

‘Doing Risk’:  
Practitioner Interpretations of Risk of Childhood Radicalisation and  
the Implementation of the HM Government PREVENT Duty

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University  
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## ABSTRACT

### **‘Doing Risk’: Practitioner Interpretations of Risk of Childhood Radicalisation and the Implementation of the HM Government PREVENT Duty**

**Leona Vaughn**

This thesis represents a specific and unique contribution to knowledge about how Government risk policy and legislation for children is operationalised in practice, in a particular time and place. The qualitative practice-oriented inquiry it draws upon straddled a period of enactment of a legislative Duty, expectant with challenges for implementation in practice, in a time of rapid change for the ‘counter terrorism’/security landscape and for safeguarding children.

The prevention of ‘childhood radicalisation’ as articulated through the UK Government’s counter-terrorism strategy, PREVENT, and later the legislatively required PREVENT Duty ‘to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism’ (Counter Terrorism and Security Act, 2015) is a seismic shift in contemporary work to safeguard children from risk and harm. This study explores how various practitioners, working in education, welfare and criminal justice settings with children in Liverpool, a city ascribed PREVENT Priority 2 status by the UK Government, were doing, or would do, the requisite ‘risk-work’ of identifying, managing and acting on perceived dangers facing children to pre-empt the risk of ‘childhood radicalisation’ (CR).

However, CR is not taken as a given. It is revealed in this thesis, through analysis of radicalisation and risk theories, legislation and policy, as an unknown, and even unknowable uncertainty, problematically recast and ‘moulded’ into a risk that is framed as possible to predict and control.

The assemblage of CR as a risk in policy and legislation is proposed here to be beyond a ‘zombie’ concept, resembling more of a ‘Frankenstein’s Monster’. Various concepts and knowledges, namely those of radicalisation, pre-crime and safeguarding are legislatively stitched together. In a context of ‘not knowing’ about the true nature or extent of the risk claimed to be posed to, or from children, this hybrid theory is then mobilised through regulation. Practitioners have been tasked to bring this monster to life through their everyday safeguarding practices with children.

Practitioner recounts of ‘doing risk’ illuminate in a similar Frankensteinian fashion, their patchwork ways of learning, seeing and acting on CR. What they come to understand to be the normal character of CR, a non-knowledge of the typologies of CR acquired through various means, consequently, informs a distorted form of ‘professional vision’ to see, or not see, children’s behaviours through the lens of CR risk. The everyday practical dilemmas faced in operationalising policy and legislation in this ‘state of ignorance’ and their attempts to resist discriminatory implementation are described as significantly impacting practitioners’ endeavours to keep children safe. By attending to dilemmas of these and other kinds, this thesis offers insights which can improve future policy and practice and identifies areas for new research.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACE	Adverse Childhood Experiences
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
CAF	Common Assessment Form
CJS	Criminal Justice System
CR	Childhood Radicalisation
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation
EHAT	Early Help Assessment Team
FBV	Fundamental British Values
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
HBV	Honour Based Violence
IS/ISIS	Islamic State/ Islamic State of Iran and Syria
LA	Local Authority
LSCB	Local Safeguarding Children Board
MASH	Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub
PREVENT	Prevention of Violent Extremism and Terrorism
RA	Risk Assessment
WRAP	Workshop to Raise Awareness of PREVENT
YOT	Youth Offending Team

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a practice-oriented study of how practitioners employ and interpret the concept of the ‘risk’ of ‘childhood radicalisation’ (Stanley and Guru, 2015) in their work with and for children<sup>1</sup> aged 11 to 18 in a range of settings across the city of Liverpool. Childhood radicalisation (CR) is a newly emerged and under-researched notion that has entered welfare and safeguarding risk-work practice in the United Kingdom in recent years (Boora, 2015; Coppock and McGovern, 2014; Horlick-Jones, 2005; McKendrick and Finch, 2016; Stanley, 2018; Stanley and Guru, 2015; Stanley, Guru and Coppock, 2017; Stanley, Guru and Gupta, 2018) and, as such, it demands extended scrutiny.

### *The Origins of Childhood Radicalisation in Contemporary Counter-Terrorism Policy and Law*

The UK Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015, known as the PREVENT Duty (herein referred to as ‘the Duty’), enacted the legislative responsibility to identify and prevent ‘vulnerability to the risk’ of radicalisation in vulnerable adults and children (HM Government, 2015; 2015a; 2015b; 2015c), despite patent definitional problems. Radicalisation and the linked familial terms of terrorism and extremism are concepts which, within their related significant bodies of literature are extensively contested as subjectively and often poorly defined, with the determinant role of a radicalisation process for future terrorist action particularly hotly disputed (Abbas and Siddique, 2012; Crenshaw, 1995; 2000; Breen-Smyth, 2014; Busher and Macklin,

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<sup>1</sup> The terms ‘children’ or ‘child’ are used within this thesis for all people aged under 18 years of age, reflecting the definition within Article 1 of the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1992).

2015; Dudenhoefer, 2018; Horgan, 2008; 2015; Horgan and Taylor, 2015; Kundnani, 2009; 2012; 2014; 2015; Laquer, 1998; Neumann, 2013; Perry, 2004; Richards, 2011; Sageman, 2016; 2017; Schmid, 2013; 2013a; Schmid and Jongman, 1988). Given that, this study spans the period leading up to and immediately following enactment of the Duty, it casts light on the process of its implementation at a time of political dissensus and when ‘conditions of work’ (Lipsky, 1980: 27) are characterised by the reduced resources and increased demands of ongoing austerity measures affecting the public sector.

The evidence bases for making CR a priority safeguarding risk in legislation and policy is opaque. ‘Terrorist’ criminal activity in the UK has had devastating and deadly impact in recent times, but these events are relatively small in number (Anderson, 2012; 2014; 2015). Children’s involvement in these acts has been extremely low in frequency<sup>2</sup> (CPS, 2016; Politowski, 2016). The specific nature of the risk ‘indicators’ and trajectories of the radicalisation of children are also said to be neither well defined nor understood (Ahmad, 2014; Bigo et al, 2014; Bizina and Gray, 2014; Bolloten, 2015; Costanza, 2015; Coppock and McGovern, 2014; McKendrick and Finch, 2016; Qureshi, 2016; 2018; Spalek, 2016; Spalek, McDonald and El Awa, 2011; Stanley and Guru, 2015; Stanley, Guru and Coppock, 2017; Thomas, 2016). Children therefore appear arbitrarily categorised as a distinct at-risk, or indeed risky community within what Heath-Kelly calls the ‘problem bodies’ targeted by PREVENT (Breen-Smyth, 2014; Heath-Kelly, 2017: 312; Hillyard, 1993; Lubeck and Garrett, 1990; Pantazis and Pemberton, 2009). The history of how this has emerged through policy is instructive.

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<sup>2</sup> Between 2009 and 2016, CPS reported on all prosecutions of terrorism offences in England and Wales. Only 2 did not give a name (common practice for those aged under 18 within Police and Criminal Evidence Act, 1984)

PREVENT has been in existence since 2006 as a work strand of the UK strategy CONTEST or ‘Countering International Terrorism’ with the aim to ‘prevent violent extremism’, hence the capitalised acronyms. Initially, PREVENT was framed as work to tackle the ‘radicalisation of individuals’ through:

“[T]ackling disadvantage and supporting reform – addressing structural problems in the UK and overseas that may contribute to radicalisation, such as inequalities and discrimination; Deterring those who facilitate terrorism and those who encourage others to become terrorists – changing the environment in which the extremists and those radicalising others can operate; and Engaging in the battle of ideas – challenging the ideologies that extremists believe can justify the use of violence, primarily by helping Muslims who wish to dispute these ideas to do so.”

(HM Government, 2006: 1)

PREVENT as a policy and strategy has been continuously criticised since inception for problematically targeting suspicion at young Muslims (Allen, 2017; Abbas and Siddique, 2012; Breen-Smyth, 2014; Hillyard, 1993; Kundnani, 2009; 2011; 2012; Lepper, 2017; Lynch, 2013; Mason, 2013; 2013a; Mythen, Walklate and Khan, 2009; 2013; Poynting et al, 2004; Spalek and Lambert, 2008; Thomas, 2010; 2014; 2016; Thomas and Sanderson, 2011). Boris Johnson, the Mayor of London at the time of the murder of Fusilier Lee Rigby<sup>3</sup> by killers claimed to be driven by ‘Islamist’ extremist ideology, publicly proposed that the risk of British Muslim children being radicalised

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<sup>3</sup> Fusilier Lee Rigby was murdered by 22-year-old Michael Adebulo and 28-year-old Michael Adebowale. The killers exclaimed “Muslims are dying daily by British soldiers” (in Dodd and Howden, 2013). The attack was linked to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS also known as IS or Daesh).

by ‘Islamist extremists’ was an emergent category of child abuse (Johnson, 2014; Stanley and Guru, 2015). The ensuing Government ‘Operation Trojan Horse’, an investigation of ultimately unfounded allegations of extremist teachings and activities in Muslim faith schools, and specific incidents<sup>4</sup> of alleged child involvement in military activity in Muslim countries served to heighten public and governmental concerns about the ability of welfare and educational services to keep children safe from the threat of ‘radicalisation’ (Boora, 2015; Mogra, 2016). CR as a safeguarding notion within current legislation is therefore premised on the belief that children, especially those who are Muslim, are part of the demographic most vulnerable to the ‘radicalising’ discourses of ‘extremist’ individuals, ideologies or organisations; a vulnerability that can lead to their involvement in future terrorist crimes (Coppock and McGovern, 2014; HM Government, 2015; 2015a; 2015b; 2015c; McCulloch and Wilson, 2016; McKendrick and Finch, 2016; Stanley and Guru, 2015; Stanley, Guru and Coppock, 2017).

Claims that a child’s future risk of involvement in crime can be prevented have endured in the approaches to preventing offending in children, especially from specific socio-demographic groups, across 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century criminal justice and welfare policy (Bateman and Hazel, 2014; Catalano et al, 2002; Garland, 2001; 2003; 2008; 2014; Spector and Kitsuse, 1973; Ward, 2012). PREVENT policy is distinct from other crime prevention activity, models that shall be returned to later, in two ways. Firstly, it ushered in pre-criminal legislation claimed to unreasonably and dangerously overstretch the temporal boundaries of criminal law (Ashworth and Zedner, 2012; 2014; Donkin, 2014; Gearty, 2005; McCulloch and Wilson, 2015; Walklate and

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<sup>4</sup> Domestic and international incidents believed to be IS-linked or ‘jihadist’ have received saturated media coverage, especially allegations of British children’s involvement (Barrett and Evans, 2015; BBC, 2015; BBC, 2017; Casciani, 2015).

Mythen, 2015; Zedner, 2010; 2010a) which envisages ‘specific serious harms and criminalize[s] those whom it is believed will commit these imaginary future harms’ (McCulloch and Pickering, 2009: 629). Secondly, in its contemporary form it extends legislative duties of local authorities beyond the realm of crime prevention into that of pre-crime prediction through the claim that prevention of future terrorist crimes is possible and calculable through identification of a child’s ‘vulnerability’ to the risk of involvement in ‘pre-crime’<sup>5</sup> activity (Ashworth and Zedner, 2014; Dick, 1956; Goldberg, Jadhav and Younis, 2017; Heath-Kelly, 2012; 2013; 2017; Heath-Kelly and Strausz, 2018; McCulloch and Pickering, 2009; McCulloch and Wilson, 2016; Mythen and Walklate, 2010; Phillips, 2012; Pickering and McCulloch, 2012; Zedner, 2007; 2008; 2010).

PREVENT uniquely brings pre-crime notions into civil safeguarding responsibilities for the first time, by introducing the first statutory duty on organisations to take actions to prevent a specific ‘pre-criminal’ activity in the domain of a pre-existing legal duty to safeguard<sup>6</sup> children. Radicalisation is described as the ‘pre-crime space’ and the actions practitioners working with children are expected to undertake are part of ‘pre-criminal’ safeguarding risk-work (Horlick-Jones, 2005; Stanley, 2018) regulated and overseen by the now statutory, police-led, multi-agency CHANNEL Panel.

Safeguarding risk-work has in recent times become increasingly central to education and welfare practices with children and families in relation to identifying existing or potential harms such as neglect, domestic violence or sexual abuse

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<sup>5</sup> The term ‘pre-crime’ was first coined by Philip K Dick in the science fiction novel ‘Minority Report’ (1956) in which it described a division of the State which predicted who would commit future crimes and arrested them in advance.

<sup>6</sup> The PREVENT Duty and framework for delivery is coupled to the broad legislative Safeguarding Duty for education and local authorities, established by the Education Act 2002 and Children’s Act 2004.

(Horlick-Jones, 2005; Kemshall, 2002; 2008; 2010; 2016; Munro, 2010; 2012; Stanley and Guru, 2015; Stanley, 2018). Vulnerability, a central but subjective notion within safeguarding risk-work, is claimed to be, amongst other things, paternalistically framed by decision-making institutions (Brown, 2011; 2014; Cole, 2016; Coppock and McGovern, 2014; Currie, 2019; Füredi, 2007a; 2008; Richards, 2012). Therefore the conceptual paradigms of safeguarding and CR are already characterised by the problematic theories of risk prediction (Keddell, 2015) but, in the case of the latter, is complicated further by the mobilisation of this nebulous concept of ‘pre-crime’. Intervention in a child’s life on this basis represents previously unentered territory for everyday safeguarding risk-work with children and families, and a potential source of confusion for practice (Chisholm and Coulter, 2017). The notion that individuals and organisations can identify the potential to commit crimes before they happen, or, in the case of CR, can identify the vulnerability of a child to involvement in a non-crime which may or may not result in them committing a crime in the future, is problematic to say the least. From the theoretical perspective of Ulrich Beck, however, this attempt by Government to control unknown futures can be understood as symptomatic of developments within the global ‘Risk Society’ (Beck, 1992; 1999; 2003; 2009).

### *Attempts to Control CR: Symptoms of the ‘Risk Society’*

According to Beck, the issue of ‘risk’ has penetrated the psyche of both States and individuals as contemporary societies have become increasingly pre-occupied with ‘unknowable’ and ‘uncontrollable’ hazards and uncertainties, many of them self-created (Beck, 1992; 1999; 2003; 2009; 2014; Beck, Bonss and Lau, 2003). In its contemporary form, ‘risk’ is no longer distinguished from uncertainty but has become

synonymous with calculable future danger and harm (Bauman, 2001; Beck, 1992; Beck, Bonss and Lau, 2003; Beck, Giddens and Lash, 1994; Douglas, 1985; 1992; Douglas and Wildavsky, 1982; Füredi, 2009; Giddens, 1990; 1991; Tversky, 1974; Tversky and Kahneman, 1974). The desire to prevent 'risk' is claimed to necessitate adoption of actuarial forms of enumerating and calculating levels of uncertainty or 'possibilistic risk'. This invariably involves utilising risk prediction practices in decision-making processes on the basis of incomplete information, or suspicion (Aradau and Van Munster, 2007; Beck, Bonss and Lau, 2003; Bell, Raiffa and Tversky, 1998; Ben-Haim, 2016; Ben-Haim and Demertzis, 2016; Cradock, 2004; Finucane et al, 2000; Fox and Tversky, 1995; 1998; Füredi, 2009; Gelsthorpe and Padfield, 2003; Gillingham and Humphries, 2010; Gross, 2016; Harcourt, 2007; Kahneman and Tversky, 1973; Keren and Tiegens, 2004; Lash, 2003; Mythen and Walklate, 2010; 2013; 2016; Satyamurti, 1981; Silver and Miller, 2002; Simon, 1972; Zedner, 2008; Zinn, 2008; Zinn and Taylor-Gooby, 2006).

Beck refers to circumstances where 'risk societies' persist in attempts to control uncertainty or incalculable risk through scientific expertise despite an absence of knowledge, as defining conditions of a state of not knowing or 'nichtwissen' (Beck, 1992; 1999; 2002; 2003; 2009; 2014; Beck, Bonss and Lau, 2003; Beck, Giddens and Lash, 1994; Beck and Wehling, 2012). Nichtwissen as a conceptual device for understanding contemporary manifestations of risk reflects other sociological thinking, particularly the Weberian perspective that post-industrial society has become increasingly focused on 'rationalisation' (Lash and Whimster, 1987; Weber and Parson, 1964; Weber, 1949; 1989). The increasing application of rational, 'scientific' methods to practical concerns in attempts to reach evidence thresholds in decision-making processes, which make it possible to claim 'objectivity', is particularly

observed in State policy or law making which aspires to protect individuals, property or society itself. Under such circumstances, States busy themselves with the construction of all manner of methods for the categorisation, management or regulation of attitudes, behaviours and populations that are deemed 'risky' or in need of control (Bergkamp, 2017; Belfiore, 2009; Bowker and Star, 1999; Dafnos, 2014a; Feeley and Simon, 1992; Frankfurt, 2005; Hacking, 1988; 1991; 1996; 2005; Hood, Rothstein and Baldwin, 2001; Jayyusi, 1984; Lubeck and Garrett, 1990; Mythen and Walklate, 2010; Pollack, 2010; Porter, 1995; Rothstein, Huber and Gaskell, 2006; Scott, 1985; 1998; Shore and Wright, 2015; Wilkinson, 2010).

Beck's thesis of a 'risk society' that is universally and democratically experienced and understood, without discrimination, across diverse geographical and social structures, is interesting therefore in several ways but it is not without its limitations. It is debatable, for instance, whether 'risk' is politically or socially constructed entirely for the purposes of social control (Altheide, 2002; 2006; 2011; 2013; Armstrong, 2004; 2006; Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Dequen, 2013; Douglas, 1985; 1992; Hacking, 1988; 1991; 1999; Hendrick, 1997; Poynting et al, 2004; Rappert, 2012; Scraton, 2004; 2004a; Wilkinson 2010; Wacquant, 2009). The expansion of risk across various domains of social life seems too haphazard and variable for that to be the case. Using a term of Beck's against him, it is also possible to ask whether risk itself is now a 'zombie' category, especially in circumstances of 'not knowing' (Gross, 2016). This is because if Beck is right, everything is 'risk' – it is everywhere and nowhere. Thus 'risk' loses its capacity to discriminate usefully between different kinds of societal process, moving into the ranks of 'undead' concepts which lurch around in our discourses but lack vitality and life. Nonetheless, discourses

of risk are proliferating, particularly in relation to the subject matter of this thesis, and Beck's work has value in exploring that.

This thesis will therefore take up the 'risk' concept with care. Risk is a concept that in its modern use can be socially and politically mobilised to delineate or define what or who may be undesirable or harmful to society and thus how 'risk' is imagined, defined and managed in its contemporary policy and practical form is instructive. As such, it is also susceptible to amplification within society, particularly through the actions of the State and the media (Kasperson et al, 1988). Against that background, this thesis tries to make the lessons that can be drawn from the implementation of PREVENT clear.

### *Predicting and Preventing Risk*

Claims about 'risk' are often advanced through regulatory narratives that tell of the necessity of preventive actions for public protection – the term narrative is used in this context to refer to the stories told and interpreted from a certain perspective, that is, of Government. Therefore, these are stories with a 'particular politics', told for a particular purpose under particular conditions; or as articulated by Haraway, they are 'facts put together, reality constructed' through narrative forms (Haraway, 1989: 4). Government actions to identify and define 'risk' are presented as protection from, or prevention of, harms and dangers to individuals or society. Stopping things 'happening in the first place' involves knowing what will most likely happen 'in the first place'; it involves looking into the future and forecasting what will take place. Not just anyone is allowed to be in a position to define future risks; expert bodies of 'risk knowledges' and 'risk' specialists, often governmental, have emerged to support such processes

(Beck, Bonss and Lau, 2003; Burnett and Whyte, 2005; Douglas, 1992; Hansson and Aven, 2014; Tulloch and Lupton, 2003; Wilkinson, 2010).

The identification, management and control of these ‘risks’ often entails, in contemporary contexts, connecting individuals who encounter risk to a wider set of actors from a range of both governmental and non-governmental bodies through the strategic use of policy directives, funding regimes or legislative requirements (Alexander, 2008; Culpitt, 1999; Kemshall, 2002; 2008; 2010; 2014; 2016; Lubeck and Garrett, 1990; Mason, 2013; Mythen, Walklate and Kemshall, 2013; O’Malley, 2004; 2006; 2016; Petersen and Wilkinson, 2008; Renn and Klinke, 2016; Tulloch and Lupton, 2003; Walklate and Mythen, 2011; Wilkinson, 2010; Zinn, 2008). Among other things, this involves, sometimes by design and sometimes by default, a process of ‘responsibilisation’ wherein Governments make non-State actors responsible for traditional State functions, and therefore culpable for blame when they are not fulfilled (Foucault, 1991; Garland, 1996; 2001; 2003; Goddard, 2012; Raco, 2009).

However, noting that responsibilisation is happening and determining how it is happening and with what implications, are different things (Howell, 2015; Salter, Crofts and Lee, 2013; Thomas, 2017; Trnka and Trundle, 2014). Without research which documents the latter, it is difficult to know what it might mean for those affected by or tasked with operationalising government policies, including how such policies open up the potential for individual or collective agency in response. Lipsky’s description of the discretionary practices of ‘street level bureaucracy’ within the welfare system is relevant here (Lipsky, 1980). As Lipsky shows, policy does impose dilemmas on public-sector workers. However, at the same time and in response to those dilemmas, their subsequent discretionary decision-making plays a major part in shaping how policy is actually enacted (Lipsky, 1980). Attending to the messy,

complicated and nuanced interpretations, choices and actions of the people ‘responsibilised’ by ‘risk’ policy can, therefore, provide a vantage point from which to gain greater insight into how ‘risk’ policy intentions practically translate into policy outcomes. Primarily, in this setting, the outcome is how a case of CR risk comes to be identified as such (Cicourel, 1968; Hacking, 1988; 1991; 1996; Jayyusi, 1984; Rappert, 2012).

