



# University of HUDDERSFIELD

## University of Huddersfield Repository

Busher, Joel, Choudhury, Tufyal, Thomas, Paul and Harris, Gareth

What the Prevent duty means for schools and colleges in England: An analysis of educationalists' experiences

### Original Citation

Busher, Joel, Choudhury, Tufyal, Thomas, Paul and Harris, Gareth (2017) What the Prevent duty means for schools and colleges in England: An analysis of educationalists' experiences. Research Report. Aziz Foundation.

This version is available at <http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/32349/>

The University Repository is a digital collection of the research output of the University, available on Open Access. Copyright and Moral Rights for the items on this site are retained by the individual author and/or other copyright owners. Users may access full items free of charge; copies of full text items generally can be reproduced, displayed or performed and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided:

- The authors, title and full bibliographic details is credited in any copy;
- A hyperlink and/or URL is included for the original metadata page; and
- The content is not changed in any way.

For more information, including our policy and submission procedure, please contact the Repository Team at: [E.mailbox@hud.ac.uk](mailto:E.mailbox@hud.ac.uk).

<http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/>

---

# What the Prevent duty means for schools and colleges in England:

## An analysis of educationalists' experiences

---

July 2017

**Joel Busher** (Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations, Coventry University)

**Tufyal Choudhury** (Durham University)

**Paul Thomas** (University of Huddersfield)

**Gareth Harris** (Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations, Coventry University)



#### **Creative Commons Licence**

Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

We encourage the sharing of this publication. Anyone can download, save, and distribute this work in any medium or format without written permission as long as appropriate credit is given to the publishers and the authors, for non-commercial purposes only, and ensure that any edited, remixed or transformed variants of the original material are not distributed.

For more information on this licence, please see <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0>. You do not have to comply with the license for elements of the material in the public domain or where your use is permitted by an applicable exception or limitation.

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the funders or of the authors' host institutions.

# Contents

Acknowledgements	4
Executive Summary	5
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2. Background to the 'Prevent duty' on schools and colleges</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1. Prevent and its criticisms	11
2.2. The changing focus and content of the Prevent strategy	12
2.3. Implementation of the Prevent duty in schools and colleges	13
2.4. How the Prevent duty has been playing out on the ground: What we know so far	15
<b>3. Methods</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>4. Findings</b>	<b>23</b>
4.1. Interpretations of the Prevent duty	23
4.1.1. <i>Prevent as safeguarding</i>	23
4.1.2. <i>Prevent as a response to all forms of extremism</i>	24
4.1.3. <i>Prevent and 'Fundamental British Values'</i>	26
4.1.4. <i>The survey data on interpretations of the Prevent duty</i>	28
4.2. Confidence	30
4.2.1. <i>'Difficult conversations'</i>	34
4.2.2. <i>The distribution of confidence</i>	36
4.3. What the Prevent duty has meant in practice	39
4.3.1. <i>Referrals and the reporting of concerns</i>	39
4.3.2. <i>The curriculum response</i>	43
4.3.3. <i>Workload and budgetary implications</i>	45
4.4. The perceived impacts of the Prevent duty on school/college communities	49
4.4.1. <i>The 'chilling effect' on classrooms, lecture theatres and student-staff interactions</i>	50
4.4.2. <i>The effects of the Prevent duty on Muslim students and school cohesion</i>	54
4.4.3. <i>The effects of the Prevent duty on relationships with parents</i>	57
4.5. Support for and opposition to the Prevent duty among school/college staff	59
<b>5. Conclusions</b>	<b>65</b>
About the research team	67

# List of Figures

Figure 1.	'The Prevent duty is about...'	29
Figure 2.	'The Prevent duty is about...'; by respondents in schools/colleges with less than 10% / more than 10% Muslim students	29
Figure 3.	Confidence in implementing the Prevent duty	30
Figure 4.	Perceived usefulness of different forms of Prevent-related training	32
Figure 5.	Confidence in implementing the Prevent duty compared with confidence about having conversations with students about issues related to extremism and radicalisation	35
Figure 6.	Perceptions of what would be most useful for school/college staff in relation to the Prevent duty	36
Figure 7.	Confidence in implementing the Prevent duty, by DSLs and non-DSL	37
Figure 8.	Confidence in implementing the Prevent duty, by job role	38
Figure 9.	Confidence in implementing the Prevent duty, by years qualified as a teacher/lecturer	39
Figure 10.	How likely or unlikely do you think it is that you would have referred the student if the official Prevent duty had not been in place? (Internal referrals)	41
Figure 11.	How likely or unlikely do you think it is that you would have referred the student if the official Prevent duty had not been in place? (External referrals)	41
Figure 12.	Reported curriculum response to the Prevent duty	45
Figure 13.	Perceived impact on personal workload, staff workload and institutional budget	46
Figure 14.	Perceived impact on personal workload, by job role	47
Figure 15.	Increase in budgetary and resource pressure as a result of the Prevent duty, by school / college	48
Figure 16.	Increase in staff workload as a result of the Prevent duty, by school / college	48
Figure 17.	Impact of the Prevent duty on staff workload, by respondents in schools/colleges with less than 10% / more than 10% Muslim students	49
Figure 18.	Perceived impact of the Prevent duty on student-staff trust	51
Figure 19.	Perceived impact of the Prevent duty on openness of discussions with students about issues such as extremism, intolerance and inequality	51
Figure 20.	Perceived impact of the Prevent duty on openness of discussions with students about issues such as extremism, intolerance and inequality, by respondents in schools with less than 10% / more than 10% Muslim students	52
Figure 21.	Perceived impact of the Prevent duty on openness of discussions with students about issues such as extremism, intolerance and inequality, by White British / BME respondents	53
Figure 22.	Has the Prevent duty made it more likely or less likely that Muslim students might feel stigmatised?	55
Figure 23.	Do you think the Prevent duty makes it easier or more difficult for schools/colleges to create an environment in which students from different backgrounds get on well with one another?	56
Figure 24.	Do you think the Prevent duty makes it easier or more difficult for schools/colleges to create an environment in which students from different backgrounds get on well with one another? By White British / BME respondents	56
Figure 25.	How, if at all, has your school/college discussed the Prevent duty with parents?	58
Figure 26.	How strongly do you agree or disagree that the Prevent duty on schools and colleges is a proportionate response to a clearly identified problem?	61
Figure 27.	How strongly do you agree or disagree that the Prevent duty on schools and colleges is a proportionate response to a clearly identified problem? By White British / BME respondents	63

---

## Acknowledgements

First and foremost we would like to acknowledge the time and effort of all of those who participated in this research: the interviewees, those who facilitated our visits to the schools and colleges, the survey respondents, the unions, local authorities and university education departments who were kind enough to publicise the survey, the local authority Prevent practitioners that we interviewed, and all of those who participated in the stakeholder feedback and discussion sessions. We are aware that these are all busy people facing multiple responsibilities and pressures in their everyday working lives, so we are deeply grateful that they took the time to support this research.

We would like to thank the three research assistants who assiduously transcribed almost 50 hours of interview data, Will Jessop, Tam Sanger and Victoria Butkova, as well as Tom Fisher and Elaine Crawley for their detailed reading of and comments on earlier versions of this report. We would also like to thank Simon Ford for his design work and Michael Braybrook for his support on that aspect of the report.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the generous support of the Aziz Foundation, and that of the institutions where we are based: Durham University, the University of Huddersfield and the Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations (CTPSR) at Coventry University. Without their support this research would not have taken place.

# Executive Summary

## What the Prevent duty means for schools and colleges in England: An analysis of educationalists' experiences

**Joel Busher** (Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations, Coventry University)

**Tufyal Choudhury** (Durham University)

**Paul Thomas** (University of Huddersfield)

**Gareth Harris** (CTPSR, Coventry University)

### Background and scope of the report

In July 2015, a legal duty came into force requiring that 'specified authorities', including schools and further education colleges ('colleges'), show 'due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism'<sup>1</sup> – popularly referred to as the 'Prevent duty'.<sup>2</sup> This was a significant change to the Prevent strand of the overall counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST, because it placed specific legal responsibility on schools and colleges to play an important role within attempts to prevent extremism and terrorism.

Guidance issued to schools and colleges by the UK government asserted that this duty should be understood within the framework of existing responsibilities to 'safeguard' young and vulnerable people from harm. Schools and colleges are also required to build resilience against extremism amongst their students by promoting 'fundamental British values' within their curriculum content and their school/college operations.

Since the Prevent duty was put before Parliament, it has been the focus of extensive and often highly polarised public debate. While the UK government has argued that the duty 'doesn't and shouldn't stop schools from discussing controversial issues',<sup>3</sup> critics of the duty have maintained that it will have, and is having, a 'chilling effect' on free speech on schools and colleges. In addition, while the UK government has insisted that Prevent and the Prevent duty relate to all forms of extremism, critics

argue that, whatever the intention of individual policymakers, practitioners and professionals, Prevent and the Prevent duty continue in practice to concentrate overwhelmingly on Muslim communities, thereby exacerbating stigmatisation of Muslim students. This concern has been heightened through high-profile media coverage of controversial Prevent referrals of individual Muslim students.

These debates made clear an urgent requirement for a stronger evidence base from which to understand and assess how the Prevent duty is playing out, both in schools and colleges and in the context of other 'specified authorities'. The research presented in this report begins to respond to this requirement. Focusing on the experiences and attitudes of school and college staff, it examines 4 questions:

1. How has the new Prevent duty been interpreted by staff in schools and colleges in England?
2. How confident do school/college staff feel with regards to implementing the Prevent duty?
3. What impacts, if any, do school/college staff think the Prevent duty has had on their school or college, and on their interactions with students and parents?
4. To what extent, if at all, have school/college staff opposed or questioned the legitimacy of the Prevent duty?

### The research evidence base

The report draws on:

- In-depth qualitative interviews with 70 education professionals across 14 schools and colleges in West Yorkshire and London;
- In-depth qualitative interviews with 8 local authority level Prevent practitioners working to support schools and colleges;
- A national online survey of school/college staff (n=225);
- A series of feedback and discussion sessions with Muslim civil society organisations, school/college staff, educational trade unions, government departments and local authorities.

1 Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015, s.26.

2 The duty came into force in the further education and skills sector 2 months later, on 18 September 2015. OFSTED (2016) *How Well Are Further Education and Skills Providers Implementing the 'Prevent' Duty?* July 2016, No. 160041, accessed via <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-prevent-duty-in-further-education-and-skills-providers>

3 Williams, R. (2015) 'School heads raise alarm over new duty to protect students from extremism'. *The Guardian*, 9 June, accessed via <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/jun/09/schools-duty-police-extremism-anti-terrorism-laws>

## Key findings

Our key research findings are identified under four main themes:

### ***Interpretation of the duty***

The overwhelming majority of respondents had engaged with and accepted the core government message that Prevent should be understood as part of school/college safeguarding responsibilities. The integration of Prevent into well-established institutional safeguarding systems and practices provided a basis for what we call 'narratives of continuity' – accounts of the duty that emphasise the extent to which it has been incorporated within or grafted onto existing ways of working.

There was also widespread acceptance and repetition of the government's message that Prevent relates to all forms of extremism. Here, however, we also encountered a strong counter-current of scepticism about the extent to which this formal focus on all forms of extremism was borne out in practice.

There was least consensus among the respondents on the role of promoting fundamental British values in relation to Prevent. We found widespread discomfort and uncertainty around the focus on the specifically *British* nature and content of these values and concern about how this can be translated in to inclusive curriculum content and practice. Indeed, the expectation to promote fundamental British values was one of the main focal points of the respondents' criticisms of the duty.

### ***Confidence***

Respondents expressed fairly high levels of confidence with regards to implementing the Prevent duty – likely to be a product of a combination of effective training, the 'narratives of continuity' described above, confidence in their professional skills and experience, trust in those taking decisions further along the safeguarding referral pathway to correctly identify which cases are or are not a 'real concern', and the cultivation of an 'if in doubt speak to someone' culture.

There was however an important variation. Teachers and lecturers, particularly those with less experience, expressed significantly less confidence than their more senior or experienced colleagues. Among respondents who were not

Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) for their institution, 1 in 3 were unable to describe themselves as at least 'fairly confident' in implementing the duty.

Within the interview data we also found a strong current of anxiety about having 'difficult conversations' with students and/or parents, and whether they had the skills and confidence to successfully engage in such conversations. The survey data were, however, ambiguous on this point.

### ***Impacts of the Prevent duty***

While we often encountered 'narratives of continuity', we also encountered evidence of significant changes associated with the introduction of the duty. This included a sharp increase in Prevent reporting and referrals. We believe that this is likely to be a product both of widespread anxiety about missing a case that should have been referred and, perhaps ironically, of the same 'if in doubt speak to someone' culture and trust in the referral systems that helped to underpin staff confidence. In some cases, referrals were made of 'inappropriate behaviour' even when it was not seen as a risk relating to radicalisation, raising important questions about how staff are understanding the purpose of the Prevent duty and the nature of the harms that they believe it to be addressing.

We also found evidence of a substantial effort to respond to the Prevent duty through the curriculum and through extra-curricular activities, and of a substantial increase in workload, particularly for senior staff, and hidden financial costs for educational institutions following the duty's introduction.

We found relatively little support among respondents for the idea that the duty has led to a 'chilling effect' on conversations with students in the classroom and beyond. We believe that part of the explanation for this is that staff who were concerned about this possible side-effect of the duty took pre-emptive action to minimise the risk of such effects emerging e.g. we heard about schools/colleges reinvigorating debating clubs, or promoting more discussion of Prevent-related issues in the classroom. There is a clear requirement for research to explore whether such perceptions resonate with student experiences since the introduction of the duty.

We did, however, find a strong current of concern, particularly among BME respondents, that the Prevent duty is making it more difficult to foster an environment in which students from different backgrounds get on well with one another.

We also found widespread – and in some cases very acute – concerns about increased stigmatisation of Muslim students in the context of the Prevent duty. It is important to note, however, that most interview respondents who discussed this issue also spoke about how they and their colleagues were working to ensure that the duty did not have these effects among their students e.g. by foregrounding democracy, active citizenship, equality and anti-racism in their activities designed to address the duty; by seeking out materials that foster a balanced understanding of the threats posed by extremism, terrorism and radicalisation; by emphasising to students that AQ/ISIS-inspired terrorism should in no way be seen to be representative of Islam or Muslims; by, in some cases, introducing students to some of the Prevent training materials that they believed conveyed that the duty was not ‘targeting’ Muslims; or in the case of DSLs, working with colleagues, and in particular younger colleagues, to try to reduce the number of unnecessary referrals by helping them to feel confident in their own professional judgement.

### **Acceptance of and opposition to the Prevent duty**

We did find some criticism of, and scepticism about the efficacy of the Prevent duty, particularly among senior leaders and BME respondents. A small number of respondents even argued that the practices engendered by the duty might, in fact, be counter-productive to the prevention of extremism – either because they might lead to Muslim students withdrawing from sharing concerns and questions with staff due to feelings that they are being singled out for more attention and scrutiny, or because they might more generally stoke feelings of being marginalised by the state and society.

In general, however, very few respondents directly questioned the legitimacy of the duty or expressed wholesale opposition to it. Furthermore, apart from a small, highly critical minority, criticisms were usually conditional and/or subtle, e.g. *if done badly*, the duty has the potential to be problematic or cause harm.

We propose that four factors have been particularly important in shaping this response:

- **Situating Prevent as ‘safeguarding’ appears to have played a fundamental role in allaying anxieties about the duty** and leading staff to see this as a continuation of their existing professional practices;

- **Respondents often expressed considerable confidence in the ability of their own institutions to effectively manage and pre-empt the potentially negative impacts of the duty** – and conversely, headline-grabbing cases of apparently absurd referrals (the ‘cooker bomb’, the ‘eco terrorism’ cases etc.) were usually interpreted as instances of other schools/colleges or staff ‘getting their safeguarding procedures wrong’ rather than a product of the duty itself;
- **A significant proportion of respondents were persuaded of the need for something like the Prevent duty** – a view often informed by their awareness of high-profile, and sometimes local, cases of young people becoming involved in extremist activities. In London, for example, the case of ‘the Bethnal Green girls’ was very much at the forefront of respondents’ minds;
- **The fact that this is a legal duty, closely monitored in Ofsted inspections, served both to undermine active opposition to the Prevent duty** and to embolden those responsible for implementing the duty in schools/colleges.

### **What our research findings mean**

We are aware that these research findings are open to a range of interpretations. Those broadly supportive of Prevent and the Prevent duty might see in these findings clear evidence that core government messages about Prevent (that it is fundamentally about ‘safeguarding’ and that it addresses all forms of extremism) actually make sense to professionals working ‘on the ground’ in schools and colleges; that fairly high levels of confidence among school and college staff indicate that they are broadly comfortable with the duty and what it entails; and that, through careful implementation by skilled professionals, it is quite possible to avert what have been identified as some of the potential negative impacts of the duty. They might even argue that these findings indicate that some of the high-profile critics of Prevent are somewhat out of touch with what is actually happening in schools and colleges.

Meanwhile, however, for those broadly critical of Prevent and the Prevent duty, these findings are likely to reinforce their concerns that, regardless of the intention of the government or individual teachers, the monitoring and disciplining procedures that Prevent entails remain disproportionately focused on Muslim students; that the duty is exacerbating feelings of stigmatisation among Muslim students; that the link between

Prevent and fundamental British values is ill-conceived and is perhaps, even, hindering policy implementation; and that, particularly when allied with expanded legal powers, the 'powerful discourses presented in Prevent' have a tendency to 'take[...] on a momentum of their own'<sup>4</sup> – that is, that the Prevent duty is not just securitising schools and colleges but normalising that securitisation by embedding it within the accepted, everyday practices of school and college staff.

It is likely that there are kernels of truth within both of these interpretations. What we believe is clear is that while there is much in these findings that is testament to the professionalism and dedication to student well-being both of school/college staff and, indeed, of the local Prevent teams that have been providing support to schools and colleges, these findings raise a number of difficult questions: about how the link between Prevent and fundamental British values contributes in practice towards reducing the risk of harm to students; about the proportionality of the additional costs and pressures placed on school/college staff; and, above all, about the unintended consequences of the duty for students, and for Muslim students in particular.

While this report provides the first detailed examination at this scale of how the Prevent duty has played out in England's schools and colleges from the perspective of educational professionals, a more complete understanding of the impact of the duty requires research that examines the experiences and attitudes of students, parents and local communities.

---

4 Bryan, H. (2017) 'Developing the political citizen: How teachers are navigating the statutory demands of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and the Prevent Duty.' *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*. ISSN 1746-1987 (In Press)

# 1. Introduction

In July 2015, a legal duty came into force requiring that ‘specified authorities’, including schools and further education colleges (‘colleges’), show ‘due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism’<sup>5</sup> – popularly referred to as the ‘Prevent duty’<sup>6</sup>

Since this statutory duty was announced, it has been the focus of considerable public and media debate. Some teachers and school/college leaders, as well as prominent academics, the National Union of Teachers and civil society organisations, such as the human rights groups Liberty and Rights Watch UK, and Muslim organisations such as the Muslim Council of Britain have expressed a number of concerns about the duty:<sup>7</sup>

- that shifting previously existing counter-terrorism responsibilities (see Section 2) onto a statutory footing would put undue pressure on educational institutions and teachers;
- that many educators may not have the skills or confidence to facilitate discussion of such issues;
- 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 feelings of suspicion towards the state, thereby playing into the hands of those seeking to recruit young people into terroristic activities.

Since the introduction of the duty, reports of cases in which students (almost always of Muslim background) have been questioned by the police after comments made in the classroom, coupled with a sharp rise in the number of young people referred to the anti-radicalisation programme ‘Channel’ since the introduction of the duty, have served to intensify the criticism of the duty from some quarters (see Section 2).<sup>8</sup>

The duty has been welcomed, meanwhile, by high-profile counter-extremism groups, such as Inspire,<sup>9</sup> and in response to some of the expressed concerns relating to the duty, the Home Office and Department for Education (DfE), have argued explicitly that the duty ‘doesn’t and shouldn’t stop schools from discussing controversial issues’.<sup>10</sup> They have urged educationalists to think of the duty as an addition to existing safeguarding responsibilities – an interpretation also favoured by the National Association of Head-Teachers (NAHT);<sup>11</sup> have repeatedly emphasised that the duty covers all forms of extremism, and have put in place significant training and guidance resources in order to support schools, colleges and other ‘specified authorities’ (see Section 2).

The purpose of this report, published 2 years after the introduction of the Prevent duty, is to get beyond the, at times, polarised public debate about the duty and explore, in a systematic and evidenced way, the experiences of ‘front line’ education professionals in schools and colleges (that is, teaching staff, school/college leaders, support staff and technical staff) – some of the people who, ultimately, have been faced with the responsibility of putting this duty into practice.

5 Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015, s.26.

6 The duty came into force in the further education sector on 18 September 2015. OFSTED (2016) *How Well Are Further Education and Skills Providers Implementing the ‘Prevent’ Duty?* July 2016, No. 160041, accessed via <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-prevent-duty-in-further-education-and-skills-providers>

7 See Durodie, B. (2016) ‘Securitisating Education to Prevent Terrorism or Losing Direction?’ *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 64(1), pp. 21–35; Liberty (2015) *Liberty’s Second Reading briefing on the Counter-Terrorism and Security Bill in the House of Lords*, accessed via [https://www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk/sites/default/files/Liberty's%20Briefing%20on%20the%20Counter-Terrorism%20%20Security%20Bill%20\(Second%20reading%20HOL\)%20\(Jan%202015\).pdf](https://www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk/sites/default/files/Liberty's%20Briefing%20on%20the%20Counter-Terrorism%20%20Security%20Bill%20(Second%20reading%20HOL)%20(Jan%202015).pdf); Lister, R. and co-signatories’ letter to *The Independent*, 10 July 2015, ‘PREVENT will have a chilling effect on open debate, free speech and political dissent’, accessed via <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/letters/prevent-will-have-a-chilling-effect-on-open-debate-free-speech-and-political-dissent-10381491.html>; Muslim Council of Britain (2016) *The Impact of Prevent on Muslim Communities: A Briefing to the Labour Party on how British Muslim Communities are Affected by Counter-Extremism Policies*, accessed via <http://archive.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/MCB-CT-Briefing2.pdf>; O’Donnell, A. (2016) ‘Securitisating, Counterterrorism and the Silencing of Dissent: The Educational Implications of Prevent.’ *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 64(1), pp. 53–76; Rights Watch UK (2016) *Preventing Education? Human Rights and UK Counter Terrorism Policy in Schools*, accessed via <http://rwuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/preventing-education-final-to-print-3.compressed-1.pdf>; Williams, R. (2015) ‘School heads raise alarm over new duty to protect students from extremism.’ *The Guardian*, 9 June, accessed via <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/jun/09/schools-duty-police-extremism-anti-terrorism-laws>.

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

9 Bashir, K. (2015) ‘Safeguarding Children from Extremism is not about Spying’, accessed via <http://www.wewillinspire.com/safeguarding-children-from-extremism-is-not-about-spying/>.

10 Williams, R. (2015) ‘School heads raise alarm over new duty to protect students from extremism.’ *The Guardian*, 9 June, accessed via <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/jun/09/schools-duty-police-extremism-anti-terrorism-laws>.

11 Coughlan, S. (2015) ‘Schools face new legal duties to tackle extremism.’ BBC News, 30 June, accessed via <http://www.bbc.com/news/education-33328377>.

The research on which this report is based has centred on four questions:

1. How has the new Prevent duty been interpreted by staff in schools and colleges in England?
2. How confident do school/college staff feel with regards to implementing the Prevent duty?
3. What impacts, if any, do school/college staff think the Prevent duty has had on their school or college, and on their interactions with students and parents?
4. To what extent, if at all, have school/college staff opposed or questioned the legitimacy of the Prevent duty?

The findings presented below are based on a combination of in-depth qualitative interviews with 70 education professionals across 14 schools and colleges in 2 areas of England (West Yorkshire and London); in-depth qualitative interviews with 8 local authority level Prevent practitioners working in different local authority areas to support schools and colleges; and a national online survey of educationalists (n=225).

The project has been funded by the Aziz Foundation with support from the Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations (CTPSR), Coventry University, and additional support from Durham University and the University of Huddersfield.

## 2. Background to the 'Prevent duty' on schools and colleges

### 2.1. Prevent and its criticisms

Prevent is one of four elements of the UK's 'CONTEST' counter-terrorism strategy.<sup>12</sup> Although identified in CONTEST's original iteration in 2003, Prevent was only operationalised in 2006/7, in the aftermath of the 7 July 2005 London bombings. Those attacks and other foiled plots in the same period demonstrated the reality of a substantial threat from domestic, al-Qaeda- and, subsequently, ISIS-inspired terrorism.

