overriding concern is that you'll miss something. [...]better to be vigilant and make that mistake, and find out [...] that there was absolutely nothing to be concerned about [...] it makes you feel anxious and that you will miss something in some way (R5, Head of Year, High School, Yorkshire)

In this instance the respondent clearly wrestles with concerns that this added vigilance, based on the student's ethnicity, might be "racist", but seems to resolve these concerns with reference to what is presented as the overriding importance of not "miss[ing] something".

All of these examples emphasise the way in which Muslim religious practices can become marked as signs of danger: not out of malice or active prejudice, but because they are different and unfamiliar to many school and college staff, the overwhelming majority of whom are white non-Muslims. A lack of understanding around Islam and a lack of confidence in assessing risk, contribute therefore to a culture of reporting onwards anything that leaves doubt in the mind of the member of staff, and issues that could have been addressed by the classroom teacher activate internal Prevent referral processes.

Staff experiences of responding to concerns about far-right extremism provide an interesting point of comparison. Our interviews indicate that some educationalists, at least, have a more nuanced and self-assured approach to far-right extremism, a finding supported by subsequent educational research.<sup>60</sup> They were confident in identifying and acting on racist comments which they believed could be addressed through lessons on equality and diversity that made it clear to all students that racism and racist language is unacceptable. The upshot of this was that they would be less likely to flag concerns because they felt more confident in their own professional judgement. As one respondent summarised:

W]e focus on Muslim extremism, and possibly because the White extremism, far-right extremism feels more commonplace, and I suppose we don't assume that there will be any action from that, that maybe not all of us take that as

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<sup>60</sup> Suraj Lakhani and Natalie James, "Prevent duty": empirical reflections on the challenges of addressing far-right extremism within secondary schools and colleges in the UK', *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 14, no.1 (2021): 67.

seriously. [...] And also, if you're being realistic, the demographic of our teaching staff is white, and so any extremism from the far-right, although it might be uncomfortable, it's more within your experience, and you feel better placed to judge how extreme you feel that is and whether you need to report it on. [...] Whereas maybe the Muslim extremism, you would feel like you had to report everything on [...] I feel that if a white child made extremist comments about Muslims, black people, they would be less likely to be reported than a Muslim student who made a comment [...] that was seen as extreme and anti-white culture. Because the right-wing extremism seems more commonplace. (R5, Head of Year, High School, Yorkshire)

The comments here suggest then that the lack of familiarity with Muslim cultural practices and norms among a largely non-Muslim and white teaching profession contribute to generating differentiated institutionalised Prevent practices in responding to the actions of Muslim students compared to non-Muslim white students. And the suggested increased likelihood of referrals for Muslim students compared to non-Muslim white students points to the risk of discrimination.

Of course, our interview data comprise a relatively small sample. However, such findings are given a certain amount of credence by Home Office data on Prevent referrals. Of particular interest here are the data regarding the ratio between the number of referrals made and the number of cases that are then assessed to require a Channel intervention. This data indicates that professionals involved in making Prevent referrals are more effective in identifying cases of right-wing extremism compared to Islamist extremism. In 2019-2020, 1487 referrals for concerns related to Islamist extremism resulted in 210 individuals receiving Channel support, but only 1,387 right-wing extremism referrals were needed to identify 302 individuals.<sup>61</sup> Thus, for every case of Islamist extremism adopted for support through the Channel programme there were seven Prevent referrals. By contrast, for every right-wing extremism case adopted for a Channel intervention there were 4.5 Prevent referrals. In other words, the rate at which right-wing extremist referrals are found to justify and require Channel interventions are almost 60 per cent higher than for Islamist referrals.

Such findings also help to explain how, while most of our survey respondents accepted surveillance and monitoring as part of safeguarding practice, and while the overwhelming majority (82%) accepted that the duty ostensibly related to all forms of extremism, many nevertheless still had concerns that the Prevent duty would in practice be focused on Muslim students and that this could both negatively transform the relationship between (white) educationalists and students, and stigmatise and alienate Muslim students and their families, particularly if "done badly" by the institution.<sup>62</sup> This finding points to an acute dilemma described by many of our respondents: aware of their professional obligation to enact the Prevent duty and broadly accepting of the importance of preventing young people being drawn into terrorism, but also aware of its potential for racialised surveillance, and associated stigmatisation of their Muslim students.

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<sup>61</sup> Home Office, *Individuals referred to and supported through the Prevent programme England and Wales, April 2019 to March 2020*, Statistical Bulletin: 36/20 (London: Home Office, 2020), 14.

<sup>62</sup> Busher, Choudhury and Thomas, *The Enactment of the Counter-Terrorism "Prevent Duty"*, 18.

## **Conclusion**

Surveillance and monitoring of students in English educational settings is inherent to Prevent and the enactment of the Prevent duty. While Prevent has been expanded to cover all forms of extremism, it has not been able to escape its own origins as a programme that began with a focus exclusively on Muslims and in which, our research data suggests, Muslim students remain in practice a focus of attention. This chapter shows that the implementation of Prevent has increased the scrutiny by school and college staff of the actions, behaviours and expressions of Muslim students in particular. Furthermore, expressions of religious identity, practice and belief have become coded as potentially suspect, requiring further attention and inquiry to determine whether they signify real threat. Aware, perhaps of how society may (mis)read the actions of Muslims who may be seeking to resist and subvert the surveillance they face, school and college staff teach their students vital lessons on how to enact appropriate “safe” identities. While our research has provided some insight into how school and college staff are interpreting, implementing and understanding the Prevent duty and the surveillance it entails, further empirical research is needed to understand the views and perceptions of students, especially Muslim students, themselves.

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