In relation to crime, specifically for children, the UK Government remains committed, in terms of policy, infrastructure and resources, to the idea that ‘prevention is better than cure’. Risk is central to this paradigm. Following the English ‘riots’ of 2011, claimed at the time to be principally the actions of children and young people<sup>7</sup> (Lewis et al, 2013; Lightowlers and Quirk, 2015; Newburn, 2012), the then Prime Minister’s speech articulated governmental support for very early intervention in children’s lives to prevent crime on both moral and financial grounds:

“Prevention is the cheapest and most effective way to deal with crime – everything else is simply picking up the pieces of failure that has gone before...[W]here we need the most intelligent reform is prevention: stopping all this happening in the first place. The riots last summer were a stark warning that parts of our society are broken. They told us we need to intervene much earlier in the story, before the jail cell, before the robbery, before the petty theft.” (Prime Minister David Cameron, 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2012)

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<sup>7</sup> The prosecution figures did not substantiate this claim. Almost two-thirds of those prosecuted were over the age of 18 years (Lewis et al, 2013)

The theoretical and practical problems associated with crime prevention models are well known and thus subject to challenge (Barnett, Blumstein and Farrington, 1989; Barton and Valero-Silva, 2013; Berk, 2008; 2009; 2012; Berk et al, 2009; Brantingham and Faust, 1976; Ellefsen, 2011; Evans, 2011; Farrington, 1985; 1989; 1990; Feeley and Simon, 1992; Garland, 1996; 2001; Hawkins, Catalano and Miller, 1992; Loeber and Farrington, 2001; Morgan and Homel, 2013; O'Malley, 1992; O'Malley and Hutchinson, 2007; Petrosino, 2000; Sherman et al, 1997; Sherman, 2002). In the case of 'pre-crime' prevention, as advocated by David Cameron, things are rather different. In one sense, pre-crime represents a continuation of governmental logics predicated on the ability to predict future crimes, but in another sense, it is also a major shift away from traditional crime prevention techniques. Put simply, under the old prevention model, the aim of intervention was to stop criminal activity (Barnett, Blumstein and Farrington, 1989). It was action focused. In the new 'pre-crime' model, by contrast, the aim of intervention is to stop someone from getting to the point where they might become involved in criminal activity. It is person focused. Attempts to identify and control people, 'pre-crime', thus involves exclusively working with judgements of possibilistic risks and uncertainties about individuals. In other words, the processes for acting upon 'pre-crime' is premised on suspicions of 'riskiness'. Social and cultural psychological research identify these discretionary judgements as predominantly based on human emotion, rather than on evidence-based calculation (Anderson, 2003; Finucane et al, 2004; Golub, 2017; Hogarth et al, 2011; Kahneman and Tversky, 1973; Kasperson et al, 1988; Lacasse, 2017; Lerner et al, 1993; Ropeik, 2010; Slovic, 1987; Slovic et al, 2002; Tversky, 1974) The 'professional vision' (Goodwin, 1994) which enables practitioners to see evidence of risk and the 'tools and technologies' (Renn and Klinke, 2016), or the methods, which generate 'evidence-

based' or justifiable assessments in risk-work (Bittner, 1970; Bayley and Bittner, 1984; Goldson and Muncie, 2006; Horlick-Jones, 2005; Hoyle, 2008; Lipsky, 1980), thus must be extended. This is necessary both for it to work in conjunction with the subjective notion of 'risk as feeling' (Slovic, 2002: 425; Slovic et al, 2004; Walklate, 1999), and for how it is to operate under conditions of 'ignorance' (Aradau and Van Munster, 2007; Fox and Tversky, 1995: 281; 1998; Füredi, 2009; Gross, 2016; Lash, 2003; Mythen and Walklate, 2010; 2013; 2016; Simon, 1972; Walklate and Mythen, 2011; Zinn, 2008). Establishing a new policy domain of 'pre-crime' among children via PREVENT and safeguarding is an extreme example of Government and practitioners operating in structural conditions of 'not knowing', or in what Rappert refers to as a 'state of ignorance' (Rappert, 2012). This move in the opposite direction of 'evidence-based policy' (Barry, 2013; Goldson, 2010; Mythen, Walklate and Peatfield, 2017; Pawson, 2002) also has the potential to result in a greater number of children, on the basis of suspicion, coming under the purview of the criminal justice system (CJS). The expansion of crime prevention to envelop the pre-crime risk of CR, wherein issues of welfare and criminal justice are commingled, represents a 'colonisation of social care' (Heath-Kelly, 2017: 315) and thus increases the likelihood of 'soft-policing' or 'back-door' criminalisation of certain populations (Cohen, 1985; Coppock and McGovern, 2014; Dafnos, 2014a; Goldson and Muncie, 2006; Lennon, 2015; Marx, 1998; McKendrick and Finch, 2016; Pollack, 2010; Ragazzi, 2016). The making of the pre-crime safeguarding risk of CR in PREVENT therefore requires careful examination.

### *PREVENT and the Practices of 'Risk-Work'*

Despite the wide variety of conceptual tools that can be used to deconstruct the PREVENT policy and legislation on paper, there are few studies that examine how problems manifest in practice and the agency which practitioners have in this process to ameliorate them (Busher et al, 2017; Francis, 2015; Heath-Kelly, 2013; 2017; Heath-Kelly and Strausz, 2018; Lipsky, 1980; Open Society Justice Initiative, 2016; Qureshi, 2016; 2018; Ramsay, 2017; Sian, 2017). Little is known about how the combination of pre-crime, CR and safeguarding notions under PREVENT legislation is impacting on children, nor on the practitioners who work under its aegis, especially in traditionally non-criminal justice settings. Coppock and McGovern indicate that social work and educational practitioners experience an ethical dilemma in operationalising policy 'inconsistent with the professional norms and core values of their profession' (Coppock and McGovern, 2014: 256). This has been underlined in recent research in social work, health and education which states that practitioners feel largely unprepared, confused and unsupported for this form of safeguarding risk decision-making (Bryan, 2017; Busher et al, 2017; Chisholm and Coulter, 2017; Dawson and Pepin, 2017; Dryden, 2017; Faure Walker, 2017; Heath-Kelly, 2017; Heath-Kelly and Strausz, 2018; HM Government, 2018; NUT, 2016; Open Society Justice Initiative, 2016; Parker et al, 2017; Qurashi, 2017; Sian, 2017; Stanley, 2018; Stanley and Guru, 2015; Stanley, Guru and Coppock, 2017; Stanley, Guru and Gupta, 2018; Thomas, 2016; 2017).

In these and other ways, countering terrorism can be seen to pose a 'wicked problem' (Rittel and Webber, 1973) for Government. It is a problem that is difficult to define, constantly changing, contains inherent contradictions and thus is difficult, if

not near impossible to resolve. Acting to prevent terrorist attacks and child abuse through legislation is politically, morally and emotionally persuasive, yet carries the chance of discrimination in preventive intervention and encroachment on the rights to freedom of thought and expression (Achiume, 2018; Daly, 2013; Kundnani and Hayes, 2018; Liberty, 2017). Fear of enacting this discrimination has been proffered as a barrier to children's practitioners acting on this risk (Boora, 2015; Dryden, 2017), however this appears to conflict with statistics. The PREVENT reality for children is that, in the first year of the Duty, 4,274 were referred to the specific police-led safeguarding process of PREVENT/CHANNEL<sup>8</sup>. Out of these, 3,595 were found to be unsuitable for the process, 322 received 'de-radicalisation' support and 357 received other safeguarding support (HM Government, 2017). The practices that generate PREVENT's 'official statistics' (Dequen, 2013; Duster, 2001; Kitsuse and Cicourel, 1963; Rappert, 2012), the data that can be subjectively used to evidence a pre-determined problem, are argued by the United Nations (Achiume, 2018; Kiai, 2017: 5) to exercise 'excessive discretion' which can lead to 'unpredictable and potentially arbitrary' interventions with racially and religiously discriminatory effect (Bittner, 1967; Gelsthorpe and Padfield, 2003; Goodwin, 1994; Hood, 1992; Luke and Cunneen, 1996; Sudnow, 1965; Sherman, 1984; Spivakovsky, 2013)

Some of this can be attributed to the nature of the policy and those charged with implementing it. Risk-work in the field of security, in contrast with safeguarding, is, for instance, claimed to be characterised by the need to make such discretionary decisions, with partial information or no information at all (Dresser, 2018; Gelev, 2011; Gross, 2016; Lee and McGovern, 2016; Mythen and Walklate, 2010; 2013;

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<sup>8</sup> The first official Government report on PREVENT/CHANNEL referrals (Home Office Statistical Bulletin 23/17, 2017) gives data on referrals broken down into groups aged under 15, and aged 15 to 20. In second category, children aged 15 to 17 have therefore been problematically aggregated with young adults.

2016; Rasmussen, 2006; Selchow, 2016; Sherman, 1984; Stanley, 2018; Stanley, Guru and Coppock, 2017; Stanley, Guru and Gupta, 2018; Walklate and Mythen, 2011). In such contexts, ‘unpredictable and potentially arbitrary’ interventions are unfortunately predictable outcomes, something the history of security service involvement in counter-terrorism can attest to. However, we know little about how this has spread out into other aspects of public service. Practice-based research into how this state of ‘not-knowing’ impacts on the individuals tasked with operationalising securitised ‘risk’ in non-traditional security settings such as education or welfare is, therefore, urgently needed in order to understand the effects of policy in this particular field (Amoore, 2013; Amoore and De Goede, 2008; Aradau and van Munster, 2007; Mythen and Walklate, 2006; 2016; O’Malley, 2011; 2015; Parker et al, 2017).

This thesis addresses that need by exploring the relationship between the conceptual roots of ‘risk’ and its legislative ‘making’ in relation to CR as the basis for a study that seeks to understand and reveal what happens in the space between policy and practice. This is a study that examines the praxiological (Cicourel, 1968) ‘risk-work’ that determines how PREVENT is ‘being done’ in a specific time and place. It spans a period during which the issue of CR gained increasing exposure and prominence, and where, significantly, PREVENT transformed from an optional strategy to engage with, to a legal obligation. As the study shows, the impact of such rapid changes in the landscape of policy, law, practice and world events, in a time of economic austerity (McGovern, 2016), has produced an environment or ‘conditions of work’ (Lipsky, 1980: 27) fraught with uncertainty for practitioners.

The starting point for the study was straightforward: it was the conviction that, in order to understand the internal tensions and inconsistencies of risk-work, in all of its multi-form and multi-purpose uses in the context of CR, it was crucial to ask the

people tasked with implementing PREVENT in practice about the knowledges, tools and technologies provided to them in order to learn, see and act upon this risk (Bayley and Bittner, 1984; Bittner, 1970; Hoyle, 2008; Lipsky, 1980). This included asking them about how they make sense of and implement this controversial Government policy in real-world settings where action is demanded of them; the ways in which they operationalise risk knowledges, interpret ‘risk’ and their responsibilities associated with it; and the facilitators and barriers in the processes for arriving at transparent and accountable actions and decisions (Eadie and Canton, 2002; Horlick-Jones, 2005; Lipsky, 1980). By adopting a flexible research approach to carrying out a practice-oriented case study (Cronin, 2014; Yin, 2004; 2014), one which involved various methods from qualitative traditions (Mills et al, 2010; Schön, 1983), this study was able to gain insights into how practitioners ‘do risk’ and an understanding of their perspectives on how policy and practice to keep children safe from harm can be improved.

### 1.1 The Research Questions

Three main questions guide this study. Firstly, how ‘risk’ is articulated in Government strategy in relation to preventing CR, and how Government conceives the scope of organisations involved. Secondly, what organisational decision-making processes and procedures exist in Liverpool for identifying the CR ‘risk’ in children between 11 and 18 years old. Thirdly, how Liverpool practitioners interpret ‘risk’, and their responsibilities in relation to it, within the paradigm of CR and safeguarding. In relation to this last question, of particular interest to this study is how practitioners match, contest or negotiate with Government strategy, and how they or their organisational decision-making processes safeguard from pre-existing concerns of discrimination.

## 1.2 Thesis Structure

To investigate and analyse the issues and problems uncovered within this inquiry, a range of literature from the fields of sociology, criminology and social psychology are drawn upon. In the first of two literature reviews, Chapter 2 critically examines the background to and history of the social uses and meanings of ‘risk’ and the theoretical perspectives that have subsequently developed around those uses and meanings in sociological thinking, particularly that of the ‘risk society’ (Beck, 1992; 1999; 2003; 2009). Risk is discussed both at an abstract level, in terms of the theorising of risk, and in relation to the risk narratives applied to children, welfare and criminal justice in the UK at an everyday, practical level. This synthesis of the literature on risk theoretically and in the social policy settings of crime prevention and child welfare, orientates the approach to risk adopted in the study that forms the basis of this thesis. Namely, that risk is a phenomenon whose situated elaboration in particular socio-political contexts should be explored rather than being treated as a pre-given and stable feature of the world (Garfinkel, 1967). In other words, for the research this thesis reports on, risk is something that is built and not found.

The second literature review, Chapter 3, examines how the risk of CR has been ‘made’ legislatively, and unpacks the specific knowledges and elements that have been assembled as its constituent parts. This approach is influenced by Hacking’s work on ‘kind-making’, specifically of child abuse (Hacking, 1988; 1991; 1996; 1999), which explicates how policy discourse and legislative frameworks construct knowledge of these ‘kinds’ or categories, both in terms of what they look like, that is, their content, and how society should respond. This is then given meaning by how individuals

interpret and enact them in practice (Dequen, 2013; Houston, 2001; McGinty, 2015; Rappert, 2012; Smith, 1978). In disentangling the often implicit, rather than explicit, theoretical underpinnings of Government policy and strategy, the contested theories of radicalisation and their empirical foundations are explored and the appropriateness of their application to children, and the evidence basis for doing so, are considered. This chapter sets the scene for following the production of risk legislatively by the State, through to local policy and procedures and to the frontline practices, processes and procedures for sense-making, judgement and decision-making on CR discussed in later chapters. The burgeoning sociological and criminological critique of PREVENT and counter terrorism strategies is acknowledged, significantly for its contribution to perceptions of ‘risky populations’, but at the same time, through a synthesis of both literature reviews (Dixon-Woods et al, 2006), a gap in understanding is revealed as to how this construction of risk takes place in praxis.

Chapter 4 sets out the background to this practice-oriented study including the setting in which it was conducted and how the setting influenced the overall research strategy and design. This chapter outlines the methods adopted to provide the best opportunities to gather and understand the stories of practitioners working strategically and in frontline positions with children and how they make sense of, operationalise and implement policy and legislative duties within a specific risk context, time and geographical place.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 are structured in a way that reflect the research questions and organises the data collected around the key epistemological, theoretical and practical themes, challenges and issues the study raises. In order to synthesise the thematic aspects which emerge from the two-year multi-phase fieldwork (Colquhoun et al, 2014; Dixon-Woods et al, 2005; Dixon-Woods et al, 2006; Thomas, 2007), the

information practitioners give is arranged sequentially or procedurally to reflect the pedagogy of cyclical experiential learning, wherein individuals learn a skill or knowledge iteratively through the process of ‘learn, see, do and review’ (see Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 2015). Organising these chapters deliberately to reflect an ‘idealised’ model (Sawyer et al, 2015; Benner, 1982) of organisational learning geared to continually improving skills and practice, cumulatively provides insight into the processes that shape how risk is learned, seen, and acted upon in a rapidly changing and challenging environment. The ‘learn, see, do and review’ cycle is thus useful because it provides a starting point for examining the nature of practitioners’ actual experiences of ‘doing risk’ in a particular kind of risk context. In employing an ideal typical model, it provides a baseline from which to explore deviations; something pursued with practitioners in various ways. How practitioners attempt to learn the risk knowledge of CR and how, despite ‘not-knowing’, they come to see, understand or contest the ‘normal’ characteristics of risk of CR, illuminates their compliance or resistance (Bittner, 1974; Merton, 1957; Scott, 1985; Weber and Parsons, 1964) to their deployment in CR risk-work decisions and action. These everyday practical dilemmas of operationalising problematic policy and legislation through developing the required expansion of their safeguarding and child protection ‘professional vision’ (Goodwin, 1994; Sudnow, 1965), indicate specific considerations for improving future policy and practice.

Chapter 8 is a discussion of how the way that the risk of CR has been built in legislation and policy relates to how risk is shown through Chapters 5 to 7 to be assembled through praxis. Chapter 9 builds upon practitioner identified and practitioner-informed recommendations for improvement of policy and practice to

identify future research opportunities to explore some of the offshoot challenges indicated by this inquiry.

### 1.3 Summary

In summary, this thesis will provide a significant and unique contribution to our understanding of how practitioners are ‘doing risk’ in their risk-work with children on the issue of CR in a specific time and place. It offers an insight into the praxiology of operationalising the practical and regulatory aspects of the Duty ‘to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism’ (Counter Terrorism and Security Act, 2015); the first piece of UK legislation to mandate the prevention of a specific form of harm related to children. How practitioners interpret the ways in which they must learn to see and respond to the new pre-crime safeguarding risk of CR, a situation identified as carrying the hallmarks of Beck’s concept of ‘nichtwissen’, is shown to be consequential to how CR as a specific social policy issue for children has been assembled in policy and legislation. Their actions to comply or resist the ‘normal characteristics’ (Sudnow, 1965; 259) of CR, the believed typologies of this risk imparted to them through various knowledges, official and unofficial, in developing the ‘professional vision’ they will employ to see and act upon CR, speaks to issues of agency in circumstances often described as responsibilisation. Unpacking risk as a sociological and psycho-sociological concept is thus essential for sketching its influence through policy and into practice within this thesis. For that reason, this process must begin with exploring how risk is conceptualised and framed theoretically before it progresses to address how it manifests in policy and practice.

## 2. FRAMING RISK

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a critical analysis and synthesis of a significant body of literature relating to ‘risk’ and how it is framed conceptually within sociological and psycho-sociological thinking. The first part of the chapter critically examines the background and history to the social uses and meanings of ‘risk’ and the theoretical perspectives that have subsequently developed around those uses and meanings in sociological thinking, particularly that of the ‘risk society’ (Beck, 1992; 1999; 2003; 2009). This analysis examines the ‘rational’ idea of ‘risk’ as being an objectively definable phenomena; one that can be scientifically and mathematically calculated, predicted, quantified and managed, and is experienced universally and without discrimination; and how this compares to the opposing ‘constructionist’ perspective of ‘risk’ as a socio-politically produced phenomenon which serves to regulate and control particular populations (Altheide, 2011; Blomberg and Cohen, 2003; Cohen, 1985; Donkin, 2014; Douglas, 1985; 1992; Garland, 2003; 2008; Hacking, 1991; 1996; 1999; 2005; Hall et al, 1978; Lubeck and Garrett, 1990; Maurutto and Hannah-Moffat, 2006; O’Malley, 2004; Rose, 2000; Silver and Miller, 2002; Stenson, 2001; Zedner, 2010a).

Based on an investigation of the arguments put forward on both sides of this debate, the argument offered here is that ‘risk’ is not an objective notion or social fact but needs to be viewed as socially constructed, something that is built and not found. Risk should therefore be read and approached as ‘bracketed’ in the discussion that follows. In keeping with insights from ethnomethodological inquiries, risk is being approached as a phenomenon whose situated elaboration in particular socio-political contexts remains to be explored, rather than being taken-for granted as a pre-given and stable feature of the world, independent of specific practical purposes and projects

(Garfinkel, 1967; 1986). The rationale for this position is that the knowledge of what risk looks like when it comes to children, and the understandings of how society should respond to these risks, are mutually worked up. They are constructed or framed and made part of the world through policy discourse and legislative frameworks, rather than pre-dating them (Belfiore, 2009; Cooperrider, Barrett and Srivastva, 1995; Frankfurt, 2005; Hacking, 1991; 1995; Latour and Woolgar, 1986; Rawls, 2008; Scott, 1998). Risk praxis thereby gives risk a material and organisational presence; making risk into a social policy reality (Cicourel, 1968; Hacking, 1988; 1999; Bowker and Star, 1999; Shore and Wright, 2015). The risk knowledges and forms of expertise that are argued to have emerged within the ‘risk society’ (Beck, 2003) are therefore understood within this perspective as a product of this interaction.

As the chapter will show, an exploration of the commonalities, differences and contradictions in the epistemologies, theories and concepts of risk, reveals the complexity which arises when they are expanded to situations of ‘not-knowing’ ((Beck, 1992; 1999; 2002; 2003; 2009; 2014; Beck, Bonss and Lau, 2003; Beck, Gidden and Lash, 1994; Beck and Wehling, 2012), complexities previously given the label of incalculable ‘uncertainty’. Studies of ‘risk-work’ (Horlick-Jones, 2005; Stanley and Guru, 2015; Stanley, 2018) suggest the identification and management of risk in relation to children is framed within UK criminal justice and welfare spheres in different ways, at different times and for different purposes. Research into risk policy and praxis in criminal justice and welfare becomes important, therefore, because Government legislation and strategy for preventing ‘Childhood Radicalisation’ (Stanley and Guru, 2015) operates at the nexus of these spheres. As a consequence, studying that nexus should reveal the practical logics in play.

As an analytical prelude to later chapters, contemporary crime prevention and welfare, regulatory, policy and legislative discourses and frameworks of risk, amongst other things, are examined in this chapter to show how they guide the practice of various professionals working with children by tasking them with the responsibility for seeing risk and preventing it; asking them to read risk into the situations they encounter. This involves turning to sociological and psycho-sociological literatures which theorise the processes which underpin individual judgement and decision-making on the categorisation and codification of who or what is risky, so as to understand how particular forms of professional reasoning might interact with the structural conditions of ‘risk work’ for children. To set the stage for this discussion, the first section below examines the history of risk.

## 2.2 Risk Theory, Origins and Social Meaning: ‘Rationalisation’ to ‘Post-Modernity’

Concepts of risk have changed significantly over time. Within modern societies, the concept of risk initially emerged from financial and actuarial practice and was used to predict the likelihood of future events to help investors and insurance brokers alike identify what they deemed to be ‘good’ or ‘bad’ bets in business decisions and investments (Bernstein, 1996; Ewald, 1991; Knight, 1921; Mythen, 2004; Wilkinson, 2010). The financial and speculative origins of risk lend the concept an interesting duality: risk, as initially framed, could relate to future events that can have either, or even both, positive or negative consequences.

This duality speaks to the origins of the concept of risk in the search for useful diagnostic aides to help work out the possible outcomes of different courses of action.

The processes of determining risks as good or bad were based upon interested understandings of what constituted good and bad outcomes. While judgements of value were certainly implicated in those determinations, however, perceptions of desirability often differ in competitive markets and therefore risk calculations themselves were arguably neutral. Assessing risk as good or bad according to certain parameters was thus primarily used as a method or a tool for calculating the probability of future events and hence of exerting some control over them. Risk and probability are closely aligned concepts here and, as with betting odds, the focus was on the likelihood of winning or losing following a decision to commit to a particular course of action.

The appeal of this anticipatory apparatus can be partially viewed as part of a wave of ‘rationalisation’ (Lash and Whimster, 1987; Weber and Parson, 1964; Weber, 1949; 1989) often seen as the prelude to contemporary globalisation<sup>9</sup>. Rationalisation, in the hands of Weber and others, was the process which was driving this paradigmatic shift away from pre-modern social, cultural or religious orientations premised on the belief that events were entirely beyond a person’s control, towards putatively ‘scientific’ and ‘rational’ approaches to organising everyday life in modern societies around notions of predictability and calculability. The process required the development of technical tools and bureaucracies to support and advance these notions and those in turn made it possible for an emerging body of risk professionals to focus their efforts on predicting whether a risk was likely to be good or bad and on taking precautions accordingly. This emerging risk infrastructure was not, at this stage, an apparatus of intervention to prevent bad risks from happening. Nor was the ascription

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<sup>9</sup> Globalisation is understood as the development of a worldwide community through intensified interactions between economies, societies, cultures and political movements within rapidly expanding global networks cemented through the means of communication, transportation, trade and the exchange of ideas (see Bauman, 1998; Bernstein, 1996; Giddens, 1990; 1991; Ritzer, 1996).

of the adjective of good or bad immovable or unchangeable, as it was aligned with what risk was profitable and what was not. Given this, understandings of risk shifted depending on what, when and to whom it was applied. As a result, the labelling of an activity or event as a good risk or a bad risk was time, purpose and person-relative (Wilkinson, 2010). The concept at the centre of this flexible future-oriented calculus, however, has undergone a transition in the period since.

Put simply, risk today is much less likely to be used in a relativistic way and much more likely to be treated in absolutist terms. Where once risk was either potentially good or bad, it has now gradually come to be understood as indexing varying degrees of bad; something jeopardous to both individuals and society (Füredi, 2001; 2002; 2003; 2007; 2009; Giddens, 1999; Wilkinson, 2010). Ulrich Beck's seminal work on risk, 'Risk Society' (Beck, 1992), not only charted this shift towards risk as an exclusively negative concept but also marked the sociological 'turn to risk'; that is, the moment when the social sciences began to inquire more systematically into and thus attempt to better understand how modernity and the experience of rapid social change had affected the increasingly extensive application of risk concepts in modern society. Beck took this thesis further to specifically differentiate between the risk society and the newly emerged, and still emerging, 'world risk society' – a precarious post-modern global society shaped largely by the response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks but also influenced by new knowledge of international environmental risks (Beck, 2002a; 2003; 2007; 2009; 2014). Whilst there remains no consensus on the definition of risk within sociological theory, Beck's work certainly focussed the discipline's theoretical gaze onto globalisation and how this has shifted societies towards a shared culture defined by risk – particularly environmental risks and risk related to international terrorism.