The stated objective of Prevent is 'to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism'.<sup>13</sup> As such, it comprises what has sometimes been characterised as 'soft', preventative counter-terrorism strategies, alongside the 'hard' policing strategies of detecting, disrupting and prosecuting actual terror plots. Such 'soft' counter-terrorism policies have been adopted by many other Western states facing similar challenges of domestic terrorism in the post 9/11 period.<sup>14</sup>

Prevent has, however, consistently been the most controversial element of CONTEST. Three broad criticisms have been particularly prominent and persistent:

- First, Prevent is often criticised for what is seen as unfair targeting and therefore stigmatisation of Muslims – a criticism grounded at least partly in the fact that the initial version of Prevent had an explicit focus on Muslim communities.<sup>15</sup>

- Second, Prevent has often been accused of 'securitising' community relations, with such criticisms focusing both on the prominent role of the police in early iterations of the Prevent strategy and concerns that the programme comprised surveillance and monitoring under the guise of community engagement – accusations that Arun Kundnani's '*Spooked*' report for the Institute of Race Relations and a subsequent and highly-critical Parliamentary Select Committee Inquiry demonstrated were not entirely without foundation.<sup>16</sup>

- Third, the scientific underpinnings of Prevent – the concept of a process of 'radicalisation' that can be identified and disrupted – have come under frequent challenge.<sup>17</sup>

As discussed below, the Prevent strategy has evolved over time, at least in part as a response to these criticisms.<sup>18</sup> Scepticism about Prevent has, however, persisted, with Prevent often subject to highly public criticism from a range of politicians, civil society groups, academics and media commentators.<sup>19</sup> A number of United Nations' human rights bodies and rapporteurs have also raised concerns about the impact of Prevent.<sup>20</sup>

12 The others being Prepare, Pursue and Protect – the so-called '4 P's'. See: Home Office (2011) *CONTEST: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism*, London: The Home Office. Prevent does not apply to Northern Ireland, which is judged to have a different terrorism threat.

13 Home Office (2011) *CONTEST: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism*, London: The Home Office.

14 See Bigo, D. Bonelli, L. Guittef, E.P. and Ragazzi, F (2014), *Preventing and Countering Youth Radicalisation in the EU*, Brussels: European Parliament, accessed via [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).

15 As well as provoking resentment among Muslims, such a focus on specific 'communities' also ran counter to the Labour/then government's community cohesion policy approach of building across-community contact and dialogue – an approach that had (and has) a great deal of support from both the public and frontline professionals (Thomas, P. (2011) *Youth, Multiculturalism and Community Cohesion*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan); Choudhury, T (2010) 'Integration, Security and Faith Identity in Britain' in A. Chebel d'Appollonia and S. Reich (eds.) *Managing Ethnic Diversity after 9/11: Integration, Security and Civil Liberties in Transatlantic Perspective*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

16 Kundnani A, (2009) *Spooked! How Not to Prevent Violent Extremism*, London: Institute of Race Relations.

17 Simply put, the key argument is that some people who hold apparently extreme beliefs and view extremist material never go on to advocate or engage in violent, terrorist activity, while some of those who do engage in terrorist activity seem to have acquired such beliefs only very shortly before becoming involved in such violence. As such, how can we know with confidence who will move forward towards violence? For more detailed critiques of the science around radicalisation see: Blackwood, L. Hopkins, N. and Reicher, S. (2016) 'From Theorizing Radicalization to Surveillance Practices: Muslims in the Cross Hairs of Scrutiny' *Political Psychology*, 37(5): 597-612; Coolsaet, R. (2016) *All Radicalisation is Local: The Genesis and Drawbacks of an Elusive Concept*, Brussels: Egmont; Kundnani, A. (2014) *The Muslims are Coming!* London: Verso.

18 Changes in the focus, priorities and content of the Prevent Strategy have also reflected strategic debates within government and the broader 'state' apparatus. There have been tensions within and between governing political parties, between different national government departments and between national and local government over what Prevent can and should try to achieve and what it should prioritise. See House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee (2010) *Preventing Violent Extremism: Sixth Report of Session 2009-10*, London: The Stationary Office; Parliament Joint Committee on Human Rights, *Counter-Extremism, 2<sup>nd</sup> Report of session 2016/17*, London: HMSO; Batty, D. (2016) 'Prevent Strategy sowing mistrust and fear in Muslim communities', *The Guardian*, 3 February, accessed via <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/feb/03/prevent-strategy-sowing-mistrust-fear-muslim-communities>.

19 See footnote 7

20 See: Committee on the Rights of the Child (2016) *Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*; Human Rights Council (2017) *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*.

## 2.2. The changing focus and content of the Prevent strategy

It is possible to identify two distinct phases of Prevent. In 'Prevent 1' between 2007 and 2011, Prevent focused exclusively on British Muslim communities, with crude demographic data about Muslim populations used to guide the allocation of funding for large-scale local Prevent programmes – fuelling accusations, outlined above, of unfair targeting and stigmatisation of Muslim communities.

In this phase, Prevent's concern with Muslim young people was largely expressed through community-based engagement via youth work programmes. Here, the scale of engagement was considerable, with a government evaluation of the initial 'Pathfinder' year of the Prevent local programme reporting engagement with 50,000 young Muslims.<sup>21</sup> This led to further expansion between 2008 and 2011, thanks to £45 million funding from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) for local Prevent engagement activities. Although schools were encouraged to contribute to Prevent via a government 'toolkit' of policy and lesson plans,<sup>22</sup> they were not a priority for policy. A government-sponsored evaluation<sup>23</sup> undertaken at the time showed that schools were much clearer and more confident about their community cohesion responsibilities than about their role in contributing to Prevent.

The Conservative – Liberal Democrat Coalition government elected in 2010 was determined to review the focus and approach of Prevent. The Prevent Review of June 2011 heralded a significant shift in the content and priorities of the strategy.<sup>24</sup> In this 'Prevent 2' phase, DCLG was removed from Prevent involvement, and the local authority activity programme was both greatly reduced and more closely controlled by the Home Office's Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism (OSCT). In addition, 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>

Crucially, the 2011 Prevent Strategy also confirmed the extension of Prevent from concern with 'violent extremism' to the more widely-defined 'extremism', with a greater emphasis on challenging ideology and the broader set of ideas that, it argued, underpinned radicalisation. Thus, 'preventing terrorism' involved challenging 'extremist (and non-violent) ideas that are also part of a terrorist ideology'. The 2011 Prevent Strategy defines extremism as,

vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also include in our definition of extremism calls for the death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas.<sup>26</sup>

Whilst the 2011 Prevent Review mapped out a new policy approach, three subsequent developments shaped the eventual direction and priorities of the 'Prevent 2' phase. First, the deepening Syria crisis led to several hundred Britons travelling to the Middle East (or attempting to do so) to join so-called Islamic State.<sup>27</sup> This included significant numbers of young people and young adults, including school students, with cases such as the 'Bethnal Green girls' gaining extensive national media coverage. Second, the murder of soldier Lee Rigby by two young British men led the government to conclude that local authorities and other public bodies were not contributing robustly enough to Prevent's work.<sup>28</sup> Third, allegations about 'extremism' being promoted in a number of state schools in Birmingham with large numbers of Muslim students – the so-called 'Trojan Horse' affair – prompted two inquiries, by the Department for Education<sup>29</sup> and Birmingham City Council.<sup>30</sup> The DfE's report, written by ex-Counter-Terrorism Police chief Peter Clarke, concluded that, whilst no evidence of support for violent extremism was found, extremism (by

21 DCLG (2008) *Prevent Pathfinder Fund – Mapping of Project Activities 2007/08*, London: DCLG

22 Department for Communities, Schools and Families (2008) *Learning to be Safe Together: A Toolkit to Help Schools Contribute to the Prevention of Violent Extremism*, London: DCSF

23 Phillips, C. Tse, D. and Johnson, F. (2011) *Community Cohesion and Prevent: How Have Schools Responded?* London: Department for Education

24 Her Majesty's Government (HMG) (2011) *Prevent Strategy*, London: The Stationary Office

25 *Ibid.* p6.

26 Her Majesty's Government (HMG) (2011) *Prevent Strategy*, London: The Stationary Office

27 'Who are Britain's Jihadis?' BBC News 22 February 2017, accessed via <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-32026985>.

28 Her Majesty's Government (HMG) (2013) *Tackling Extremism in the UK: Report from the Prime Minister's task force on tackling radicalisation and extremism*, London: HM Government.

29 Clarke, P. (2014) *Report into allegations concerning Birmingham schools arising from the 'Trojan Horse' letter*, London: HMSO.

Prevent's own definition) was being encouraged in some of the schools. This report prompted then Education Secretary Michael Gove to instruct the educational inspectorate, Ofsted, to prioritise Prevent implementation, particularly through the promotion of 'fundamental British values', within their revised Common Inspection Framework and in their inspections of maintained schools and colleges.

As outlined in the Introduction to this report, the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 confirmed this Prevent responsibility for educational institutions and their staff, giving the responsibility the power of law. The Prevent duty also applies to other 'specified authorities' such as universities and health and welfare professionals, such as social services staff.

As such, while the 'Prevent 1' phase tended to 'responsibilise'<sup>31</sup> Muslim communities for the fight against domestic terrorism, the 'Prevent 2' phase has increasingly responsibilised front-line educational, health and welfare institutions and the professional staff within them, putting them on the front-line of preventative counter-terrorism efforts and expecting them to assume responsibility accordingly.<sup>32</sup> Recently such counter-terrorism responsibilisation has come to the fore in relation to healthcare services. Counter-terrorism Police have explicitly criticised health professionals for what they view as inadequate Prevent implementation, highlighting that a significant number of individuals implicated in terror plots were previously known to health workers, such as through treatment for mental health issues.<sup>33</sup>

## 2.3. Implementation of the Prevent duty in schools and colleges

The UK Government has made clear that across the education, health and welfare sectors, the Prevent duty should be understood as part of organisational safeguarding duties – a framing of Prevent that, it should be noted, has been criticised by some academics.<sup>34</sup> The DfE's *Departmental Advice for Schools and Childcare Providers* states:

Protecting children from the risk of radicalisation should be seen as part of schools' and childcare providers' wider safeguarding duties, and is similar in nature to protecting children from other harms (e.g. drugs, gangs, neglect, sexual exploitation), whether these come from within their family or are the product of outside influences.<sup>35</sup>

This understanding of the duty has also been articulated by Ofsted through its Common Inspection Framework and through the school/college inspections based on that Framework. Indeed, it is important to note that this Ofsted requirement<sup>36</sup> and resulting school/college focus and compliance, pre-dates the introduction of the formal legal duty – a fact bought home to schools and colleges as early as 2014 after one London school found itself placed in 'special measures' following an Ofsted inspection in which its rating was downgraded overnight from 'Outstanding' to 'Inadequate', largely due to shortcomings in its safeguarding policies relating to Prevent.<sup>37</sup>

30 Investigation Report: Trojan Horse Letter (The Kershaw Report): *Report of Ian Kershaw of Northern Education for Birmingham City Council in respect of issues arising as a result of concerns raised in the 'Trojan horse letter'*, accessed via: [https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/1579/investigation\\_report\\_trojan\\_horse\\_letter\\_the\\_kershaw\\_report](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/1579/investigation_report_trojan_horse_letter_the_kershaw_report).

31 'Responsibilisation' is a communitarianist-influenced approach to governance whereby the state passes on (or shares, depending on one's analysis) responsibility for implementing, and being seen to implement, specific policies to communities or ground-level institutions and their professional staff. See McGhee, D., (2010) *Security, citizenship and human rights: Shared values in uncertain times*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; McKee, K., (2009), 'Post-Foucauldian governmentality: What does it offer critical social policy analysis?' *Critical Social Policy*, 29(3), 465–86.

32 Heath-Kelly, C. (2017) 'The geography of pre-criminal space: epidemiological imaginations of radicalisation risk in the UK Prevent Strategy, 2007–2017.' *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, DOI: 10.1080/17539153.2017.1327141; Thomas, P. (2017) 'Changing experiences of responsibilisation and contestation within counter-terrorism policies: the British Prevent experience', *Policy and Politics*, DOI: 10.1332/030557317X14943145195580.

33 Knapton, S. (2017) 'NHS not doing enough to help police prevent terror attacks, says Met's counterterrorism chief', *The Telegraph*, 27 April, accessed via <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/2017/04/26/nhs-not-enough-help-police-prevent-terror-attacks-warns-mets/>.

34 Some academics and social workers argue that the logic that underpins Prevent is not the same as that which has traditionally underpinned safeguarding since, they claim, safeguarding is supposed to be about protecting children, not protecting society from what children *might* do (Coppock, V. and McGovern, M. (2014) 'Dangerous minds? De-constructing counter-terrorism discourse, radicalisation and the 'psychological vulnerability' of Muslim children and young people in Britain', *Children and Society*, 28, 242–256). Others have raised concerns that the concept of 'vulnerability' entailed by treating Prevent simply as safeguarding actually 'risks silencing and even pathologising the person labelled vulnerable' rather than understanding and engaging with their practices as acts of dissent (O'Donnell, A. (2016) 'Securitisation, Counterterrorism and the Silencing of Dissent: The Educational Implications of Prevent', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 64(1), 53–76).

35 DfE (2015) *The Prevent duty: Departmental Advice for Schools and Childcare Providers*. London: Department for Education, p5

36 HMG (2015) *Working together to safeguard children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children*, London: HMG (March)

37 Adams, R. and S. Weale (2014) 'Church of England school taken aback by Ofsted rating amid extremism row', *The Guardian*, 20 November, accessed via <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/nov/20/church-england-school-john-cass-ofsted-downgraded-extremism>.

This emphasis on Prevent primarily as ‘safeguarding’ has turned the ‘Designated Safeguarding Lead’ (DSL)<sup>38</sup> into a key figure in the institutional implementation of Prevent. Where safeguarding concerns about an individual student relating to Prevent are identified, these are referred to the local authority, who may then choose to take the case to the local Prevent ‘Channel Panel’, a multi-agency group that examines the referral evidence and decides whether the threshold for necessitating anti-radicalisation counselling/mentoring has been reached.

In schools and colleges, however, alongside this emphasis on safeguarding, the duty also dovetails with another policy agenda around the promotion of ‘fundamental British values’ – again a policy agenda that was already institutionalised within Ofsted’s Common Inspection Framework prior to the introduction of the Prevent duty, and one that had also attracted not inconsiderable criticism.<sup>39</sup> As explained in the DfE guidance:

**Schools and childcare providers can also build pupils’ resilience to radicalisation by promoting fundamental British values and enabling them to challenge extremist views.<sup>40</sup>**

As such, and in keeping with a growing policy emphasis on the role of ideology as a supposed driver of radicalisation and terrorism,<sup>41</sup> a clear link was made between preventing terrorism and extremism and the promotion of ‘fundamental British values’.<sup>42</sup> This meant that alongside a safeguarding response, the Prevent duty in schools and colleges might also entail a curriculum response – the extent to which this has been the case is one of the issues explored in this report.

The statutory guidance and accompanying advice set out the requirements that the Prevent duty entails under four general themes: risk assessment – including the assessment of risk that individual students might be ‘vulnerable’, working in partnership, staff training and IT policies.

The implementation of the Prevent duty has entailed a major investment in training and support structures for educational institutions and their staff, and multiple private and third sector providers have stepped in alongside statutory bodies to meet this demand. The core of this training has comprised packages based on the government’s WRAP (Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent) training, which have been delivered to hundreds of thousands of education, health and welfare staff nationally. In 2015 alone 400,000 frontline professionals are reported to have received WRAP training.<sup>43</sup>

As well as explaining the responsibilities that the Prevent duty implies for institutions and individuals, this training also provides information about the scope of the duty – particularly with regards to the stated focus on all forms of extremism – and the processes through which people ‘at risk’ of radicalisation are identified and referred to the anti-radicalisation counselling system. It also provides participants with case studies that are intended to enable them to understand the type of deliberation that might be expected with regards to a possible Prevent referral.<sup>44</sup>

In some areas, usually those identified as Prevent ‘priority’ areas, there has also been dedicated support at the local authority level in the form of a schools’ or education officer (additional to the government-funded Prevent Co-ordinator posts in all ‘priority’ areas) – a post in most cases funded by Prevent – with these individuals providing training and support to schools/colleges on both the safeguarding and curriculum dimensions of the Prevent duty.

38 The senior member of school/college staff responsible for collating all safeguarding concerns about students identified by staff members, assessing them through internal processes and referring them to external authorities if necessary. The role was often referred to previously as Child Protection Officer

39 See Elton-Chalcraft, S., V. Lander, L. Revell, D. Warner and L. Whitworth (2016) ‘To promote, or not to promote fundamental British values? Teachers’ standards, diversity and teacher education.’ *British Educational Research Journal*, 43(1), 29–48; Maylor, U. (2016) ‘I’d worry about how to teach it’: British values in English classrooms.’ *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 42(3), 314–328; Richardson, R. and Bolloten, B. (2014) ‘Fundamental British Values’ – origins, controversy, ways forward: A symposium in *Race Equality Teaching*, December, pp9–23

40 DfE (2015) *The Prevent Duty: Departmental Advice for Schools and Childcare Providers*. London: Department for Education, p5

41 Prime Minister David Cameron’s speech at Munich Security Conference 5 February 2011, accessed via: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-speech-at-munich-security-conference>

42 A link reiterated recently in Theresa May’s initial response to the attack in London Bridge of 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 2017, Syal, R. and Walker, P. (2017) ‘Theresa May responds to London Bridge attack with anti-terror laws promise’ *The Guardian*, 4 June, accessed via: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/jun/04/london-bridge-attack-pushes-theresa-may-into-promising-new-laws>

43 HM Government (2016) *CONTEST: The United Kingdom’s Strategy for Countering Terrorism: Annual Report for 2015*. London: Home Office, p16.

44 In addition, further training and resources have been made available such as the Educate Against Hate website. See <http://educateagainsthate.com/>. The website is run by HMG.

## 2.4. How the Prevent duty has been playing out on the ground: What we know so far

Understanding of how the Prevent duty is playing out in schools and colleges is so far limited, and based on a combination of government and Ofsted publications, media coverage of the duty, and a smattering of academic or think tank research, usually based on a small number of case studies.

In terms of **implementation of the Prevent duty**, as described above, Home Office records indicate that at least 400,000 front line professionals received WRAP training in 2015 alone across the sectors to which the Prevent duty applies. A survey undertaken by the National Foundation for Educational Research in November 2015, published by the DfE in July 2016, presented an early indication that confidence in implementing the duty among senior leaders in education was already fairly high – just 5 months after the duty had come into force – but that confidence among classroom teachers was lagging somewhat behind. While 83 percent of senior leaders were very or fairly confident, this was only true for half (52%) of teachers.<sup>45</sup>

Around the same time, however, there appeared an at times highly critical report by Ofsted on the implementation of the Prevent duty among further education providers. While recognising that the majority of providers had implemented the Prevent duty guidance in accordance with expectations, it noted that some ‘adopted a “tick-box” approach’ to implementation.<sup>46</sup> Specifically, they expressed concerns about the number of education providers in which they did not find evidence of effective partnership working, where staff were unaware of the range of advice and guidance available through organisations such as the Education Training Foundation, where it was judged that ‘not enough had been done to ensure that learners were protected from the risk of radicalisation and extremism when using information technology’, and where

staff training was deemed ineffective, often as a result of what they described as a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach across all staff. The report also criticised some local authorities for focusing ‘solely on schools’ and not engaging sufficiently with further education providers.

In terms of **impacts** of the Prevent duty, one of the most eye-catching findings has been the sharp rise in referrals of young people (some of Primary School age) to the Channel process. In the year following the Prevent duty’s introduction the numbers of young people referred to the Channel process nationally rose by over 75% to a total of 4,611 people, which included more than 2,000 teenagers. Within this figure, referrals from schools more than doubled.<sup>47</sup> Alongside this, journalists have highlighted individual cases of Muslim young people under investigation since the duty’s introduction on apparently flimsy, sometimes seemingly absurd, bases,<sup>48</sup> although the accuracy of some of these stories has been questioned.<sup>49</sup>

A report in July 2016 by Rights Watch UK based on 20 interviews, including some with teachers, students and parents, found that the Prevent Strategy was ‘having a chilling effect on discussions of political and religious issues in the safe space of school.’ The study concluded that Prevent was leading to ‘the systematic breach of children’s human rights in the school setting.’<sup>50</sup>

Another report in October 2016, this time by the Open Society Justice Initiative was also blunt in its criticism, declaring that the UK’s Prevent Strategy, ‘which purports to prevent terrorism, creates a serious risk of human rights violations.’<sup>51</sup> Based on interviews with some of the referred students and their families, the report concluded that the statutory duty ‘creates an incentive to over- refer’, and that ‘while compliance with safeguarding obligations would only permit referral to Channel while prioritising the best interests of the child, the Channel

45 Straw, S., J. Tattersall and D. Sims (2016) *NFER Teacher Voice Omnibus, Research Report, July 2016*. The National Foundation for Educational Research. London: Department for Education

46 OFSTED (2016) *How Well Are Further Education and Skills Providers Implementing the ‘Prevent’ Duty?* July 2016, No. 160041, pp.3-4, accessed via <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-prevent-duty-in-further-education-and-skills-providers>.

47 Open Society Justice Initiative (2016) *Eroding Trust: The UK’s PREVENT Counter-Extremism Strategy in Health and Education*. New York: Open Society Foundations, p.41

48 Churchill, D., 2015, ‘London child aged THREE in terror alert over radicalisation’, *Evening Standard*, 27 July, accessed via <http://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/london-child-aged-three-in-terror-alert-over-radicalisation-10418455.html>; Dodd, V., (2015) ‘School questioned Muslim pupil about ISIS after discussion on eco-activism’ *The Guardian*, 22 September, accessed via: <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/sep/22/school-questioned-muslim-pupil-about-isis-after-discussion-on-eco-activism>

49 BBC (2016) ‘Lancashire ‘terrorist house’ row ‘not a spelling mistake’, 20 January, accessed via: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-lancashire-35354061>

50 Rights Watch UK (2016) *Preventing Education? Human Rights and UK Counter Terrorism Policy in Schools*, London: Rights Watch UK, p.4.

51 See Open Society Justice Initiative (2016) *Eroding Trust: The UK’s PREVENT Counter-Extremism*

*Strategy in Health and Education*. New York: Open Society Foundations, accessed via <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/reports/eroding-trust-uk-s-prevent-counter-extremism-strategy-health-and-education>

duty guidance does not specify that as a mandatory or even a relevant consideration.<sup>52</sup> Echoing language used elsewhere to criticise Prevent, the report asserts not only that the duty is likely to have a ‘chilling effect’ on free speech by Muslim students, but that a large number of inappropriate Channel referrals is likely to exacerbate societal stigmatisation of Muslim students and actually hinder efforts to combat extremism by damaging the anti-extremism cooperation that might be provided by Muslim students and their families. If true, this is obviously damaging to the educational environment but also damaging to counter-terrorism itself, where success in defeating extremism relies on the flow of ‘human intelligence’<sup>53</sup> and community reporting of concerns about ‘intimates’ – that is, people close to the reporters.<sup>54</sup>

These findings and the controversy that has surrounded them highlight, we believe, the need for a stronger and more systematic evidential basis on which to form judgements about how educational professionals and institutions have understood, implemented and experienced this Prevent duty.

---

52 Ibid, p.4 and p.5

53 English, R. (2009) *Terrorism: How to Respond*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

54 Grossman, M. (2015) *Community Reporting Thresholds: Sharing information with authorities concerning violent extremist activity and involvement in foreign conflict*. Canberra: Countering Violent Extremism Subcommittee, Australia-New Zealand Counter-Terrorism Committee.

## 3. Methods

This was a mixed methods research project, combining qualitative and quantitative methods. The research fieldwork was carried out in 3 phases. Phase 1 (May-September 2016) comprised semi-structured interviews with educationalists in 10 schools and 4 colleges in 2 metropolitan areas of England. Phase 2 (October-December 2016) comprised a national online survey of educationalists, and semi-structured interviews with 8 local-level Prevent practitioners with responsibility for supporting the implementation of the duty in schools and colleges. Phase 3 (January-March 2017) comprised a series of discussion sessions with a range of project stakeholders based on the initial findings from the interview and survey analysis, and a targeted booster sample for the survey.

### **Semi-structured interviews with educationalists**

In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with 70 members of staff across 10 schools and 4 colleges in London and West Yorkshire.<sup>55</sup> Schools/colleges were approached through the project team's existing professional networks as well as through local authority communication channels such as headteachers' bulletins. We selected institutions to ensure a balance of primary schools, secondary schools and colleges. We also selected institutions to ensure a range of student demographics in terms of the proportion of the student population from 'White British' backgrounds, from black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds and from Muslim backgrounds.

In each institution, we spoke with between 3 and 6 members of staff.<sup>56</sup> We asked to speak with members of staff across a range of roles, with varying levels of experience and involvement with the Prevent duty. This included teaching and non-teaching staff, reflecting the increasingly diverse range of professional roles, titles and responsibilities held by staff working in schools and colleges. This is broadly reflected in our sample (Table 1).

**Table 1. Interview Sample Split by Institutional Role/Position**

Role/Position	No. of interviewees	% of total no. interviewees
Senior leaders <i>Heads/deputy heads/ principals/ senior management team members</i>	14	20%
Heads of department or year-group	25	36%
Teachers / lecturers	10	14%
Teaching assistants	5	7%
Support or technical staff <i>e.g. learning mentors, progress coaches, pastoral staff, librarians, IT staff and members of estate teams</i>	16	23%
Total	70	
Of which: Designated Safeguarding Leads	16	23%
Non-Designated Safeguarding Leads	54	77%

<sup>55</sup> These areas were selected because they are among the areas that have featured quite prominently in national debates about Prevent. They are also areas where members of the project team have previously worked, thereby facilitating the research process.