The deployment of risk concepts across the period of conceptual and theoretical development in which Beck was writing shares a future-focus with earlier periods; the ‘risk society’ is described by Beck as one that attempts to predict, manage and prevent events that can jeopardise the environment and the economy, in an attempt to ‘colonise or conquer’ the future (Beck, 1992; 2003; 2007; Füredi, 2007; Giddens, 1999; Mythen and Walklate, 2006; 2013). However, the multi-dimensional purposes to which risk narratives are put to work in the risk society are less explored.

### 2.2.1 Risk as Neutral Fact or Socially ‘Manufactured’

The shaping and reshaping of risk from pre-modern to post-modern (Western) society is broadly accepted to have been influenced by positivism; the drive to conceptualise and articulate phenomena in scientific, mathematical terms. The development of naturalistic methods (Klein, 2008; Lipshitz et al, 2001; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Perrin et al, 2001) which apply rationalisation to practical concerns in order to attain or make claims of ‘objectivity’ in policymaking, even on the basis of little or no empirical evidence (Porter, 1995; Tversky and Kahneman, 1971), has increasingly come to permeate all facets of social life (Bowker and Star, 1999; Hacking, 1988; 1991; Jayyusi, 1984; Scott, 1998; Wilkinson, 2010). Mirroring critiques of positivism more generally, recent waves of risk scholarship have shown that while scientific determinations of risk may be claimed to be purely objective, they are in practice morally inflected, involving situated judgements about which processes, identities, circumstances or behaviours in society should be labelled ‘risky’ (Armstrong, 2004; 2006; Bancroft and Wilson, 2007; Dannreuther and Kessler, 2017; Douglas, 1992; Füredi, 2009; Hood, Rothstein and Baldwin, 2001; Heath-Kelly, 2017; Heath-Kelly and Strausz, 2018; Hoyle, 2008; Kelly, 2001; McCulloch and Pickering, 2009;

Montelius and Nygren, 2014; Mythen, Walklate and Khan, 2013; Pollack, 2010). The term 'society' itself remains ill-defined but is one whose content is leveraged as that which risk threatens. Ironically, then, understandings of risk remain time, purpose and person-relative but in a disguised way – pronouncements about risk are dressed up in absolutist language and generalised from one position to all.

Social understandings of risks are conceptualised by Beck primarily in terms of facts, objectively evaluated and considered, which identify external dangers posed to society by people or events that are outside of that society, or outside of its control; 'risks are always future events that may occur, that threaten us' (Beck, 1992; 1999; 2002; 2002a; 2007: 9; Tulloch and Lupton, 2003; Wilkinson, 2010). The issue of the politics of risk as a form of knowledge which yields power (Said, 1993) is not one that all theorists raise. Beck's argument is that the risk society is an inclusive concept and that risk is 'democratic' insofar as it does not discriminate in whom it affects, even affecting 'the rich and the powerful' (Beck, 1992: 47; 2007). For others, Beck's side-stepping of concerns related to relative power and privilege in who gets to define risk (Atkinson, 2007; Douglas, 1985; 1992; Douglas and Wildavsky, 1982; Mythen, 2014; Scruton, 2004; Smith, 2010; Wilkinson, 2010) is viewed specifically from two perspectives. Firstly, critics argue that it is important to explore what or whom comes to be defined as both risks to society and risks within society; and secondly, they argue we must consider who the risk discourses in society benefit and who they disadvantage.

When assessing these criticisms, it is worth noting that the relabelling of social problems, such as racism and poverty and the people who experience them, as risks both within and to society is acknowledged by Beck. Indeed, his observations imply the presence of agency, power and vested interests within the process of defining risk

(Beck, 2007). Yet as his critics suggest he does not go as far as articulating such structural inequalities in and of themselves as risks to society. Instead their role is downplayed in the analysis of how risk is defined and experienced in society by the assertion that structural factors such as race, gender and class are ‘zombie categories’ (Beck, 2002: 204). Declared to have limited meaning because the reality that they correspond to is ‘dead’, that is, it no longer exists or is no longer relevant to societies, these categories are argued to be continuously revived by academic and other institutions (see Bauman, 2002; Beck, 2002; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Beck and Willms, 2004; Giddens, 1991; 1999).

Beck’s argument is paradoxical on this issue. On the one hand, he asserts that persistent social inequalities are an accepted feature of modern society. Yet on the other, he also maintains the position that those social inequalities do not impact upon the proportionality of the experience of risks by certain groups in society, nor the attribution of the risk label to certain populations (Atkinson, 2007; Dannreuther and Kessler, 2017; Douglas, 1992; Douglas and Wildavsky, 1982; Mythen and Walklate, 2013; Olofsson et al, 2014; Walklate and Mythen, 2010; Wilkinson, 2010). Beck seems to want to hold two positions at once. That is problematic in key respects.

Beck, as cited earlier, imagines the threats to the risk society as being external to it. It is important, therefore, to ask who constitutes the ‘us’ said to be under peril. The ‘World at Risk’ thesis claims that the 9/11 terrorist attack on the USA changed the context of the risk society for the entire world. This displays the conceptual limitations of Western-centric views and narratives of risk and threat within Beck’s work. The internal threat of terrorism from those who are ‘us’ is minimised by maximising the perception of the external, and internal, threat from those who are not ‘us’, those who are the ‘other’ (Abbas, 2007; 2012; Bilgin, 2010; Douglas, 1992;

Fassin, 2001; Golub, 2017; Hoque, 2015; Kundnani, 2015; Poynting et al, 2004; Said, 1978; Sen, 2006; Smith, 2018). When we consider how risk concepts are utilised on both the global and local stage to provide a ‘victim/perpetrator’ dichotomy in contemporary risk narratives, separating out the ‘innocent victims and evil-doers’ (Lee, 1984), then privilege is undeniably attached to some individuals, groups or ideologies over others. That is, it is attached to ‘us’ over ‘them’.

This is partly because Beck’s ‘them versus us’ discussion in the risk society misleadingly welds issues of risk and identity together. However, it is not just Beck who adheres to this polarity; it is symptomatic of the present-day approaches to global uncertainty in State discourses which adopt a majority/minority narrative. Appadurai, for instance, argues that this type of narrative emanates from the ‘large scale exercises in counting and naming populations in the modern period and worries about peoplehood, entitlements, and geographical mobility’ (Appadurai, 2006: 88). The point made by Appadurai, and by others too, is that risk not only requires a form of calculative reasoning based on identity, but that calculative reasoning in this process of ‘social categorisation’, in and of itself, is fuelling global uncertainty and precariousness (Bowker and Star, 1999; Hacking, 1991; Jayyusi, 1984; Scott, 1998; Sen, 2006; Shore and Wright, 2015). Appadurai reflects on this particularly in relation to the twentieth century genocidal conflicts within Europe and Africa:

“The brutal ethnic violence of the 1990’s is deeply inflected by factors which triangulate a highly specific sort of modernity: passport-based national identities; census-based ideas of majority and minority; media-driven images of self and other; constitutions which conflate citizenship and ethnicity; and, most recently, ideas about democracy and the free

market which have produced severe new struggles over enfranchisement and entitlement in many societies.”

(Appadurai 2006: 90)

Appadurai's comments certainly bear further examination. However, while Beck may not explicitly acknowledge the political dimensions of majority/minority narratives in respect of the exclusivity of how the 'society' threatened by risk is defined, there is some recognition in his work that ways of defining and perceiving risk depend upon power of position. He appreciates the constructed or 'manufactured' nature of risk as a factor in the process of the imagining or 'global staging' of the reality of a global terrorist risk (Beck, 2007: 10). That said, despite this, there is no acknowledgement of 'internal threats' such as the societal risks which the State poses or creates, by its actions or inactions, or how these particular risks could be avoided (Hillyard and Tombs, 2004; Irujo and Miglio, 2014; Pemberton, 2007; Scott, 1998). For example, in relation to the 'risk of radicalisation' for involvement in terrorism, it could be argued that the State places citizens at risk by virtue of its foreign policy decisions, but this is not reflected in how risk is imagined within State narratives on counter-terrorism – a major absence (Abbas, 2007; 2012; Altheide, 2006; 2007; 2009; Kundnani, 2014; Mohammed and Siddiqui, 2013; Sabir, 2017; Sian, Law and Sayyid, 2012).

The language of risk is therefore shown to be utilised to define what are seen to be the acceptable and unacceptable uncertainties for society. These understandings in turn inform our societal 'risk consciousness'; a powerful political imaginary that can be manipulated to shape both local and global politics for ideological ends (Ewald, 1991; Heyman, Henriksen and Maughan, 1998; Hillyard and Tombs, 2004; Wilkinson, 2010). State narratives encourage individuals to be 'risk aware' or 'risk conscious',

specifically in relation to crime and security, and to be alert to the risk posed by those who are ‘other’ (Breen-Smyth, 2014; Cherney and Murphy, 2016; Fassin, 2011; 2013; Hillyard, 1993; Hillyard and Tombs, 2004; Holdaway, 1996; Hoque, 2015; Lennon, 2015; Pantazis and Pemberton, 2009; Poynting et al, 2004; Ragazzi, 2016; Smith, 2018). This imagined sense of threat can have the undesirable consequence of increasing societal uncertainty by stimulating divisions in group or national identity and thereby increasing the risk of social violence (Appadurai, 2006; Sen, 2006; Wilkinson, 2010) – the global ramifications of Islamophobia are just one example.

When the actors who define the social meaning of risk are brought into the analytical frame, risk is shown to be a political concept both in terms of how it is constructed in our collective imagination but also in terms of the purposes to which it is put. Theorists have demonstrated that risk concepts have developed in tandem with contemporary post-industrial societies and have not evolved organically (Beck, 1992; 2007; Bauman, 1999; Giddens, 1991; 1999). They are, by implication, there to service certain needs of those post-industrial societies. More specifically, they are concepts which tend to be mobilised to prevent situations that may be harmful to those societies in the future, rather than to prevent harm to individuals from, for example, the structural inequalities embedded within the way society or the State develops and operates. The risk narratives that emerge in contemporary social life are thus, in large part, State narratives that selectively portray certain situations, behaviours or populations as dangerous, for the purpose of organising society and the regulation or control of individual or group thinking and behaviours by the State or the self that are inevitably coloured by subjective judgements (Bergkamp, 2017; Mythen, Walklate and Khan, 2013; Wilkinson, 2010). Risk, as it is widely used, in contradiction with

Beck's assertions, is therefore routinely undemocratic and discriminatory in its application and usage.

In his writing around the risk society thesis, Beck skims over the important contextual issues of identity, power and exclusion. In doing so, he significantly limits its ability to expand our understanding of risk as a conceptual tool of hegemonic power or control. According to those who adopt more risk critical and indeed risk sceptical perspectives, the widespread integration of positivistic, scientific or calculative reasoning has been purposefully utilised to confer an element of legitimacy, credibility and neutrality on the application of the risk label to certain groups or activities. In doing so, risk identification practices are stabilised, and protection is provided from accusations of vested interest and bias (Armstrong, 2004; 2006; Brown, 2014a; Case, 2007; Gregory and Satterfield, 2002; Goldson, 2000; Goldson and Muncie, 2006; Hillyard, 1993; McGovern, 2013; Mythen and Walklate, 2013; Mythen, Walklate and Khan, 2009; 2013; Mythen, Walklate and Peatfield, 2017; O'Malley, 1992; Smith, 2010; Wilkinson, 2010). This process of legitimisation in turn creates scope for justifying the further extension of the domain of risk beyond its initial boundaries.

The ever-growing lists of 'who's' and 'what's' that can be categorised as presenting a risk in, to or for society, demonstrates the elasticity of the risk concept within contemporary risk societies. This expansionist tendency concurrently provides rationalisations for the actions that claim to not only identify, mitigate and manage present risks, but also prevent them from materialising at all (Bauman, 1999; Bowker and Star, 1999; Douglas, 1985; 1992; Giddens, 1991; Hacking, 1990; 1991; Jayyusi, 1984; Shore and Wright, 2015; Weber, 1949; 1989).

### 2.2.2 Risk, Uncertainty and ‘Not Knowing’

Several theorists have argued that faced with new uncertainties in modern society, the need to rationalise or make sense of ‘risk’ has intensified and expanded to all areas of life and all types of threats, even those whose occurrence it may not be possible to anticipate. This represents a departure from traditional understandings of risk, but this notion has been given particular weight in risk narratives relating to problems of the environment, criminal justice, health, social care and welfare (see Bancroft and Wilson, 2007; Bernstein, 1996; Beck, 1992; 2003; 2007; Chamberlain, 2016; Corry, 2012; Giddens, 1999; Heyman, Henriksen and Maughan, 1998; Hudson, 2003; Lupton and Zinn, 2011; Mair, 2011; Mythen, 2004; Stenson, 2001; Tulloch and Lupton, 2003).

One of the problems associated with defining risk, however, is consistently distinguishing it from related terms. Not only does risk, despite its now negative connotations, overlap in its usage and therefore bear a family resemblance to concepts like uncertainty, probability, likelihood, chance and odds, those connections have themselves given rise to secondary distinctions. Prior to the emergence of probability theory, Cartesian epistemologies<sup>10</sup> sharply distinguished determinations of what was only ‘probable’ from what was ‘certain’ (Hacking, 1991; 2015). However, while probability broke free of its associations with uncertainty, the concept of risk did not. The links between risk and uncertainty continue to generate confusion to this day (Fox and Tversky, 1995; 1998; Lash, 2003; Zinn, 2008).

From its original fiscal roots, risk is understood to be something that can be identified, measured and accounted for in probabilistic terms and therefore can be

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<sup>10</sup> For Descartes (cited in Francks, 2008), and the many thinkers influenced by his redefinition of the scientific worldview, something that is merely probable is by definition uncertain or non-certain. True knowledge, which has absolute certainty as its cornerstone can therefore not be established for something which is only probable. As mathematics advanced, particularly in relation to science and engineering, however, this was shown to be a semantic illusion. Probabilistic calculations can be derived deductively, that is ‘certainly’ in Cartesian terms, from a set of non-probabilistic axioms.

accurately predicted if the underlying information those calculations are based upon is correct (Aven, 2016; Hansson and Aven, 2014). For the economist Knight, the possibility of accurate enumeration and calculation discerned the structured nature of risk, a knowable and countable phenomenon, from generic unstructured and unknowable (or ‘Knightian’<sup>11</sup>) uncertainties (Knight, 1921). The notion of risk as calculable is, however, gradually losing prominence, as notions of risk as incalculable or uncertain, but yet still preventable and controllable, have come to the fore (Bauman, 2001; Beck, 2003; Ben-Haim, 2016; Ben-Haim and Demertzis, 2016; Douglas, 1985; 1992; Gross, 2016; Mythen and Walklate, 2010; 2013; 2016; Zinn, 2008).

The different responses to the problem of defining risk have given rise to competing schools of thought around how risk is best analysed. The shift in the ‘World Risk Society’ view towards controlling uncertainties is regarded by Beck as the result of the turbulence caused by an era of ‘reflexive modernisation’ (Beck, Beck, Bonss and Lau, 2003; Beck, Giddens and Lash, 1994). This was described as a period of rapid social change which has blurred and multiplied the boundaries of social spheres and understanding in relation to science, superstition and ‘natural’ fact, resulting in a ‘multiplication of valid means of justification’ (Beck, Bonss and Lau, 2003: 20) for the ascription of the risk label to phenomena and behaviours. What ‘counts’ as knowledge in this context is thus constantly disputed, subsequently leading to ‘a multiplication of claims to knowledge’ where the ‘knowers’ and ‘not-knowers’, the experts and the lay people respectively, have become indistinguishable (Beck, Bonss

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<sup>11</sup> Knight frames risk as a *structured* uncertainty capable of being projected using a reliable probabilistic model, whereas a generic, *unstructured* uncertainty – termed ‘Knightian uncertainty’ after the author – is an unknown or unknowable, non-probabilistic phenomenon which is by extension indeterminate, ungovernable and unmanageable (Knight, 1921).

and Lau, 2003; Beck, Giddens and Lash, 1994; Beck and Wehling, 2013; Herbig and Glöckner, 2009; Shapin, 1995; 1999; 2005; Sonnentag, 2000; Speelman, 1998).

Optimistically, and in similar ways to Latour's arguments (Latour, 1987; Latour and Woolgar, 1986) concerning increasing transparency in science, the advantages of this scenario are perceived to be that risk 'experts' and risk 'science' can now be seen, challenged and held accountable by the lay person:

“[i]n this new situation, the foremost public task of science is no longer to silence controversies, but rather to enable them, that is, to enable different public voices to be heard and to make themselves count.” (Beck, Bonss and Lau, 2003: 21).

Beck's view is that the positions of all people in defining risk and determining how it is acted upon has been democratised by this development (Beck, 2007; Tulloch and Lupton, 2003). However, while the proposition that contemporary 'risk knowledge' is never definitive or certain, may, to an extent, provide these opportunities, when risk is conceived as "...probabilistic, at best: more likely 'possibilistic'" (Füredi, 2009; Lash, 2003: 52), it also presents problematic dilemmas for risk decision-makers. Widening the scope of responsibility from considerations of what is calculated as likely, to what is imagined as possible, is acknowledged by Beck to bring issues once 'below the level of significance' firmly into processes of risk identification and management (Beck, 2003: 20). The 'precautionary rule', which precipitates acting based on doubt, is identified by Beck to also carry the potential for risk 'fact' to become conflated with risk suspicion or prophecy (Beck, 2003; Rakow, 2010). Indeed, if calculability is being

completely abandoned, the question needs to be asked as to whether this kind of risk phenomenon can accurately be described as a 'risk' at all.

In the advent of the 'war on terror', Beck defines risk as 'the anticipation of catastrophe' (Beck, 2007: 9); a phenomenon of unknown origin or destination. In this and other ways, Beck's work on the 'risk society' enables shifts to be traced in the deployment of the concept of risk. Yet here it also shows that when it is extended and remoulded for the prediction of the unpredictable, measurement of the immeasurable or control of the uncontrollable, it is being pushed to breaking point. Put bluntly, Beck's examination of the 'global' response to terrorist attacks on the West, acts whose unpredictable nature are necessary to generate fear and 'terror' amongst those who are targeted, provides a clear-cut example of Knightian uncertainties being re-cast as risk. In this sense, risk has become a 'simplifying heuristic' (Heyman, Henriksen and Maughan, 1998); a quick fix technique or shortcut for guiding action in an attempt by Western societies to exert some form of control over all uncertainties including those which are effectively unpredictable in complex social situations.

The expansion of risk into the domain previously described as uncertainty, argued to be emblematic of 'reflexive modernisation', is claimed by Beck to necessitate societal actions to be taken in circumstances of '*nichtwissen*'; broadly translated from German to English as meaning a state of 'not knowing' (Beck, 2003; 2009; Beck and Wehling, 2012; Gross, 2016; Mythen and Walklate, 2013; 2016). In this claim, Beck places 'ignorance', or what has been referred to in traditional sociological theory as 'non-knowledge' (Simmel, 1906), on an equal footing with 'knowledge' in the endeavour to analyse and understand societal risk notions (Aradau and Van Munster, 2007; Beck, 2009; Gross, 2007; 2010; 2016; Lash, 2003; Mythen, 2004; Mythen and Walklate, 2013; 2016). This is an important concept, and one that

will be taken up in the analyses which follow, but Beck's own analysis of the role 'nichtwissen' plays within the risk society thesis and how it informs the structural conditions in which risk operates, is under-developed (Gross, 2016; Mythen, 2004; Mythen and Walklate, 2013; 2016), something picked up by several commentators on Beck.

Gross, for instance, retitles the 'risk society' as the 'non-knowledge society' (Gross, 2016: 387), linking back to earlier discussions of how it is no longer connected to traditional theoretical models of probability calculation, in his contention that 'nichtwissen' presents a conceptual paradox for the study of risk. The increased and increasing importance of 'non-knowledge' in risk decision making when applied to Beck's own conceptualisation of the proliferation of unknowable and incalculable uncertainties within the claimed signature rapidity of this era of modernity, is argued to turn risk into what Beck himself called a 'zombie' category (Gross, 2016: 398). Just as Beck controversially dismissed structural inequalities as 'zombie' social concepts continuously resurrected by academic inquiry and institutions (Beck and Willms, 2004), Gross does the same in disputing Beck's claim that risk is a 'real-world' classification rather than one which is constructed or 'historically conditioned' (Gross, 2016: 398). Gross's claim that risk is made and not found serves to amplify the conceptual relevance of 'nichtwissen', echoing the call of Mythen and Walklate to consider its potential as an 'incisive tool for social analysis...in and with situations of not-knowing' (Mythen and Walklate, 2016: 409). This has particular resonance for sociological exploration of risk practices and the processes of risk knowledge production in the fields of counter-terrorism and safeguarding children from harm (Gross, 2016; Mythen and Walklate, 2006; 2016).

### 2.2.3 Summary

In summary, in terms of framing risk theoretically, the social origins and uses of risk theories indicate that the purpose of risk concepts in society has been, and to an extent remains, to count, predict and control futures, good or bad. Concurrently, risk is also a concept that is neither neutral nor democratically experienced but rather infused with power and privilege in its differential application to different groups, identities and behaviours. The social meaning of risk has shifted in contemporary risk societies from a positive or negative possibility, to become synonymous with a singularly unacceptable and dangerous threat. Risk is now a proxy term for unequivocal peril. The risk society logic – ‘the anticipation of catastrophe’ – has expanded risk into the narration of unknown possibilistic fears, thereby liberating the concept from the traditional categorisation process of calculable probability (Hacking, 2013; 2015). Risk notions now go beyond identifying, mitigating or managing existing risks, to predicting and preventing future imagined, unknown or unknowable hazards. Even when it is unknowable, we are told we can and should still attempt to measure, manage and control risk (Douglas, 1992). ‘Nichtwissen’ presents a challenging setting for risk decision makers in both policy and practice and demonstrates that the concept of risk is not an objective social fact, but one that is situationally understood and established through praxis. The next section turns to how risk, as a way to categorise and manage unwanted, but often incalculable, occurrences in society, is framed for children in policy and practice.

## 2.3 Risk Praxis: Children and Risk Prevention

The naming of societal phenomena as risk and the ascription of this label to certain behaviours, identities or groups, even in the absence of knowledge, information or ‘evidence’, illustrates that the application of the risk concept in modern life is a political act. The power to define risk through discretionary decisions about who or what is to be ‘feared for’ and ‘fearful about’ in society is also often the same power exercised in attempts to identify, manage or control risk. What is more, the development of an apparatus to individualise risks and place the responsibility for action, or inaction, to manage and prevent them onto both State and non-State entities, as well as individuals within society, is critical to maintaining this authority to name and categorise (Bowker and Star, 1999; Ewald, 1991; Garland, 1996; 2001; 2003; 2008; 2014; Lubeck and Garrett, 1990; Raco, 2009; Shore and Wright, 2015; Wilkinson, 2010). How the State and its agents imagine or construct, identify and manage risk as a set of strategies for controlling not just the future, but a particular group of people’s futures, is therefore a central issue for both macro and micro level sociological inquiry into risk. In the context of this thesis, this critical lens brings vital clarity to understandings of risk and the application of risk concepts to children as a defined group within society.

### 2.3.1 Children and the Risk of Criminal Harm

Children have been the focus of risk narratives from the 19th Century up to very recent times, featuring throughout as posing ‘problems’ to be managed via social policy (Bateman and Hazel, 2014; Catalano et al, 2002; Garland, 2001; 2003; 2008; 2014; Spector and Kitsuse, 1973; Ward, 2012). The present period is no different and the

claimed need to protect children from various State-identified harms has seen risk narratives extended in various ways. Risk is now attached to social problems like child poverty, for instance, as its occurrence is said to store up future problems for societies (Bateman, 2011). It also attaches to the behaviours of certain groups, individuals or characteristics of segments of the child population to define ‘at risk’ populaces – to particular diets, social, cultural and religious practices, the consumption of various products and media by (different kinds of) children. This State-led recodification of ‘dangers’ in risk narratives on personal health and personal safety, as risks to be managed primarily by the self and to a lesser extent by the State, is evident across contemporary approaches to health, social welfare and criminal justice policy and legislation (see Atkinson, 2007; Case, 2006; 2007; Culpitt, 1999; Kemshall, 2002; 2010; 2016; Lubeck and Garrett, 1990; Mair, 2011; O’Malley, 2004; 2006; Petersen and Wilkinson, 2008; Renn and Klinke, 2016; Tulloch and Zinn, 2011; Wilkinson, 2010; Zinn and Taylor-Gooby, 2006). Prevention and risk are co-dependent concepts; if a risk of dangerousness or harm is determined to exist there is an implication that, once it is known and understood, certain actions can be taken to identify and prevent, avoid or minimise it (Beck 1992; 2007; 2007a; Giddens, 1999; Hudson, 2003). Epistemologically, analyses of risk can be turned around to provide analyses of what it might take to stop their realisation.

In the fields of child welfare and crime prevention, the techniques for encouraging individualised precautionary measures to avoid criminal harms are well established and expanding. These include actions children can, indeed *should*, take to regulate or self-monitor behaviours and choices argued to increase their risk of harm (Case, 2006; Case and Haines, 2009; 2010; Creaney, 2013; Garside, 2009; Karaian, 2014; Kemshall, 2010; 2011; Lubeck and Garrett 1990); as well as actions that children

can take to avoid harm from adults, for example child sexual exploitation (CSE) or ‘stranger danger’ initiatives (Craven, Brown and Gilchrist, 2006; Eaton and Holmes, 2017; Gillespie, 2004; McAlinden, 2006; 2014). Current counter terrorism discourse, legislation and policy, provides another example of this process of individualisation and behaviourisation in practice in that it places responsibility for managing the risk of CR – individual levels of susceptibility to the risk and the identification and management of the risk – onto children, their families and their communities (McKendrick and Finch, 2016; Stanley, Guru and Coppock, 2017; Thomas, 2017). These practices mirror the principles of individualisation<sup>12</sup> in Beck’s risk society. As Beck puts it;

“individualisation is misunderstood if it is seen as a process which derives from a conscious choice or preference on the part of the individual. The crucial idea is this; individualisation really is imposed on the individual by modern institutions” (Beck, 2007b: 681)

The State placing responsibility for risk and its identification onto individuals and non-governmental actors is not a new phenomenon but the specificities of how this relates to risk and ‘pre-crime’ crime prevention mark out developments in this area as a new kind of departure (Bennett, 2008; Brown, 2014; Bull and Craig, 2006; Coaffee, 2013; Garland, 1996; 2001; 2014; Goddard, 2012; Hinds and Grabosky, 2010; Ilcan and

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<sup>12</sup> Individualisation as a technique for decentralising risk in order to shift the responsibility for identification and management to individuals within society (Beck, 2007; Garland, 2001; Muncie, 2006; Mythen and Walklate, 2006b; Mythen, Walklate and Kemshall, 2013) bears a close resemblance to the Foucauldian concept of ‘responsibilisation’. This is a process wherein the Government distances itself from traditional State functions and thereby liability for blame when responsibilities are not achieved by passing over responsibility for previous government functions to individuals or non-governmental actors (Garland, 2001; Raco, 2009).

Basok, 2004; Kelly, 2001; Kemshall, 2002; Muncie, 2006; Raco, 2009; Rose, 2000; Spalek, 2016; Skinns, 2003; Thomas, 2017).

### *The Co-Option of Welfare Actors in (Pre) Crime Risk Prevention*

The responsibility for reducing risks in relation to overall crime control, prevention and community safety, has been placed onto third sector organisations to a large extent in the UK through a combination of legislation and ‘marketisation’ of crime prevention initiatives and partnerships (Goddard, 2012). In the latter, the central and local government ‘outsourcing’ or ‘commissioning’ regimes fund non-government actors to deliver previously State delivered welfare, leisure or educational services. In the current context of austerity – reduced public spending, cuts to public services and dwindling resources for the third sector – this co-option process of non-governmental actors into governmental roles is often ‘sold’ to third sector and wider community organisations as a way to survive in this environment (ARKTOS, 2014; Dodd, 2015; Giroux, 2009; Goddard, 2012; HM Government, 2012; Thomas, 2017). This, in several respects, constitutes their ‘conditions of work’ (Lipsky, 1980: 27). Nevertheless, these processes of co-option are problematic. Primarily, ‘governmentalisation’ reconfigures non-traditional actors, many of whom may well have been advocates against government policy in the past, into the CJS to act as ‘agents of the state’ (Bauman, 2001; Dean, 1999; Faure Walker, 2017; Garland, 1996; 2001; 2014; Rose, 2000; Shehadeh, 2015). It also simultaneously facilitates an expansion of the State’s reach by enabling it to ‘act through’ a wider network of non-traditional actors, such as teachers, youth workers and the voluntary sector, as part of crime prediction initiatives, providing for a wider diffusion of risk work than was

previously possible (Bogomolov et al, 2014; Davies, 2011; Hannah-Moffat, 2018; Harcourt, 2007; Hood, Rothstein and Baldwin, 2001; Ilscan and Basok, 2010; Kelly, 2001; Mascini, Achterberg, and Houtman, 2013; Mossman, 1994; Zedner, 2006). The permeation of criminal justice policy specifically into the sphere of education, through the introduction of police officers to schools for example, has already led to accusations of government surveillance or ‘securitisation’ of children’s spaces (Casey, 2013; Corry, 2012; Durodie, 2016; Harrikari, 2013; O’Donnell, 2016; Waever, 1995). This increases the likelihood of children’s behaviour, for those over the age of criminal responsibility<sup>13</sup>, being criminalised. Against this background, the ‘pre-emptive turn’ (Walklate and Mythen, 2010) observed within counter-terrorism policy targeted at children signals an explicit expansion of securitisation into the ‘pre-crime’ territory. The PREVENT policy and legislation thus deliberately extends educational, health and youth practitioners’ roles and responsibilities to include ‘counter terror policing’ (Faure Walker, 2017; Giroux, 2009; Heath-Kelly, 2012; 2013; 2017; House of Commons Education Committee, 2015; Robinson, 2014).

There is an interesting dilemma within this. The shrinking of the State and responsibilisation of other sectors may seem an attractive and cheaper alternative for crime control in times of austerity (Barry, 2013; Bennett, 2008; Hinds and Grabosky, 2010; Howell, 2015; Kelly, 2001; Liebenberg, Ungar and Ikeda, 2015; Thomas, 2014; 2017). Yet, paradoxically, those sectors argue that in relation to counter-terrorism that they do not have the funding, resources or the expertise to be effective in the role, and thus the risks that are perceived to exist are likely to multiply (Breyer, 1993; Hood, Rothstein and Baldwin, 2001). It is debatable as to whether this process of shifting responsibility or blame for predicting and preventing crime onto others has been

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<sup>13</sup> In England and Wales this is 10 years old.

undertaken by the State to extend ‘governmental rationalities’ for its own sake (Gordon, 1991). Rather, this may be a process necessitated by the very nature of naming and then trying to regulate or control potential social problems with limited resources. Put bluntly, it may appear to be the cheapest or most politically feasible option.

Nonetheless, whether by accident or design, distributed risk work is an increasingly core feature of how children are governed. Given that, it is crucial to examine in detail how risk has manifested in both social policy affecting children and the accompanying methods and tools which have emerged in this domain for identifying, assessing and managing risk.

### *Risk-Work and Children: Policy and Methods*

The first Children’s Act in 1948 shifted the powers of intervention by the State into situations of child endangerment in the home previously led by law enforcement agencies to the remit of Local Authorities, a trend which continued with further legislation to develop social work roles and powers in local government (Bateman and Hazel, 2014; Goldson and Muncie, 2006). While the involvement and leadership of police in modern day Local Authority (LA) child protection practices is increasing today again (an issue that will be returned to in later chapters), contemporary child protection now falls under the umbrella term of ‘safeguarding’. Safeguarding describes both the legal responsibilities of the State to promote the welfare of children under the age of 18 and protect those who are deemed to be at risk of harm, as well as the LA arrangements for the dispensation of this duty (Section 11, Children’s Act, 2004). Statutory referral processes for actions to protect children within this framework can

be traced back to the Labour Government Green Paper ‘Every Child Matters’ (HM Government, 2003) and the resulting Children’s Act (2004) which established Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs). The LSCB, which later became Local Safeguarding Children and Adults Boards (LSCAB), was a multi-agency body which oversaw all LA safeguarding work and the effectiveness of single agency and multi-agency responses (Stroud and Warren-Adamson, 2013). LSCBs at the time of the research were legislatively required to have members from police, probation, NHS, Connexions, Youth Offending Teams, Governors of prisons/Young Offender Institutions, directors of Secure Training Centres and British Transport Police<sup>14</sup>. The LSCBs’ focus on child welfare is dominated by criminal justice agencies, but nevertheless, it represents an established framework for managing safeguarding issues for children of relatively long-standing.

Within this framework, harm is defined as “ill treatment or the impairment of health or development” encompassing “physical, intellectual, emotional or social harms” and “impairment suffered by hearing or seeing the ill-treatment of another” (Children’s Act, 1989; Section 31; Adoption and Children Act, 2002; Children’s Act, 2004; HM Government, 2015c: 19). The concept of ‘significant harm’ is the threshold stated for compulsory intervention by the State in a child’s life (Section 47, Children’s Act 1989); it differentiates a child ‘in need’ of support from a child in need of protection but is acknowledged to be vaguely defined and thus open to being differentially interpreted in practice and across localities<sup>15</sup> (Cradock, 2004; Jay, 2014;

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<sup>14</sup> Defined by Section 11 of the Children’s Act 2004. Following the 2016 review of LSCBs for Government (Wood, 2016) Section 16, of the Children and Social Work Act, 2017, was enacted to replace LSCBs with ‘safeguarding partners’ (the local authority, chief of police and clinical commissioning group) and any ‘relevant agencies that they consider appropriate’.

<sup>15</sup> A number of serious case reviews in Rotherham (Jay, 2014) and Haringey (Care Quality Commission, 2009) and investigations into child protection ‘failings’ (All Party Parliamentary Group for Children, 2017) have identified this threshold as problematic.

Kemshall, 2010; 2016; Marinetto, 2011; Munro, 2010; Parker, 2004; Parton, 2011; Sidebotham et al, 2016; Stanley, Guru and Coppock, 2017; Stanley, Guru and Gupta, 2018; Stanley, 2018; Turney et al, 2011). Among other problems, ‘significant harm’ is open to misinterpretation or misapplication and its accepted parameters may expand or contract depending on the abilities or resources of LA’s, reflecting problems with conceptions of risk more broadly as neither an absolute nor a neutral concept in child protection (Barlow, Fisher and Jones, 2012; Bernard and Harris, 2016; Case, 2006; 2007; Cradock, 2004; Kemshall, 2010; 2016; Parton, 2011; Pollack, 2010; Stanley, Guru and Coppock, 2017; Stanley, Guru and Gupta, 2018; Wollons, 1993). As Wollons puts it:

“[T]he concept of risk is a social construct that has changed over time, at various times including some children, while ignoring others, always reflecting our nation’s level of tolerance for criminal deviance, school failure, parental neglect, and the effects of poverty on children”  
(Wollons, 1993: xxi).

Notwithstanding the elastic definitions of risk and its associated terms, the complicated practices of defining, predicting, identifying and managing risk is now a central feature of social work practice and a salient dimension within youth justice and crime prevention initiatives to reduce the risk of offending in the UK (Kemshall, 2003; Kemshall and Pritchard, 1996; Muncie, 2008; O’Malley, 1992; Pritchard and Kemshall, 1997; Webster, MacDonald and Simpson, 2006). The concepts of risk, harm and need consistently punctuate both contemporary welfare and criminal justice legislation and policy in relation to children, yet they carry differing emphases and at

times differential meanings or definitions depending on the context (Case, 2006; Lubeck and Garrett, 1990; Parker, 2006).

Attempts to prevent the risk of ‘troubled’ children or those ‘beyond parental control’ from involvement in crime through welfare-based provision was a priority, albeit often problematically conceived, observed in UK welfare legislation since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>16</sup>. The departure from welfare-based interventions in child-focussed crime prevention, in favour of punishment was signalled by the legislation of the 1990’s, in particular the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (CDA98) and the Children’s Act 2004 (Muncie, 2008). Measures in the CDA98, along with subsequent amendments<sup>17</sup>, resulted in the effective criminalisation of children’s undesirable behaviour, now classed as ‘anti-social’ (ASB). In creating civil orders with criminal breaches, which exist in varying iterations to this day<sup>18</sup>, it brought significant numbers of children, particularly those from lower socio-economic groups, into the CJS for otherwise legal activities (Fyson and Yates, 2011; Jamieson, 2012; Kelly, 2012; Newburn, 2011; Tisdall, 2006; Yates and Jamieson, 2009). Muncie dubs this period of youth justice policy the ‘punitive turn’ (Muncie, 2008) but it also heralded a ‘preventive turn’ (Edwards and Hughes, 2009) as legislation was not only punitive in nature for children who had offended, but also for those who were targeted so as to prevent them from offending in the future.

In terms of crime prevention and reduction, the CDA98 established various multi-agency initiatives underpinned by the belief that making organisations work

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<sup>16</sup> The 1854 Reformatory School Act was concerned with ‘troubled children’. The 1933 Children and Young People’s Act created reformatory schools for children ‘beyond parental control’ and was later amended in 1969 to introduce supervision and care orders subjecting children to welfare-based interventions (Bateman and Hazel, 2014).

<sup>17</sup> These came within the Police Reform Act 2002; Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003; Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005; Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act, 2014.

<sup>18</sup> In England and Wales, ASB Orders have now been replaced with civil injunctions, Community Protection Notices (CPN) or Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBO).

together for crime prevention, rather than in silos, would not only improve their outcomes but also make them more cost efficient (Catalano, 2007). The creation of LA-led Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) and Community Safety Partnerships in terms of their roles and functions and despite the multi-agency rhetoric, was essentially an act of expansion of the CJS (Blyth and Solomon, 2008; Evans, 2011; Goldson, 2000; Kemshall, 2003; Muncie, 2008). This expansion transformed the responsibilities of non-CJS agencies in the processes of criminal justice, but it also extended the reach of State intervention into children's lives by tasking the newly formed multi-disciplinary YOTS with the identification and management of children aged 10 and over categorised as 'at risk of offending'.

CDA98 was the embodiment of the New Labour rhetoric of being 'tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime', a narrative continued by the following Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition and the present-day Conservative Government (Blair, 1993; Cameron, 2012). In principle, policies which aim to prevent child involvement in crime by addressing the claimed causal factors or 'risks' that structural issues such as poverty, racism, poor housing and lack of educational opportunity pose to their life chances is difficult to argue against. However, the ways in which such policies are operationalised on the ground matter a great deal. In contemporary policy and legislation<sup>19</sup>, crime prevention for children exists at the intersection of criminal justice and welfare (Kendrick, 2017). Under welfare or safeguarding provisions, all children under 18 should be protected from harm, but in the CJS children from the age of 10 can be held criminally liable for their actions. Combining welfare and criminal justice policy for children exposes those aged 10 to

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<sup>19</sup> This includes the current 'troubled families' initiatives which resulted from the 2011 unrest in the UK, where the early intervention notion is firmly situated (McKendrick and Finch, 2016).

18 to the danger of criminalisation instead of responding to their welfare needs (Jamieson, 2012).

In crime prevention practice, the characteristics or circumstances shaped by children's experiences of structural conditions are utilised for the purpose of identifying children 'at risk' of future harmful criminal, 'pre-criminal' or non-criminal activities, such as radicalisation. Thus, structural conditions have come to define the terms in which children are seen to pose a higher risk of offending and thus stand in need of greater 'protection' or control by CJS agencies (Ashworth and Zedner, 2014; Case, 2006; 2007; Case and Haines, 2009; 2010; 2015; Furlong and Cartmel, 2006; Haines and Case, 2008; Heath-Kelly, 2012; 2013; 2017; Jamieson, 2012; Kemshall, 2006).

### *Safeguarding Children from Risk or Punishing Risky Children?*

A great deal of research shows how successive Governments have pitted welfare against punishment in addressing the issue of children and crime control within the UK (Armstrong, 2004; 2006; Blyth and Solomon, 2008; Tisdall, 2006; Muncie, 2006; 2008; Goldson, 2011; Goldson and Muncie, 2006) but Sim describes the most recent attempts by government to avoid the risk of children being involved in future crimes or ASB, as involving the creation of a 'punishment-welfare machine' (Sim, 2014). Strategies such as those to 'safeguard' children from exploitation for organised crime, sex crimes or terrorism (HM Government, 2015c; 2018; 2018a; National Crime Agency; 2016), are argued to have created a machinery in which the two systems negatively fuse and the problems in each reinforce the problems in the other. The whole established here, unfortunately, is greater than the sum of the parts. Crucially,

this paradigm shift has facilitated a ‘widening of the net’ for children who have committed no crimes but can still routinely encounter CJS agencies by virtue of being considered as ‘at risk’ of committing imagined future crimes (Cohen, 1985). The argument is therefore strengthened that all ‘prevention’ strategies led by Government, by their very nature, are strategies for controlling futures through techniques of social control (Giddens, 1999; Pemberton, 2007).

In order to prevent unwanted occurrences of child involvement in crime, the codification of children as being ‘at risk’ requires tools and techniques for risk identification and management. The move to prioritise crime prevention in youth justice and child welfare to forecast and control risk has thus entailed a problematic mobilisation of increasingly popular crime prediction philosophies (Berk, 2008; 2009; 2012; Berk et al, 2009; Harcourt, 2007; Zedner, 2006; 2007; 2010). Discussions about crime control in this period of austerity have, in particular, come to be dominated by the development of measures for pre-empting and predicting crime. This ranges from the use of ‘Big Data’, that is , large scale datasets recording human behaviours and interactions in real-time, to identify and map criminogenic risk factors utilised for ‘predictive policing’ (Bogomolov et al, 2014; Chan and Bennett-Moses, 2016; Naugle and Bernard, 2017; Uchida, 2014; Vlahos, 2012; Williams, Burnap and Sloan, 2017), to the advancement of scientific research into genetic markers for identifying, for example, people at risk of committing sexual offences (Långström et al, 2015). For some, this may be viewed as progress in the area of criminogenic epidemiology, but for others this is a regressive shift reminiscent of eugenicist theories of criminality (Heath-Kelly, 2017; Lombroso, 1880; Mythen and Walklate, 2010; Sian, 2017; Zedner, 2007; 2010).

Critics refer to crime prediction as representing a ‘Sword of Damocles’<sup>20</sup> for current or ex-offenders, due to the problematic use of past criminal actions as a reliable guide to predict future offending (Sherman, 2011). The assumptions built into this process increase the likelihood of erroneously classifying people in a ‘positive’ category for risk, calculating and generating these ‘false positives’ because, within its frame, innocuous or expected behaviour will be viewed as abnormal or anomalous (Finucane et al, 2000a; Garland, 2003; 2008; Heath-Kelly, 2012; Hudson, 2003; Kasperson et al, 1988; Matza, 1969; Sian, 2017; Slovic, 1987, 2002; Slovic and Peters, 2006; Slovic et al, 2004; Slovic, Monahan and MacGregor, 2000). Nevertheless, despite these problems, the desire within contemporary crime prevention policy for new methods to assess the presence, levels and likelihood of both existing and future risk has spurred the development of endless numbers of tools to quantify, calculate, measure and manage perceived risks of offending and victimhood (Berk, 2008; 2009; 2012; Berk et al, 2009; Farrington, 1985; 1989; 1990; Feeley and Simon, 1992; Hawkins, Catalano and Miller, 1992; Loeber and Farrington, 2001; Petrosino, 2000; Sherman et al, 1997; Sherman, 2002).

The risks held to be facing children, as previously described, or to be posed by children’s behaviour, constitute particular interest in a context of this kind (Bateman, 2011; Case, 2006; 2007; Farrington, 1985; 1989; 1990; 2007; Farrington and Welsh, 2007; Füredi, 2009; Hawkins, Catalano and Miller, 1992; Loeber and Farrington, 2001). Offender risk assessment (RA) tools have been and are being used to provide, for instance, an ‘evidential basis’ for validating earlier and more far-reaching ‘pre-

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<sup>20</sup> This is a reference to the legend of Damocles, who was invited by King Dionysius to eat under a sword tied above his head by a single hair thus placing him under the perpetual threat of death. Sherman uses the phrase to describe the precarious betwixt and between status of offenders and the high likelihood of a negative outcome for them when made subject to assessments involving backward selection and forward prediction (2011).

crime' interventions with young offenders (Ashworth and Zedner, 2014; Armstrong, 2004; Bateman, 2011; Briggs, 2013; Case, 2006; 2007; Case and Haines, 2004; 2009; 2010; 2015; Farrington, 1989; 2007; HM Government 2015; 2015a; 2015b; 2015c; McCulloch and Pickering, 2009; McCulloch and Wilson, 2016; Sherman, 2011; Silver and Miller, 2002; Zedner, 2007; 2010). However, we have scant information on the way in which these tools are applied to children who have no history of offending behaviour. It is to the set of practices involved in that area of policy that this thesis directs its attention.

### 2.3.2 Risk Tools and Technologies: Predicting 'At-Risk Children'

Tools for risk work in the realms of welfare and criminal justice have been traditionally presented as 'neutral', 'value free' and 'objective', applied to all without bias or prejudice. Critical approaches, however, claim tools of this nature are developed to enable the ideological advancement of technologies to order human affairs and make populations 'thinkable' and 'measurable' for the purposes of governing them (Feeley and Simon, 1992; Foucault, 1991; Garland, 1996; 2001; Hacking, 1991; Hardy, 2014; Heyman, Henriksen and Maughan, 1998; Loader and Sparks, 2012; Maurutto and Hannah-Moffatt, 2006; Stenson, 2001). The risk theory literature shows, moreover, that risk is never neutral or individualistic in how it is conceptualised, defined or utilised; risk does not exist in a vacuum. It is, instead, a socio-political term, now in its contemporary form synonymous with danger. It invokes fear and anxiety and sounds 'social alarms' in the societal 'risk consciousness' (Beck, 1992; 1997; Füredi, 2009; Wilkinson, 2010: 25). Such is the heightened state of risk alertness and societal anxiety, many argue there is no longer a need for empirical evidence to show that risk is present and hazardous, for individuals to be willing to try to identify, manage and

prevent it (Alexander, 2008; Füredi, 2009; 2009a; 2016; Lash and Wynne, 1992; Tulloch and Lupton, 2003; Wilkinson, 2007; 2010). As a result of this transformation, risk as it is currently imagined has lent urgency to the search for more and more ways to control and prevent the possibility of incalculable risks in all aspects of everyday life. This tendency is particularly clear in the continued contradictory attempts to develop calculative tools which claim to identify and manage inestimable risk.

### *Identifying Possibilistic Risk*

If the conceptual definition of risk is a ‘structured uncertainty’, as previously described, then risk necessitates the application of a model of probabilistic reasoning (Hacking, 2015). Interventions with children deemed at risk of committing crimes at some point in the future are argued to have been empiricised through ‘actuarialism’ in the form of risk assessment (RA) tools (Aven, 2016; Briggs, 2013; Füredi, 2009; Hannah-Moffat, 2018; Knudsen, 2018; McCafferty, 2018; Silver and Miller, 2002). However, Füredi argues that these attempts to control the ‘unknown’ and ‘unknowable’, have resulted in RA as a socio-political practice going beyond probabilistic calculation to traffic in perceptions of *possibility* (Füredi, 2009). This, he maintains, widens the scope of the application of risk to large numbers of children (Richards, 2012). Troublingly, the subsequent actions necessitated by the identification of risk themselves carry the potential for serious negative consequences for both individual children and wider society.