<sup>56</sup> Interviewees were asked initially to tell us in their own words about their experience of coming into contact with the Prevent duty and incorporating it into their working practice. This enabled the interviewees to discuss and emphasise what they considered to be the most significant elements of their experiences with the Prevent duty to date. After exploring their initial responses, the interviewer then asked more targeted questions around the core research themes. All respondents provided informed written consent prior to the interview. Interviews were audio-recorded and fully transcribed for analysis. After an initial reading of the transcripts a structured coding frame was developed for more detailed analysis of the data.

The more general demographics of our interview sample are summarised in Table 2.

**Table 2. Interview Sample Demographics**

	No. of interviewees	% of total no. interviewees
<b>Gender</b>		
Women	43	61%
Men	27	39%
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
White British	46	66%
White Other	9	13%
Mixed – White and Black African	1	1%
Mixed – White and Asian	1	1%
Mixed – Other (than Black Caribbean, Black African or Asian)	1	1%
Asian or Asian British – Indian	2	3%
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	2	3%
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	4	6%
Black Caribbean	2	3%
Black African	2	3%
<b>Religion</b>		
Christian	33	47%
Muslim	7	10%
Sikh	1	1%
No Religion	28	40%
Religion other than Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh	1	1%
<b>Broad political orientation</b>		
Left-leaning <sup>57</sup>	56	80%
Right-leaning <sup>58</sup>	5	7%
No political parties broadly represent their views	9	13%

57 Who stated that their political views are best represented either by the Labour Party, the Liberal Democrats or the Green Party

58 Who stated that their political views are best represented by the Conservative Party (no respondents stated that their political views are best represented by other parties on the right, such as UKIP)

### **Interviews with local Prevent practitioners**

Interviews were undertaken with 8 local authority Prevent practitioners with responsibilities for supporting the implementation of the duty in schools and colleges.<sup>59</sup> Of these, 6 were from within our London and West Yorkshire case study areas, and 2 from elsewhere in England. Since mechanisms for policy delivery vary across the country, the specific job titles of these individuals varied, but included local Prevent co-ordinators, specialist education support roles and members of local authority neighbourhoods and community teams.

The purpose of these interviews was to enable us to gather data at different points in the implementation chain, allowing perspectives from outside of school/college settings to inform analysis. Particular attention was given to the differences and similarities in local policy delivery and support mechanisms and how these might affect the experiences of educationalists. Focus was also placed on points of convergence and/or divergence between the experiences and opinions of local Prevent practitioners and those of educationalists.

### **National online survey of educationalists**

A survey was developed to enable us to explore and test hypotheses emerging from the interview data. It was developed on the Bristol Online Survey (BOS) platform<sup>60</sup> and promoted via a number of channels. These included emails to schools and colleges from a number of university education departments and local authorities, and information about the survey in the e-bulletins of a number of teaching unions. The survey was also advertised at the end of an article by the project team that appeared in the Times Educational Supplement on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2016.<sup>61</sup>

The survey was accessible via an open URL. It was not password protected in order to facilitate access for as broad a range of relevant participants as possible. This did create a risk that the survey could be 'trolled' by campaigners either in favour of or opposed to the duty.<sup>62</sup> In order to mitigate this risk, we monitored closely the activity on the survey, e.g. to see whether there were particular bursts of activity on the survey, whether respondents filled in all/most of the questions or just those most likely to generate a headline finding, or whether there were identical sets of responses.

The survey was run from mid-October 2016 to the end of December 2016. Once the data had been cleaned, we had 203 completed surveys. After the stakeholder discussion sessions held in January (see below), representatives from two organisations, NAHT and the Muslim Teachers' Association, offered to help us undertake a booster sample in order to increase the number of responses from a) school/college leaders and b) minority ethnic respondents. The booster survey was promoted via direct emails from the aforementioned organisations in March 2017, as a password protected survey.<sup>63</sup>

Responses to each of the questions were aggregated and then subjected to a series of systematic cross-tabulations to explore correlations. Analysis of the survey data was conducted separately to the qualitative analysis by a member of the project team who did not have access to the emerging set of qualitative codes. This was done in order to reduce the likelihood of the analysis being affected by confirmation bias. The final sample contained 225 completed responses (Table 3).

---

59 As with the interviews with educationalists, interviews were recorded and fully transcribed to enable thematic analysis. Informed written consent was provided prior to each interview.

60 The survey was piloted prior to its launch with educational professionals in order to ensure intelligibility of the questions, ease of survey navigation and provide a reasonable estimate of how long it would take to complete the survey.

61 Busher, J. Choudhury, T. and Thomas, P. (2016) 'The fatal flaws in how schools are asked to tackle terror' *Times Education Supplement*, 4 November 2016, accessed via <https://www.tes.com/news/school-news/breaking-views/fatal-flaws-how-schools-are-asked-tackle-terror>

62 We assessed that, given the range of distribution channels, a password would serve little purpose as this could easily have been shared publicly had somebody been of a mind to do so. Indeed, we assessed that a password might even have encouraged trolling by giving the impression that the survey was intended only for certain selected respondents.

63 Very minor adjustments were made to the survey prior to the booster. We removed 4 questions relating to school/college profiles that, due to sample size and distribution, we assessed to be superfluous. Based on a suggestion in one of the stakeholder discussion sessions, we also inserted a question about perceived possible stigmatisation of 'white working class' students to complement a question about perceptions that the introduction of the Prevent duty had increased the risk that Muslim students might feel stigmatised. We do not assess that these adjustments are likely to have impacted on the responses to other questions in the survey.

**Table 3. Survey Sample Summary**

	No. of interviewees <sup>64</sup>	% of total no. interviewees
<b>Gender</b>		
Women	69	31%
Men	156	69%
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
White British	173	81%
Black and Minority Ethnic (BME)	41	19%
<b>Religion</b>		
Christian	88	42%
Muslim	25	12%
Religion other than Christian or Muslim	7	3%
No Religion	90	43%
<b>Broad political orientation</b>		
Left-leaning	104	66%
Right-leaning	32	21%
No political parties broadly represent their views	21	13%
<b>Role in school/college</b>		
Senior leaders	52	23%
Teachers/lecturers	82	36%
Trainee teachers/lecturers, teaching assistants and educational support workers (e.g. study mentors)	37	16%
Other <sup>65</sup>	54	24%
<b>Safeguarding role</b>		
DSL <sup>66</sup>	68	30%
Non-DSL	157	70%
<b>Type of institution</b>		
School <sup>67</sup>	118	53%
College	106	47%
<b>Region</b>		
Yorkshire and Humberside	44	20%
East of England	37	17%
North West	36	16%
London	35	16%
East Midlands	26	12%
South East	25	11%
West Midlands	10	5%
South West	5	2%
North East	1	0.5%
<b>Ethnic/religious mix of school/college</b>		
Mainly White British	102	45%
Diverse	98	44%
Mainly from one ethnic/religious background other than White British	24	11%
<b>Estimated proportion of Muslim students in the school/college</b>		
Less than 10%	106	51%
11-25%	29	14%
26-50%	28	14%
51-75%	19	9%
More than 75%	24	12%

### **Feedback and discussion sessions with research stakeholders**

Feedback and discussion sessions were held with a range of stakeholder groups (Table 4), all of which comprised between 4 and 10 people. These sessions consisted of a presentation of emergent findings and a discussion with stakeholders of the findings and our interpretations of them. The purpose of these sessions was to invite comment and challenge from people with professional expertise relevant to this study. Anonymised fieldnotes were made at each of these sessions. These have subsequently been used to critically evaluate our framework for analysis and identify assumptions underlying our interpretations of the data. As indicated above, these sessions also led us to undertake the booster sample of the survey.

### **Feedback and discussion sessions by stakeholder group**

<b>Stakeholder Group</b>	<b>Number of Sessions</b>
Educationalists <i>from the schools/colleges where the interviews had taken place</i>	2
Local authority staff <i>with roles relating to Prevent, safeguarding and/or communities in our two case study areas</i>	2
Muslim civil society organisation members <i>Hosted by the Aziz Foundation</i>	1
Representatives of national teaching unions	1
Representatives of Home Office and DfE	1

64 Where totals do not add up to 225, this is because some respondents either chose the 'prefer not to respond' option or skipped the question.

65 Comprising a range of roles including estate managers, IT managers, librarians, dedicated pastoral roles, dedicated safeguarding or child protection roles.

66 The majority of DSLs are Senior leaders (54%, n=37) or belong to the Other category (21%, n=14).

67 Of whom just over half (n=60) work in a secondary school.

## Limitations

There are two important limitations to the project. The first of these concerns **sample size and distribution**. By the standards of in-depth qualitative work, 70 interviews across 14 educational institutions comprises a good sample size. It should be acknowledged however that these were distributed only across 2 geographic areas, both characterised by high levels of urban density and high levels of ethnic and religious diversity. They are also both areas where there has been considerable investment under the Prevent strategy.

Furthermore, it is possible that schools and colleges willing to engage with the project might have been schools and colleges where management were, by and large, more than averagely confident about implementing the duty. Put another way, in schools/colleges where there were serious concerns about how to implement the duty it is possible that senior leaders would have been reluctant to invite a team of researchers in to speak with staff. Similarly, it is possible that within schools/colleges, staff who felt more concerned or unconfident about the Prevent duty might have felt cautious about being interviewed for this project. We sought to mitigate this by emphasising that schools/colleges and individuals within those institutions would not be identified, that the project was not seeking to 'test' or 'evaluate' schools and that we were keen to speak with people with different levels of experience.

In relation to the survey, the sample was not large enough or with sufficient distribution to enable us to undertake some of the cross-tabulations that we had intended (e.g. we have had to collapse some of the variables relating to respondent and student demographics), and is not large enough to support meaningful regression analyses. We had hoped to be able to

develop a comparison across areas that are and are not Prevent priority areas,<sup>68</sup> but too many respondents chose to withhold information about the local authority area in which their school/college is based for this to be done.<sup>69</sup> It is important to emphasise that our sample is not a representative sample of educationalists in England. It does, however, provide a useful means of testing the hypotheses that emerge from the interview data.

The second limitation is that the project **addresses only the experiences, attitudes and opinions of school/college staff**. There is a clear requirement for systematic research into how, if at all, the Prevent duty has impacted on students, their care-givers and their wider communities. Many Muslim civil society groups remain adamant that the Prevent duty is 'hushing' Muslim students who are reticent to voice their true feelings for fear of being referred to Channel. This is a particularly important evidential need, given that some Muslim civil society groups and, indeed, individual parents feel that the implicit threat of Prevent referral has led Muslim students to 'perform' careful and 'moderate' personas, rather than express their real political and social opinions.<sup>70</sup>

---

68 This distinction is important as non-priority areas do not necessarily have dedicated Prevent staff who can guide and support schools and colleges in their implementation of the duty.

69 We assume that this was due to concerns about anonymity.

70 Mythen, G., Walklate, S. and Khan, F. (2013) 'Why Should We Have to Prove we're Alright?' Counter-Terrorism, Risk and Partial Securities', *Sociology*, 47(2), 382-397.

# 4. Findings

We present the findings under five headings:

1. Interpretations of the Prevent duty;
2. Confidence;
3. What the Prevent duty has meant in practice;
4. The perceived impacts of the Prevent duty on school/college communities; and
5. Support for and resistance to the Prevent duty.

## 4.1. Interpretations of the Prevent duty

As set out in Section 2, since the announcement of the Prevent duty there have been a number of key messages that the Home Office and other government departments have sought to convey regarding how the duty ought to be interpreted, which can be summarised as: i) the duty should be understood as part of school/college safeguarding duties; ii) the duty relates to all forms of extremism, and iii) schools and childcare providers can also build pupils' resilience to radicalisation by promoting fundamental British values and enabling them to challenge extremist views.<sup>71</sup>

In this section we discuss how the school/college staff members who took part in this research have engaged with these messages.

### 4.1.1. Prevent as safeguarding

I think it sits there [within safeguarding] really well because it kind of belongs there, in a sense of the referral and those aspects. The grooming elements online, those, all of those things, do firmly sit within that. (R38,<sup>72</sup> DSL, school, London)

I think perhaps when the conversation about Prevent first began it sounded like something which was a little bit obscure perhaps for some people, but I think as soon as people said 'it's a type of safeguarding' then it kind of clicked into place in terms of what our response should be [...] For me it's just an extension of safeguarding to be perfectly honest. (R4, SENCO,<sup>73</sup> college, W. Yorks)

I've always seen Prevent as being a model of safeguarding. I don't see it as much different from safeguarding, and indeed we've had a line in our safeguarding [policy] for extremism for many, many years, so it's been a part of our safeguarding. (R20, DSL, college, W. Yorks)

One of the clearest findings from the interview data was the extent to which most respondents engaged with the idea that it made sense to think of the Prevent duty as an additional element of safeguarding. This was particularly evident among DSLs and school/college leaders, but this was broadly consistent across the sample,<sup>74</sup> and was even the case among respondents who expressed scepticism about the Prevent duty and concerns about the impacts that it might have.

Within these comments situating Prevent within safeguarding, there was a stress on significant continuity, rather than stark change in terms of school/college policies and procedures. The inclusion of Prevent was described simply as clarifying and sharpening their existing safeguarding focus and paradigm:

Before you would maybe think of it [safeguarding] just as in sort of neglect or abuse or some sort of, things like that where you'd be concerned about a child. But these are all things that could also be down to sort of extremism and radicalisation. (R39, teaching assistant, school, London)

Indeed, in several interviews, respondents drew parallels with other identified safeguarding issues such as gangs, child sexual exploitation (CSE) and female genital mutilation (FGM).<sup>75</sup>

71 Department for Education (2015) The Prevent Duty: Departmental Advice for Schools and Childcare Providers. London: Department for Education, p.5.

72 R38 indicates 'Respondent 38'. We have not numbered the institutions in order to preserve respondent anonymity.

73 Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator

74 Only 1 of the 70 interview respondents overtly challenged the idea that Prevent fitted within safeguarding.

75 This prompted some respondents to question the need for having a separate Prevent duty at all, rather than simply incorporating it within safeguarding.

When you look at the action it's exactly the same as the actions we'd take against FGM and against child sexual exploitation... It is a safeguarding issue. It's the same, it's about keeping children safe from predators. If you look at, well when I look at a profile of a radicaliser, if that's, you know, and a groomer it's the same tactics and they're targeting the same sorts of vulnerabilities in children. (R61, DSL, school, London)

This finding was consistent across primary and secondary schools and colleges, albeit with some subtle differences. In primary schools, for example, the focus was mainly on home environments and vulnerabilities, and where respondents discussed concerns it was often more about the views of those within the student's family networks rather than the student themselves. By contrast, in secondary schools and colleges the focus was far more on the students themselves and, particularly at the time of the interviews (May-Sept 2016), concerns about whether they might travel to Syria.

Engagement with the idea of 'Prevent as safeguarding' had been facilitated both by the training that staff had received and the way the duty was being operationalised within schools and colleges. In almost all of the 14 schools and colleges, Prevent-related training and information-sharing had initially taken place in the context of annual safeguarding training, delivered by the DSL or another member of the safeguarding team at the start of the academic year. Furthermore, in each of the institutions implementation of the duty was being led by the DSL and the institutional safeguarding teams, albeit in some cases these had been expanded in response to the Prevent duty, with a specific sub-team set up to deliver on Prevent. This made monitoring and assessing students in relation to their possible 'vulnerability' under the Prevent duty something that couldn't really be separated from the wider and ongoing institutional monitoring and assessment of 'vulnerability' in general. This meant that the 'Prevent as safeguarding' message was not only coming from government and Ofsted, but was also embedded within the everyday practices of the schools and colleges.

#### **4.1.2. Prevent as a response to all forms of extremism**

Well my understanding, at a very simple level, is that it's about preventing young people from being radicalised by any extremist. Of course if you follow the media obsession with certain types of extremism it would be easy for a member of the general public to fall into thinking it's just about Muslim extremism and ISIS, but it's about preventing young people from being radicalised by any extremist of any persuasion. That's my understanding. (R57, senior leader, school, London)

I mean we've got quite a diverse section of society coming to college, [...] and the last thing that we want is any particular group of students, or staff in fact, to feel that they're being watched more than anybody else or demonised or picked on. Now that's quite a challenge to do really because a lot of the Prevent materials, just by default, do refer to case studies and things like that that are linked into terrorist activities that are linked into people that are Muslim. So we have to work really hard in the organisation to make sure that staff understand that that's not what it's about [...] We use like far-right case studies when we do the training and we make those kinds of emphasis. I think the majority of our teaching staff understand that, and I think they're very sensitive to the fact that if they've got mixed students in their group that they've got a responsibility to manage cohesion among their students really. (R2, HoD, college, W. Yorks)

Another clear finding from the interview data was that most respondents recognised that the Prevent duty was, at least in principle, about all forms of extremism i.e. not only focused on al-Qaeda/ISIS-inspired extremism. Indeed, in some of the schools and colleges it was observed that, as a result of the demographics of their school/college and surrounding area, their focus with regards the duty was primarily on issues relating to the extreme right and overt racism.

This interpretation of the duty was often supported with references to the training that they had received, and in particular to the fact that the training foregrounded case studies of young white people being drawn into extreme right

activities.<sup>76</sup> In fact, some respondents described how up until that point they had thought that Prevent and the Prevent duty was only concerned with ISIS-inspired extremism and that it had been the training that had changed that, suggesting that the national training approach has achieved significant success in conveying to educational practitioners this key policy message:

If you'd have asked me before any discussions in the school I would've had a very, very clear view that it was primarily, if not exclusively, around anti-radicalisation in terms of Islamic groups, but I guess as a result of that discussion, or those discussions, my understanding of that broadened to incorporate other things as well. (R59, HoD,<sup>77</sup> school, London)

In the training that we had it was very clear that, you know, they made it very clear that we're not just concerned about Islamic radicalisation. We are concerned about any type of radicalisation. (R43, HoD, school, London)

This conception of Prevent as having a focus that extends beyond AQ/ISIS-inspired extremism is made clearer still in discussions on some of the curriculum responses, when teachers talked about the kind of topics that were covered in class that they saw as relevant to Prevent. These included not only religious extremism, but also political extremism, refugees, racism and the Holocaust:

What we try to talk to students, and also staff, about, is that the Prevent agenda isn't just about that religious extremism. It's what happened in Norway [*the massacre carried out by far-right extremist Anders Breivik*], etc., that sort of political extremism as well. So – and we did the holocaust again, [...] we also have somebody from a local refugee support group as well. I know that's different, but that's all in terms of breaking down some perceptions of students, especially with Prevent. (R6, DSL, school, W. Yorks)

Yet this theme was not as straightforward or consistent as the 'Prevent as safeguarding' theme. Several respondents made clear that they believed that while the duty was ostensibly about all forms of extremism, it had come into existence because of more specific concerns about ISIS-inspired extremism and that Muslim students and Muslim communities continued to be the *de facto* focus of policy attention:

Although on paper it was intended, it covered lots and lots of different groups, there was a clear – it was in response to radicalisation of Islamic groups. (R59, HoD, school, London)

*Interviewer:*

Did you feel that WRAP3<sup>78</sup> sort of acknowledged different types of extremism?

*Respondent:*

I think it's a bit of lip service probably to make it appear – I mean everybody knows or thinks that it is developed to deal with the al-Qaeda attack. If that had not come along I don't think they would have ever developed [it]. (R12, DSL, college, W. Yorks)

Furthermore, even during interviews with staff who articulated clearly the belief that the Prevent duty was intended to address all forms of extremism, there were still frequent allusions to an underlying sense that the duty has special relevance to Muslim students and Muslim communities. Sometimes this took the form of observations about how their school/college had been particularly engaged with the Prevent duty because they have a large proportion of Muslim students in their institution – although this was usually said obliquely through references to 'certain populations', 'our particular demographics' or 'our catchment area'.

76 Although one respondent in a predominantly Muslim school observed that, while they understood why they were shown that video and the message it was supposed to convey, it didn't seem particularly relevant in their specific context.

77 Head of Department

78 The latest version of WRAP training.

Even before [the introduction of the Prevent duty] we could just feel, you know, the writing was kind of on the wall with, not necessarily we had to do something but we should because of the demographic of our students. So we'd already had the Prevent lead in to teach senior staff. (R61, DSL, school, London)

Other ways in which this almost unspoken idea about an underlying focus on, or at least relevance to, Muslim students and communities was alluded to in the interviews included i) the way that discussion of Prevent, terrorism and radicalisation often merged into discussions of issues such as female genital mutilation or forced marriage which, in the public imagination, political and media discourse, are often conceived of largely as 'Muslim issues';<sup>79</sup> ii) how knowledge and understanding about Islam, either as a result of one's professional experience or personal faith, was often identified as a form of relevant expertise in relation to the Prevent duty; iii) the fact that a disproportionate number of Prevent trainers or experts seemed to be Muslims; and iv) widespread concerns about the possibility that the Prevent duty could accentuate feelings of victimisation and stigmatisation among Muslim students (Section 4.4.2.).

In one particularly frank discussion about this, a senior school leader both explained how difficult it is to ensure that a *de facto* focus on AQ/ISIS-inspired extremism and, by extension, on Muslim students, does not creep in to working practice, and expressed their anxiety about this.

My anxiety as a school leader, if I'm completely honest, is that we 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 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 on it. Do you know what I mean? Whereas maybe the Muslim extremism, you would feel like

you had to report everything on if you didn't feel you had that [...] if you were in a classroom, and you were teaching 2 separate groups, 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, I don't know, that was seen as extreme and anti-white culture. Because the right wing extremism seems more commonplace. (R5, senior leader, school, W. Yorks)

As such, while respondents engaged in principle with the idea that the Prevent duty is about all forms of extremism, there was an often more or less explicit acknowledgement, and in some cases concern, that Muslim students and communities may still continue to be a particular and disproportionate focus of attention, even where this might not be the intention of staff.

#### 4.1.3. Prevent and 'fundamental British values'

I think the aspect where it becomes quite unclear is this idea of what is a British value because whilst they might have been set out by the government, actually a lot of the values they say are British values I would say could apply to anywhere really in the world. Aspects of tolerance, aspects of believing in democracy well they could be applicable, well you would hope, to large aspects of the world. It's very hard I think to pinpoint down what specifically makes somebody British. (R32, teacher, school, W. Yorks)

The title 'British values', the title 'fundamental British values', whoever thought that up should've been shot in my opinion. I think it's disgraceful, because it just has too many connotations, it's like tit for tat, 'well you want to be fundamental, well we'll be fundamental'. (R20, DSL, college, W. Yorks)

*Interviewer:*

And how do you explain [to your colleagues] or see the link between the Prevent duty and British values?

79 For discussions of representations of Muslims in political and media discourse see Kundnani, A. (2014) *The Muslims Are Coming: Islamophobia, Extremism and the Domestic War on Terror*, London: Verso; Petley, J. and Richardson, R. (eds.) (2011) *Pointing the Finger: Islam and Muslims in the British Media*, London: Oneworld.

*Respondent:*

Well British values gives them the principles that they can use to judge where things might be going towards radicalism. Yeah, that's how I would put it across to them. So it would be a measure for them to use. If they see how society operates in general using British values then they'll be able to see any extreme aspects of that.

*Interviewer:*

And what's been the response from the staff in terms of delivering these tutorials? How have they found it?

*Respondent:*

Yeah (laughs). Yeah, they've had some issues with it. (R68, support worker, college, London)

Where there is least consistency within the interview data is with regards the relationship between the Prevent duty and fundamental British values.<sup>80</sup> While some respondents placed considerable emphasis on fundamental British values, a significant minority of respondents made little or no mention of this until prompted.

To some extent this is likely to reflect the range of roles of our respondents. It is not surprising that those in highly specified safeguarding roles or those without involvement in the development or delivery of the school curriculum (e.g. estate managers, librarians, IT managers) were less likely to raise fundamental British values during interviews. It is also likely, however, to reflect the fact that opinion among the respondents varied considerably with regards the fundamental British values agenda more broadly. While some were broadly supportive, most were not and several respondents identified fundamental British values as the most problematic element of the Prevent duty.

We encountered significant variation across respondents and institutions with regard to the emphasis, or lack of it, placed on the *Britishness* of these values. Some schools and colleges had made a point of talking about and promoting *British* values, in some cases using this as an entry point for wider explorations

of British identity and belonging. Thus, fieldtrips to WW1 battlefields and commemoration or Remembrance Day were identified as contributing to the work on Prevent.

I mean, we've done things like, we've had big displays on being British and what it is to be British, and what that means, and I always run that on a year 6 open evening as well, because I think it opens up – parents always stop and go, 'Oh, it's fish and chips,' or 'Oh, it's a cup of tea,' – it opens people up and gets them engaging [...] like I previously mentioned, we do have a display, I do make a point of at least having a term of a display on the whole concept of Britishness which the whole school can access. (R7, HoD, school, W. Yorks)

[...] looking at the battlefield trips that we do in History, with the French exchange, that's all part of that general programme of British values. (R6, DSL, school, W. Yorks)

In one school we even heard about how fundamental British values, now backed up by the Prevent legal duty, were being used to justify more overtly celebrating Christmas, or singing the national anthem on special occasions such as the Queen's jubilee – activities that they had shied away from in the past because of perceived opposition from a minority of Muslim parents.