This perspective only provides half the picture, however. Alongside the broader forces at work and their internal logics, there is the practical reality faced by pressurised services operating with reduced resources to meet increased demands on their services, whether due to increasing need or the widening of statutory

responsibilities through legislation. In these circumstances, the case for having a calculative process to produce an evidential basis for targeting support and resources to children perceived to be potentially in the most need has obvious appeal (Lipsky, 1980). In short, procedures make life easier, providing ready-made solutions to otherwise difficult problems.

New methods, processes and procedures thus find willing audiences in hard-pressed public services. Nor do they have to look far to find a ready supply of them. The quest for ‘evidence gathering’ to support the implementation of risk concepts in social policy for children in the UK is part of an overall shift towards ‘smarter’ Government, ‘evidence-based’ policy and decision-making, and greater openness and ‘transparency’ initiated by the then Labour Government’s *Modernising Government White Paper* (HM Government 1999: 16). The complicated work of defining, predicting, identifying and managing risk in attempts to prevent the risks of children’s offending or harm is argued to have already had a particular effect on practices in youth justice, social care and welfare (Corby, 1996; Goldson, 2010; 2011; Horlick-Jones, 2005; Kemshall, 1996; 1997; 2003; Kemshall and Pritchard, 1996; McCafferty, 2018; Muncie, 2008; Mythen, 2004; Mythen, Walklate and Kemshall, 2013; O’Malley, 1992; Peterson-Badali, Skilling and Haqanee, 2015; Webster, Macdonald and Simpson, 2006; Wilkinson, 2010). This shift has played a key role in the emergence and expansion across the sectors of actuarial-type risk assessment and management techniques (Briggs, 2013; Case, 2006; 2007; Case and Haines, 2009; 2010; Cradock, 2004; Creaney, 2012; 2013; Haines and Case, 2008; Harcourt, 2007; Kemshall, 2010; 2014; 2016; McNeill et al, 2012; McNeill, Bracken and Clarke, 2010; Muncie, 2006; Silver and Miller, 2002; Zedner, 2010; 2010a).

### *Predicting Future Criminality*

In welfare settings, child protection risk assessments have traditionally been used to determine whether a child is exposed to the imminent risk of danger or harm posed by the behaviour of others, usually adults (Case and Haines, 2015). In criminal justice, the ‘risk factor prevention paradigm’ (RFPP) has been operationalised in measurement tools to identify children labelled as ‘at risk’ of offending or re-offending, that is those who present a future risk to themselves, others and/or wider society. As previously described, high scores on the measures used are often connected to social environment characteristics which children have little control over (Armstrong, 2004; 2006; Armstrong et al, 2005; Case and Haines, 2009; 2010; Case, 2006; 2007; Creaney, 2012; 2013; Garside, 2006; Goddard, 2014; Goddard and Myers, 2017; Goldson and Muncie, 2006; 2012; Haines and Case, 2008; Kemshall et al, 2006; O’Mahony, 2009).

Overall, the new realm of ‘pre-crime intervention’ with children, under the umbrella term of safeguarding, represents a conglomeration of both welfare and criminal justice approaches to assessing risk. As a sub-field of crime prevention, it is relatively novel and has emerged with notably different purposes to policy in either area alone before, expanding the reach of interventions with previous offenders to those who have not offended before. Children who have not committed any crime, unlike most adults<sup>21</sup>, can be referred to programmes not only by CJS agencies who identify them to be ‘at risk of offending’, but also by teachers, parents or social workers via a process which calculates or assesses their likelihood of committing a crime at some point in the future (Armstrong, 2004; 2006; Barry, 2013; Case and Haines, 2010;

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<sup>21</sup>‘Vulnerable’ adults is a term defined as a person “Who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of disability, age or illness; and is or may be unable to take care of unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation” (HM Government, 1998). Vulnerable adults are included in safeguarding frameworks.

Creaney, 2012; 2013; Goldson and Muncie, 2006; Kelly, 2001; McKendrick and Finch, 2017; Phoenix and Kelly, 2013; Sherman, 2002). It is useful to think through this new evidence-based risk assessment process which articulates children as potential victims in need of safeguarding from being harmed by crime, in concrete terms.

Moving on to counter-terrorism specifically, the safeguarding approach to radicalisation involves a RA used by police-led CHANNEL Panels to identify individuals, mainly children, at risk of ‘vulnerability’ to radicalisation. The content of this assessment will be explored in a subsequent chapter, but the purpose of the process will be first unpacked here. Suffice to say at this point, that it is not an RA based on previous offending behaviour but rather on current or past experiences, behaviours or characteristics which are deemed to make a child vulnerable to this risk. It can be initiated by any person who has contact with a child which leads them to suspect the child may be vulnerable to the risk of ideological radicalisation, claimed as the forerunner to terrorist activity (HM Government, 2011; 2012; 2015; 2015a). The orientation of this assessment thus suggests that this is not a process aiming to predict a child’s vulnerability to future ‘victimhood’, an already challenging notion particularly in the areas of policing domestic violence (DV), hate crime and sexual exploitation (Brown, 2011; 2014; Chakraborti and Garland, 2012; Eaton and Holmes, 2017; Walklate, 2011). Rather, it is orientated to predict vulnerability to future criminality (Coppock and McGovern, 2014; McCulloch and Pickering, 2009; McCulloch and Wilson, 2016; Richards, 2012).

A framework such as CHANNEL stretches the concept of safeguarding significantly beyond its original definition and is problematic in its application to children. Childhood and adolescent socio-cultural and physical development are

claimed to be, by its very nature, characterised by various levels of risk-taking behaviours (Blakemore, Burnett and Dahl, 2010; Harrikari, 2013; Hendrick, 1997; James and James, 2004; Mounts, 2015; Scraton, 2004a; Smith, 2004; Steinberg, 2008).

### *Controlling Risky Children*

Children are traditionally seen through a patronising lens as needing both control and protection, particularly adolescents who are viewed as ‘not quite’ children but ‘not quite’ adults either (Knight, 2016). Universally judged to be incapable of discerning the consequences of their actions and to be without agency in decision making (Bancroft and Wilson, 2007; James and James, 2004; Parker, 2004), these children are more likely to be viewed simultaneously as prone to vulnerability, to being ‘taken advantage of’ by adults, and predisposed to ‘risky behaviours’ that may place themselves in danger or ‘get themselves into trouble’. Paradoxically, children are frequently made subject to an assessment of their risk due to the risk that adults pose to them. This has been observed as RA being orientated to potential victims as being or ‘carrying’ the risk (see Ribeaud and Eisner, 2010); a particularly age-specific and gendered phenomenon in institutional assessments of domestic violence or CSE (Creaney, 2012; Eaton and Holmes, 2017; Fitz-Gibbon et al, 2018; Gadd, Fox and Hale, 2014; Gielen et al, 2000; Hannah-Moffat and O’Malley, 2007; Hoyle, 2008; Walklate et al, 2019).

At the same time, for children of racial minority backgrounds, the racialised judgements of risk (Alexander, 2010; Berk, 2009; Bernard and Harris, 2016; Dannreuther and Kessler, 2017; Fassin, 2011; 2011a; Finucane et al, 2000a; Satterfield, Mertz and Slovic, 2004; Shepherd, Luebbers and Dolan, 2013; Sian, 2017; Small, 1994; Spivakovsky, 2013; Ward, 2012) can simultaneously infantilise and

adultify these children in practice. Infantilisation in the sense that these groups of children are determined less able to resist ‘risky’ decisions and thus need greater control. ‘Adultification’, wherein children are treated as adults in practice and often in policy, is a systemic issue argued to be prevalent in the experiences of black and minority ethnic (BME) children in education and criminal justice (Burton, 2007). Perceived as having more dangerous capabilities and intent but less control over themselves; adultified children are not allowed the opportunity of proportionate treatment based on age, with sometimes deadly consequence in policing and incarceration (Alexander, 2010; Burton, 2007; Coppock and McGovern, 2014; Dancy, 2014; Ferguson, 2001; Gilliam et al, 2016; Hall et al, 1978; McKendrick and Finch, 2016; Ward, 2012; 2016; Williams, 2015; Wollons, 1993; Yates and Jamieson, 2009).

Value-laden judgements about children’s experiences, behaviours or characteristics are therefore interposed by subjective interpretations of vulnerability, which, like risk, is a concept saturated with problematic assumptions and often patriarchal, gendered, heteronormative, cultural and age-specific pre-conceptions. It is a term used to encompass what an individual is doing, or not doing, being or not being, in order to make themselves ‘vulnerable’ to being harmed. Although conceptually unstable, it has uses, enabling a series of judgements from different authorities to coalesce in responsabilising the individual for their own situation (Brown, 2011; 2014; Chan and Rigakos, 2002; Creaney, 2012; Fitz-Gibbon et al, 2018; Hannah-Moffat and O’Malley, 2007; McCulloch et al, 2016; Walklate, 1999; Walklate and Mythen, 2011; Walklate et al, 2019). Additionally, a safeguarding RA which only identifies the presence of risk, lacks the counterbalance of identifying indications of its absence or, to use emerging clinical and psychological risk factor language, the presence of ‘resilience’ or protective factors (Bhui, Everitt and Jones, 2014; Bhui et al, 2012; Bhui

and Jones, 2017; De Vries Robbé et al, 2015; Euer et al, 2014; Hawkins, Catalano and Miller, 1992; Munro, 2010; Munton, Martin and Lorenc, 2011; Phillips, 2012; Rutter, 1987; Stanley, Guru and Coppock, 2017; Stanley, Guru and Gupta, 2018; Vien, 2010; Zolkoski and Bullock, 2012). If children are already seen as inherently ‘risky’ beings, this type of assessment represents what Goddard and Myers term ‘evidence-based oppression’ of already marginalised children and youth (Bannister and Kearns, 2013; Cradock, 2004; Goddard and Myers, 2016: 151; Van Eijk, 2017; Yates, 2016).

As problematic as the notion of resilience is (Brown, 2011; 2014; Coaffee, 2013; Howell, 2015; McElwee, 2007; Mitchell, 2011; Ungar, 2004; Walklate and Mythen, 2015), critiques of RA that make use of it as a form of practice raise important issues. Only measuring what is placing a child at risk as opposed to what is keeping them safe, *is* deeply problematic. It is an approach which generates false positives, and false negatives, through non-contextual or incomplete assessments which ultimately fail, in particular, to keep women and children safe (Fitz-Gibbon et al, 2018; Gielen et al, 2000; Hoyle, 2008; McCulloch et al, 2016; Stanko; 1997; Stanley and Guru, 2015; Walklate and Mythen, 2011; Walklate, 2011; Walklate et al, 2019). The purposes of RA tools are thus questionable to say the least.

The significant divergence observed in established and emerging RA tools to protect children from being affected by future crime stems from the basis upon which they are initiated. Some are instigated based on evidence of a child previously being a victim of a crime, for example domestic violence, trafficking, sexual violence (Eaton and Holmes, 2017, Fitz-Gibbon et al, 2018, McCulloch et al, 2016). However, by contrast, tools for predicting future criminality related to terrorism can be initiated by suspicion. The construction and the practical interpretation of tools for risk decision making, particularly through criminological inquiry, thus impose the personal risk

perceptions and judgements of individual assessors upon particular children (see Bittner, 1967; 1970; Bayley and Bittner, 1984; Cicourel, 1968; Cole et al, 2009; Egan et al, 2016; Finucane et al, 2000; 2000a; Gelsthorpe and Padfield, 2003; Goodwin, 1991; Hood, 1992; Hoyle, 2008; Kemshall, 2003; 2010; Luke and Cunneen, 1996; Mythen, Walklate and Khan, 2009; Spivakovsky, 2013).

At the stage of initiation of an RA for a subjectively defined and contested concept such as radicalisation, practitioners are operating in a situation with little or no indicative information about risk probability. In other words, 'nichtwissen' is observed here as both a structural and practical condition; it necessitates a 'felt assessment' (Walklate, 1999: 52) wherein the individual perception, imaginings or 'gut instinct' of risk take pre-eminence in the process of risk identification and decision making (Lacasse, 2017). However, problematic as this may be, as has been historically shown by earlier cited investigations into the often unrecorded, discretionary decisions and actions in welfare and criminal justice, this provides both an opportunity to offset prejudice or biases, as well as enact them. Under these conditions, practitioners may try to circumvent flaws in the system as much as enact them through risk work. The unpredictability such systems introduce should therefore be a major concern.

### 2.3.3 Risk Perception in Practice

Social and cultural psychological approaches to risk clearly place the cognitive processes for how people come to see, understand, judge and act upon risk, within the realm of human emotion, rather than in rationality or evidence-based calculation (Anderson, 2003; Finucane et al, 2004; Golub, 2017; Hogarth et al, 2011; Kahneman and Tversky, 1973; Kasperson et al, 1988; Lacasse, 2017; Lerner et al, 1993; Ropeik, 2010; Slovic, 1987; Slovic et al, 2002; Tversky, 1974). Seen from this perspective, the

processes of individual risk perception are not separate to the processes through which societies imagine risk but are shaped by them. Research into how risk is ‘socially amplified’ (Kasperson et al, 1988), in particular, connects with sociological and criminological studies to jointly demonstrate that individual perceptions of risk are informed to a significant degree by the popular imagination (Douglas, 1985; 1992; Lash, 2003; Renn et al, 1992; Urquhart et al, 2017).

As shown by research in this area, the cultural, political and media perpetuation of stereotypes of ‘risky’ groups or individuals is a ‘primary source of amplification’ in the ‘social amplification of risk frameworks’ (Kasperson et al, 1988; Renn et al, 1992; Ross, Mirowsky and Pribesh, 2001; Urquhart et al, 2017). In exploring how various actors contribute to and shape the structural conditions for biased and discriminatory risk perception in the societal ‘risk consciousness’ and individual perception, this research adds further layers to well-established understandings of ‘moral panics’ or ‘deviancy amplification’ around children, youth and BME communities in society via political and media discourse (Altheide, 2002; 2007; 2009; 2011; 2013; Baker, 2012; Baker, Gabrielatos and McEnery, 2013; Appadurai, 2006; Breen-Smyth, 2014; Cherney and Murphy, 2016; Cohen, 1972; 1985; 2011; Finucane et al, 2000a; Füredi, 2009; Garland, 2008; Gordon, 2018; Hall et al, 1978; Herman and Chomsky, 1994; Hillyard, 1993; Kasperson et al, 1988; Lean, 2012; Massumi, 1993; Mythen and Walklate, 2006a; Satterfield, Mertz and Slovic, 2004; Sian, Law and Sayyid, 2012; Silva, 2017; Slovic, 1987; 2002; Slovic et al, 2004; Slovic and Peters, 2006; Tulloch and Zinn, 2011; Ungar, 2001; Wilkinson, 2010; Williams, 2003; Williams, 2015).

The issues of bias and labelling will be returned to but, at this point, it is worth drawing out the fissures in risk understandings between the new policy domains focused on preventing child involvement in crime and academic work on risk

perception. Traditional social psychological research into risk perception reflects the empirical origins of risk theory and risk calculability – it analyses human attitude and behaviours through quantitative measurement and statistical inquiry based on, for instance, laboratory observations or surveys (Kahneman and Tversky, 1973; Tversky and Kahneman, 1974). Drawing our conclusions from studies conducted in these ways, work in this field suggests most people are ‘deficient’ in risk perception because they make ‘irrational assumptions’ when judging or determining risk (Tulloch and Lupton, 2003: 7; Tversky and Kahneman, 1974). Yet, risk, constituted in crime prevention as an unstructured uncertainty, requires actions to be taken by a variety of actors in a range of lay and ‘expert’ roles, where empirical evidence is not always available or even deemed to be essential. Risk as ‘feeling’ (Slovic, 2002: 425; Slovic et al, 2004; Walklate, 1999), the ‘non-rational’, unevidenced and untested assumptions and instincts, are a structural feature of risk-work under these conditions. The risk interpretations produced as part of that work will, therefore, have a tendency to reflect ‘socially amplified’ shared understandings and anxieties about phenomena like terrorism in specific ways (Knudsen, 2018; McCafferty, 2018; Strachan and Tallant, 1997). This is because they are a consequence of a multi-layered and symbiotic processes of ‘private’ and public reflexivity on risk (Lash and Wynne, 1992: 7), wherein cultural values and political preferences are deeply embedded and reinforced (Slovic 1987; 2000) to form the epistemological foundation of ‘expert’ decisions about risk in public life. In criminal justice and welfare risk work, ‘private reflexivity’ in particular is required for risk to be made visible through RA tools. That is, individual practitioners know their ‘expert’ judgements about risk must correspond to what ‘everyone knows’ risk looks like if they are to be taken seriously (Garfinkel, 1964; Goodwin, 1994; Sudnow, 1965). Scherer and Cho refer to this process wherein

individuals reinforce each other's risk perceptions as risk 'contagion' within a social network (Scherer and Cho, 2003).

In the context of crime or pre-crime prevention, the individual practitioner's perception of risk rather than evidence, is where the safeguarding RA procedure originates. It is an attempt to manage uncertainties through a specific set of practices that make it possible to navigate the dilemma of having to make decisions 'under ignorance' (Fox and Tversky, 1995; 1998; Slovic, 2002; Slovic, Monahan and MacGregor, 2000; Slovic and Peters, 2006). When a gap in information or partial knowledge exists about a hazard, 'satisficing' is a form of decision-making practice which involves the choice that evidence, rather than being compelling, can be a sufficient or good enough basis for action or inaction (Anderson, 2003; Simon, 1972). Engaging in satisficing in lieu of alternatives means practitioners must decide for themselves what will constitute an acceptable margin of 'tolerable harm' stemming from their choice to act or refrain from acting (Anderson, 2003; Ben-Haim, 2016). In relation to children in the crime prevention process, practitioners may well err on the side of tolerable harms of stigma (Gregory and Satterfield, 2002) and criminalisation. In other words, they may rather apply the label of being 'at risk' to a child than be left open to accusations of having failed to act<sup>22</sup>.

Once individuals and groups have been labelled 'risky' or 'at risk', the association is difficult to remove. This is due to structural conditions which reinforce, disseminate and even institutionalise the belief that the label is reasonable and warranted (Becker, 1963; Cohen, 1972; 1985; Eddo-Lodge, 2017; Hall, 1978; Hillyard, 1993; Hillyard and Tombs, 2004; Williams, 2015). Labelling processes, such

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<sup>22</sup> Following the inquiry into failures to safeguard children in Rotherham from grooming and sexual assault (Jay, 2014), Government announced a consultation in 2015 on making social workers criminally liable in cases where they 'fail to protect' children from sexual exploitation which was ultimately rejected (Stevenson, 2018)

as those which occur in the context of structural, systemic or ‘institutional’ racism (Carmichael, 1967; Macpherson, 1999), are simultaneously persuasive and generalised. They are also difficult to isolate because of how deeply they are embedded in wider bodies of locally situated practices and procedures, or praxis, through which judgements about risk are arrived at (see Cicourel, 1968; Goodwin, 1994; Garfinkel, 1964; 1967; 1986; Smith, 1978; Sudnow, 1965).

For practitioners doing risk work, the attribution of a risk label to children necessitates actions to report and manage the risk, which in practice requires children and their families to be monitored for a significant period of time (Coppock and McGovern, 2014; McKendrick and Finch, 2016; Pollack, 2010; Qureshi, 2018; Stanley and Guru, 2015; Stanley, Guru and Coppock, 2017; Stanley, Guru and Gupta, 2018). The label subsequently becomes difficult to remove due to continuously applied ‘risk’ titled processes and procedures. This, in turn, generates a form of ‘confirmation bias’ (Kahneman and Tversky, 1979) or self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton, 1948), where all actions and behaviours of individuals previously labelled as ‘risky’, come to be viewed through a lens that conceives them as evidence of risk (Heyman and Brown, 2013). This contributes to a form of ‘availability bias’ developing in seeing risk (Agans and Schaffer, 2010; Kasperson et al, 1988; Keren and Tiegens, 2004; Tversky and Kahneman, 1974) wherein events that are easy to recall or access, such as previous ‘risky’ incidents or information in the public domain which they interpret as risk indicators. Fanon analyses this phenomenon in terms of how it specifically perpetuates racial stereotypes:

“Sometimes people hold a core belief that is very strong. When they are presented with evidence that works against that belief, the new evidence

cannot be accepted. It would create a feeling that is extremely uncomfortable, called cognitive dissonance. And because it is so important to protect the core belief, they will rationalize, ignore and even deny anything that doesn't fit in with the core belief.” (Fanon, 1952: 158)

This form of bias plays a significant role in the theory of ‘implicit bias’, explained as the process by which societal attitudes or stereotypes unconsciously affect individuals’ understandings, actions and decisions which manifests in, specifically, gendered, racialised and age-specific ‘ways of seeing’ (Amodio and Devine, 2006; Cameron, Payne and Knobe, 2010; Carper, 1978; Devine, 2001; Dovidio et al, 1997; Fazio and Dunton, 1997; Finucane et al, 2000a; Geisinger, 2007; Gendler, 2011; Gilliam et al, 2016; Goodwin, 1994; Greenwald and Banaji, 1995; Greenwald and Krieger, 2006; Greenwald, McGhee and Schwartz, 1998; Greenwald et al, 2009; Hall et al, 2015; Nickerson, 1998; Oakley, 1998; Payne, Vuletich and Lundberg, 2017; Satterfield, Mertz and Slovic, 2004; Smith and Alpert, 2007; Sudnow, 1965; Swanson, Rudman and Greenwald, 2001; Van Eijk, 2017; Weyman and Barnett, 2016). However, as previously stated, if preferences or biases inform individual risk perceptions, they are part of mutually reinforcing processes which determine how risk is articulated, seen and managed in social policy settings (Carmichael, 1967; Macpherson, 1999; Payne, Vuletich and Lundberg, 2017; Van Eijk, 2017). The real-life manifestations of risk as it is framed in theory, particularly in circumstances of ‘not knowing’, are therefore revealed to be contingent upon the nature of their enactment within both the individual and institutional practices employed to assess and manage it.

#### 2.3.4 Summary

It is clear from the aetiology of the concept of children ‘at risk’ that the use of terminology and guiding principles are in constant states of change – including harm reduction, safeguarding, welfare, danger, correction or punishment. Risk is presented in policy and discourse as something that can cause harm to individual children and society, but well documented concerns surround how policy constructs and amplifies perception of risk and determines whether individuals are viewed as ‘at risk’ or posing risk. Risk emerged as a probabilistic notion in theory but the process of identifying risk in children through RA to implement social policy on crime prevention is statistical only in a secondary sense. Who determines risk, under what conditions and in response to what demands, matters. These socially, culturally, politically and organisationally shaped understandings of risk, in turn, provide the grounds for the development of methods for defining risk and positioning interventions to prevent risk, albeit problematically but understandably, to attempt to safeguard children from immediate harm or danger.

Particularly problematic aspects of risk in practice are the risk perception judgements and assumptions integral to risk work or policy operationalisation. It is evident that the tools for identifying risk represent a figurative ‘double edged sword’, in that diversion from crime may be achieved for some but it will also likely result in increased demands on already stretched services (Puffett, 2015; 2018) and increased risks, potential stigmatisation, negative welfare interventions and criminalisation for many children and their families pulled into the system’s gravitational field. In the ‘pre-crime space’, which radicalisation is said to inhabit, practitioners are expected to undertake the complex task of identifying and managing *vulnerability* to the risk of future danger, which invariably reduces the basis of action to suspicion and possibility.

The cultural conditions and social means by which knowledge of risk is specifically produced in such settings (Bourdieu, 1993; Slovic, 1987; Wilkinson, 2010) are hugely significant, especially for ‘socially amplified risks’. They are, however, under-researched. Risk work in circumstances of ‘not-knowing’ involves making individual ‘private reflexivity’ – the personal perceptions, identification, judgements and assessments of risk and their moral and ethical biases – a public exercise not just because it is undertaken publicly but also because it is undertaken on behalf of the public. Understandings these practices are, therefore, crucial to making the current system accountable (Dekker, 2007).

## 2.4 Conclusion

Whether we look at how it is framed in theory, understood or constructed in our social imagination, or narrated within social policy and measured in society, risk is socially, culturally and politically made. It is also permeated with problematic dynamics of power and privilege that have the potential to not only reinforce but also produce social inequalities. Its scope has been extended far beyond its original orientation and purpose, becoming not just a way to manage structured uncertainty and to predict good and bad possibilities, but to manage the genuinely uncertain, cast as the intrinsically ‘bad’. In its contemporary form, risk is a concept operating outside of its proper domain of application, especially when applied to circumstances of ‘not-knowing’, where risk is neither calculable or measurable yet still believed to be preventable. In Gross’s appropriation of Beck’s term, risk is a ‘zombie’ category.

‘Terrorism’, with its specific features of unanticipated surprise and harm, does not seem conducive to probability calculation. Nonetheless, risk has been tethered to it as a ‘simplifying heuristic’ (Heyman, Henriksen and Maughan, 1998) to guide State actions to control it. Another target for this zombie categorisation is children. A group

arguably expected and encouraged to take risks to develop their knowledge and sense of self, identity and politics; but whose thinking and activities society seems perpetually anxious and even fearful about. In the sphere of crime prevention, risk and its associated tools and technologies have given legitimacy to interventions in the lives of children who have not committed any crimes; interventions which would otherwise be viewed as an incursion of rights (Achiume, 2018; Case and Haines, 2015; Daly, 2013; Gearty, 2005; Kemshall, 2008; Kiai, 2017; Kundnani and Hayes, 2018; Liberty, 2017; Mills, 2003; Smith, 2004).

In the last 20 years, actors from non-CJS agencies have been increasingly co-opted into the realm of predicting and preventing children's risk of involvement in crimes in the UK. One of the main tools for co-option has been to mandate particular actions through the legislative frameworks of policy, statute and regulation (Bergkamp, 2017; Dafnos, 2014; Mythen and Walklate, 2006b; 2010; Mythen, Walklate and Kemshall, 2013). Practitioners on the frontline of children's services must operationalise policy and legislation irrespective of their origins and orientation. However, the orientation towards applying crime prediction concepts in a safeguarding context presents ethical dilemmas for welfare-focussed practitioners; the practical resolutions for which need to be explored. It is, however, unlikely that Government is conscious in its exercise of social control. It is more likely that Government believe this to be an efficient or cost-effective response to situations they fear, that appear beyond their control. Nevertheless, it is worth considering that Weber believed that the more rational society strives to become, the more we try to count, govern and legislate, the less capable we are of dealing with the things that can't be anticipated – 'the irrational force of life' (in Wilkinson 2010: 30). The next Chapter therefore explores

how risk has been legislatively made in relation to CR in order to gauge how far this process of rationalisation has spread.

### 3. LEGISLATING RISK: The Making of the Risk of Childhood Radicalisation (CR)

#### 3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, risk was shown to have come to be problematically and often contradictorily framed in social policy, developing conceptually into something that is simultaneously undesirable due to its wild uncertainties, but also believed to be quantifiable, identifiable, predictable, and preventable. A theoretically challenging ‘zombie’ category, one increasingly central to Government attempts to be seen to be controlling undesirable actions or behaviours, it operates by categorising threats to society and making others responsible for the imagined future dangers they pose.

In the domain of UK crime prevention specifically, the task of bringing order to the disorderly has been outsourced to non-traditional criminal justice actors, such as the third sector, by a raft of Government policy, legislative, regulatory and funding frameworks. The expansion of the CJS’s reach into the welfare and education of children is concerning, as are the methods for doing so. Particularly problematic are the RA tools which aim to identify and enumerate children ‘at risk of offending’ by applying pathologising theories of crime prediction.

The responsibility to predict children’s vulnerability to the risk of future involvement in crime, namely for terrorism, through safeguarding risk-work further extends this apparatus. In this ‘pre-crime’ space, practitioners must forecast children’s involvement in an area of crime characterised by its unknowability. ‘Not knowing’, an integral feature of reflexive modernisation diagnosed by Beck in *The Risk Society*, describes a set of conditions within which lay people and experts make decisions and act in the absence of certainty to try and control or avoid ‘catastrophe’. In practice, this

elevates the role and import of individual risk perception, or ‘private reflexivity’, in identifying and categorising children as ‘at risk’ (Beck, Bonss and Lau, 2003; Lash, 2003).

Against that background, this chapter examines how the particular risk of CR has been assembled through policy and legislation. As Hacking points out in his work (Hacking, 1988; 1991; 1996; 1999), understanding how the risk of something like CR has been legislatively ‘made’ over time requires an investigation of the specific elements that ‘make up’ its constituent parts – a genealogical approach. As an exemplar of that approach in action, Hacking’s description of ‘kind-making’, the practices through which the taken-for-granted aspects of what makes something the thing it is are formed (Hacking, 1999), is particularly useful for an analysis of the rapidly developing forms of ‘kind-making’ associated with CR. Following Hacking, that analysis opens up socio-political frameworks – in this case the PREVENT Duty – by unpacking what goes into them.

The Duty ‘to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism’ was the first legal duty mandating monitoring and reporting of children for *suspicions* of vulnerability of risk to a specific safeguarding harm, namely radicalisation. The Duty was directly placed upon ‘specified authorities’ – organisations within the public sector fields of health, education, housing and LA’s – but also extends to third sector organisations (community, charity and voluntary sector agencies) commissioned to deliver services on behalf of those authorities. That the Duty has come at a time of an austerity-driven reduction of resources in public services makes for challenging ‘conditions of work’ (Lipsky, 1980: 27), with a forecast 24% reduction in central government funding by 2019/20 for LA’s and the children’s

services they traditionally commission<sup>23</sup> (All Party Parliamentary Group for Children, 2017; Local Government Association, 2015). Immediately following enactment, compliance with the Duty became a key part of the inspection regime for educational services via OFSTED (the UK Office for Standards in Education) as part of the vaguely articulated conception of taking actions to promote ‘Fundamental British Values’ (FBV) (Wolton, 2017). Failure to comply can determine a pass or fail, with economic consequences for organisations and individuals alike. Statutory penalties were introduced within the legislation for those who did not fulfil the Duty, but what it means to be ‘compliant’ and the actions to be taken against organisations or individuals who are not, remain unclear to this day. These conditions combine the fear of being held legally responsible if something ‘goes wrong’, with the austerity-driven fear of losing one’s job (McCulloch et al, 2016; McGovern, 2016). This could motivate practitioners to identify more children as potentially at risk of CR than they would under more benign conditions of work.

The RA traditions across safeguarding and crime control are, however as previously described, characterised by evidence-based processes and procedures. Indeed, the guidance for the Duty, in line with the ‘Modernising Government’ agenda, implies the making of PREVENT policy and legislation, and its requisite actions, to be ‘evidence-based’ (Mythen, Walklate and Peatfield, 2017). It advocates a ‘risk-based approach’ (HM Government, 2015a: 3), stating that those who are subject to the Duty should have an awareness and understanding of the risk in their geographical area or organisation, because no one and nowhere is deemed to be ‘risk-free’. This presupposes the adoption of an empirical approach to quantifying what the risk is, who

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<sup>23</sup> Mandating reporting of suspicions of harm is questionable in many ways not least because it increases the strains and pressures on already stretched welfare services, according to Mathews, Lee and Norman of up to three times the level previously experienced (2016: 74).

poses it, how it can be effectively prevented and by whom. Through an exploration of the theoretical foundations of the contested concepts of radicalisation, pre-crime and safeguarding that have been mobilised, overlapped and applied to children within PREVENT policy and legislation, this will be shown to be far from the case when it comes to how the risk of CR has been assembled. As will become abundantly clear, despite the rhetoric, PREVENT is not evidence-based policy but something quite different.

### 3.2 PREVENT Policy and Legislation – Background and Overview

Actions to ‘protect’, ‘pursue’, ‘prepare’ for and ‘prevent’ the ‘known’ threats to the UK are incorporated into counter terrorism and extremism strategies (HM Government, 2006; 2008; 2011; 2012; 2015; 2015b). ‘Pursue’ is the stream of work under which people who have committed or are deemed likely to commit a criminal ‘terrorist’ act imminently are pursued by police and intelligence services. Since the 9/11 attacks on USA, however, there has been a consistent global focus on not only pursuing terrorist individuals and organisations but preventing the spread of terrorist ideology through what are referred to as ‘processes of radicalisation’. PREVENT (HM Government, 2006; 2008; 2011; 2011a; 2011b; 2011c; 2012; 2015; 2015a; 2015b; 2015c) thus aims to intervene earlier than ‘Pursue’ through the work of CHANNEL projects for de-radicalisation.

In its contemporary form, framing PREVENT as ‘safeguarding’ individuals suspected to be vulnerable to the risk of being radicalised to support extremist ideology or commit future acts of terrorism, is a clear attempt to distinguish these two work strands (HM Government, 2012; 2015). PREVENT as a safeguarding framework, requiring ‘vulnerable’ people to be protected from being ‘groomed’ for involvement

in terrorism, is said to have its origins in the case of Mohammed Saeed Alim,<sup>24</sup> according to the Home Office Workshop to Raise Awareness of PREVENT (WRAP)<sup>25</sup>. The resultant interweaving of welfare policy (safeguarding) with criminal justice and security is a unique characteristic of PREVENT.

The big problem, however, as previously discussed, is that both its main targets, terrorism and radicalisation, are notoriously difficult to define. The legal definition of terrorism (Terrorism Act, 2000) positions religious and racial causes as inter-related within the character of ‘terrorism’, implying an overlap with racial and religious crime that places terrorism on the conceptual continuum of ‘hate crime’<sup>26</sup>. Yet, there are layers of confusion within the tapestry of hate crime and counter-terrorism legislation and policy. ‘Hate’ is presented as a core component of the legal definition of terrorist actions but conversely there is no single coherent government narrative on hate crime as a manifestation of ‘terrorist’ ideology. Nor are hate crime statistics referred to in the rationale for counter-terrorism activities. The points of connection are now just

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<sup>24</sup> Formerly known as Nicky Reilly, Alim was a 22-year-old man with learning disabilities who newly converted to Islam before attempting a bomb attack in Exeter in 2008, in which he was the only person injured. Alim’s case coincided with the publication of the Government PREVENT Strategy Guide for Local Partners in England, which highlighted the work that PREVENT had commissioned in the previous year to educate and ‘disrupt’ existing and potential supporters of ‘terrorism and violent extremism’ and detailed CHANNEL project work to support ‘vulnerable individuals’ (HM Government 2008: 28). The prosecution of Alim revealed how he had been befriended and ‘groomed’ by others to commit the offence. Nonetheless, he was given a life sentence with a minimum term of 18 years to serve at HMP Manchester, a category A prison for ‘highly dangerous offenders’ (Allely, 2016). He was discovered dead here in October 2016. The inquest into his death found that whilst Alim had committed suicide, he had not intended to kill himself but was acting on impulse related to his learning disability (BBC, 2018). This raises questions about how the criminal justice system responds to vulnerability.

<sup>25</sup> The session observed was in Liverpool, see Chapter 4. The profiles of Alim, alongside other convicted ‘terrorist’ offenders (Adebolajo, Adebawale and the child planning the ANZAC attacks in 2014) were presented as evidence of the need for practitioners to act. In Alim’s case, it was claimed his ‘vulnerability’ had been identified through his contact with a variety of organisations, in particular a school, youth club and college, but no intervention or an inadequate intervention had taken place. This is used to instruct practitioners on their duties and illustrate what they should do. That is, working with children and young people they can and should make interventions to avoid ‘vulnerable’ individuals from being exposed to the risk of committing such crimes.

<sup>26</sup> This orientation within UK hate crime policies follows the logic of Gordon Allport’s research in which he devised a scale to measure the manifestation of prejudice within society post-World War II. He identified a range of activity that increased in severity from anti-locution, speaking against specific identity groups, to extermination at its apex (Allport, 1954).

separately referenced between hate and terrorism in contemporary policy<sup>27</sup>, with violent and non-violent extremism (NVE) described in ways that were not covered by the preceding legal definition of terrorism 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... [or engaging in] calls for the death of members of our armed forces’ (HM Government, 2015: 2).

The hate crime concept, itself problematic and contested (Chakraborti, 2010; Chakraborti and Garland, 2009; 2012; Dixon and Gadd, 2006; Gadd and Dixon, 2011; Gadd, Dixon and Jefferson, 2009; Gerstensfeld, 2004; Hall, 2005; Jacobs and Potter, 1998; Mason-Bish, 2013; Netto and Abazie, 2013; Perry, 2001; 2009; Perry, 2008; Petrosino, 1999; Ray and Smith, 2001), is therefore shown to be simultaneously conceptually leveraged and conceptually distanced from the notion of the type of terrorism affecting the UK. Further evidence of this, detailed in later discussion, includes minimising the risk presented by far-right compared to ‘Islamist’ activity and identifying the experience of hate crime as a potential ‘risk factor’ for radicalisation.

The nebulous process of ‘radicalisation’, believed to be the preliminary stage to engagement in terrorist activity (Archetti, 2010; 2015; HM Government, 2008; 2011; 2011a; 2011b; 2012; 2015; 2015; 2015a; 2015b; 2015c; Silber and Bhatt, 2007; Staniforth, 2009; Stevens and Neumann, 2009), is described as ‘a process not an event’ wherein people are encouraged ‘to support terrorism and then engage in terrorism

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<sup>27</sup> For example, the 2016 Government ‘Action Against Hate’ plan for tackling hate crime proposes future research as part of ‘building our understanding of hate crime’ by the Extremism Analysis Unit, particularly on cross-European Neo Nazi networks (HM Government, 2016: 36).

related activity’ (HM Government, 2011; 2012). By arguing that to ‘reduce the risk from terrorism, we need not only to stop terrorist attacks but also to prevent people becoming terrorists’ (HM Government, 2012: 3), the Government implies radicalisation is a *sequential* process that offers opportunities for intervention to stop a person from engaging in ‘terrorist’ activity. This conceptualisation of radicalisation and its theoretical underpinnings, as with the parent concepts of ‘terrorism’ and ‘extremism’, is problematic and contested for several reasons that will be returned to later in the chapter. However, it is the foundational belief that the ‘radicalisation’ of people, children in particular, is preventable that gives shape to legislative interventions designed to ensure the prevention of the ‘risk of radicalisation’.

The Counter Terrorism and Security Bill (Parliament, 2014) was ‘fast-tracked’<sup>28</sup> in the same year that a parliamentary inquiry concluded that, despite the perpetrators featuring in previous counter terrorism investigations, the murder of Fusilier Lee Rigby in a terrorist attack in London could not have been prevented (Intelligence and Security Committee, 2014). Even though their own investigation questioned the efficacy of the actions it now sought to mandate for the prevention of terrorist acts, the enactment of the Bill almost immediately after the Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris in January 2015 was the most significant part of the Government response to the challenge of preventing ‘homegrown extremism’ (Johnson, 2014). In the legislation, hotly disputed theories of pre-crime prevention and radicalisation were embedded, in an unprecedented way, in a statute framed as safeguarding in Part 5 of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (CTSA) – ‘Risk of Being Drawn into Terrorism’. It was Section 26 of this part of the CTSA which introduced the ‘risk based’ duty to have ‘due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into

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<sup>28</sup> This took only four months from first hearing in November 2014 to the Act receiving Royal Assent in February 2015.

terrorism'. This is known as the PREVENT Duty (from herein referred to as *the Duty*), which, alongside the associated frameworks, processes and procedures for risk assessment (RA), requires implementation at a local level across England and Wales by public bodies to identify 'vulnerability to the risk of radicalisation' in children and 'vulnerable adults'<sup>29</sup>.

The safeguarding arrangements and tools for the risk-work required by PREVENT will be discussed in detail later in this chapter, but at this point it should be observed that they are highly disputed (see Birt, 2016; Bolloten, 2015; Coppock and McGovern, 2014; Costanza, 2015; Dudenhoefer, 2018; Heath-Kelly, 2013; 2017; Knudsen, 2018; Kundnani, 2014; 2015; Qureshi, 2016; 2018; Sian, 2017; Stanley, Guru and Coppock, 2017).

From 2008 to 2015, CHANNEL multi-agency Panels had operated to assess the risk of radicalisation in referred cases of individuals in 'PREVENT Priority' areas only. These are geographical policing and LA areas judged by the Home Office to present a higher likelihood of people being radicalised and consequently receive funding and support for dedicated staff and projects. Initially, these judgements were controversially based upon the size and type of Muslim communities within the area (Birt, 2009; Kundnani, 2009; Pantazis and Pemberton, 2009; Thomas, 2014). Lord Carlile's Report to the Home Secretary of Independent Oversight of PREVENT Review and Strategy (HM Government, 2011a) acknowledged the divisive character of such targeting, criticising the funding of programmes in communities exclusively to address 'Islamism' and claiming there was work to be done on expanding the orientation towards other forms of extremism. Carlile's report spurred the Government

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<sup>29</sup> The PREVENT Duty guidance for England and Wales is the part of the legislation that this thesis is concerned with, but it should be acknowledged that, somewhat controversially, a separate version of the Duty Guidance applies to Scotland and that the legislation does not apply to Northern Ireland at all (Versi, 2017).

to make the regime more general in scope, but Priority Areas continue to exist and the rationale for assignation is not published (Norris, 2015).

Legislating for PREVENT thus moved the previously voluntary and evidence-based desire, albeit flawed, to protect and safeguard people from radicalisation onto a statutory and legal footing, obliging all specified authorities to engage with it, irrespective of any evidence of local need. The Duty moved pre-existing non-statutory CHANNEL Panels onto a statutory footing similar to that of LSCB for all Local Authorities in England and Wales, but to be led by police. The CHANNEL Duty guidance for the Panel's RA procedure (the Vulnerability Assessment Framework) was introduced as a statutory document to direct the Panels' risk judgements and deliberations (HM Government, 2015a). The Panels can only assess cases referred to them by a chief officer of police, but the police are dependent on individuals identifying and referring children suspected of being vulnerable. The cumulative impact of the overlapping and mutually enforcing Duties of Safeguarding and PREVENT, with its associated statutory police-led Panels, make it likely that PREVENT is seen, in problematic ways, as mandatory reporting in all but name (Achiume, 2018; Stanley, Guru and Coppock, 2017).

The evolution of PREVENT from a crime prevention initiative to a pre-crime 'safeguarding' obligation is thus easy to chart. PREVENT, in its pre-2011 form, aimed to stop the involvement of vulnerable people of all ages, arguably already 'radicalised' and subscribed to ideological groups or organisations, in criminal acts of terrorism (HM Government, 2006; 2008). Organisations are now required to safeguard children and 'vulnerable adults' from vulnerability to the risk of being radicalised, turning PREVENT into an instrument for pre-crime intervention (HM Government, 2011; 2011b; 2012; 2015; 2015a; 2015b; 2015c). Making organisations legally responsible

for the prevention of, or indeed the failure to prevent<sup>30</sup>, people being drawn into terrorism, is controversial for many reasons. For one thing, radicalisation is not a crime. However, because it is presented as part of *progression* towards crime, it has become permissible to rebrand it as ‘pre-crime’ and make it into a target for prediction and intervention. To fulfil this pre-crime preventative responsibility, the PREVENT Duty Guidance sets out a framework for implementing a ‘risk-based approach’ to the identification of ‘vulnerability to the risk of radicalisation’ (HM Government, 2015: 3) and articulates this as part of the ‘safeguarding children’ legislative framework – an unstable coupling to be discussed in later sections and chapters. Introducing legislation of this kind needed to be justified and the Government kept returning to their ‘evidence base’ as part of that. Given its importance, the empirical evidence said to necessitate a policy intervention with such reach and impact on the lives of children is the focus of the discussion in the following section.

### 3.3 The CR Risk Assemblage

The PREVENT legislative duty implies that the risk of CR is knowable, identifiable and measurable and, as such, practitioners can be justifiably tasked with preventing it. Legislative and policy approaches to risk by the State are argued to have the unintended or unanticipated production of different risks elsewhere, such as the risk of discrimination or the risk of proliferating dangerous situations (Breyer, 1993; Hood, Rothstein and Baldwin, 2001; Rittel and Webber, 1973). It is not possible to know what outcomes PREVENT effects, however, by reading the legislation. This is

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<sup>30</sup> The ramifications for individual practitioners who fail to comply with the PREVENT Duty is not stated and there is no criminal offence, as yet, for those who fail to safeguard children from CR. Nonetheless, as is true under the pre-existing safeguarding duty as well, it is assumed that individuals and their employers may be subject to serious case review and disciplinary proceedings.

because, as written into policy and law, PREVENT operates through interpretations, decisions and judgements about how to implement it in practice by those tasked with the Duty.

The PREVENT policy and legislative risk framework is predicated on the guiding assumption that children, especially those from certain groups, are susceptible to radicalisation and therefore constitute more of a risk to society than others. This has the potential to enact a ‘negative labelling’ (Becker, 1963) of cultural and religious identities and practices through the processes PREVENT establishes for identifying signs of CR. Given PREVENT’s discriminatory potential, it is important to further explore how various concepts are brought together in the way CR is legislatively made to guide those interpretations, decisions and judgements.

An exploration of the legislative assemblage which defines the risk of CR, makes it clear that the orientation to children is unreliably founded and fundamentally biased and reveals the use of different and often paradoxical parts of legislative and practical understanding in patching the Duty together. The knowledges which are leveraged and mobilised within PREVENT, particularly the crucial foundational concepts of radicalisation, pre-crime and safeguarding, to fill the space of the unknown notion of CR are discussed in what follows.

### 3.3.1 Children and a Proclivity for Terrorism?

In his regular newspaper column in 2014, Boris Johnson made the following statement:

“The law should obviously treat radicalisation as a form of child abuse. It is the strong view of many of those involved in counter-terrorism that there should be a clearer legal position, so that those children who are being turned into potential killers or suicide bombers can be removed into care –

for their own safety and for the safety of the public.” (Johnson, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2014)

The case for safeguarding children from travelling abroad to support what the Government deems to be terrorist organisations or regimes (HM Government, 2015; 2015c; Home Affairs Committee, 2012), develops tangentially from Johnson’s declared position in his newspaper column headed ‘The children taught at home about murder and bombings’ (Johnson, 2014). For Johnson, ‘radicalisation is a form of child abuse’ likely to be perpetrated by family members, over which ‘the authorities must have the power to intervene’ (ibid). Johnson’s statement clearly reflected Government thinking because what it said had to happen, did subsequently happen. For instance, the Children and Family Courts Advice and Support Service (CAFCASS) states that CR is now monitored as a distinct category in child protection procedures as a consequence of the PREVENT Duty (CAFCASS, 2016). The thinking Johnson helped articulate, thinking shared by many in Government, the security establishment and figures on both the right and left of British politics, has therefore proven consequential. There are several reasons as to why.

Among other things, Johnson’s symbolically timely claim that the main challenge in CR is ‘Islamic radicalisation’ of possibly ‘hundreds of children’, especially younger siblings of known terrorists, found support in alleged occurrences reported in the media of children ‘groomed’ online and later killed in Islamic State (referred to over time as IS, ISIS or Daesh) conflict areas<sup>31</sup>. However, while the claim

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<sup>31</sup> These included the cases of Talha Asmal, a West Yorkshire 17-year-old who died in Iraq and was reported to be ‘Britain’s youngest ever suicide bomber’; the ‘teenage terrorist’ jailed for planning Anzac bombings; the so-called ‘jihadi brides’, Amira Abase, Shemima Begum and Kadiza Sultana, the London 15 and 16-year-olds believed to have travelled to marry ISIS fighters in Syria; and Isa Dare the four-year old British child known as ‘Jihadi Junior’ who was suspected of being part of ISIS execution

and the reporting reinforced one another, the available data is much more equivocal.<sup>32</sup> When it comes to determining which British children have travelled abroad to support terrorism and in what numbers, the evidence problematically only focusses on Muslim children – allowing for no comparative conclusions to be drawn about any other ‘groups’ – and shows cases to be small in number, questionably defined and often contested (BBC, 2017). More recent cases have been claimed to retrospectively justify the State’s framing of CR as child abuse (Dryden, 2017; Stanley and Guru, 2015), but there was no specific evidence of the extent of the danger of CR at the time of Johnson’s statement and the move to put the PREVENT Duty on the statutes, and there remains none now.