However, several respondents also described considerable discomfort or even embarrassment about describing these as *British* values.<sup>81</sup> Such unease was often rooted in concerns about how definitions of Britishness could come up against issues of empire, imperialism and racial and exclusionary identities:

Being British we perhaps feel a bit uncomfortable about calling something British. And it feels a little bit BNP, UKIP-y to sort of say, I mean patriotism's kind of been robbed from us hasn't it really, in some respects? (R3, HoD, college, W. Yorks)

80 Whereas in some of the institutions the values dimension of Prevent was discussed primarily in relation to the curriculum and initiatives such as debating clubs that were intended to encourage critical thinking about topical issues, in others it was also linked in to wider issues about the provision of pastoral services. For example, in one college, issues about the naming of, and access to, prayer rooms was discussed as an issue relevant to Prevent and fundamental British values.

81 It is important to note that interview fieldwork was largely carried out during and in the immediate aftermath of the June 2016 EU Referendum, a period that saw fierce and often divisive debates over British nationality and identity. This might have intensified anxieties among some respondents about nationalistic sentiments.

It was more the fact that we are having to define what it means to be British. In itself it almost smacks of racism slightly if you are not careful. You know we are British. It's almost going back a hundred and fifty, you know, the Empire and all that kind of thing. I think, it's almost, what is this Britishness they are looking for? You know we are multi ethnic, diverse, community. We are here getting on with it, as British people generally, as a country. You know, because again going back to the Prevent. A lot of it is radical extremism. It's a very small proportion of everything that goes on day to day. Why are we having to justify what British is? You might have an Asian background, I don't know, ninety-five percent of people of Asian background [living in Britain] were born in Britain. They are as British as everybody else. So why do we have to, I don't know, make it an issue almost? (R13, estates manager, college, W. Yorks)

As a result, some had adopted alternative language, talking about 'school/college values', 'community values', 'democratic values' and 'universal values', even though they recognised that Ofsted would expect the language of fundamental *British* values to be used.

We don't say 'these are British values', no we don't. We don't. That would feel fake. 'These are our values', we don't say 'these are British values', we say 'these are our values.' (R38, DSL, school, London)

Given that many schools and colleges already utilise the concept of school/college values, the policy expectation of overtly foreground *British* values was not seen as useful or adding value by many respondents. Indeed, given the clear discomfort that some school/college staff have about defining values in terms of their Britishness, it might be argued that the expectation of overtly foregrounding *British* values is potentially hindering rather than helping engagement with, and implementation of the Prevent duty more generally.

#### 4.1.4. The survey data on interpretations of the Prevent duty

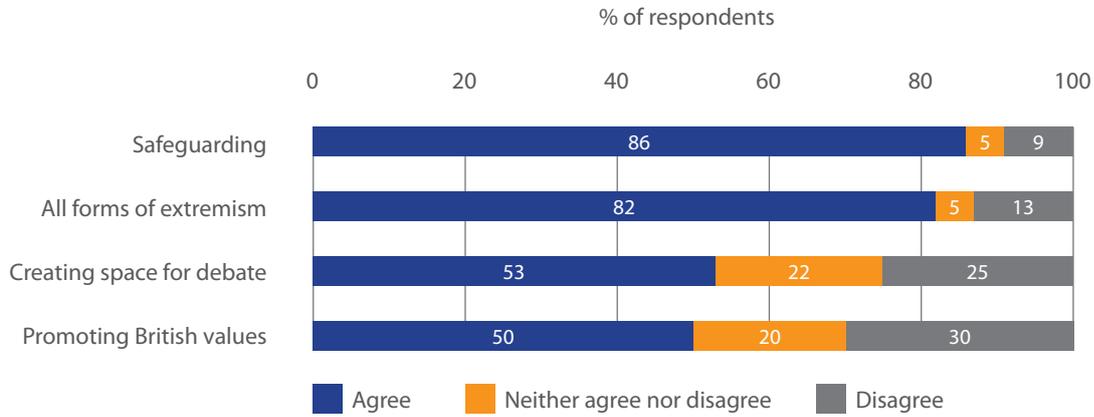
The survey data largely support the findings from the interviews. When asked how they would describe the Prevent duty to a friend or neighbour,<sup>82</sup> of 206 responses, 167 made specific reference to terrorism, radicalisation or extremism and 21 comprised broader statements about keeping people safe. Just 14 responses contained references to 'British values' or 'fundamental British values'.

When asked a series of agree/disagree questions (Figure 1), we found very high levels of agreement around the statement 'The Prevent duty in schools/colleges is a continuation of existing safeguarding responsibilities' (86% agree or agree strongly), and that 'The Prevent duty relates to all forms of extremism and intolerance' (82% agree or agree strongly). By contrast, there was far less agreement on the statements 'The Prevent duty in schools/colleges is about creating more space for debate on a range of issues including democracy, extremism, intolerance and inequality' (53% agree or strongly agree) or 'The Prevent duty in schools/colleges is about promoting British values' (50% agree or agree strongly).

---

82 'Imagine you are describing the Prevent duty to a friend or neighbour, how would you describe it to them in no more than one or two short sentences?'

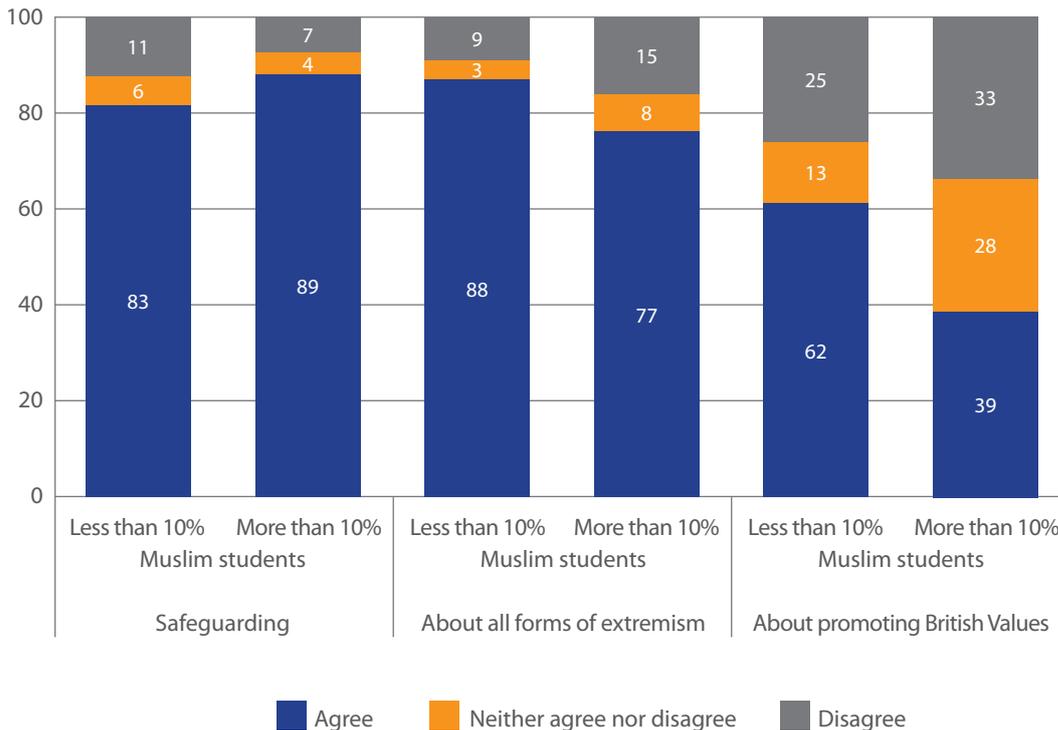
**Figure 1. 'The Prevent duty is about...'**



Interestingly, we found a significant variation when comparing respondents from schools/colleges in which Muslim students comprise more than 10% and those from schools/colleges in which Muslim students comprise less than 10% of the population (Figure 2).

Specifically, respondents from schools/colleges in which Muslim students comprise more than 10% of the population were significantly less likely to agree that the Prevent duty is about promoting British values. They were also somewhat less likely to agree that the Prevent duty is about tackling all forms of extremism.

**Figure 2. 'The Prevent duty is about...,' by respondents in schools/colleges with less than 10% / more than 10% Muslim students**



Together, these findings indicate that the core government messages about understanding Prevent within the framework of safeguarding, has broadly been accepted by school/college staff. Most of the professionals who took part in this research recognised and accepted the ‘fit’ between Prevent’s identification of youth ‘vulnerability’ to radicalisation and their vulnerability towards other harms, such as CSE and gang activity. The findings also indicate that government messages about the Prevent duty applying to all forms of extremism are getting out to, and being broadly accepted by a large proportion of educationalists, albeit there is an important current of scepticism about the extent to which this policy intention is fulfilled, in spite of the best efforts of school/college staff.

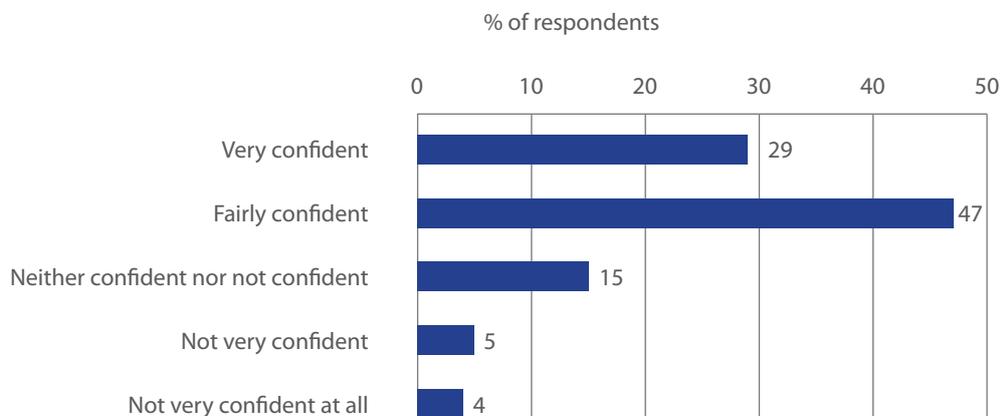
However, there is as yet less clarity regarding the relationship between Prevent and fundamental British values. It is not possible to say whether this relates to the government messaging on Prevent directly, or whether it is more a function of the way in which the challenges of implementing the duty – and in particular discomfort relating to fundamental *British* values – are being mediated within schools and colleges. We return to the implications of these findings in more detail in the following sections.

## 4.2. Confidence

I think, when it first sort of launched people were really worried about it, people were really frightened about it, but now it’s more like, ‘well actually it’s just a safeguarding issue.’ So it just becomes part of – At first it was really super high-profile and people were really, really, concerned about it. We need to do all these different things to make sure we are in the Prevent zone. If Ofsted come in they are going to want to know all these different things. We don’t want to fail the school on this. Whereas, I think now, maybe, it has calmed a little bit. In my mind it has anyway. It is now more about, ‘right, okay, this about safeguarding as well as everything else.’ It becomes part of that package really, which I am quite secure with because I know how to deal with that. (R55, senior leader, school, London)

In both the interview and survey data we found fairly high and widespread confidence among educationalists about implementing the Prevent duty. Of the 70 interview respondents, only 2 expressed high levels of uncertainty about what was required of them under the duty, and both of those respondents were at the very early stages of their teaching careers. Among the survey respondents, a little over three quarters of the respondents described themselves either as ‘very confident’ (29%) or ‘fairly confident’ (47%) about implementing the duty. Less than 1 in 10 described themselves either as ‘not very confident’ (5%) or ‘not confident at all’ (4%) (Figure 3).

**Figure 3. Confidence in implementing the Prevent duty**



Given concerns initially expressed by some education trade unions and other commentators about whether teachers/lecturers and other staff would feel equipped to deal with the requirements placed on them by the Prevent duty (Section 2), this is an important finding, and would appear to support the findings of the DfE's 2015 omnibus survey.<sup>83</sup>

We propose four factors that appear to have contributed to these fairly high levels of confidence among school/college staff. The first of these is the **training and support mechanisms** put in place to facilitate implementation of the duty.

As outlined in Section 2, the Prevent duty has been accompanied by a major drive – from national government, local authorities, the police and the private and third sectors – to provide training and guidance relevant to the Prevent duty. This was clearly reflected in our interview and survey samples, in which the overwhelming majority of respondents reported having received at least some form of Prevent-related training.

Furthermore, while some respondents expressed a fairly low opinion of the training, both in terms of content and delivery,<sup>84</sup> by and large the training and support appears to have been well received. Information about the scope of the Prevent duty (in terms of addressing all forms of extremism) and how it coincided with existing safeguarding practices was repeatedly identified by interview respondents as both helpful and reassuring. Most respondents were also positive about ongoing support and guidance from local authorities and community policing teams in relation to the Prevent duty – although again some college staff felt that the training and guidance was based primarily on the needs of schools or higher education institutions, and that those developing the guidance had limited knowledge of further education colleges.<sup>85</sup>

[The] Prevent coordinator [...] has been fantastic, really. He has come in and done training with the staff where we have got specific groups, where we have had issues. [...] He has delivered training to our student union executive committee. We have built that relationship over a couple of years now and he has even, when we have had a student who we think, uummm, there is something here that we need to check this student out, or there is something of concern, we have been able to pick up the phone and he looks into it and he then might do some further monitoring. We feel that without that we would have probably struggled really. (R11, senior leader, college, W. Yorks)

We find a similar picture in the survey data. On a scale from 1-5 where 1 is 'not useful at all' and 5 is 'very useful', all of the main forms of training had mean scores above 3 (Figure 4). The form of training with the highest mean score was face-to-face training provided by a fellow member of staff (3.95). The forms of training with the lowest mean scores were the online (3.25) and face-to-face training provided by external providers (3.46) other than the police or the local authority.

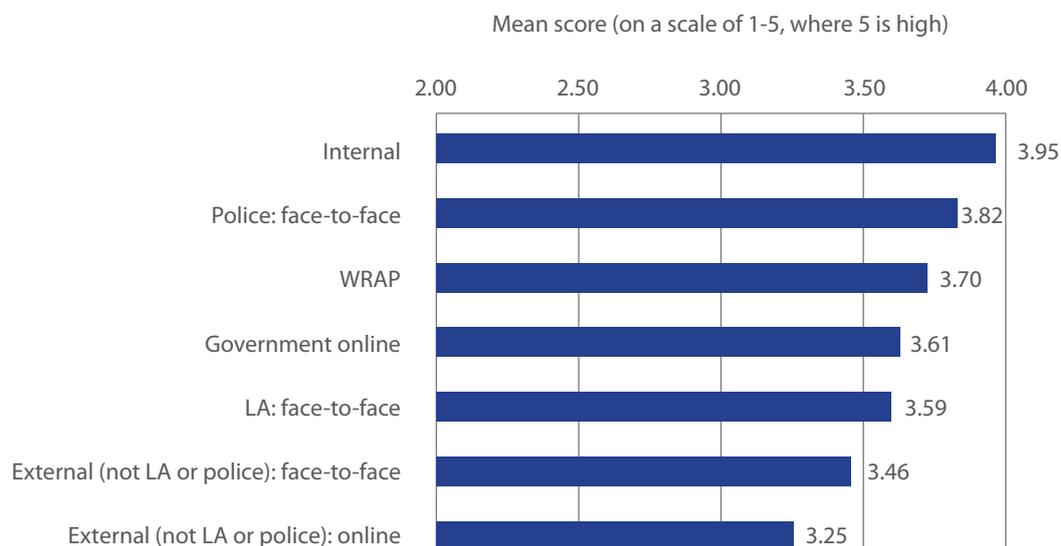
---

83 83% of senior leaders and 52% of classroom teachers said they were very or fairly confident in implementing the duty. See footnote 45

84 In most cases criticism was limited to comments about how they did not learn anything new. There were also some comments about the delivery feeling rather formulaic and uninspiring.

85 In particular, they questioned whether those developing the guidance understood the diversity of the student population in colleges, both in terms of the range of courses being delivered and in terms of the range across post-16 students through to mature students.

**Figure 4. Perceived usefulness of different forms of Prevent-related training<sup>86</sup>**



A second factor that appears to have contributed to this fairly high level of confidence with regards the Prevent duty is the extent to which staff have been able to situate the duty within existing practices – developing what we call **narratives of continuity**. It was common in the interviews to hear respondents describe how they had initially had some concerns, even anxieties, about the new duty and what it would entail. These feelings largely gave way to a sense of relief when staff realised that they were already doing much of what was required of them – a realisation that usually occurred either during a training session, a conversation with colleagues or, in the case of those more involved in implementing the duty, when they sat down to look at how the Prevent duty might fit with existing organisational safeguarding policies and procedures and how it might ‘map’ against their existing curriculum content:

*In terms of the stuff from the guy from the borough that came into deliver stuff, that really just confirmed for me, and I think for lots of us, what we already knew about what we were trying to do and how we were trying to, or how we needed to, address these issues if they arose, because if*

*you’re having conversations with children about sensitive issues in all kinds of areas then you have a feeling and experience of how to address those, and so it was helpful to clarify things but it didn’t sort of vastly change how we were thinking about it, I don’t think. It just confirmed for us, in my opinion, what we were doing. (R59, HoD, school, London)*

The idea that the Prevent duty comprised an extension of existing safeguarding requirements was an important part of these narratives of continuity, as was the fact that, as a result of Ofsted’s Common Inspection Framework, fundamental British values in one guise or another were already firmly on educationalists’ radar. Indeed, staff in some schools/colleges reported that they had been seeking more Prevent-related input and support from their local authority even prior to the announcement of the duty. Similarly, respondents in some schools/colleges spoke about how the duty had in effect simply allowed for a renewed emphasis on things such as Citizenship Education after its prominence had previously been downgraded in the focus under former Education Secretary Michael Gove on ‘traditional academic education’.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>86</sup> This graph combines 2 questions from the survey: ‘Have you received any training in relation to the Prevent duty?’ and ‘Have you had WRAP (Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent) training?’ As such, some overlap between WRAP and other columns is possible.

<sup>87</sup> See also Richardson, R. and Bolloten, B. (2014) ‘Fundamental British Values’ – origins, controversy, ways forward: A symposium’ in *Race Equality Teaching*, December, pp 9-23

A third basis of confidence concerned **professional skills and experience**. In some cases, this related to specific subject-matter expertise. For example, most teachers/lecturers working in the humanities and social sciences made reference to the fact that they were used to, and comfortable with discussing contentious issues in the classroom – it was seen as something that came with the territory. Similarly, staff with experience in pastoral roles spoke about how looking out for signs of vulnerability in young people has long been an everyday part of their job. However, more general professional identities also underpinned respondents' confidence. Education professionals are, after all, well used to having to adapt to and implement policy coming down to them from the government.<sup>88</sup>

A fourth basis of confidence relates to a combination of **trust in the safeguarding system**, and the promotion of a culture of **'if in doubt, speak to someone'** with regards to the safeguarding element of the duty.

For several non-DSLs, trust in their school/college safeguarding processes and teams and, specifically, in their DSL, was an important source of confidence with regards the duty. This was particularly the case among those respondents who acknowledged anxieties about the possible implications of the Prevent duty and referrals made under the duty.

Very, very confident I think but confident because I feel that I know to go to [name of DSL], if you know what I mean. Like she's very strong, she's very good, and because she's confident then I'm confident. I'd never do anything without running anything by her because she is, you know, the safeguarding lead but, no, confident delivering it in that I know exactly what to do to follow that procedure, and then whenever I have to speak to parents and talk about these things, we feel confident because we know at all times that really it's the child that you're thinking about the whole time. So addressing this with parents, no matter how sensitive the topic may be, you know. We're working with Safer Schools police officers. (R63, HoD, school, London)

It's that nervousness of thinking [...] 'Am I making the right judgement here? What's going to happen to my student? Am I doing the right or wrong thing?' You know, 'are the police going to swoop down and sort of sirens wailing and arrest them?' But we talk here about the fact that we've got a team of experts in our own college under safeguarding. They refer people normally through that, so if they're worried about a student self-harming or being unsafe in any other way they'd refer that way. And we promote Prevent as being the same thing but just with a different focus. (R2, HoD, college, W. Yorks)

In the case of DSLs or other respondents who were part of their institutional safeguarding team, this trust in the system extended beyond the school to the Safer Schools police officers and local authority Prevent teams with whom they were working. Several DSLs described regular and fairly informal conversations with local Prevent practitioners which they saw as 'just an extra source of help really' (R56, DSL, school, London).<sup>89</sup>

Alongside this trust in the safeguarding system, most respondents described how in their school/college, senior staff had encouraged everybody to adopt a culture of 'if in doubt, speak to someone' in which speaking to somebody further up the referral chain was not to be seen as accusing students of something that they should not have been doing. Rather, in keeping with standard safeguarding procedures, it was seen simply as bringing in a more senior and experienced colleague in order to ensure the safety of the young person in question.

We've established quite a good supportive ethos around this... And what I say is it doesn't matter how insignificant, how small, tell me about it and we'll be able to work it through. So I think they feel supported. (R1, DSL, college, W. Yorks)

We just ask staff if they've got a concern to refer and it's better to refer and be wrong than not to refer and something bigger happen, you know, it escalate. (R17, student advisor, college, W. Yorks)

88 Ball, S., Maguire, M and Braun, A (2013) *How Schools Do Policy*, London: Routledge

89 The exception to this was a DSL who had been unhappy when what they thought was an informal conversation resulted in the police going to the student's house without them (the DSL being informed). While they continued to work closely with the local authority Prevent team, this incident coloured their perception of the local authority Prevent team.

Again, among senior staff with dedicated safeguarding roles, this 'if in doubt, speak to someone' approach also extended beyond the schools and colleges to their interactions with local authority Prevent teams.

Combined, this trust in the safeguarding system and the 'if in doubt, speak to someone' culture had the effect of relieving anxiety about decision-making. We would propose that this is at least in part because it has limited the burden of responsibility on individuals at any given position within the referral pathway, that is, for most staff not in senior leadership roles, their responsibility, at least with regards the safeguarding element, was limited to raising concerns with somebody within the safeguarding team. As one respondent succinctly put it 'my remit stops when I've passed it on' (R18, HoD, college, W. Yorks).

Similarly, DSLs could speak to local authority Prevent practitioners without having to reach a decision themselves about whether or not this was a case that required a formal Channel referral and intervention by the police or other statutory authorities. As discussed below (Section 4.3.1), this has also, however, had implications not just for the number of referrals taking place but also how educationalists have interpreted this increase.

#### 4.2.1. 'Difficult conversations'

*Interviewer:*

When you say not confident can you explain a bit more about...?

*Respondent:*

I'm not sure. I mean I know that you have to inform the police and, but I think that it's, I wouldn't, if I had to explain something to a parent, why I have to report it, I think it would be like 'it's just not acceptable, things are happening' and that's it. I wouldn't know how to deal with that in any more detail than to say 'I'm passing it on for somebody else to deal with'. (R65, support worker, school, London)

There are however two elements of complexity that require attention. The first of these relates to the focus of confidence. Within the interview data a clear distinction emerges between confidence about knowing what to do should concerns arise about a particular student (i.e. knowing what the safeguarding

procedures are), and confidence about having 'difficult conversations', either with students or, in some cases, with parents, in relation to the Prevent duty. While, as discussed above, most respondents expressed fairly high levels of confidence with regards knowing what was required of them and how to proceed if safeguarding concerns arose, confidence was often lower with regards to having 'difficult conversations'.

Quite what made these conversations 'difficult' varied across respondents, as one would expect – we all have different comfort thresholds for a whole range of different things. In some cases, it was about the content of the conversations and, specifically, conversations which push at or go beyond boundaries of respondents' personal knowledge and skills.

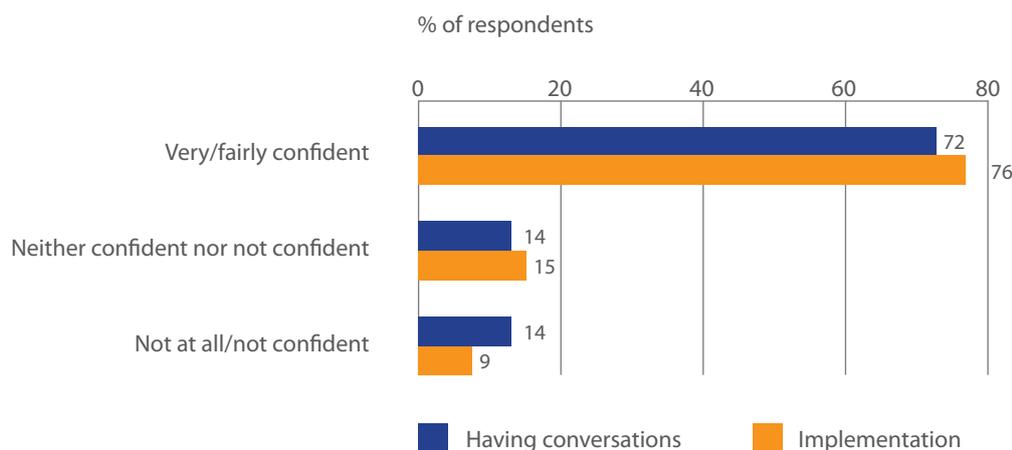
*I will tell you what's hard, is when students want to talk to you about things and you don't know everything [...] I know bits of things about Syria, I know bits of things like Iraq or bits of things, but they want to know how it all comes in together. I don't know all of that and it's really hard to have conversations with them. (R55, senior leader, school, London)*

*There's an absolute gap in knowledge about what's going on from the student point of view and I don't think the staff are that, I think there's a lot of staff who don't bother with the news or don't, or only understand the headlines and don't really understand it at any depth. They're worried about saying the wrong thing, getting it wrong. I think there's, I think that's a real fear in the [further education] sector. (R1, DSL, college, W. Yorks)*

In other cases, it was more about the context of the conversation and an awareness of the sensitivity of the issues being discussed and how these might be interpreted or experienced by the people they were having the conversation with. For example, one respondent who had spoken very confidently about the Prevent duty and about discussing issues around extremism and radicalisation with students suddenly stalled when asked how they would describe the duty to a parent. Meanwhile, some of the white respondents observed that their ethnic identity could also make conversations about AQ/ISIS-inspired extremism and radicalisation difficult because of concerns that their comments would be misconstrued as racist or Islamophobic.