Timelines are nonetheless important here, particularly as the need to broaden PREVENT had been recognised in Government circles before 2014. The turn to children as a population at risk of CR can be observed in PREVENT policy and the commissioning of PREVENT youth work activities from 2008 onwards, under the then Labour government, and persisted in the policy and strategy of subsequent changes of government, including guidance for education and children’s services (HM Government, 2011) as well as local CHANNEL partnerships (HM Government, 2012), through to the present day incarnation of CR in PREVENT legislation (Counter Terrorism and Security Act, 2015; HM Government, 2015; 2015b; 2015c).

CR was firmly embedded in the Counter Terrorism and Security Bill in time for its first reading in November 2014<sup>33</sup> and was also the established focus of

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videos. All provoked discussion of what should be done to stop British children’s involvement in terrorism overseas (see BBC, 2015; 2017; Malik and Siddique, 2015; Saltman and Russell, 2014; Sherlock, Daunt and Tarling, 2015; Thomas et al, 2017)

<sup>32</sup> The BBC online publication ‘Who are Britain’s Jihadists?’ is drawn not only from BBC news reports but also open source material, such as Twitter and Facebook. The latter therefore being open to subjective interpretation and not necessarily reliable. BBC states that, up to 2017, 850 people have travelled to join ISIS, primarily in Syria, and that nine males and one female aged 18 or under have been killed in this conflict area (BBC, 2017).

‘Operation Trojan Horse’ – a government investigation into ultimately unfounded allegations of extremist teachings and activities in West Midland Muslim faith schools, led by a former counter-terrorism chief of police (Mogra, 2016). Johnson may have been the first politician, then, to publicly put forward the claim that the risk of CR was an emergent child abuse category but the nature of both the developing PREVENT legislation and the composition of the Trojan Horse investigation team signals a trend already underway of addressing controversial issues of crime and security by clothing it in the more palatable garb of child protection or safeguarding.

Keeping children safe from the harms that could be perpetrated against them by family or strangers is not controversial, nor unusual practice. Yet, the pre-crime framed discussions of CR cast children as susceptible, or vulnerable, to committing a terrorist crime based on the alleged involvement of the adults in their lives in terrorism, not because they were vulnerable to becoming victims of child abuse (Birt, 2016; Bolloten, 2016; HM Government, 2008; 2011; 2011b; 2012; 2015; Hughes, 2009; Johnson, 2014; Lowndes and Thorp, 2010; Mythen, Walklate and Khan, 2013). The justification for this major shift in policy was the claimed prevalence of CR; however, neither the vanishingly small number of children with familial relations to terrorist actors overseas, nor the even smaller figure of children committing domestic terror-related offences, constitute good evidence for this claim<sup>34</sup>. A process which labels children as both ‘at risk’ and ‘risky’ not based on their own actions but based on the actions of adults is, *prima facie*, a grossly unfair form of ‘guilt by association’. Nonetheless, unfair treatment is precisely what PREVENT institutionalises.

Under PREVENT guidelines, the behaviours or actions of adults – whether as suspected recruiters or ‘groomers’, as family members active in terrorist networks or

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<sup>34</sup> See CAFCASS, 2016 and Politowski, 2016

as ‘returnees’ who have been involved in overseas terrorist related conflict – place a child under suspicion of CR. This is a dubious basis for intervening in children’s lives, or even, as in the case of Jojo Dixon, potentially ending them<sup>35</sup>. The degree of agency a child has in controlling their proximity to the criminal actions of others, later discussed in depth vis-a-vis radicalisation and pre-crime theories, ought to be an important and obvious consideration in how they are treated – it is an entirely marginal concern within PREVENT. The distinctions introduced by PREVENT as a safeguarding initiative – between children as conscious actors in criminal actions and children being exploited for the criminal, sexual or political gains of others – are undoubtedly eroded. In practice, all are treated in the same problematic way with policy and legislation focused on the former category rather than the latter. Via the frameworks it has put in place, the Government thus treats children as more likely to support terrorism than others. It is the construction of children as ‘risky’, rather than the gathering of evidence of risk, which thus validates the legislative attempt to control their futures more than others (Pollack, 2010). ‘Evidence’ does, however, play a role in PREVENT and it is that which will be examined next.

### *Inside the Evidence Base*

The 2011 version of the PREVENT strategy saw the first use of empirical ‘evidence’ to justify prioritising specific groups of children in radicalisation prevention work. This evidence was drawn from the Citizenship Survey (Cooper, 2010), a survey established by the Department for Communities and Local

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<sup>35</sup> Sally Jones, a British citizen known as the White Widow, was killed with her 12-year-old son Jojo Dixon in a US CIA military strike in Raqqa, 2017. It was reportedly not sanctioned by the UK but Sir Michael Fallon, then Defence Secretary, described Jones as a legitimate target <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/10/11/britons-wanted-female-terrorist-white-widow-sally-jones-killed1/>

Government (DCLG) in 2001, which sampled the views of 10,000 adults aged sixteen and over, with a booster group of 5,000 adults from minority ethnic communities, primarily on issues of race, faith and community. It ran on a bi-annual basis until 2011, when it was cancelled due to being too ‘complex and expensive ... to run’ (HM Government, 2011c). The survey responses are claimed to identify the groups in society who are at a higher risk of radicalisation due to their higher approval rate for violent extremism – namely, children and those from lower income groups (HM Government, 2012: 16). This finding needs to be unpacked.

The approval rate in the strategy is determined by aggregating the answers regarding whether participants ‘distrust parliament’, believe that ‘ethnic and faith groups should not mix’ and see a conflict ‘between being British and their own cultural identity’. However, the aggregation of widely varying answers to construct a composite index for identifying high risk and thus ‘priority’ groups is extremely questionable. Taking one example, the responses to a question on violent extremism, we find “18% of 16 to 19-year olds judged violent extremism as ‘always right’, ‘often right’ or ‘sometimes right, sometimes wrong’” (HM Government, 2012: 16). It is not difficult to see that responses in those categories, grouped together for use in the composite index for CR, could have been given for any number of different, but here unexplored, reasons. This is true for the other measures that make up the index too. The claim that this survey gives us insight into the extent to which, and reasons why, children support, or do not support, terrorism does not therefore withstand much scrutiny: the findings are vague and lack detail, making it extremely difficult to judge their validity and robustness. More so, indeed, because the full breakdown of the survey’s results has been left ‘unpublished’. Consequently, it is impossible to check the rationale behind the construction of questions or the multiple-choice answers and

hence, to claim a meaningful basis for declaring these to be ‘findings’ at all as the research does not meet basic tests for survey work.

A second source of the evidence initially used to justify action on CR is the 2010 ‘Attitudes Towards Violent Extremism’ survey; an ‘experimental’ survey whose measures were ‘subject to testing in terms of their volatility and ability to meet customer needs’ (HM Government, 2010: 1). A report based upon it provided non-aggregated responses contextualised by a narrative focused on the factors that may influence the rejection, rather than support, of violent extremism. The report concluded that very few respondents gave an ‘answer which might indicate support’ and that most of the people surveyed rejected violent extremism. This data is misrepresented in the PREVENT strategy where the evidence is said to show the reverse, quite contrary to the conclusion in the original report.

The research used by Government to evidence children’s susceptibility to support terrorism is therefore misrepresented and methodologically flawed. The dubious use of empirical data gleaned from surveys involving a small number of children under eighteen years old problematically underpins a policy and legislative focus on radicalisation prevention which places all children under its scope. Furthermore, it buttresses the State’s identification of ‘Islamist extremism’ as the main threat to national security and in doing so undoubtedly weights policy and practice towards Muslim children (Bolloten, 2015; Coppock and McGovern, 2014; Kundnani, 2009; 2012; 2014; 2015, McKendrick and Finch, 2016; Miller and Sabir, 2012; Mohammed, 2015; Mohammed and Siddiqui, 2013; Stanley and Guru, 2015; Stanley, Guru and Coppock, 2017; Stanley, Guru and Gupta, 2018).

In summary, children cannot be evidenced as more involved in terrorist crimes, more involved in actions to support terrorism overseas or more likely to support

terrorist ideologies than any other group in British society. The claim that the risk of CR poses a pressing and urgent threat has been linked to the involvement of adults in actual or suspected ‘Islamist’ terrorist acts at home and overseas, and the biased representations of children in both political and media narratives. These narratives socially amplify what, in evidential terms, ought to be a statistically insignificant risk in the societal ‘risk consciousness’ (Kasperson et al, 1988; Slovic, 1987, Wilkinson, 2010).

However, even when operating under conditions of ‘not knowing’ about CR, the amplification of risk – particularly in highly-charged national and international political contexts – strengthens the case for the Government to be seen to act in response (Appadurai, 2006; Bowker and Star, 1999; Hacking, 1991; Hood, Rothstein and Baldwin, 2001; Shore and Wright, 2015; Wilkinson, 2010). Legislating for CR while not knowing about CR, offers evidence that this risk is beyond a ‘zombie’ category (Gross, 2016). To claim zombie status would be to imply that the reality it refers to existed in the past, but no longer exists in the present. The evidence indicates that there was no risk of CR in the past or the present. The risk of CR was not ‘found’, then, it was built and projected backwards in time through legislation and policy. The category of risk thus created has subsequently been realised through practice in the law’s implementation. In this sense, CR is not a zombie but in fact more akin to a ‘Frankenstein’s Monster’ (Shelley 1818), an unholy patchwork of scavenged parts that only has life as a result of the effort of its creators.

### 3.3.2 Conceptualising Radicalisation

The interweaving of the contested concepts and persistently vague definitions of radicalisation and terrorism, and the conflation of terrorism with extreme views, both violent and non-violent, are also part of the confusing policy foundations that led the

Government to legislate for the risk of CR. The varying and open definitions of radicalisation<sup>36</sup> (HM Government 2011; 2012), informed by analyses of adult actors involved in terrorist activities, do not significantly evolve in the legislative guidance provided by the Department for Education to support implementation of the PREVENT Duty for children. In fact, they become vaguer. According to the Government, radicalisation is:

“...the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism leading to terrorism. During that process it is possible to intervene to prevent vulnerable people being drawn into terrorist-related activity.” (HM Government 2015d: 4).

The government approach to the concept of radicalisation has nonetheless been consistent in one significant way: it presents it as a linear social process within which people who subscribe to ‘radical’ thinking and support a set of beliefs, ideology or philosophy are on the first stage of progressing to actively engaging in terrorist activity. This not only implies the process can be interrupted but also that extremism and terrorism are aligned, if not identical, bodies of actions and beliefs. Kundnani describes this as a problematic ‘Conveyor Belt Theory’ (Kundnani, 2012; 2014; 2015) applied to, and drawn from, various radicalisation theories that unhelpfully reduce radicalisation to a sequential order and particularly pathologise Islamic identity by

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<sup>36</sup> For instance, as “the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups” (HM Government, 2015: 21) but also as ‘...a social process particularly prevalent in small groups. Radicalisation is about ‘who you know’. Group bonding, peer pressure and indoctrination are necessary to encourage the view that violence is a legitimate response to perceived injustice. We have also seen evidence to support this theory from classified Government reporting” (HM Government, 2011: 17).

making it an inherent part of the process of being radicalised<sup>37</sup> (Archetti, 2010; 2015; Awan, 2012; Bartlett and Miller, 2012; Brown and Saeed, 2015; Cherney and Murphy, 2016; Coppock and McGovern, 2014; Dornhof, 2009; Githens-Mazer and Lambert, 2010; Huq, 2010; Patel, 2011; Silber and Bhatt, 2007; Sedgwick, 2010; Staniforth, 2009; Stevens and Neumann, 2009; Thomas, 2010; Thomas and Sanderson, 2011; Williams, 2015). The Conveyor Belt Theory controversially links ideological or non-violent extremism with violent acts of terrorism, by framing them as sequential stages along which individuals are ‘conveyed’ once the process of radicalisation begins (Bartlett and Miller, 2012; Horgan, 2008; Horgan et al, 2016; Schmid, 2013a; 2014). Despite evidence from UK intelligence services that there is no single ‘pathway to extremism’ (Travis, 2008) and research findings that illustrate that not all people who are radicalised become terrorists and not all terrorists undergo radicalisation (Horgan, 2008; Horgan and Taylor, 2015), the orientation within UK legislation and policy is that an individual can go directly from having ‘extreme’ beliefs or ideologies to supporting or being involved in violent acts of terrorism. Several radicalisation theories have been drawn on as part of this.

### *Radicalisation Theories*

Describing radicalisation as a sequential social process involving contact with social networks or groups who transmit radical ideas or encourage individuals to undertake action, mobilises aspects of contestable sociological and psychological

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<sup>37</sup> The work of Silber and Bhatt is an example of this theory and particularly influenced the early models of radicalisation. For example, the New York City Police Department’s four step model for radicalisation, adopted following the attacks of 2001, defined the first stage as pre-radicalisation, followed by self-identification, indoctrination and finally jihadisation (Williams, 2012). The second stage of self-identification was said to include actions such as rejecting criminality, becoming more religious, being active in the community and mixing with like-minded people – all seemingly positive actions, but viewed negatively when linked to Islam.

Social Movement and Social Network theories (referred to from here as SMT and SNT respectively) (Buechler, 1995; Castells, 2004; Granovetter, 1983; Milgram, 1963; Parkin, 1968). The pivotal claim of PREVENT is that the process of radicalisation is the ‘pre-crime’ space which exists before people become active terrorists. This frames CR as a step in the journey into crime and validates the application of ‘pre-crime’ criminological theory rooted in SMT and SNT informed radicalisation theories which emanate from psychological research with adults who have already been involved in international terrorist activity (Beardsley and Beech, 2013; Bhui, Everitt and Jones, 2014; Bhui et al, 2012; Bhui, Warfa and Jones, 2014; Bouhana and Wikström, 2011; Cole et al, 2009; Dalgaard-Neilsen, 2008; 2010; Horgan et al, 2016; Kebbell and Porter, 2012; Lloyd and Dean, 2015; McCauley and Moskalenko, 2008; Munson, 2001).

SMT, SNT and Social Network Analysis (SNA) have been invoked in support of the approach criminal justice and security agencies take when identifying how terrorist networks function and operate (Sageman, 2004). However, as with the survey data used to claim children and Muslims are more likely to support terrorism, no concrete evidence is explicitly offered to justify the uses to which these theories are being put within PREVENT. Instead, the underlying research is ‘classified’ or ‘unpublished’ and, without further scrutiny, it is impossible to know whether the methodology stands up. It is unclear, for example, how the theories were arrived at, whether the research extended to all extremist groups, or if it explored children’s experiences of being ‘radicalised’. Where research has been made public, it is a positivist retrospective analyses of ‘radicalised’ adults who have gone on to become active terrorists, associated with a pre-selected ideology, mainly ‘jihadi’ or ‘Islamist’ extremism. The research is thus beset with ethical and methodological shortcomings

but represents an example of Government deploying research to corroborate a definition of radicalisation they had already committed to. The ‘Extremism Risk Guidance +22’ (ERG+22), specifically, derived from an unpublished study of ‘extremist’ adult offenders in the UK undertaken by the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), is implied to be a primary source for the ‘pre-crime’ vulnerability indicators used to assess risk in the CHANNEL<sup>38</sup> process (Knudsen, 2018; Lloyd and Dean, 2015; Qureshi, 2016).

Nonetheless, despite the difficulties, it remains important to assess the relevance of radicalisation theories that influence the underlying research, given their centrality to the legislative construction of the risk of CR. Fortunately, it is possible to trace key strands within them.

One key strand is Social Movement Theory (SMT). SMT has traditionally been applied to analyses of how political movements emerge in society and how individuals become involved in collective action. Collective action, often revolving around identity groups connected via class, race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age or political persuasion, can be either positively or negatively framed. It may be action for a cause or action against a cause, such as activist, lobbying or civil rights groups challenging the existing social order (Comas, Shrivastava and Martin, 2015; Daalgard-Neilsen, 2008; Marx, 1998; Parkin, 1968; Rootes, 1990; Schmid, 2013; 2013a).

The influence of SMT on PREVENT can be seen in the framing of radicalisation as a ‘social process’, wherein identity-based ideological or political beliefs are given an opportunity to manifest in participation in extremist or terrorist

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<sup>38</sup> The Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF) previously a standalone document and now an appendix to the statutory CHANNEL Duty Guidance, aims to guide the ‘risk’ decisions of the CHANNEL Panel members and partners as part of the ‘safeguarding process’ (HM Government, 2012; 2015a).

movements (Ahmad, 2014; Al Raffie, 2013; Comas, Shrivastava and Martin, 2015; Dalgaard-Neilsen, 2010; Lakhani, 2013). This is evident in the claims that radicalisation “...occurs as people search for identity, meaning and community” and that “...some second or third generation Muslims in Europe, facing apparent or real discrimination and socio-economic disadvantage, can find in terrorism a ‘value system’, a community and an apparently just cause” (HM Government, 2011: 17). These statements refer specifically to PREVENT-commissioned projects as one of the sources of evidence for issues of identity and community being essential radicalisation factors. The same projects, described earlier, which were admonished in a report to the Home Secretary for a lack of evaluation and for unfairly targeting Muslims. Using SMT principles to define radicalisation, PREVENT then makes race, religion and socio-economic disadvantage proxies for risk. In so doing it recalibrates children’s identities and experiences of structural harm<sup>39</sup> as potential vulnerabilities or indicators for the risk of future terrorist offending (Coppock and McGovern, 2014; McCulloch and Pickering, 2009; McKendrick and Finch, 2016; Spector and Kitsuse, 1973). This has a peculiar effect. Discrimination or oppression, currently being termed ‘Adverse Childhood Experiences’ (ACE) to describe the harms individuals experience as a child which indicate their increased risk of ‘health-harming’ behaviours as an adult (Quigg, Wallis and Butler, 2018), are made invisible in terms of addressing children’s welfare needs but simultaneously the groups of children who experience them are rendered hyper-visible in ‘pre-crime’ policy and practice (Settles et al, 2018). The communities related to these ‘risky’ identities are thus repackaged into what SMT refers to as social

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<sup>39</sup> Socio-economic disadvantage and racial and religious discrimination are experiences which make children vulnerable on many levels. These forms of social and structural violence or harms (Pemberton, 2007) impact significantly on their life chances but are aspects of their lives that they have no control over. Therefore, the coupling of these harms to the likelihood of ascribing to a terrorist value system is an act of re-victimisation (Brown, 2015; Goddard and Myers, 2016; Stanley, Guru and Coppock, 2017).

‘networks’; vehicles for recruitment, mobilisation and transmitting grievances (Dalgaard-Neilsen, 2010).

After SMT, Social Network Theory (SNT) is a second key strand. SNT is a recently adopted model for developing criminological analyses, particularly of networks of organised crime and, post-2001, terrorist organisations (Burcher and Whelan, 2015; Mullins, 2013; Ressler, 2006; van der Hulst, 2009). In contemporary research, SNT is used to identify social environments or milieux that support and encourage crime, or ‘radicalism’, which individuals are either submerged in or gravitate towards on their ‘radicalisation journey’ (Malthaner and Waldmann, 2014). Within SNT analyses, radicalisation is treated as beginning a number of stages before becoming active in a network or preparing for involvement in extremism or terrorism. The influence of SNT and SMT in the ERG22+ research is apparent.

The theoretical conceptualisation of radicalisation as a journey into formal terrorist ‘networks’ has also involved a search for empirical grounding, and this is where Social Network Analysis (SNA) comes in. SNA is the set of investigative and intelligence tools derived from SNT that are used to identify networks and individuals, primarily in criminal investigations but increasingly in security operations. SNA aims to map the social connections within networks by identifying ‘pathologising’ relationships between actors, in a similar way to understanding the spread of disease<sup>40</sup>.

However, claims about SNA’s effectiveness have been challenged. For example, Burcher and Whelan explored the application of SNA to the biographies of the London 7/7 bombers and conclude that SNA is unreliable when it comes to analysing small networks and therefore of limited use in analysing the actions of ‘lone actors’ identified as increasingly prevalent within European terrorist activities (Bakker

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<sup>40</sup> SNT generated the famous ‘six degrees of separation’ hypothesis (Milgram 1963).

and de Roy van Zuijdewijn, 2015; Burcher and Whelan, 2015; Dafnos, 2013; 2014; Europol, 2015; Gill et al, 2017; Kirby, 2007; Moskalenko and McCauley, 2011; Ramakrishna, 2014; Spaaij, 2010; 2012; Vidino and Brandon, 2013) and characteristic of ‘far-right’ activists in England and Wales (HM Government, 2011; 2015). As a basis for new policy in the field of terrorism, SNA would seem to be an insecure foundation.

Indeed, in her critical assessment of both SMT and SNT, Dalgaard Neilsen argues that there is no adequate empirical evidence showing the benefit of these theories to understandings of violent radicalisation, nor any academic consensus on which theory is best for analysing how and why people become terrorist actors (Dalgaard Neilsen, 2010). Despite this, the application of SNT and SNA together is hailed as successful in building an understanding of terrorist operations and of security or military actions to disrupt or destabilise them. This theoretical combination uses the proximity and recurrence of ‘ties’ as key indicators of the ‘actors’ level of activism; the USA military strategy developed since the 1990’s that it takes a ‘network to defeat a network’ is a derivative of this thinking (Cockburn, 2015; Weber, 2015).<sup>41</sup>

### *Radicalisation for Non-Violent Extremism*

There is a great deal of evidence to suggest SNT and SNA are counter-productive and obscure more than they illuminate, but their use may have some value in identifying ‘actors’ connected immediately or remotely to a violent, and therefore likely illegal, extremist network. Applying SNT and SNA is seen as useful, for

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<sup>41</sup> The USA, Israel and the UK utilise SNT as justification for military operations, or targeted killings, on those whose actions or identity ‘ties’ them to a terror network or individual. For example, this could be a ‘tie’ of being a family member who provides ‘logistical support’, for example food or a home. Arguably these actions only fuel political grievances further (Cockburn, 2015; Granovetter, 1983; Shehadeh, 2015; Weber, 2015). Not only is this application problematic, the obvious flaw in this claim is that the problem of terrorist networks targeted by US action, from Al Qaeda and the Taleban in the 2000’s to current day ISIS, has proliferated and not reduced.

example, to examine recruitment methods to inform police, security or military activity at a ‘preventative’ stage (Mullins, 2013; Ressler 2006: 7). That the government’s Pursue strategy uses SNT principles to investigate crimes related to terrorism is therefore unsurprising. In this context it will be used to identify active networks of proscribed organisations, outlawed by the Terrorism Act 2000, including their location or individuals who act as recruiters. Working with such models, linked actors will be guilty of some form of offence as defined by this criminal legislation, for example supporting a proscribed organisation. There is at least a logic to this application of SNT.