However ‘difficult conversations’ were understood, what seemed clear from the interviews was that there were certain conversations about which respondents felt less comfortable. Somewhat surprisingly, given the interview data, this distinction between confidence in implementing the duty and confidence in having ‘difficult conversations’ is not immediately apparent within the survey data. While 76% of respondents described themselves as very or fairly confident about implementing the Prevent duty, 72% also described themselves as very or fairly confident about ‘having conversations with students on issues related to extremism and radicalisation’ (Figure 5).<sup>90</sup>

**Figure 5. Confidence in implementing the Prevent duty compared with confidence about having conversations with students about issues related to extremism and radicalisation**

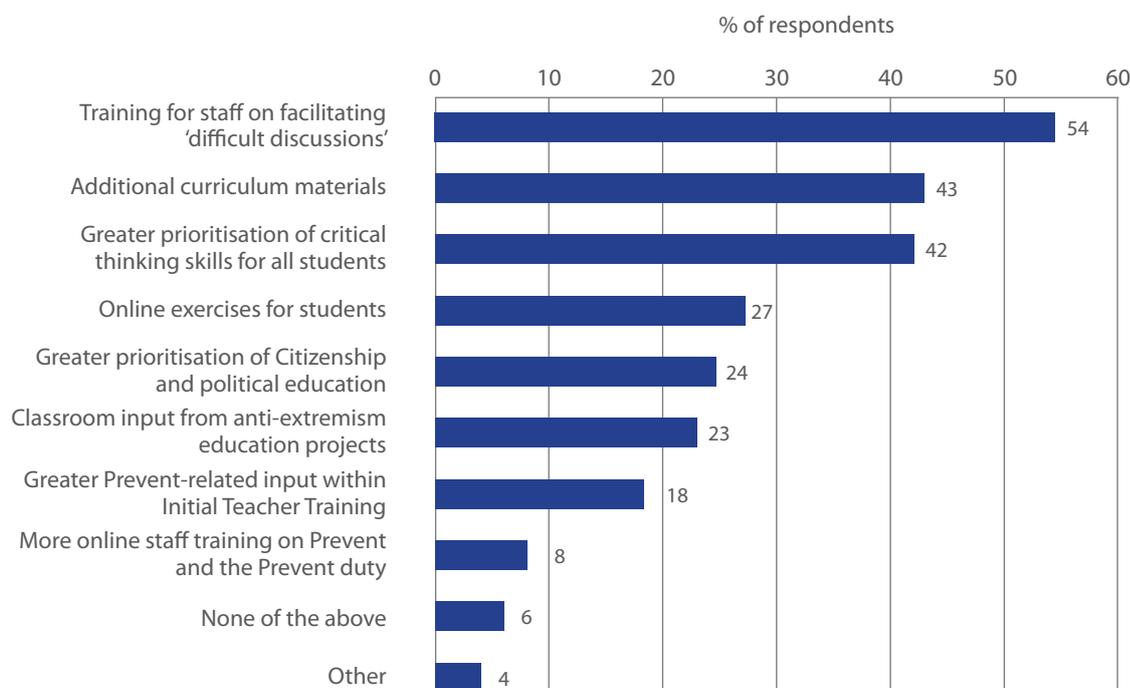


However, when asked what they thought would be most useful to them in relation to the Prevent duty (Figure 6), ‘training for staff on facilitating “difficult discussions”’ was by some distance the most frequently chosen option (chosen by 54% of respondents), followed by ‘additional curriculum materials such as DVDs and group discussion exercises’ (43%) and ‘greater prioritisation on developing critical thinking skills for all students’ (42%).<sup>91</sup>

<sup>90</sup> We believe that part of the explanation for this is likely to lie in the fact that being confident in their own abilities to carry out their day to day educational interactions with young people is a pre-requisite for educationalists. It is also possible that there is an element of social desirability bias at play here – that as an educational professional it is hard to admit you are not confident at having ‘difficult conversations’.

<sup>91</sup> Respondents were able to select up to three options. The list was generated from the initial analysis of the interview data.

**Figure 6. Perceptions of what would be most useful for school/college staff in relation to the Prevent duty**



This would seem to indicate that having 'difficult conversations' continues to be a focus of some concern for a significant proportion of educationalists with regard to the Prevent duty, or at least that their confidence in having such conversations is of limited depth. Further research is required, however, to identify the nature and type of 'difficult conversations' that support and skills-development training is needed for. It is possible that educationalists are confident in responding to comments by their students but less sure about initiating a more sustained open conversation as part of curriculum activity, and less sure about the degree to which school/college leaders are actually supportive of such conversations with students.<sup>92</sup>

**4.2.2. The distribution of confidence**

The second element of complexity is the distribution of confidence. In the interview data, those who most consistently expressed high levels of confidence tended to fall into one or more of five categories: i) staff with a specified safeguarding role (either as DSL or as a member of school/college safeguarding teams); ii) members of staff in senior management positions; iii) experienced members of staff (e.g. with several years of professional experience); iv) members of staff working in subject matter areas in which having 'difficult conversations' around contentious issues are considered par for the course, such as Citizenship Education, Sociology,

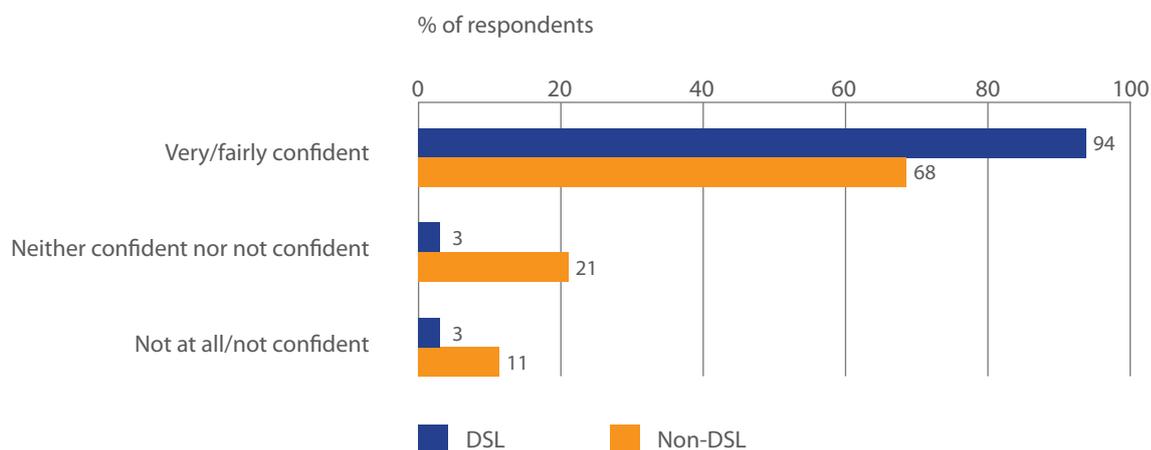
<sup>92</sup> A parallel could be drawn with previous anti-racism efforts within education, where individual practitioners felt that they were not being licenced to have risky (in terms of language and views that might be expressed) conversations. See for example Hewitt, R. (2005) *White Backlash and the Politics of Multiculturalism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Thomas, P. (2002) 'Youth Work, Racist Behaviour and Young People – Education or Blame?', *Scottish Journal of Youth Issues*, Issue 4, pp. 49-66

Religious Education and v) members of staff whose own biography means that they feel confident discussing issues that they considered pertinent to the Prevent duty e.g. some of the Muslim respondents explained how their knowledge and understanding of Islam and its history gave them confidence to engage with students who had questions about the relationship between religious orthodoxy and ‘extremism’.

By contrast, some of the members of staff who fall outside of the broad categories described above – including less experienced members of staff, or members of staff working in curriculum areas in which having ‘difficult conversations’ is not part of their day-to-day practice – expressed considerable anxiety about the duty. In one instance, a Newly-Qualified Teacher (NQT), quite visibly worried and upset, told us ‘Maybe this is really bad now but [in relation to Prevent] I don’t really know what I’m supposed to do’ (R58, teacher, school, London). We also encountered respondents who expressed anxiety about how they could fit fundamental British values into their curriculum areas, and the possible consequences of failing to do so for the school/college’s next Ofsted inspection.

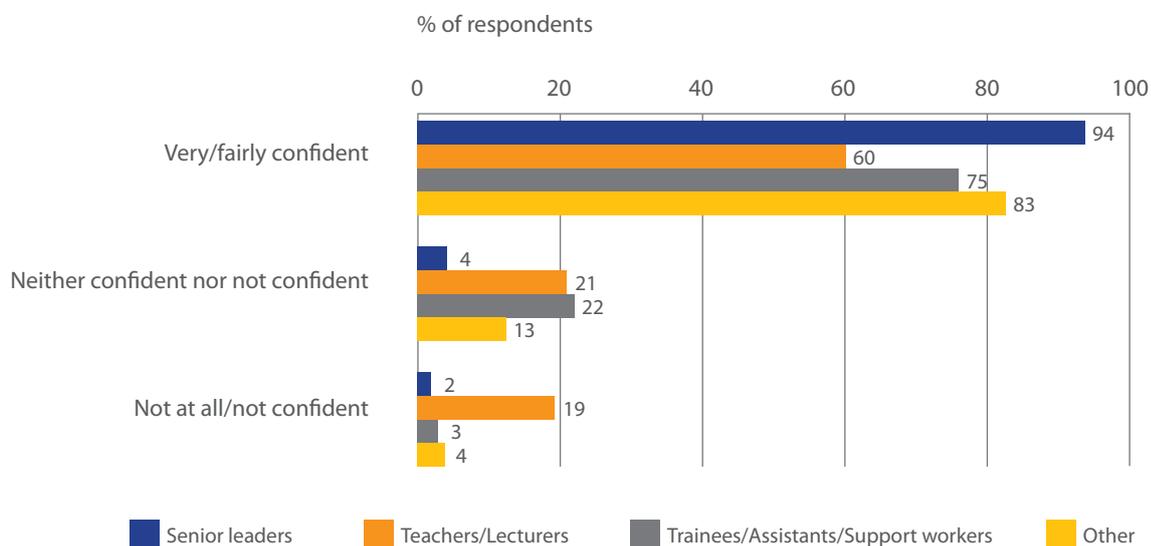
The survey data tell a similar story, with non-DSLs, junior members of staff and staff with fewer years of experience considerably less confident than their more experienced colleagues. While 94% of DSLs in our sample described themselves as fairly or very confident about implementing the Prevent duty, this dropped to 68% among non-DSLs, with 21% describing themselves as neither confident nor not confident and 11% describing themselves either as not confident or not at all confident (Figure 7) – that is, 1 in 3 non-DSLs did not describe themselves as at least fairly confident.

**Figure 7. Confidence in implementing the Prevent duty, by DSLs and non-DSL**



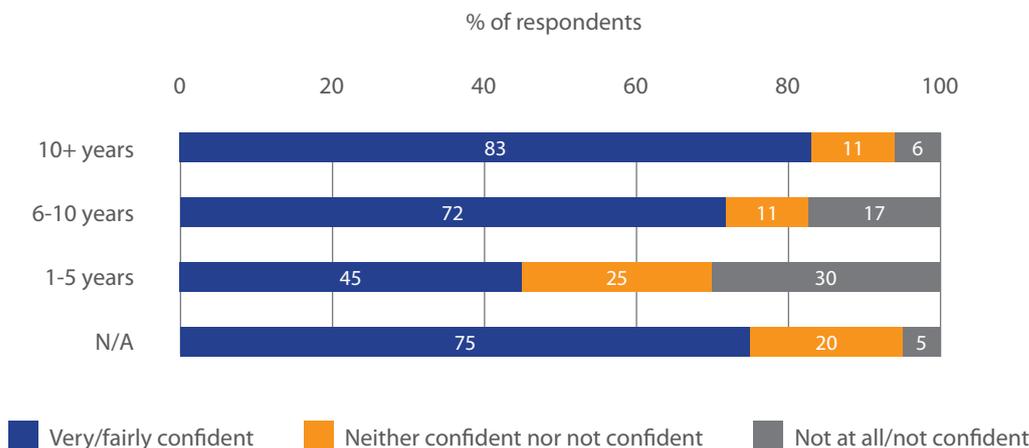
Similarly, while 94% of senior leaders surveyed described themselves as fairly or very confident about implementing the duty, this fell to 60% among staff-grade teachers and lecturers, although it is interesting to note that the figure was higher (75%) among trainee teachers and educational support staff (Figure 8).

**Figure 8. Confidence in implementing the Prevent duty, by job role**



Among respondents with teaching qualifications, 83% of those who had qualified more than 10 years ago described themselves as confident about implementing the duty compared with just 45% among those who had qualified within the last 5 years (Figure 9).

**Figure 9. Confidence in implementing the Prevent duty, by years qualified as a teacher/lecturer**



As such, while we find high levels of confidence among a large proportion of respondents, it is important to recognise that there appears to be a demand among educationalists for further support concerning how to have the type of ‘difficult conversations’ that implementing the Prevent duty might throw up; and, furthermore, that confidence in relation to the Prevent duty is not evenly distributed.

These findings raise important questions about the degree to which the national Prevent strategy adequately supports such ‘difficult conversations’ within schools and colleges, and provides resources for practitioners to develop the skills and confidence required. They also highlight the policy challenge around successful implementation of the pedagogical and curriculum aspect of the Prevent duty. The risk of being not only ineffective but counterproductive (see Section 4.4.2) increases considerably unless all front-line staff are sufficiently confident and skilled.

### 4.3. What the Prevent duty has meant in practice

While we often heard ‘narratives of continuity’ around both safeguarding and curriculum practices during the interviews (Section 4.2), it is nonetheless clear from the data that there are a number of areas in which the Prevent duty has entailed, or at least contributed towards, changes in the working practices of school and college staff. For the purposes of this report, we discuss these under three headings:

1. Referrals and the reporting of concerns;
2. The curriculum response;
3. Workload and budgetary implications.

#### 4.3.1. Referrals and the reporting of concerns

You know, I would say that the change, if anything, that I’ve seen would be really two-fold. One, that staff are raising issues from time to time under Prevent which, or with Prevent in mind, which perhaps they wouldn’t have done as frequently before, and I would say that, where previously we would’ve dealt with that amongst ourselves in-house, we have, if we want to, got an external point of contact who’s someone that deals with Prevent at a borough level, which allows us to just have someone with a wider range of experience to run things by. (R59, HoD, school, London)

I think it’s like anything else, once you raise staff awareness then what you get is a lot of people thinking to themselves, ‘right, okay I am not sure about that but I will put that out there.’ I would rather that than people blissfully, ignorantly, walking around, you know, allowing stuff to happen that shouldn’t be happening in schools. (R49, DSL, school, London)

*Respondent:*

They go around and say 'I am a bride of Isis!' or something like that, but we know it's ridiculous but then we have to follow it all up. So sometimes it's quite exasperating because you know the kids are taking the Mickey, but we still have to go through all the procedures and inform everybody and that's quite time consuming and annoying [...] they might say stupid things like 'I am gonna go over to Syria' but without actually knowing what it means and without even – they can't even make their way from here across London in a Tube let alone anywhere else.

*Interviewer:*

Those procedures, would you have done anything similar to those before this duty came in?

*Respondent:*

No. Not at all, no. We might have called parents in and have a chat with them. We would have monitored the child and if we had any serious concerns we would have obviously taken it somewhere. But 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. They are saying that 'we had no idea', when there were probably lots of signs there. (R50, DSL, school, London)

As discussed in Section 2, there was a sharp increase nationally in referrals of young people to the Channel programme in the year following the introduction of the Prevent duty. Our findings resonate with this, showing that there has been a significant rise in the number of students entering internal safeguarding referral pathways (within the school/college i.e. from a staff member to a DSL) and external safeguarding referral pathways (reaching beyond the school/college i.e. from a DSL to the local authority).<sup>93</sup>

During the interviews, senior leaders and DSLs in particular spoke about the importance of avoiding 'kneejerk reactions' (R29, DSL, school, W. Yorks) and being careful about staff 'getting a bit over-conscientious in terms of trying to identify things' (R16, DSL, college, W. Yorks). This was echoed by other members of staff, who highlighted the role of professional judgement and common sense in decisions about what to refer or report.

If you notice lots of different things you might start to think, 'should I be checking? Is that person all right?' But it wouldn't be one thing because teenagers are quite hard to make out anyway. I think that if you took one thing from the list of pointers that might raise alarm that could happen once a week with a teenager. (R35, teacher, school, W. Yorks)

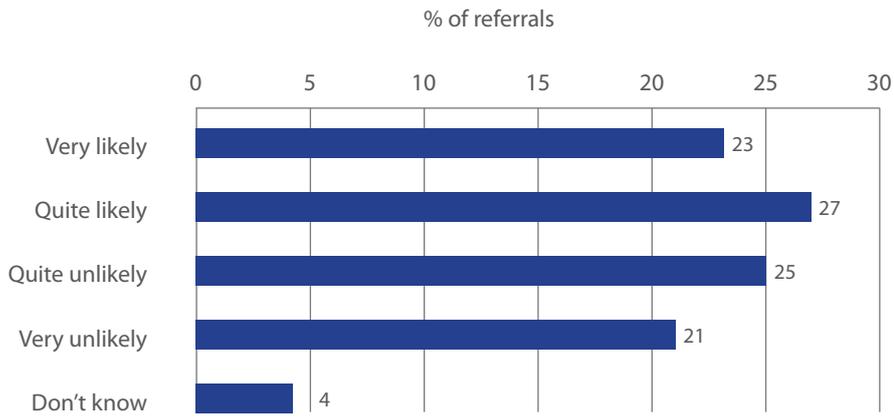
However, across the schools and colleges where we undertook interviews we heard about a general increase in the reporting of concerns relating to radicalisation and/or terrorism, and the 8 local Prevent practitioners all reported a sharp increase in safeguarding referrals from schools and colleges in the first weeks and months of the duty being in force.

Similarly, within the survey data, while slightly over half the internal referrals (within school) were identified as being very likely (23%) or quite likely (27%) to have been made without the duty, 25% were identified as being quite unlikely to have been made had the Prevent duty not been in place, with 21% identified as very unlikely to have been made (Figure 10). A similar, if not quite so stark pattern, is found in the data on external referrals (to the local authority), with 24% of external referrals assessed as being quite unlikely to have been made had the Prevent duty not been in place, and 18% being identified as being very unlikely to have been made (Figure 11).

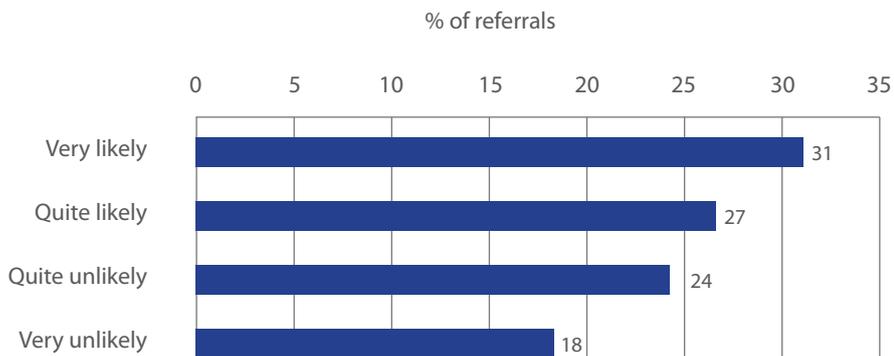
---

<sup>93</sup> It is possible that this initial rise in Prevent referrals and reporting of concerns by schools and colleges in the period following the duty's introduction will gradually subside. While all 8 of the local authority Prevent practitioners interviewed described a sharp increase in referrals after the duty was initially introduced, they also reported a steady decline in 'unnecessary referrals' over time as the duty bedded in. DSLs also reported that as they had become more familiar with the duty they had had less frequent need to contact local authority Prevent practitioners for guidance – with one DSL drawing a quite clear distinction between the present and an earlier 'time of fear' (R61, DSL, school, London) in which they were more likely to contact the local authority Prevent lead for frequent advice and reassurance. The extent to which this anecdotal evidence is supported by national data remains to be seen.

**Figure 10. How likely or unlikely do you think it is that you would have referred the student if the official Prevent duty had not been in place? (Internal referrals)**



**Figure 11. How likely or unlikely do you think it is that you would have referred the student if the official Prevent duty had not been in place? (External referrals)**



It is likely that this increase in reporting and referrals is partly a product of the same 'if in doubt speak to someone' culture and trust in the referral systems that helped to underpin staff confidence, and partly a product of widespread anxiety about 'missing something'. Alongside quite genuine and deep concern about the perceived risks posed by violent extremism to their students' welfare – concerns that were fuelled, particularly at the time of this research, both by a number of high-profile cases of young people travelling to Syria to support ISIS and by perceptions of a heightened risk of extreme right wing violence around the time of the murder of Jo Cox, MP – respondents were also anxious about the repercussions for themselves and their school/college if they were deemed to have missed something.<sup>94</sup>

*They [internal referrals] do come forward and sometimes they amount to nothing and sometimes they come to safeguarding, sometimes you get referrals for things that actually are not really safeguarding, but you would rather it that way than the other way. (R11, senior leader, college, W. Yorks)*

*And then something will happen, and the thing is that what we've seen [referring to a nearby college] is the institution gets pilloried. We've seen institutions get 'why, how did you not?' and all of that finger-pointing, when actually 'do you want to just have a chat with the families and the friends and the other people who might have wanted to notice something twenty thousand students later?' (R1, DSL, college, W. Yorks)*

*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, DSL, school, W. Yorks)*

*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, school, W. Yorks)*

In other words, and in keeping with a more general safeguarding perspective, almost all the respondents in this research took the view that it was better to have a few referrals that 'amount to nothing' than to 'miss something'. As such, while several respondents expressed concern about how students might be negatively affected by unnecessary referrals – by what we might call 'false positives', the increase in reporting of concerns and in the number of students entering referral pathways was not seen necessarily as being problematic.

Even so, it was nonetheless surprising how frequently we encountered cases in which respondents and their colleagues had been quite confident that there was **not** a serious risk but where reporting had nonetheless taken place. As indicated above, in some of these cases, the primary reason given for reporting was about 'covering themselves'. In others, however, there was also another, seemingly didactic, justification for reporting that was to do with addressing what was referred to as 'inappropriate' behaviour.

The most striking example of this was a case in which a Muslim student had made a video with friends from other schools 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 was raised with the DSL, who spoke with the Safer Schools police officer, who raised the issue with 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)*

---

94 Several respondents spoke movingly about how terrible they would feel if something happened to one of the students (see Section 4.5).

What makes cases such as this one interesting is that they raise a basic but challenging question: if Prevent is safeguarding, who is being safeguarded from what in this particular case? The young person is neither considered to be vulnerable to being radicalised, nor to be a potential threat to other members of society. Rather, the function appears to be to teach this person that somebody like them – a young Muslim – cannot make certain jokes without perhaps finding themselves in trouble. The apparatus of the Prevent referral mechanisms are here being called upon and utilised to drive home lessons on the societal boundaries of appropriate behaviour for young Muslims. The difficulty here is that while school/college staff, with the best of intentions, may be seeking to raise awareness among young Muslims of the need to enact and perform ‘safe identities’ in public spaces, in doing so they may also be reinforcing the perception of Muslims as risky and dangerous.<sup>95</sup>

What was also clear was that, while all respondents agreed that the Prevent duty should be about all forms of extremism, and while most appeared to accept that this was the intention of the duty, there were nonetheless repeated instances in which concerns that were flagged were distinctly Muslim-focused. Several respondents spelled out very clearly that the Prevent duty was not about looking out to see whether somebody has started wearing a hijab, or whether they have started to grow a particular type of beard. Nonetheless, several of the ‘false positive’ cases discussed by respondents (that is, cases that at least led to an internal referral to a DSL) were cases in which, for example, a student had come in wearing more religious dress, or had written Allahu Akbar on their notebook, or in one case was learning Arabic:

*Respondent:*

You get referrals because they have drawn something or they have worn a piece of clothing, you know. Or, one lad were learning Arabic because he wanted to learn the Qur’an in its original language and that were flagged. We had a chat with him and when, it was because he wanted to understand it without the change in language or change in meaning for him. That were fine.

*Interviewer:*

That member of staff flagged that up as being ... he wasn’t sure what was going on?

*Respondent:*

Yeah. Clothing, different things, different aspects of people. But it’s about logging them and looking to see if there is anything else, and maybe a bit of a chat with them. Sometimes I think the chat could happen before it actually goes any further. (R12, DSL, college, W. Yorks)

It was made clear in these cases that there was not perceived to be any problem and no further action was taken. However, such cases do lend credence to the concern that, whatever the intentions, in practice the Prevent duty is more likely to focus staff attention on the behaviours and practices of Muslim students because many staff, particularly from non-Muslim backgrounds, are unsure about how to interpret and assess some of the behaviours and cultural norms of Muslim students (Section 4.1.2).

#### 4.3.2. The curriculum response

In addition to the safeguarding element of the Prevent duty, it is clear that there has also been a curriculum response. Indeed, several respondents were considerably more enthused about the ‘curriculum side of things’ than they were about safeguarding, seeing it as being potentially ‘far more powerful’ (R55, senior leader, school, London).

To some extent this curriculum response has been simply about undertaking ‘mapping’ exercises to identify where within the existing curriculum they were already addressing the duty and being able to evidence this to Ofsted. As discussed in Section 4.2., this helped to reassure staff by highlighting continuity between what they had previously been doing and what they believed they were being required to do going forward:

Mapping is probably the best tool the school uses in terms of Prevent. I think there is a lot of Prevent goes on inside the school, but not all of it is explicit. So I think a lot of staff do Prevent but it’s trying to make them see that they do Prevent [...] I was really surprised by how much Prevent we did cover inside the school. It was much more prevalent than I thought it was. (R47, senior leader, school, London)

95 See for example: Mythen, G., Walklate, S. and Khan, F. (2012) ‘Why Should we have to prove we’re alright?: Counter-terrorism, Risk and Partial-Securities’, *Sociology* 47(2) 383–398.

Alongside this, however, there were also clear examples of schools, colleges and individual staff responding to the duty through initiating or reinvigorating a range of curriculum activities. These included special assemblies, sometimes led by an external expert speaker; 'drop-down days' where the normal curriculum was suspended to allow groups of students or the whole school to focus on what were perceived to be Prevent-related issues; the inclusion of anti-extremism material during form time in schools (where Personal Health, Social and Citizenship Education (PHSCE) is normally delivered); the inclusion of new material within existing curriculum; and in several of the schools and colleges we heard about how, in the wake of international terrorist incidents or at times of high-profile debates around foreign policy issues (such as the parliamentary debate about whether or not to undertake airstrikes in Syria), they had created space in the timetable for discussion of these issues.

These were not necessarily seen as major changes to what they had done previously; more often they were seen as a subtle refocusing:

*So I'm probably more structured now, so if I, if something has happened I will make the time, we will talk about and we will, I'll make it clear that we're making the time to do that and that it's important for us to do that and to see different sides of it, whereas maybe before it would've been a quick like 'oh this happened. How are we feeling? Okay, move on'. (R44, HoD, school, London)*

The 'curriculum response' also included various cross-institution initiatives. These included activities such as having 'student campaigns', a 'Prevent awareness week' and promoting Prevent and fundamental British values through posters and on TV display screens. In one school, the duty had motivated staff to reinvigorate a debating club, and in another they had adopted a programme they called 'the big question', in which students and staff were encouraged to deliberate over a large and contentious question. Staff in another school told of how

they had adopted the Philosophy4Children (P4C) programme – something that pre-dated the Prevent duty and which was seen as part of a much wider focus in the school on developing critical thinking and active enquiry among the students and staff, but which nonetheless was seen as providing a clear avenue through which to bolster students' resilience to the binaries often put forward by extremist groups and ideologies – an approach that academic research supports.<sup>96</sup>

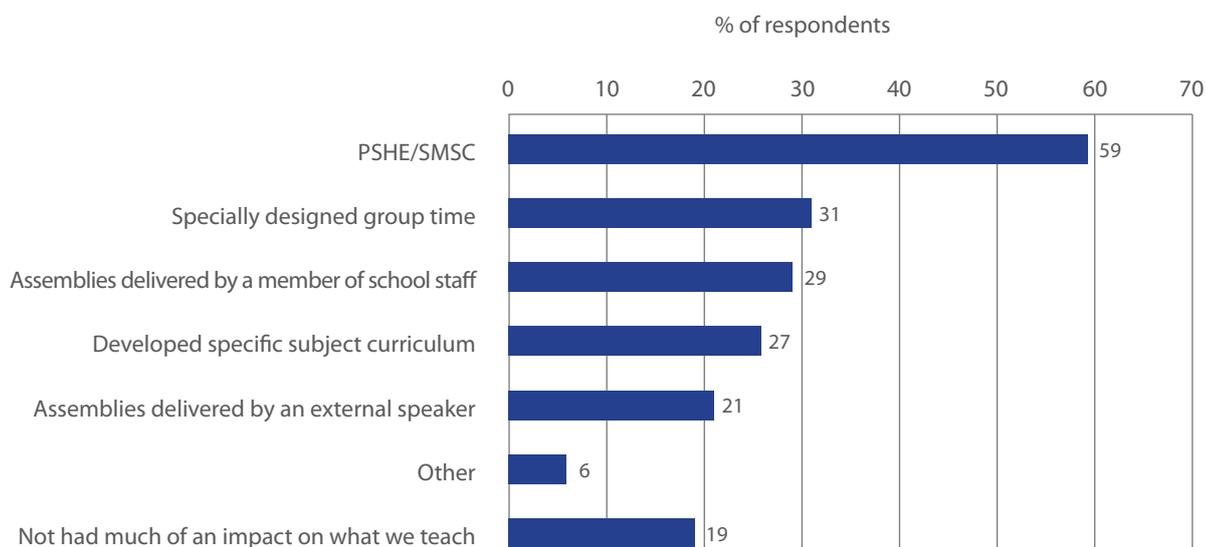
*We do P4C. Most of our staff are trained in it, and it's sessions that we do with the children about them asking questions, and teaching them to ask questions in a different way, so it's not just a yes or no answer [...] So I think that's been a huge thing to help them in terms of that thing about sort of extremism and radicalisation. (R39, teaching assistant, school, London)*

The survey data support the idea that there has been a significant curriculum response to the Prevent duty from schools and colleges. Only 19% of respondents stated the duty had 'not really had much impact on what we teach' (Figure 12). The other respondents described multiple ways in which their school or college had developed some form of curriculum response to the Prevent duty. Of these, by far the most frequent response (59% of respondents) was for Prevent issues to be addressed through PSHE/SMSC<sup>97</sup>, followed by the use of 'designed group time, such as "drop down" days, workshops, theatre events etc.' (31%), and use of staff led assemblies (29%), and the use of specific subject curriculum related to 'Prevent issues' (27%).

96 Davies, L. (2008) *Educating Against Extremism*, Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham

97 Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development. All English schools are required to show pupil development against this.

**Figure 12. Reported curriculum response to the Prevent duty**



While it is clear that many schools and colleges were already actively engaging with students around issues related to extremism, radicalisation and intolerance more broadly, it is also clear that the Prevent duty and concomitant expectations about how this will be reflected in forthcoming Ofsted inspections have entailed a greater pedagogical emphasis on these issues.

**4.3.3. Workload and budgetary implications**

The interview data provide a mixed picture of the perceived implications of the Prevent duty in terms of school/college budgets and workload. As already discussed at length, some respondents emphasised continuity when discussing the duty and most expressed the view that, apart from receiving a small amount of training about their responsibilities under the duty, nothing had really changed for them. However, those with specific safeguarding responsibilities or management responsibilities expressed the view that the Prevent duty had had quite significant budgetary and workload implications, noting that

these additional budgetary and workload pressures are largely hidden within more generic budget and organisational headings (for example ‘staff training’) but have, nevertheless, been real and substantial in the initial period after the duty’s implementation.

The feedback from [Ofsted] inspectors that started going in and inspecting Prevent from last September were that they were looking negatively on colleges where they were not 100% compliant and that. Where they may have trained 70% or 75% and, as you can imagine, it is just a huge undertaking to get through this amount of staff. We dedicated a full college CPD day to it, but it’s still only about 50% of staff [...] because people have that day off or they work part-time and they don’t get remit. So, we then brought in the online training to ensure that they all, everybody, got something, access to something. And then work departmentally with a verbal face-to-face follow up and more explanation. So, it’s just been ongoing really. In fact, it’s just taken up a huge amount of time relative to the risks, to the level of risk in our area. (R12, DSL, college, W. Yorks)

This Ofsted expectation of 100% of staff having received Prevent training was identified as being particularly challenging for colleges, many of which not only teach across multiple sites, but also off-site in communities and workplaces, and with more diverse staff to train than most schools (i.e. not only full time and part time but also specialist staff that deliver one particular course at a community centre and may never come into college).<sup>98</sup>

The safety and security of school and college sites themselves was also seen by some respondents as part of their responsibilities under the Prevent duty, which again was identified as having significant additional pressure in terms of budget and workload.

*Well, Prevent is making us look at the safety of the buildings in a whole different way because of the perceived threats which are out there at the minute. It's not just from my element it's about the security of the property, it's about ensuring access controls to people that need to be here rather than anybody that can wander about. It also looking at the way we record images, and the images that we have to choose to record. And training.... (R13, estates manager, college, W. Yorks)*

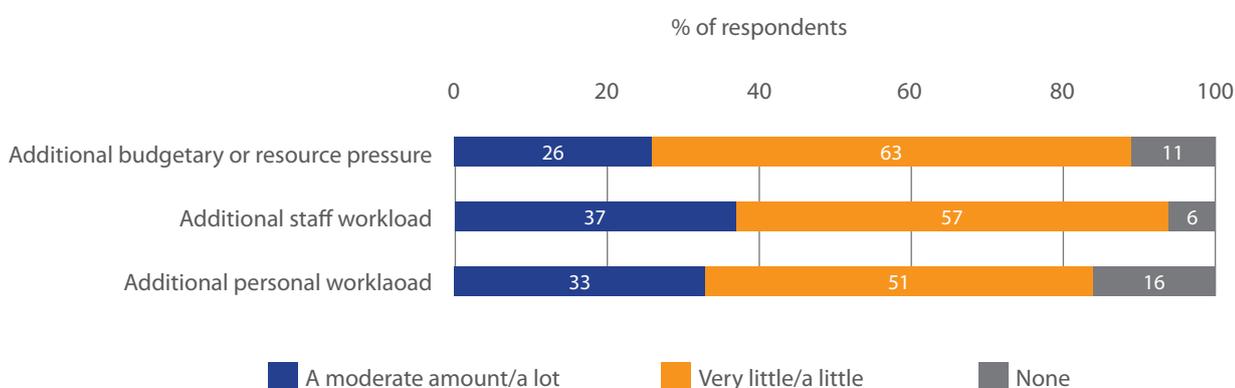
Alongside this, there was a considerable focus on e-safety in all of the schools and colleges, with most using dedicated e-safety programmes that screen students' online communications for key words identified as potential indicators of risk or vulnerability. In some cases, however, the cost of what were identified as the desired e-safety monitoring tools was simply unaffordable.

Perhaps not surprisingly, awareness of such costs prompted some senior leaders to raise questions about the proportionality of the investments that the Prevent duty seemed to entail, particularly when compared with other safeguarding risks. One interviewee described the costs of the physical infrastructure of their institution as 'inordinate' compared to the risk, noting that in terms of safeguarding 'there are far more students being blackmailed for pictures online' (R12, DSL, college, W. Yorks) than being radicalised online. Another expressed their clear frustration that, while they could get a fairly clear statistical assessment of the risk of FGM in their local area they could not get a similarly robust assessment of the risk with regards to radicalisation – leading them to question why their particular areas was a 'category one' area:

*Well why is it a category one? What is it? I think it's just based on the number of Muslims. I don't know. Is it? I don't know. Or the amount of radicalisation activity or, we don't know, we just, I don't even know. Do you know? (R61, DSL, school, London)*

This, again, is largely borne out in the survey data. The majority of respondents believe that the duty had created little or very little additional budgetary or resources pressure (63%); staff workload pressure (57%) or personal workload pressure (51%). However, there was a small but significant proportion of respondents that believe the duty had created moderate or significant additional staff workload pressure (37%), personal workload pressure (33%) or budgetary or resource pressure (26%) (Figure 13).

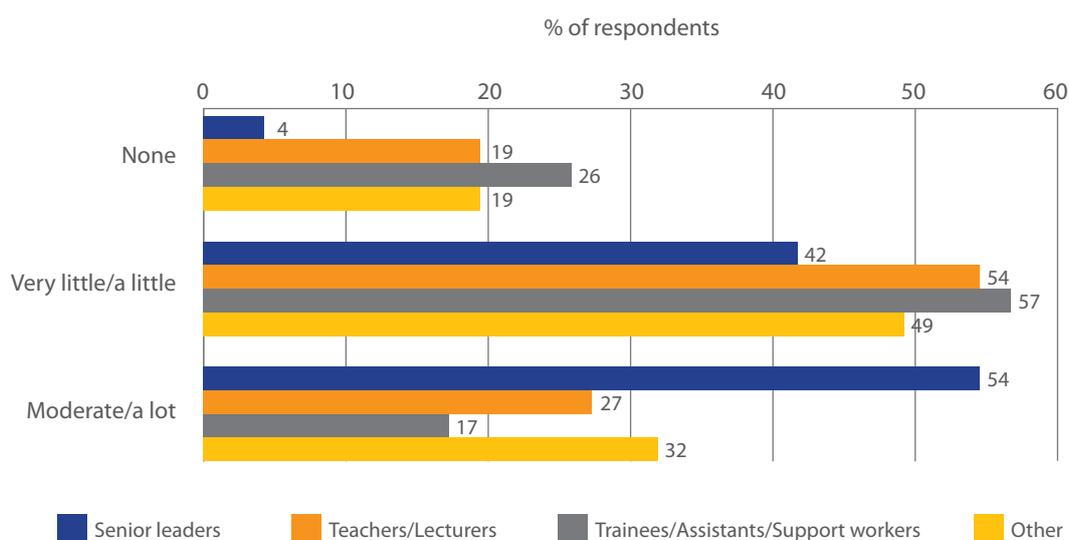
**Figure 13. Perceived impact on personal workload, staff workload and institutional budget**



<sup>98</sup> As one respondent observed, 'There is still a group of cleaners that we still haven't done because no one's worked out how to be here at 4a.m. and I haven't worked that out either' (R1, DSL, college, W. Yorks)

Perhaps unsurprisingly given the preceding discussion, senior leaders were considerably more likely to perceive the duty to have led to a moderate or major increase in their personal workload, with more than half (54%) saying that the duty had led to a moderate or major increase in their personal workload and just 4% saying that it had made no difference (Figure 14).<sup>99</sup> By contrast, a majority (54%) of teachers/lecturers said that it made little or very little difference to their workload, 19% said it had made no difference and 27% found it made a moderate or a lot of difference. Trainee teachers, teaching assistants and support staff were least likely to report that the duty had led to an increase in their workload, arguably only partially aware of what the Prevent duty entails for the institution as a whole.

**Figure 14. Perceived impact on personal workload, by job role**

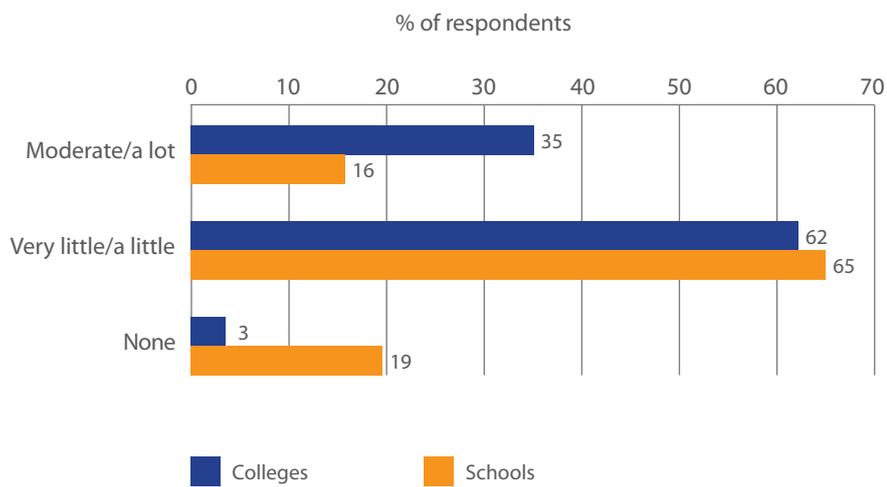


In keeping with some of the observations among college staff about the particular challenges facing colleges in meeting Ofsted expectations around training and the difficulty of managing what are often multi-site institutions, we found that perceptions of the impact of the duty on staff workload and budgetary pressure were considerably higher in colleges than in schools. While just 16% of school staff stated that they

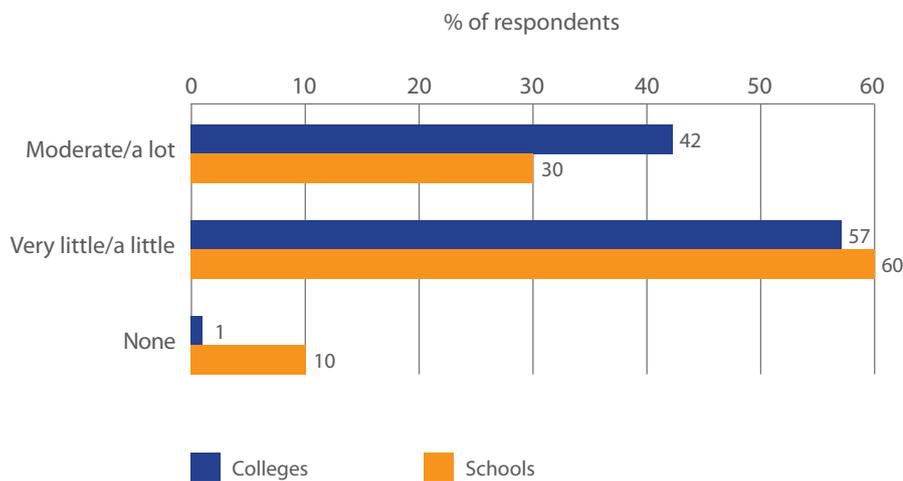
believed that the Prevent duty had increased budgetary pressure on their institution 'a moderate amount' or 'a lot', this rose to 35% among college staff (Figure 15), and whereas 30% of school staff surveyed estimated that the Prevent duty had increased staff workload in their institution 'a moderate amount' or 'a lot', this rose to 42% among college staff (Figure 16).

<sup>99</sup> The fact that perceptions of increased workload are also on average relatively high among the 'other' category is likely to reflect the fact that this category includes several respondents with dedicated safeguarding or pastoral roles.

**Figure 15. Increase in budgetary and resource pressure as a result of the Prevent duty, by school / college**



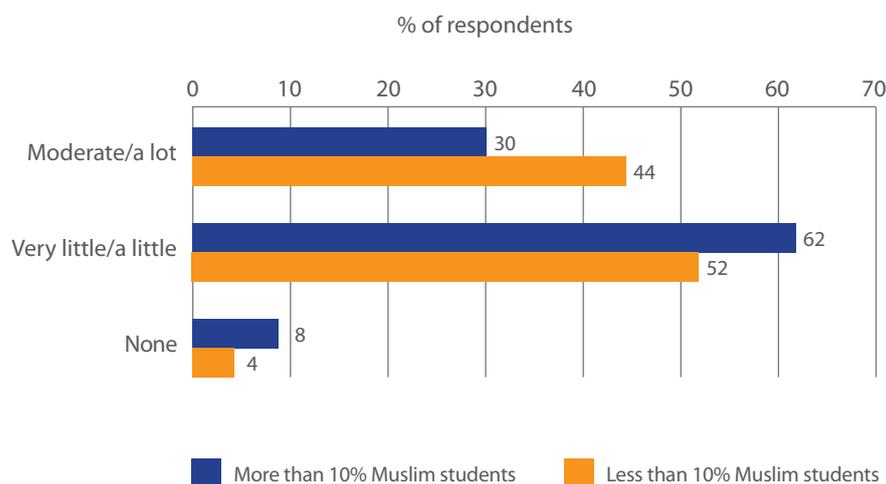
**Figure 16. Increase in staff workload as a result of the Prevent duty, by school / college**



What is also interesting to note is that perceptions that the Prevent duty has led to a moderate or significant increase in staff workload were more widespread among staff in schools or colleges with smaller Muslim populations (Figure 17). While 44% of staff in schools/colleges with less than 10% Muslim students said that the Prevent duty had increased staff workload by a moderate or

significant amount, this dropped to 30% among staff working in schools/colleges with more than 10% Muslim students. We believe this might be to do with the fact that in schools with larger Muslim populations staff and school leaders were already more actively engaged around what are now conceived of as 'Prevent issues' prior to the introduction of the legal duty.

**Figure 17. Impact of the Prevent duty on staff workload, by respondents in schools/colleges with less than 10% / more than 10% Muslim students**



The implementation of any new duty involves an opportunity cost. Time, effort and resources spent on implementing the Prevent duty is time, effort and resource that is not being used for other priorities (whether in safeguarding or teaching). To meet their legal obligations, schools and colleges have had to invest not only in staff training, but also in their electronic and physical infrastructure. For senior staff and DSLs in particular, the duty has meant more work, more pressure from Ofsted, more anxiety and significant commitment of financial resources. The lack of information on the level of risks in an area led some senior leader in schools/colleges to question the proportionality of the investment they are making. Such questions are likely to intensify as school and college budgets remain under pressure.

#### 4.4. The perceived impacts of the Prevent duty on school/college communities

In light of the concerns raised about the possible impacts of the Prevent duty on schools and colleges as places of learning, in this section we explore school/college staff’s experiences and perceptions of three issues:

1. Whether there has been a ‘chilling effect’ on their interactions with students;
2. School cohesion, and in particular potential issues around perceptions of increased stigmatisation of Muslim students; and
3. Relationships between staff and parents.

#### 4.4.1. The 'chilling effect' on classrooms, lecture theatres and student-staff interactions

I think in the early years when we did it, I think maybe because of the things that were being said around, [students] said 'we can't say that to you because you can report us'. So, for me, I had to convince them that 'that's not what we're here for. We're here to actually create a safe environment for you to be able to share your views and hear what other people say and that will help to bring a balance to your own perspective of things'. So yeah, so I think it varies, but as we're going on with it I think people are getting to understand part of the reasoning behind the Prevent agenda. (R68, support worker, college, London)

They know they can't say things, they know that they are not allowed to get involved in things, they know it will bring them trouble if they make comments or say things. (R55, senior leader, school, London)

The interview data highlight the extent to which staff are aware of the potential challenges of the Prevent duty in this regard, and in particular of the potential tension between on the one hand, creating space for students to have open and honest discussions and debates about controversial issues and, on the other hand, the monitoring and reporting on the views expressed by students where these are seen as potential indicators of vulnerability to radicalisation.<sup>100</sup> Indeed, in one institution, the DSL was kept out of school debates on issues relating to Prevent because their safeguarding role was seen as potentially stifling open discussion.

...half of your work is reassuring staff and not allowing them to get all dramatic about a child just looking [at something online]. And I always say we want them to be inquisitive and to challenge and to think for themselves, so it's a balance between giving them free speech and free thought and then saying 'ah, but you can't do that and you can't look at that'. (R26, DSL, school, W. Yorks)

[...] what we need to be able to do, as a member of staff, is to create an environment where they [the students] feel comfortable and they feel comfortable and safe, and support them as well. But if we start, you know, going and asking them these questions then they're not going to open to you, they're not going to open up, even if something was to happen, you know, down the line. (R67, HoD, college, London).

Perceptions of the extent to which this gave rise to some form of 'chilling effect' varied, however. Some respondents clearly believed that students were being inhibited by concerns that what they say might be reported and misinterpreted.

I'd think they'd be quite vocal, but I think they're afraid to be vocal [...] I just think like with everything that's going on they don't want to be singled out in terms of – or being misinterpreted. There has to be a culture where they can speak freely and discuss things but I don't think that there is such a culture. (R64, support worker, school, London)

Others however, were clear that they believed that students not only continued to engage in discussions in the classroom and in other learning environments as they had done prior to the introduction of the duty, but in some cases actually believed that since the introduction of the Prevent duty they had actually seen more open discussions on issues around extremism.

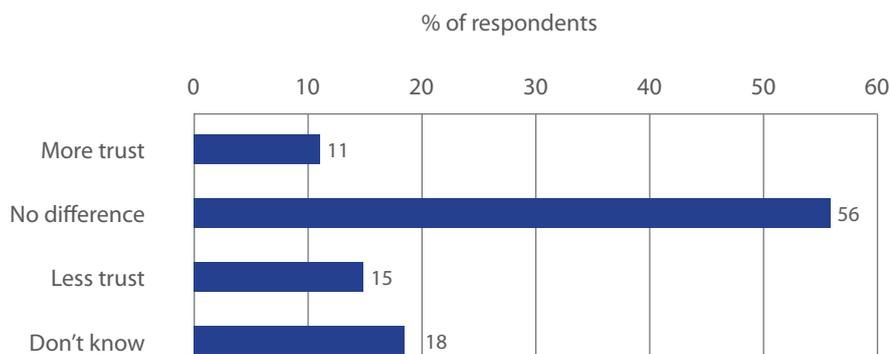
I do think it serves a purpose in school because, like I said, it's a vehicle for discussion and it's almost, it's something that's been a bit taboo in the past and it's made it, it's brought it to the forefront of school life, and it's something that now not only should be discussed but it has to be discussed. (R24, teacher, school, W. Yorks)

This picture is also supported by the survey data. By far the largest proportion of respondents (56%) expressed the view that the Prevent duty had not resulted in any change in the levels of trust between students and staff, and only marginally more expressed the view that it had led to there being less trust (15%) than more trust (11%) between staff and students (Figure 18).<sup>101</sup>

100 For a detailed exploration of how educationalists might be working through this dilemma, see Bryan, H. (2017) 'Developing the political citizen: How teachers are navigating the statutory demands of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and the Prevent Duty'. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*. ISSN 1746-1987 (In Press)

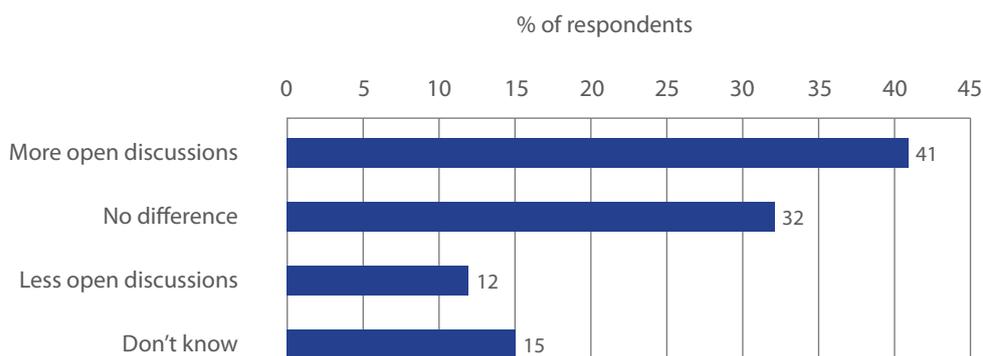
101 It is worth noting that although a fairly high proportion (18%) of respondents said that they did not know whether it had led to more trust, less trust or not made a difference there was an important variation between respondents who are DSLs and those who are not, with 20% of non-DSLs saying that the duty has led to there being less trust, as compared with just 7% of DSLs.

**Figure 18. Perceived impact of the Prevent duty on student-staff trust**



Even more strikingly, we found considerable support (41% of respondents) for the view that Prevent duty had led to more open discussions around such topics as extremism, intolerance and inequality (Figure 19). Just over 1 in 10 respondents stated that the duty had resulted in less open discussions (12%) on such topics, with 32% stating that it had not made a difference.<sup>102</sup>

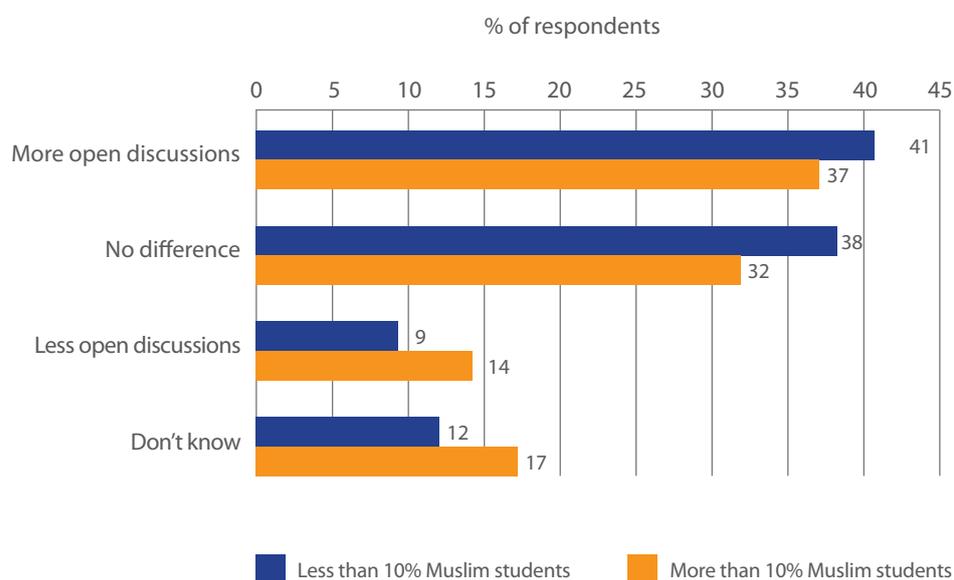
**Figure 19. Perceived impact of the Prevent duty on openness of discussions with students about issues such as extremism, intolerance and inequality**



<sup>102</sup> The strength of this pattern diminishes considerably if DSLs are removed from the data. Even then, however, 30% stated that it had led to more open discussions compared with 34% 'no change' and 16% 'less open discussions', with 20% 'don't know', that is, the balance is still in favour of the 'no change' or 'positive change' response.

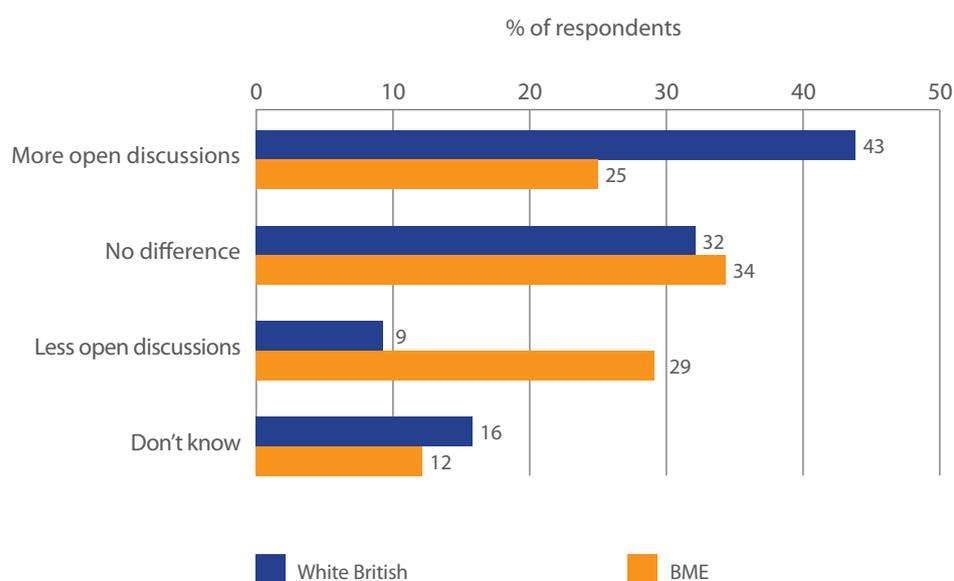
While this pattern becomes slightly less pronounced among respondents working in schools or colleges in which more than 10% of the student population are Muslim, it still broadly holds (Figure 20). 37% of respondents said that it has led to more open discussions, 32% that it has made no difference, and just 14% said that it had led to less open discussions.

**Figure 20. Perceived impact of the Prevent duty on openness of discussions with students about issues such as extremism, intolerance and inequality, by respondents in schools with less than 10% / more than 10% Muslim students**



It is also important to note that BME respondents were, by and large, more pessimistic than their White British colleagues about the impacts of the Prevent duty on the openness of discussions between students and staff. A disproportionate number of interview respondents who expressed serious concerns about a decrease in open discussion were BME and, in particular, Muslim, respondents. In the survey data, more BME respondents state that the duty has led to less open discussions (29%) than more open discussions (25%) – in stark contrast with their White British colleagues, among whom 43% say that the duty has led to more open discussions and among whom fewer than 1 in 10 (9%) said the duty had led to less open discussion (Figure 21).

**Figure 21. Perceived impact of the Prevent duty on openness of discussions with students about issues such as extremism, intolerance and inequality, by White British / BME respondents**



However, while BME respondents were three times more likely than White British respondents to say that the duty had led to less open discussion, it should be emphasised that this still amounts to less than a third of BME respondents. Thus, a majority of BME, and the vast majority of White British respondents, said the duty made no difference to open discussion or led to more open discussion on issues of extremism, tolerance and inequality.

To be clear, these findings do **not** indicate or ‘prove’ that there has not been a ‘chilling effect’ – such an assessment would require systematic research with students. They do, however, indicate that staff (and, especially, White British staff) do not perceive that the Prevent duty has had a significant ‘chilling effect’ in their schools or colleges.

We believe that there are three elements that are likely to be important in accounting for these findings. First, and relating back to a theme discussed in Section 4.2., much of

the monitoring and reporting being undertaken in relation to the Prevent duty was seen very clearly as a continuation of monitoring and reporting already in place prior to the introduction of the duty.<sup>103</sup> Thus, ‘open discussion’ in schools was already understood as taking place within an existing context of safeguarding that requires staff to report concerns that arise from information that students share.

*I think they are very aware that if, you know they are aware of, even if aside from Prevent, that if there is anything that they tell me, if they told me something that’s happening at home, they know I am not allowed to keep that to myself. (R46, teacher, school, London)*

Second, while school/college staff were clearly aware of the potential for an increase in Prevent-related monitoring and reporting to undermine staff-student trust and make it more difficult to have open discussions, they were also confident that the steps that they and their colleagues had taken would

<sup>103</sup> In the schools and colleges in which interviews took place, there was broad agreement among respondents that students were aware that they were being monitored, not least because they would periodically find webpages blocked or would encounter other disciplining procedures.

go a long way towards addressing such issues. As described in Section 4.3.2., across the interview sample we heard about how schools and colleges had gone out of their way to create more space for discussions about extremism, intolerance and racism. We also heard about initiatives to engage directly with students about Prevent including, in one institution, undertaking training with student representatives:

Some students have found they've understood it because we've been able to run the Prevent training or British values training to even like student reps and so on. So they've sort of seen the reasoning behind it because of the sort of case studies that we use, so they've understood that there's a need for somebody to look out for young people. So there's some people that, some students see it that way, but other students do see it as, oh yes this is another target. (R68, support worker, college, London)

In other words, being aware of and concerned about the possible negative consequences of the duty on student-staff interactions, it seems that schools, colleges and individual staff have developed a variety of strategies to counter or at least mitigate such consequences.

Third, it is possible that these findings reflect the fact that there was previously very little debate on these issues in some institutions, and so the Prevent duty has provided the impetus for creating more opportunities for debate and discussion. If true, this offers a somewhat different perspective on claims that once open debate has been 'chilled' by the imposition of the Prevent duty.

#### **4.4.2. The effects of the Prevent duty on Muslim students and school cohesion**

It must be really difficult for Muslim kids [...] because they feel constantly vilified and that actually in a sense kind of pushes them further into isolation because as Muslims they feel it's just another thing that is being put upon them to monitor them and to vilify them. I do think the kids are resentful of that. (R50, DSL, school, London)

[The students] do feel like it's particularly targeted at Muslims and, you know [...] some of them just see it as something that's happening in society so they just deal with it. Others are not happy, so they feel like, you know, they're being picked on, like [...] 'sir, why is it us? Why is it?' (R69, HoD, college, London)

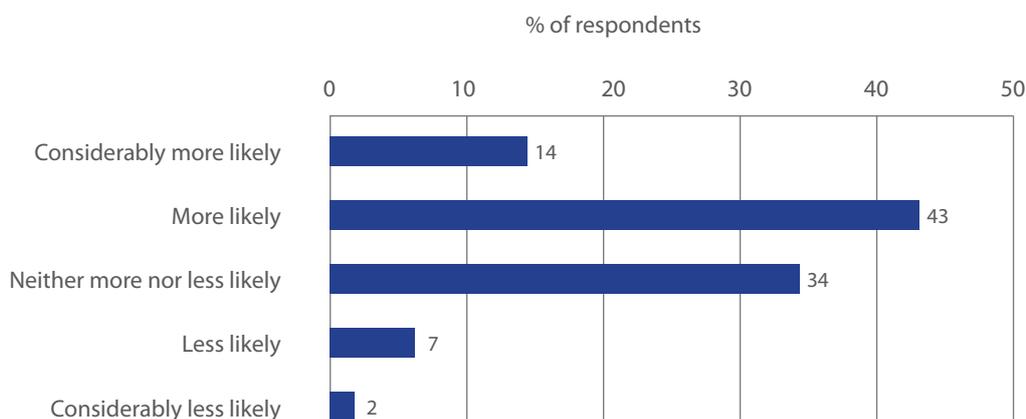
While the data indicate that school and college staff might be sceptical about the extent to which the Prevent duty has had a 'chilling effect' on free speech in the schools and colleges they work in, they do, however, highlight significant concern about the possibility that the duty might make it more likely that Muslim students feel stigmatised.

Even though there was widespread agreement among both survey and interview respondents that the Prevent duty addresses all forms of extremism (Section 4.1.), concerns that the Prevent duty might fuel feelings among Muslim students of being stigmatised emerged as a strong and recurring theme in the interview data. However it is important to note that respondents in all of the schools and colleges also described measures taken in their particular institution to address this risk. These measures included i) the foregrounding of democracy, active citizenship, equality and anti-racism in activities designed to address the duty; ii) the seeking out of materials that foster a balanced understanding of the threats posed by extremism, terrorism and radicalisation; iii) emphasising to students that AQ/ISIS-inspired terrorism should in no way be seen to be representative of Islam or Muslims; iv) introducing students to some of the Prevent training materials that they believed conveyed that the duty was not 'targeting' Muslims; and v) in the case of DSLs, working with colleagues, and in particular younger colleagues, to try to reduce the number of unnecessary referrals by helping them to feel confident in their own professional judgement.

The survey data also indicate widespread concerns that the Prevent duty has fuelled feelings of stigmatisation among Muslim students. Over half of the survey respondents said that the Prevent duty has made Muslim students more likely (43%), or considerably more likely (14%), to feel stigmatised (Figure 22). This pattern was particularly strong among BME respondents, where 76% said that the Prevent duty made Muslim students more likely, or considerably more likely, to feel stigmatised.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>104</sup> 19% of BME respondents said Muslims were neither more likely nor likely to feel stigmatised while 5% said they were less likely or considerably less likely to feel stigmatised. Among White British Respondents, 55% said Muslims were more likely or considerable more likely to feel stigmatised; 36% said they were neither more nor less likely to feel stigmatised, while 9% said Muslims were less likely or considerably less likely to feel stigmatised.

**Figure 22. Has the Prevent duty made it more likely or less likely that Muslim students might feel stigmatised?**

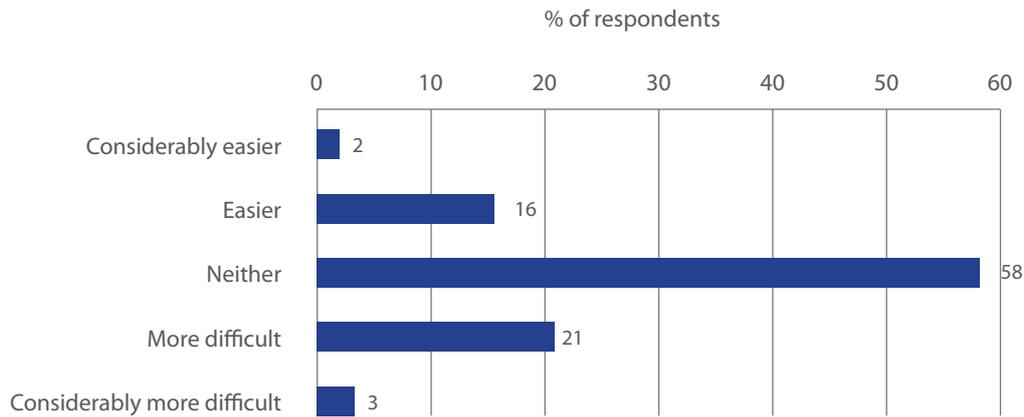


In some cases, these concerns about the stigmatisation of Muslim students were intertwined with wider concerns about how, by appearing to single out and stigmatise Muslim students, the Prevent duty might also be playing into a wider process of undermining school cohesion. As one respondent observed,

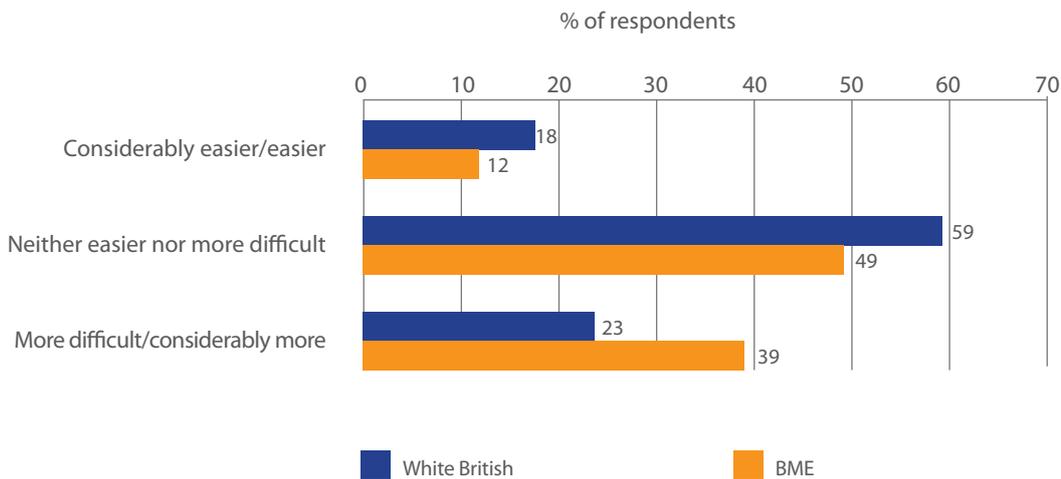
*I have worked in this borough a really long time and I have watched things happen. So when I first came to this borough I watched, you know, there was quite a divide I would say between Muslims and other communities. As kind of like time went on and maybe they started to enmesh together a bit more and there was lots of work within the borough to get communities to work together and understand each other. To get all the children to actually be together and then as things have happened within the world and people's reactions to what happens in the world and I am not saying this is just Prevent, but it is a reaction to things that have happened politically. The children feel like they don't come together like – that they go; they retreat back into what they know. (R55, senior leader, school, London)*

Such concerns were, however, expressed far less consistently across the sample than the concerns about stigmatisation of Muslim students, with most respondents expressing confidence that the cohesion of their school or college community had not been adversely affected by the introduction of the Prevent duty. This was broadly borne out by the survey data. A significant majority of respondents (58%) in the whole sample (Figure 23) expressed the view that the Prevent duty has made it neither easier nor more difficult for students from different backgrounds to get on well together, with just a quarter stating that it had either made it 'more difficult' (21%) or considerably more difficult (3%). It is worth noting, however, that BME respondents were significantly more likely to say that the Prevent duty has made it more or considerably more difficult to create an environment in which students from different backgrounds get on well together than their White British colleagues (39% and 23% respectively) (Figure 24).

**Figure 23. Do you think the Prevent duty makes it easier or more difficult for schools/colleges to create an environment in which students from different backgrounds get on well with one another?**



**Figure 24. Do you think the Prevent duty makes it easier or more difficult for schools/colleges to create an environment in which students from different backgrounds get on well with one another? By White British / BME respondents**



Taken together, these findings highlight widespread and important concerns about the impacts that the Prevent duty might be having on student communities and, more specifically, on Muslim students. While our findings on the possible 'chilling effect' could be seen to call into question some of the critiques put forward of Prevent and the Prevent duty, the findings presented in this section would appear to lend support to criticisms that the duty is likely to exacerbate the stigmatisation of Muslim students regardless of the intentions of policymakers and school/college staff. Once again, however, further research is required with students and parents in order to develop a more complete picture of the facts on the ground.

#### **4.4.3. The effects of the Prevent duty on relationships with parents**

*Interviewer:*

You said Prevent and the Prevent duty was in the news quite a lot, it's something that's been discussed quite a lot publicly. Is it something that parents have ever spoken with you about?

*Respondent:*

Never. Never ever had that at all. In fact it's always us – not talking about Prevent but talking about keeping an eye on your children, being close to them, talking to them, discussing how they're feeling. No, I've never had a parent wondering, asking, worrying at all, no.

*Interviewer:*

And when you raise these issues with parents how do they respond, what do they...?

*Respondent:*

They always agree with us, they always understand that it's really important, for whatever reasons, but my opinion only is that I feel that they feel this is very, very far away. (R64, support worker, school, London)

I do think though that it's a bit difficult to implement. I'm not really sure how it can be put out there because although I think school does quite a bit I don't think parents are really onto it, and they don't necessarily work with schools to implement it. (R65, support worker, school, London)

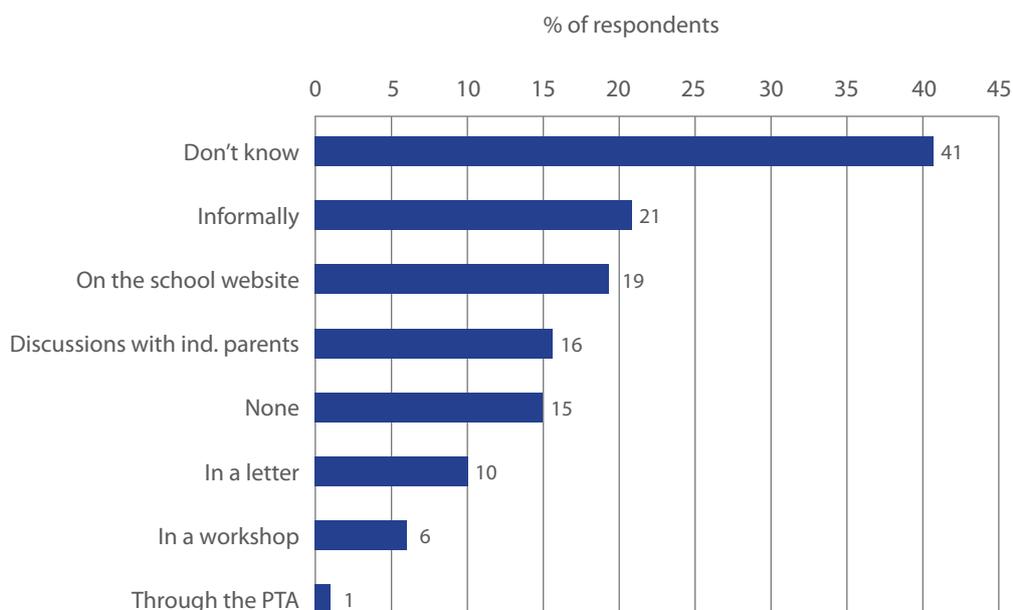
Across the interview and survey data we found a range of different approaches that had been adopted with regards to communicating with parents about the Prevent duty. Some of the interview respondents described their institutions taking quite an active approach, organising events such as coffee mornings or parents' evenings in which Prevent was, if not the central theme, one of the themes discussed within a wider framework e.g. of 'e-safety'.

Other institutions were more passive in their communication, providing information via newsletters or their websites, while others did not report any formal communication with parents in general specific to the Prevent duty. A few respondents pointed towards actions and approaches anticipating some parental or community opposition to the introduction of Prevent. One respondent, recalling how their school had earlier anticipated unease and opposition to the employment of a school social worker by renaming the position as a 'family support worker' until people became familiar and comfortable with this, continued:

...it's exactly the same with [Prevent]. We don't say 'we are teaching Prevent'. We're talking about tolerance and respect and liberty and all the things that we think are really important that every school's got a duty to empower their kids to know about. (R24, teacher, school, W. Yorks)

The survey data provide a similar picture. Survey respondents indicated that discussion about Prevent was mainly communicated informally to parents (21%) and then via the school website (19%) or discussions with individual parents (16%). 15% of respondents said that there was no discussion or information about Prevent from their school/college to parents. The largest group of respondents (41%) did not know. Fewer than 10% recalled a letter to parents, workshops or communication via parent teacher's associations.

**Figure 25. How, if at all, has your school/college discussed the Prevent duty with parents?**



What emerges most clearly from respondents' accounts of the general interactions that they have had with parents in relation to the Prevent duty is that they do not perceive there to have been open or concerted opposition to the duty. One respondent observed that, even when they had called parents in to discuss concerns about their child's online searches on school computers, 'no parents have been kind of "how dare you? This is Islamophobia!" (R26, DSL, school, W. Yorks) If anything, the story has been more one of parental non-engagement. In one school, for example, where they had dedicated one of their regular parent coffee mornings to Prevent, they observed that rather than the usual 30-or-

so parents they had instead had only 2, one of whom was a school governor and the other a parent who 'goes to everything, anyway'. Similar experiences were reported elsewhere.<sup>105</sup> In another institution, where a student had travelled to Syria and subsequently died, one respondent expressed their surprise about the apparent silence on the issue among parents and students.

Hardly anything was spoken about it in school by the families or the kids. It was amazing. And yet we've got relatives in the school. (R26, DSL, school, W. Yorks)

<sup>105</sup> The one clear exception to this was a school where one respondent noted that there had been a spike in interest from parents in Prevent after the news story broke about the girls from Bethnal Green who had travelled to Syria: 'Around the time of the Bethnal Green thing we had parents who really wanted to know more about, not just our response, but the local authority's response to the issue of young people and terrorist involvement or grooming of young people for that issue. That I think, it was almost what gave us the confidence that our parents were concerned as we were.' (R49, DSL, school, London)

Respondents offered different readings of this response from parents. Some felt that it might reflect a nervousness among parents about raising or engaging on the topic<sup>106</sup> – an interpretation also offered in the stakeholder discussions sessions.

However, a more common reading among school/college staff was that parents simply weren't very interested in it because they didn't think it was something that applied to them or to their child.

*I lead the Parents' Forum as well. We haven't talked about Prevent and so on, it's not something that the parents – parents want to know about school dinners and uniform, and homework. They are not, Prevent is not a discussion that we are having with parents. The Parents' Forum is open for them to raise anything. I know the last year we have not had a single conversation about Prevent at all. (R47, senior leader, school, London)*

Several respondents observed however how difficult it had been to have conversations with parents when specific Prevent-related concerns about their children had arisen.

*I think it's quite difficult to talk to parents about it. You know to ring up a parent, 'this is what happened. Somebody is suggesting that you hide your child's passport.' That is quite a difficult thing to tell a parent. (R55, senior leader, school, London)*

*Interviewer:*

How do their parents feel about it, when they are brought in for these discussions?

*Respondent:*

They are very quick to deny, they are very quick to be outraged, and we don't talk like that at home. I think they are also very conscious about being tarred by that brush, they are very conscious of that. Again, they may harbour those views, we don't know, but they don't, they wouldn't express it openly to us. I think again the parents are very conscious of that being a really great no. (R50, DSL, school, London)

Indeed, such conversations were identified by some respondents as one of the key areas where further training and support is required.

It is difficult to draw any clear conclusions from the data relating to staff interactions with parents. While schools/colleges have not experienced significant challenge from parents, the relative lack of engagement by parents with regards to Prevent could be interpreted in a number of ways. Further research is required in this area.

#### 4.5. Support for and opposition to the Prevent duty among school/college staff

*It is targeted at Muslims, it makes Muslims feel worse, or more strongly against the state so to speak than they would normally have. I mean I am [a] very moderate [Muslim] to be absolutely – I'm very moderate, but to me I still dislike that, the Prevent agenda, and I feel like it's targeting Muslims. (R67, HoD, college, London)*

*How would I evaluate it? Well I think when it's at its best then I'd explain it as an attempt to stop vulnerable young people from being exploited by organisations which are not good for them, not healthy for them, and that's a good thing [...] But I totally, totally accept that if done badly and where done badly, that there's a risk that the wrong people could be spoken to in the wrong way and that that could, far from leading to a more cohesive community could lead to a less cohesive one. (R59, HoD, school, London)*

*My own personal values in life is that I think that a seventeen-year-old British-born male wanting to go to Syria to blow themselves up, whatever your political views, is really tragic, and if there's anything that we can do as an organisation to stop that from happening, the same way we'd want to safeguard in any other way, then I can only see it as a good thing. You can have the debate, you can have the conversation, you can decide whether Labour would implement it different to the Conservatives, anything like that, fine have those debates. But it boils down to keeping young people safe and the people around them, and the broader community as far as I can see. (R2, HoD, college, W. Yorks)*

<sup>106</sup> One respondent suggested that this was something typical of safeguarding in general, where parents were often cautious about the possible involvement of social services: 'I think it would be reasonable to expect that there would be anxiety about it within the community. You find that kind of anxiety about Safeguarding as well, people have attitudes to social services involvement' (R31, learning mentor, school, W. Yorks)

I understood that it [the Prevent duty] was completely necessary. Initially when you don't see them [the students] on a daily basis, you think, 'is it; does it really need to be that strong?' But I actually think it probably does; I do see the point of it. Again I do remember just thinking, 'Oh this is just another thing that we need to be vigilant about', but actually it is really important. (R50, DSL, school, London)

You asked how it's changed [with the Prevent duty]. I think there is an element that means that, it's not about what might happen to me or what might happen to a colleague so much as what I might feel like or what a colleague might feel like if we had been party to a piece of information that we then haven't acted on. Then we find out that something has happened with that child. That I don't think is worth thinking about. (R49, DSL, school, London)

Given the often damning commentaries on and assessments of Prevent in media discourse, the overall views emerging from school/college staff about the duty were, perhaps, surprisingly balanced.

Respondents expressed a number of anxieties about the duty. In addition to the concerns about workload and proportionality of the duty (Section 4.3.), and concerns about the possible (unintended) focus on Muslim students (Section 4.1.2.) and potential impacts of the duty on individual students and school/college communities (Sections 4.4.1. and 4.4.2.), we also found underlying concerns about the effectiveness or otherwise of the duty. These concerns usually focused around observations that school/college is only one part of a student's life. For example, several respondents made observations about the fact that students did most of their internet browsing at home or on their mobile phones, so this was almost impossible to monitor. Such observations were usually accompanied with comments about the need for, but difficulty of achieving (Section 4.4.3), greater parental engagement around these issues.

There was also fairly widespread scepticism about whether those who were seriously engaged in extremist activities would be likely to give themselves away anyway:

I have not had any serious suspicions that any of them might want to go [to Syria] or if they do harbour those extremist views they are very cautious in keeping it to themselves. I expect that the people that do groom them, and I know they are out there, that they prepare them really carefully. The kids know exactly what they can and can't say so they are very guarded. So, if anything, it has really driven it underground. (R50, DSL, school, London)

If someone is genuinely involved, you wouldn't know. You wouldn't know. And that is very hard for us as lecturers to police, and that's what our, as lecturers, our main concern was... They're not going to walk around with a, with something to give you indicators, are they? If they're doing researching they're most probably doing it at home, if they're being radicalised they're most probably doing it in their personal space or time. They're not going to do it in the classroom, because this is an environment for learning. (R69, HoD, college, London)

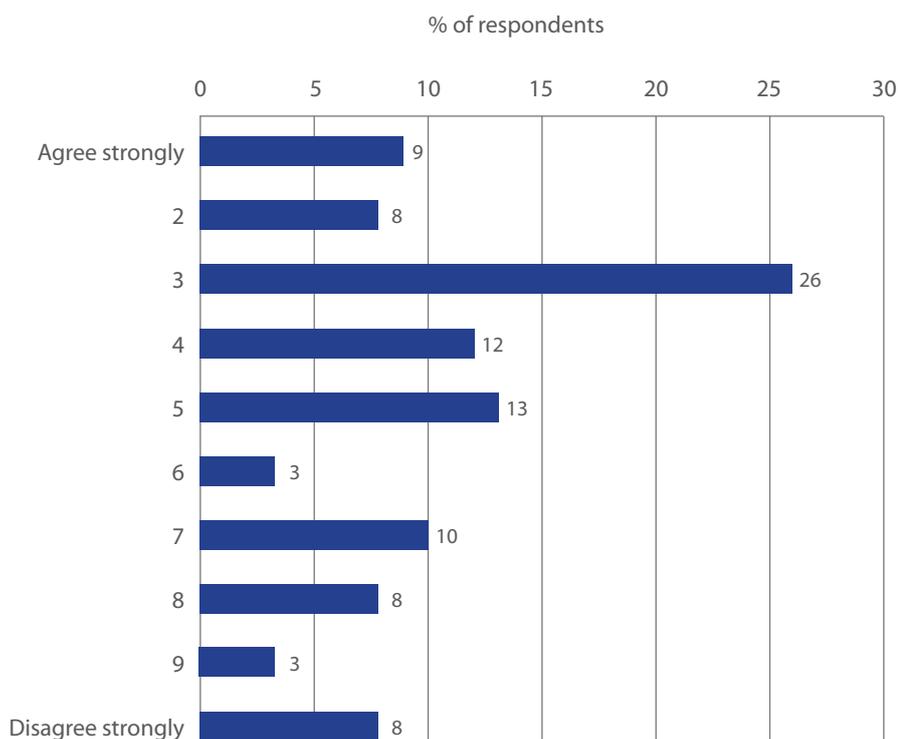
Wholesale criticism of, much less opposition to, the duty was, however, very rare in the interview data. With a small number of exceptions, where problems were identified they were usually discussed more in terms of failures of implementation – of the duty being done 'badly' by particular institutions or individuals, or requiring further resources to be able to implement the duty more effectively.<sup>107</sup> The picture that emerges is one of what might best be described as various shades of pragmatic acceptance.

The survey data provide a similar picture, with broadly more agreement than disagreement with the statement 'the Prevent duty on schools and colleges is a proportionate response to a clearly identified problem', with only a small proportion of respondents disagreeing strongly (Figure 26).<sup>108</sup>

107 A pattern that resonates with Bryan's (2017) findings. Bryan, H. (2017) 'Developing the political citizen: How teachers are navigating the statutory demands of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and the Prevent Duty'. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*. ISSN 1746-1987 (In Press)

108 In response to a free text question in which respondents were asked how they would describe the Prevent duty to a friend or neighbour, of 205 responses, just 15 were overtly hostile to the duty, using phrases such as 'A knee jerk reaction'; 'Being forced to spy on students and abuse our position of trust in order to fuel the government's Islamophobia' or 'A strategy that shuts down debate by pathologising political dissent'

**Figure 26. How strongly do you agree or disagree that the Prevent duty on schools and colleges is a proportionate response to a clearly identified problem?**



On one level, such pragmatic acceptance is not surprising. As pointed out in the academic literature on how policy plays out in schools and colleges, education professionals are used to, and skilled at, interpreting national government policy directives and implementing them within their ongoing practice.<sup>109</sup> Adjusting to new, and often unpopular, government policy is very much part of their professional reality.

We believe however that four key factors have been particularly important in softening potential hostility to the Prevent duty among school and college and staff, even within the context of concerns about the possible negative consequences of

the duty. First, and as has already been touched upon above, situating Prevent as ‘safeguarding’ appears to have played a fundamental role in allaying anxieties about the duty and helping staff to see this as a continuation of their existing professional practices.

You have to sell it as a safeguarding thing rather than a Prevent thing because I think teachers don’t like it, didn’t like it at first. They thought it was really reactive to things that were happening. But if you put it as part of, you know, if you package it up as part of safeguarding then it becomes more palatable. (R55, senior leader, school, London)

<sup>109</sup> See especially Ball, S., Maguire, M. and Braun, A. (2013) *How Schools Do Policy: Policy Enactment in Secondary Schools*, London: Routledge.

I think there has been some expressed opinions as ‘Why should we be doing police work for them?’ That’s how they see it. That’s when I am trying to say, ‘it’s safeguarding’. It’s what you are doing already. It’s about if you have got a concern about a young person. (R12, DSL, college, W. Yorks)

Second, respondents often expressed considerable confidence in their own abilities and in the ability of their institution to implement the Prevent duty in a manner that would effectively manage and pre-empt potentially negative impacts. As one DSL summed up,

I don’t think, we’re not the kind of school who would have these major kneejerk reactions, we’d certainly talk about it as a staff and have those discussions, and decide what we need to do. (R29, DSL, school, W. Yorks)

Indeed, not only were respondents confident that within their school/college some of the potentially negative effects of the Prevent duty, such as the ‘chilling effect’, were being effectively managed, but some also described what might be considered positive collateral effects. As described in Sections 4.3.2 and 4.4.1, we heard several accounts of how the Prevent duty had provided an opportunity to reinvigorate areas of work around equalities, diversity and anti-racism, and about how individual teachers or schools/colleges had made use of the duty to have more open discussions with students on issues relating to extremism, intolerance and inequality. In one school we even heard how a blanket ban on mobile phones, introduced as part of their response to the Prevent duty, had produced a substantial reduction in bullying.

Interestingly, and related to this, when asked about their views on the headline-grabbing examples often used to critique the Prevent duty – such as the widely reported ‘cooker-bomb’ and ‘eco-terrorism’ cases (see Section 2) – respondents tended to interpret these as the result of institutions having poor safeguarding systems and processes in place, rather than the fault of the Prevent duty itself – a generic professional failing, rather than one specific to the Prevent duty.

Third, a significant proportion of respondents were persuaded of the need for something like the Prevent duty.<sup>110</sup> Such perceptions were undoubtedly fuelled by high-profile, and in sometimes local, cases of young people becoming involved in extremist activities. We repeatedly heard about ‘the Bethnal Green girls’, even when interviewing in Yorkshire, and several DSLs mused that such events had undoubtedly made it easier for them to persuade colleagues of the need to take this issue seriously.

It’s become part of the national picture, and the things on the news about fears, there’s a heightened awareness. It’s more impacted upon staff. They’re not just listening to me, it becomes more relevant. (R6, DSL, school, W. Yorks)

We all sat in the meeting and we are told that actually in the previous twelve months there have been four or five people from [London Borough] that, you know, that have tried to go to Syria to join the fighting. Yes, at that point it becomes kind of real doesn’t it, because it could be kids that you taught. Or it could be, you know, the family down the road. It does become really real. (R49, DSL, school, London)

In some cases, such perceptions were also underpinned by their own institutional or local success stories of what were identified as successful and effective interventions. In one case in particular, the respondent themselves had played a key role in an intervention with a student that, it later transpired, had influenced that student’s decision not to travel to Syria to join ISIS.

Fourth, the fact that this is a legal duty served both to undermine active opposition to the Prevent duty and to embolden those responsible for implementing the duty in schools/colleges. One respondent recalled for example how in their institution, when union representatives stated their objections to the duty, the school/college leadership reminded staff of their legal responsibilities:

---

<sup>110</sup> We find a strong positive correlation between increased perception that radicalisation is a significant problem in the town in which they work and increased agreement that the Prevent duty comprises a proportionate response to a clearly defined problem.

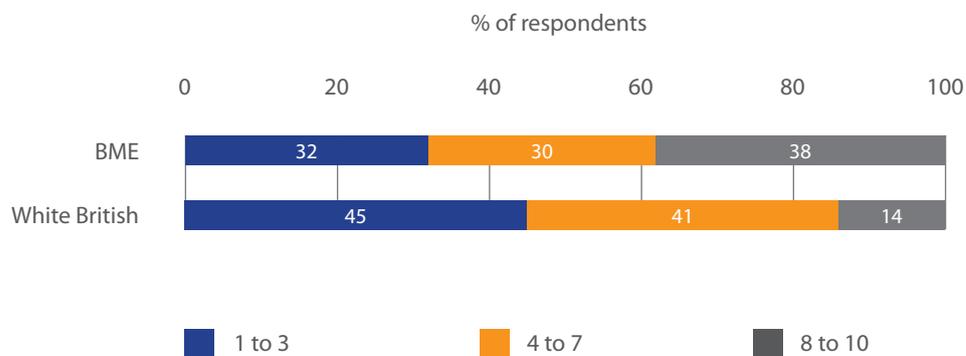
It did spark a lot of emotions with the people that I was working with. But to be fair when it came out as statutory it actually took away any sort of discussion on the matter, which was kind of helpful in pushing through what we, you know, because if it, while you're doing it because you feel that you should do it people can object, but when you say we have to do it as well, it made it a bit easier to address. (R61, DSL, school, London)

I don't think there was a lot of room for us to counter those arguments. I think it was just 'this is the information, this is what the law requires us to do, this is what we need to do to make sure we tick the safeguarding boxes for the college'. (R66, support worker, college, London)

They haven't challenged me on the duty because this is a duty, okay? 'This is a duty and we have to implement it, and if we don't implement it the college could be closed down. So there's your facts, okay?' (R1, DSL, college, W. Yorks)

What is important to note, however, is that both the interview and survey data indicate that agreement with the view that the Prevent duty is a proportionate response to a clearly identified problem was considerably lower among BME staff than among White British staff. In the survey data, while 45% of White British respondents agreed at least quite strongly that the Prevent duty on schools and colleges is a proportionate response to a clearly identified problem, this dropped to 32% among BME respondents, and while just 14% of White British respondents disagreed at least quite strongly with this statement, that rose to 38% among BME respondents.

**Figure 27. How strongly do you agree (1) or disagree (10) that the Prevent duty on schools and colleges is a proportionate response to a clearly identified problem? By White British / BME respondents**



The interview data also provides some support for the divergence in the experience and evaluations of BME staff compared to White British staff on the impact (see Section 4.4) and proportionality of the Prevent duty in schools and colleges. The reason why this is important is that it indicates that the overall findings of broad acceptance of the duty may reflect the fact that educational institutions are largely dominated by (usually middle class) White British professionals. The data from the small BME sample in our research is consistent with other research that has pointed to the very differing experiences of BME and White British communities in counter terrorism policies,<sup>111</sup> however, further research is needed to understand the extent to which the experience of BME (and perhaps Muslim) staff differs from that of White British staff in schools/colleges.

---

111 Choudhury, T and H. Fenwick (2010) *The Impact of Counter Terrorism Law and Policy on Muslims in Britain*, London: Equality and Human Rights Commission.

# 5. Conclusions

This research set out to address four questions:

1. How has the new Prevent duty been interpreted by staff in schools and colleges in England?
2. How confident do school/college staff feel with regards to implementing the Prevent duty?
3. What impacts, if any, do school/college staff think the Prevent duty has had on their school or college, and on their interactions with students and parents?
4. To what extent, if at all, have school/college staff opposed or questioned the legitimacy of the Prevent duty?

With regards to their **interpretation of the duty**, the most striking finding is the extent to which interview and survey respondents had engaged with and accepted the idea of 'Prevent as safeguarding'. We also found broad engagement with the idea that the duty is, at least officially, intended to address all forms of extremism. Indeed, we found several cases where schools/colleges were using the duty to strengthen work around racism, prejudice and inequality, both because some perceived far-right extremism to be the most pressing issue in their area and as part of their efforts to ensure that they avoided stigmatisation of their Muslim students. Where there was least consensus among the respondents was with regards to how the promotion of fundamental British values related to Prevent.

With regards to **staff confidence**, while there was important variation within the data in terms of who did and did not express confidence, and while for some staff 'difficult conversations' remain a source of anxiety, the majority of interview and survey respondents expressed fairly high levels of confidence with regards implementing the duty. We believe that engagement with the idea of 'Prevent as safeguarding' was an important factor in underpinning this confidence because it enabled schools/colleges and their staff to incorporate the duty within existing safeguarding policies and processes with which staff were already by and large familiar and comfortable.

Perhaps the most ambiguous data is that relating to the perceived **impacts of the Prevent duty on schools and colleges**. On the one hand we heard what we have called 'narratives of continuity', about how little the Prevent duty was perceived to have changed the everyday practices of school or college staff. On the other hand, however, we encountered evidence of a substantial additional workload burden and

hidden costs for educational institutions following the duty's introduction, a significant increase in Prevent reporting and referrals, and reports of substantial efforts to respond to the Prevent duty through the curriculum and through extra-curricular activities.

Most of the respondents did not perceive the Prevent duty to have had a 'chilling effect' on discussion and debate, at least not in their own institution – often the result of measures that they and their colleagues had taken to avert such outcomes. Alongside this, however, we found a strong current of concern, particularly among BME respondents, that the Prevent duty is making it more difficult to foster an environment in which students from different backgrounds get on well with one another. We also found widespread and in some cases very acute concerns about increased stigmatisation of Muslim students in the context of the Prevent duty – although such concerns tended not to focus on their own institution, where they perceived these issues to be being managed, but a more general concern about how this duty might play out in a societal context characterised by widespread anti-Islam/Muslim sentiments.

What was striking with regards to our fourth question was how few respondents had questioned the **legitimacy of the Prevent duty**, and that fewer still had sought in some way to oppose or actively criticise it. Some interview respondents expressed considerable scepticism about how effective the Prevent duty was likely to be, usually a product of a belief that in the 'genuine' cases the individuals in question were unlikely to give themselves away. Other respondents even raised concerns that the duty might be counter-productive by, for example, undermining students' willingness to share their concerns about extremism. However, most respondents expressed the view that there was a need for something like the Prevent duty, and where criticisms were voiced, they were usually conditional and/or fairly subtle, e.g. *if done badly*, the duty has the potential to be problematic or cause harm.

We are aware that these findings are open to a range of interpretations. Those broadly supportive of Prevent and the Prevent duty might see in these findings clear evidence that core government messages about Prevent (that it is fundamentally about 'safeguarding' and that it addresses all forms of extremism) actually make sense to professionals working 'on the ground' in schools and colleges; that fairly high levels of confidence among school and college staff indicate that they are broadly comfortable with the duty and what it

entails and that, through careful implementation by skilled professionals, it is quite possible to avert what have been identified as some of the potential negative impacts of the duty. They might even argue that these findings indicate that some of the high-profile critics of Prevent are somewhat out of touch with what is actually happening in schools and colleges.

Meanwhile, however, for those broadly critical of Prevent and the Prevent duty, these findings are likely to reinforce their concerns that, regardless of the intention of the government or individual teachers, the monitoring and disciplining procedures that Prevent entails remain disproportionately focused on Muslim students; that the duty is exacerbating feelings of stigmatisation among Muslim students and that, particularly when allied with expanded legal powers, the 'powerful discourses presented in Prevent' have a tendency to 'take[...] on a momentum of their own'<sup>112</sup> – that is, the Prevent duty is not just securitising schools and colleges but normalising that securitisation by embedding it within the accepted, everyday practices of school and college staff.

It is likely that there are kernels of truth within both of these interpretations. What is clear is that if we are to establish what these kernels of truth are, there is now an urgent need for detailed, independent and systematic analysis, based on empirical research, of the experiences of students, parents and community partners with regards to the Prevent duty. A key focus of such research should be on understanding the impacts of this increase in reporting and referrals on the students involved and those within their immediate circles, as well as on understanding how implementation has varied across different areas (for example between Prevent 'priority' and 'non-priority' areas, and between local authority areas with significant number of Muslim students and those with only small numbers of Muslim students).

It is likely to be some years before we are able to truly assess the impact of the Prevent duty and further research on this ground-level implementation experience is needed. In the meantime, we hope that this research can serve as a stimulus for constructive yet critical discussion about what the Prevent duty means for schools and colleges and other 'specified authorities'.

---

112 Bryan, H. (2017) 'Developing the political citizen: How teachers are navigating the statutory demands of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and the Prevent Duty'. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*. ISSN 1746-1987 (In Press)

## About the research team

**Joel Busher** is a Research Fellow at CTPSR, Coventry University. His research examines the social ecology of political violence and anti-minority politics, the implementation of counter-terrorism policy and its societal impacts, and mobilisation around national and transnational identities. Alongside publications in several leading academic journals, his book, *The Making of Anti-Muslim Protest: Grassroots Activism in the English Defence League* (Routledge), was joint winner of the British Sociological Association's Philip Abrams Memorial Prize, 2016. His current research includes: 'The internal brakes on violent escalation', an analysis of how intra-group dynamics can inhibit the use of political violence (in collaboration with Dr. Donald Holbrook of Lancaster University and Dr. Graham Macklin of Teesside University; funded by CREST/ESRC); and 'Costa del Brexit', a longitudinal study of how Brexit is playing out in British 'expat' communities living in Spain (funded by the British Academy/Leverhulme Trust).

**Tufyal Choudhury** is Assistant Professor at the School of Law, Durham University where he teaches domestic and international human rights law, as well as counter terrorism, law and policy. His research covers issues of counterterrorism, radicalisation, racial and religious discrimination, and integration. He has over 30 publications in this field, including most recently, "Campaigning on Campus: Student Islamic Societies and Counterterrorism" (2017) *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* and "The Radicalization of Citizenship Deprivation" (2017) *Critical Social Policy* 37(2): 225-244. He is a Senior Associate of the Canadian Terrorism, Security and Society Research Network and a member of the UK Foreign Office External Review Panel. He is also a trustee at the Democratic Audit UK and Rights Watch UK.

**Paul Thomas** is Professor of Youth and Policy and Associate Dean (Research) in the School of Education at the University of Huddersfield. Paul's research focusses on how multiculturalist policies such as Community Cohesion and the Prevent counter-terrorism strategy have been understood and enacted by ground-level policy-makers and practitioners, particularly educationalists such as youth workers, community workers and teachers. It has led to the books *Youth, Multiculturalism and Community Cohesion* (Palgrave, 2011) and *Responding to the Threat of Violent Extremism – Failing to Prevent* (Bloomsbury, 2012), as well as articles in many leading journals. Paul gave oral evidence to the House of Commons Select Committee Inquiry on Prevent in 2009 and has given key note presentations at national and international policy and academic conferences. His current research project focuses on barriers to community members reporting concerns about an 'intimate' (a friend or family member) becoming involved in violent extremism (in collaboration with Professor Michele Grossman of Deakin University, Australia; funded through CREST/ESRC).

**Gareth Harris** is an independent researcher affiliated to Coventry University. His research focuses on anti-minority activism, the impact of demographic change on community relations, and community engagement. He is currently convening the Special Interest Group on Counter-Extremism (SIGCE), a local authority network to promote shared learning and good practice in relation to managing extremism. He has delivered projects for several UK local authorities, the Department of Communities & Local Government, the Home Office and the Welsh Assembly, and has also recently produced a Local Authority Toolkit on counter-extremism and undertaken an evaluation of a European knowledge transfer programme for practitioners who work directly with extremists. Alongside this, he has published several articles in leading academic journals and his work on demographic change and the white working classes was published in the report, *Changing Places* (Demos).

# AZIZ FOUNDATION

BUILDING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

The Aziz Foundation is an independent grant-making body seeking to support the most disadvantaged communities in Britain. It aims to do this through supporting community empowerment, leadership development and greater public engagement by them in wider society. The Foundation seeks to support individuals and projects, strengthen organisations and networks, and help incubate innovative ideas that will ultimately improve the conditions in and for these sections of our society.