By contrast, SNT being used as part of the PREVENT strategy to identify those who are ‘vulnerable’ and targeted for recruitment into extreme ideologies or organisations poses very different moral, legal and political questions. PREVENT awkwardly extends SNT and SNA to both violent *and* non-violent extremism, even though this is incompatible with its stated intentions and out of step with international approaches<sup>42</sup> (Schmid, 2014). The advocates for extending the application of SNA to terrorism recruitment refer solely to violent activities. Unlike violent extremism, engaging in non-violent extremism is, in the main, a legal activity. With official definitions of extremism increasingly elastic and capable of being expanded to include almost anything within their jurisdiction, critics are already pointing to ‘thought-policing’ by the State (Dodd, 2014; 2016; Kundnani, 2015; Mohammed, 2015). Utilising police or security powers to address ‘radical’ thinking is not only problematic but arguably iatrogenic (Wiener, 1998), in so far as these strategies tend to fuel or exacerbate the very conflicts they aim to avoid (Barr and Pease, 1990; Cockburn, 2015,

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<sup>42</sup> The legislative inclusion of all manifestations of political and philosophical extremism, both violent and *non-violent* was not only ill-defined but was a move that was out of step with the explicit focus on radicalisation for violent extremism by the United Nations (UN, 2015).

Kundnani, 2015; Kundnani and Hayes, 2018; Lindekilde, 2012; Mythen, Walklate and Khan, 2013).

PREVENT defines potential ‘radicals’ as those who encounter a recruiter, physically or virtually. That is, virtual contacts such as reading or interacting with online sites are perceived as a part of the ‘radical milieu’ (Conway, 2012; Malthaner and Waldmann, 2014). This will result in many ‘radical’ children being discovered just because the definition and process makes them out to be so (Granovetter, 1983; Quayle and Taylor, 2011; Valentine and Holloway, 2002; van Brakel and De Hert, 2013). The Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF) is the legislative tool to assess vulnerability to radicalisation within the PREVENT/CHANNEL process. Similar in purpose to the RA tools for violent crimes, it has a fundamental difference. Offender or repeat victim RA tools, as previously explained, use indicators to count people ‘into’ or ‘out of’ being at risk when a crime has occurred. This is done by considering both the risks and resilience factors present in an offender or victim’s life, with the intention of protecting the victim or society from further crimes. In the tradition of the theories that inform it, however, VAF only counts people into suspicion of vulnerability to the risk of being radicalised and thereby has the potential to criminalise children in advance of a crime being committed. It is argued that the likelihood of future violence can only be clinically assessed, that is by a medical clinician, and even then, is not fully assured (Corner, Gill and Mason, 2016; Dernervik et al, 2009; Goldberg, Jadhav and Younis, 2017; Monahan, 2012; Mossman, 1994; Roberts and Horgan, 2008; Slovic, Monahan and McGregor, 2000). The undesirable, and likely unintentional, practical consequence of viewing safeguarding through the perspective of radicalisation theories is that children, developmentally at an experimental stage of exploring and shaping their worldviews and political orientation,

particularly those who are Muslim, automatically come to be placed under suspicion of being at risk of CR (Awan, 2012; Birt, 2016; Coppock and McGovern, 2014; Faure Walker, 2017; McKendrick and Finch, 2016; Qureshi, 2018; Sian, 2017; Stanley, Guru and Coppock, 2017). The potential for this discrimination is even legislatively reinforced<sup>43</sup>.

In summary, radicalisation as a concept and a process is highly contested. Even if it is accepted as a precursor to terrorist activity, how the Duty to prevent it is interpreted and implemented using any associated tools for identification and action, will undoubtedly be impacted by the evident CR knowledge gaps the described flaws reveal.

The Government's development of policy and legislation with the stated aim of safeguarding all children across England and Wales from CR, takes contested understandings of radicalisation and positivistic research with adults and applies them to children. This is methodologically, conceptually and ethically unsound. It has been shown that there is no specific empirical knowledge for how radicalisation affects children or the extent of the threat. The information or 'evidence' used within policy and legislation has limited transferability to the issue of CR, in relation to both violent and non-violent extremism in the UK context (Dalgaard-Neilsen, 2010). Preventative legislation that is based on theoretical assumptions that both weak and strong ties to a network implicate you within that network (Granovetter, 1983), forces thinking about

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<sup>43</sup> One month after Royal Assent was given to the PREVENT Duty, the Serious Crime Act 2015 introduced mandatory reporting for suspicions of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). FGM, one of the manifestations of Violence Against Women and Girls said to be prevalent in some African, Middle Eastern and Asian communities<sup>43</sup>, is specifically mentioned within the PREVENT Duty Guidance and CES as one of the 'harmful cultural practices' that can indicate vulnerability to the risk of radicalisation (HM Government, 2015a; 2015b; 2015c; 2015d). This illustrates a 'double bind' of suspicion of criminal activity, within both mandatory monitoring for CR and for FGM, but only impacting those children perceived to be most at risk. The perception of risk is not only racialised and aged but gendered by this legislation.

radicalisation and children down very specific lines. Children's networks are invariably wide, especially in relation to virtual networks through social media (Castells, 2004). They are also often networks they have no control over, for example through school.

Taking such a perspective firmly rooted in a form of criminological analysis only counts children into and not out of suspicion. The additional preoccupation in SMT and SNT research with international jihadi networks amplifies the focus on Muslim and BME children of earlier policy and research. When the legislation talks about radicalisation, therefore, it is directing itself primarily towards Muslim children, but generally and pervasively to the 'others' in society – those who are in search of community or identity because of the experience of poverty and discrimination (Abbas, 2012; Bateman, 2011). By casting the net of suspicion so wide it will only serve to bring children, primarily from these backgrounds, into very early and unnecessary contact with criminal justice and security agencies with greater frequency (Breen-Smyth, 2014; Cohen, 1985; Lennon, 2015; Spalek, 2016; Spalek and Lambert, 2008; Spalek, McDonald and El Awa, 2011).

The inflated number of children 'counted in' to vulnerability to CR could then be misrepresented as a convincing statistical illustration of how prevalent the risk of CR is within these groups (Cicourel, 1968; Dequen, 2013; Duster, 1998; Kitsuse and Cicourel, 1963; Rappert, 2012). In other words, the action of making a PREVENT referral itself becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton, 1948) reflecting processes observed by Sudnow in his research into Public Defenders decision making. Here, typicality is constructed for certain cases, referred to as the 'normal crimes' of specific populations, based on the personal experience of Defenders, which in turn helps to continue the classification of them as such (Sudnow, 1965). In the context of

PREVENT, radicalisation becomes the ‘normal crime’ of children, especially those who are Muslim. This is irrespective of the absence of empirical evidence to support this claim and, also, despite radicalisation not being a crime.

Attempts to dispense organisational safeguarding responsibilities to protect children from CR, in the absence of knowledge about CR, are thus consequently more likely to utilise the more familiar concepts within the legislation, including vulnerability and grooming. The trouble is, their meaning too is altered by PREVENT because safeguarding is legislatively put to work with the less familiar pre-crime framework.

The ‘crime’ within pre-crime is clearly understood to be a possible future act of the child. By trying to stop vulnerability to the risk of being groomed for involvement in imagined future acts of terrorism, PREVENT extends ‘pre-crime’ way beyond its original meaning into the realm of ‘pre, pre-crime’ (McCulloch and Wilson, 2016; Qureshi, 2016). Vulnerability to a potential future risk of CR is many ‘stages’ away from children becoming active criminals, if they ever become involved in terror-related crime at all. Even if possible, it is certainly highly questionable as to whether the State and its agents and agencies should try to identify and prevent involvement in non-crimes. Nevertheless, PREVENT provides the processes to attempt to do exactly this. The following discusses how this significantly transforms the contexts in which safeguarding risk-work with children takes place.

### 3.3.3 Pre-Crime Prevention and Safeguarding

Proceeding on the basis that it is possible to identify distinct times and places in the journey of an individual into or out of criminality (Barry, 2010; 2013; de Vries Robbé et al, 2015; Farrington, 1990; Farrall et al, 2011; Gadd, 2006; Haigh, 2009;

Kelly, 2001; Phoenix and Kelly, 2013; Sherman, 2011; Webster, MacDonald and Simpson, 2006), furnishes various organisations and criminal justice agencies with the rationale for opportunities for earlier intervention to prevent crimes from taking place. The language of risk prevention used within ‘pre-crime’ is a normal feature of previously described safeguarding, desistance and crime control models (‘arrest them before they rob the bank if you can’). The notion of preventative crime control however becomes anything but normal when approached through the ‘pre, pre-crime’ concept of CR. The quandary it presents is as the musician Prince expressed in his song ‘Electric Chair’:

“If a man is considered guilty,  
For what goes on in his mind,  
Then give me the electric chair,  
For all my future crimes”.

(Nelson, 1989)

There is a vast difference between what is thought and what is acted upon. There are also a number of practical consequences to defining a time when no crime has been committed, and where there even may be no intention to commit a crime, as a stage where an intervention should be made to prevent future crime. Frontline practitioners (FP’s) are legally required to decide, based on a framework of pre-determined risk factors, whether a child may be ‘vulnerable’ to committing a crime at some time in the future (Bartlett and Birdwell, 2010; Fitzgerald, 2016; McCulloch and Wilson, 2016). This makes a much wider set of bodies responsible for the prediction and prevention of terrorism and extends pre-existing sets of crime prevention and

safeguarding legislative duties to much earlier stages than was previously imagined. Acting to identify and safeguard children from being ‘vulnerable to the risk of radicalisation’, goes far beyond safeguarding children already involved in extremist activity. Organisations are thus expected to act in circumstances quite different to those set out in existing safeguarding legislation, that is when harm is ‘possible’, rather than ‘actual’ or ‘likely’. This ‘possibilistic’ orientation (Lash, 2003) requires practitioners to use their perception of current vulnerabilities in an attempt to predict children’s futures some way off.

Legislating for CR as a specific harm implies that ‘vulnerability’ to that harm is ‘significant’ enough to require societal action. This is anomalous given that CR is not a statistically prevalent form of harm to children. Safeguarding interventions with children are thereby transformed from being based on the actions of others towards a child, to being based on practitioner perceptions of how risky a child’s behaviours, thoughts and beliefs are, or may be, to others in the future.

### *Modifying Vulnerability*

In legislating for CR, the mobilisation of the safeguarding language of ‘vulnerability’, and its related term ‘grooming’, is purposeful. The familiarity of the terms may engender confidence in practitioners to identify and deal with this risk, but these concepts are not without their problems. ‘Grooming’ has been described as a process wherein ‘someone builds an emotional connection with a child to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or trafficking’ (NSPCC, 2017; Bentley et al, 2018) but has also been claimed to be poorly defined conceptually and legally, and poorly understood in practice (Ashurst and McAlinden, 2015; Craven, Brown and Gilchrist, 2006; Eaton and Holmes, 2017; Gillespie, 2004; Karaian, 2014; McAlinden, 2006). The term has been extended to become a central concept in new

frameworks of child exploitation<sup>44</sup> and associated prevention-focussed policy. It is now widely used to refer to the way in which people, usually adults, get close to, befriend and gain the trust of children with the intention of harming or abusing them (Firmin, 2010; Jay, 2014; McAlinden, 2006; 2014).

The notion of ‘vulnerability’ is of significant import within the grooming concept. It is assigned to the characteristics of a child or the factors in their life which make them easy to exploit, gain access to or take advantage of (Erooga, 2012). Not only does this conceptualisation responsibilise the child for their susceptibility to being exploited by adults, both the grooming and vulnerability concepts are built around questionable gendered, heteronormative and disablist assumptions concerning agency-reduction and weakness (Brown, 2014; Craven, Brown and Gilchrist, 2006; Eaton and Holmes, 2017; Fox, 2016; Gillespie, 2004; Gilson, 2014; Karaian, 2014; McAlinden, 2006; 2014; Salter, Crofts and Lee, 2013; Wong, Slotboom and Bijleveld, 2010). The equation of being disabled with being vulnerable and thus more susceptible to the ‘risk of radicalisation’ is particularly unhelpful (Allely, 2016; Brown, 2014; Fyson and Yates, 2011; O’Neill and Simpson, 2015).

The unilateral application of the term ‘vulnerable’ to all children under 18 years old in PREVENT legislation jars most with pre-existing safeguarding legislative attempts to differentiate degrees of vulnerability in the thresholds of harm and need to delineate justifiable State interventions.

The UK Office of the Children’s Commissioner is one of those who have raised this issue, pointing out that categorising all children as vulnerable, particularly given discrepancies between all the different ways in which the term is being used, will not

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<sup>44</sup> HM Government published the Serious Violence Strategy in April 2018, which addresses the ‘risk and protective factors’ for early interventions on ‘county lines’ exploitation of children in drug trafficking around the UK (HM Government, 2018a)

help organisations prioritise those with the greatest need (Office of Children's Commissioner, 2017). This orientation towards children as 'risky subjects' is argued to heighten the possibility for society's most marginalised and vulnerable children to find themselves with alarming regularity under scrutiny for the 'pre-crime' risk of radicalisation (Achiame, 2018; Birt, 2016; Bolloten, 2015; Kiai, 2017; Open Society Justice Initiative, 2016). The term 'vulnerable' may invoke sympathy for those who are imagined to be 'innocent' victims of crime (Lee, 1984; Lerner and Simmons, 1966; Christie, 1986), but sympathy is noticeable by its absence when a child or 'vulnerable' person commits a crime. For instance, Alim's 'vulnerability' and experience of being groomed was not considered by the CJS when he was prosecuted for his act of 'terrorism' (Allely, 2016).

Placing CR within the field of safeguarding positions it as closer to a form of child abuse than crime, with children by extension victims and not criminals. Yet, the logic is skewed. Imagining 'grooming' as a binary victim and offender scenario, results in children not being treated as victims but rather as active agents guilty of criminal activity. This is especially true when they are perceived by practitioners to be acting out of personal choice, based on preconceptions about age, sexual activity, class, religious or racial origins (Eaton and Holmes, 2017; Firmin, 2010; Jay, 2014). The lack of sympathy expressed in the media and political narratives for victims of CR, such as the Muslim children 'groomed online', trafficked and sexually exploited in marriages to IS fighters referred to earlier, show that simply categorising CR as an abuse to be safeguarded from is not enough for it to be conceived as such.

The 'pre-criminal' categorisation of CR exacerbates this situation. The Duty is clearly related to the practice of crime prediction and legislatively compels practitioners in welfare and education services, most of whom have limited, if any,

experience working in the field of counter-terrorism, into roles more usually associated with security and surveillance specialists. It is unsurprising, therefore, that practitioners are reporting feeling out of their depth when required to work with a concept in such dissonance with traditional safeguarding (Busher et al, 2017; Chisholm and Coulter, 2017; Dryden, 2017; Faure Walker, 2017; Heath-Kelly, 2017; Heath-Kelly and Strausz, 2018; Open Society Justice Initiative, 2016; Stanley, Guru and Coppock, 2017; Stevenson, 2015; 2015a; 2015b).

### *Pre, Pre-Crime Safeguarding Process*

Building on the problematic foundations of SMT, SNT and SNA informed theories of radicalisation, the Government position on CR is that ‘Supporting vulnerable individuals requires clear frameworks including guidance on how to identify vulnerability and assess risk’ (HM Government, 2012: 3). These referral and assessment frameworks for safeguarding children in this ‘pre-criminal’ context are provided through PREVENT Duty Guidance, CHANNEL Duty Guidance (HM Government, 2015; 2015a) and the supporting VAF document (HM Government, 2012; 2015a). These processes are an important focal point. In this space, organisations interpret and give meaning to their responsibilities under the legal Duties and their instruments. This is where custom and practice for risk identification is worked out around the perceptions of vulnerability to the risk of CR and thus where it acquires its ‘normal character’ (Sudnow, 1965: 259). How these processes have been assembled are thus consequential in several ways.

CHANNEL is described as a voluntary process for children and families, but this applies only to the stage of the referred child physically engaging with the de-radicalisation intervention. For this reason, the thesis presents the process as PREVENT/CHANNEL to clarify that there are various stages of the process of

identifying and referring CR. In practice, the way in which these stages operate means the process isn't voluntary. Nor, for that matter, does it resemble anything we would normally term safeguarding in the UK context.

In both the legislation and guidance for CHANNEL Panels (referred to from herein as *the Panel*), only statutory organisations from CJS and non-CJS fields are referenced as required and potential members<sup>45</sup>. As safeguarding legislation, the involvement of these agencies could be argued to appropriately reflect the pre-existing statutory arrangements previously outlined. However, the membership and decision-making power the Panel has is decidedly weighted toward criminal justice rather than welfare. It would be expected that a range of agencies, including experts in child protection, would contribute to decision-making about the assessment of risk levels for CR. This is not what PREVENT does, instead positioning the police as the CR experts. The police are currently the only agency which can legally determine which cases can be heard at the Panel<sup>46</sup>. Community and voluntary sector organisations with expertise in working with children in particular, are omitted from the required membership, but simultaneously the process is dependent on frontline practitioners (FPs) identifying children possibly 'at risk' and referring them into the process. Panels are therefore initiated, led and directed by police, allowing them to exercise the most influence on how risk is identified, assessed and progressed in referrals. It is clear that the role of non-statutory organisations is limited to that of surveillance 'agents' (Heath-Kelly, 2017: 307). Furthermore, unlike other safeguarding referral systems, practitioners identify their suspicions of children being at risk of CR without the need to obtain consent from parents or guardians or even inform them of the need to make

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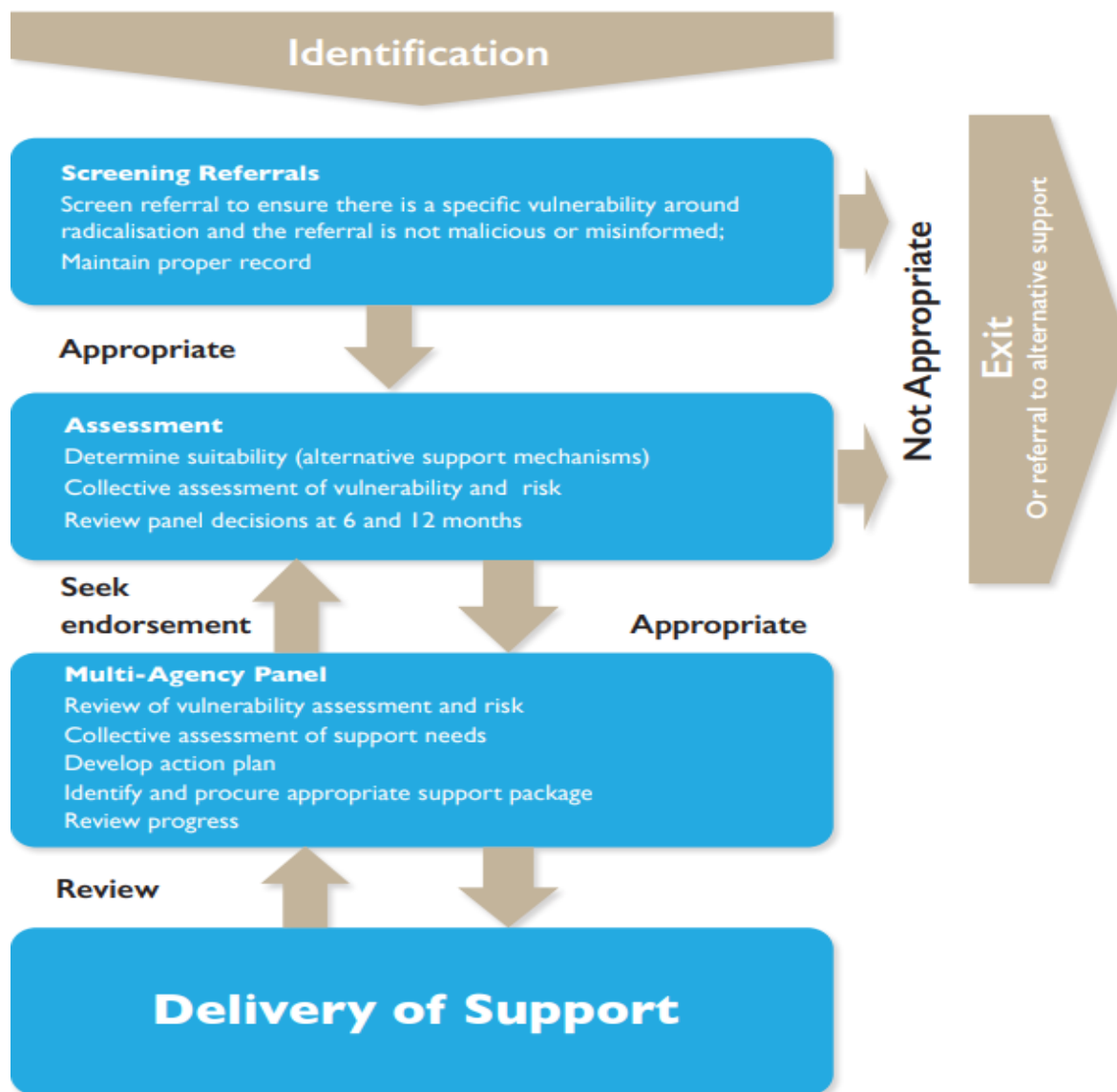
<sup>45</sup> Section 7, Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015

<sup>46</sup> Section 19, Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Bill 2017-19 recommends this changes to the Local Authority

a referral of their child (HM Government, 2015a: 11). This has raised concerns about violations of the fundamental rights of children and their families (Achiume, 2018; Birt, 2016; Bolloten, 2015; Kundnani and Hayes, 2018; Liberty, 2017).

Closer inspection of the CHANNEL process for referrals of children is thus required to determine whether this orientation skews the focus onto matters of criminality rather than child protection.

Diagram 1 illustrates the statutory processes which define how referrals are to be dealt with by the ‘Multi-Agency Panel’ and how risk is to be assessed. As noted above, the process is dominated operationally by the police as the key actors. The Panel represents a risk ‘ad-hoc decision-making institution’ (Beck, Bonss and Lau, 2003: 21) in this setting; a checking mechanism for the presence of risk in referrals. It is only assembled, however, after decisions and judgements of risk and vulnerability have been made at three separate points in the process. The ‘collective assessment’ undertaken to determine the level of ‘vulnerability and risk’ that is part of an ‘appropriate’ referral of children, presented separately from the multi-agency Panel stage, provides an opportunity for referrals progressed by the police after ‘screening’ to exit the process or continue to the Panel. The assessment is presented to the Panel for ‘endorsement’, which implies a level of confidence that assessments will be accurate even though it is not clear who is involved.



*Diagram 1: CHANNEL Duty Guidance (HM Government, 2015a: 6)*

The underlying claim is that those making the assessment have reliable tools for assessing vulnerability in children at their disposal. The tool for assessing the behaviours or circumstances of children that are claimed to indicate vulnerability to CR is again the dubious VAF. As a legislative tool it can be used to make decisions of the Panel ‘see-able’, but as discussed earlier it is problematically derived from flawed theory and research. Risk factors or identifiers, informed by positivist research into the actions of adult offenders specifically related to ‘Islamist’ extremism or in an

international context, rather than being situated in the experience of children in a UK context, have limited usefulness for the risk-work practice of identification of CR.

At the time of this inquiry, however, there remained no detail on the indicators or evidence thresholds (Chisholm and Coulter, 2017; Thomas et al, 2017) which need to be met to necessitate a referral of a child into CHANNEL<sup>47</sup>. The absence of statutory guidance for the first stage of risk identification seems incongruent with the legislated requirement for organisations to act to prevent terrorism; how can they identify something when they don't know what it looks like?

A high level of discretionary decision making, and action is thus permissible at several points in the PREVENT/CHANNEL process – locations of very probably problematic practice (Lipsky, 1980). None more so than the stage which is most crucial in initiating the 'evidence' which makes the case of risk in this safeguarding referral process. This stage is discussed in detail.

### *Identification: Risk Evidence*

The VAF is described as a tool to help Panel members risk decisions but not FPs at the stage of risk identification. Nevertheless, it is signposted in the additional policy documents that support implementation of the Duty in education (HM Government 2015c, 2015d) and it forms the basis of the WRAP. A perception of 'risk' and 'risky communities' in relation to radicalisation is thereby built into the ways of seeing and identifying or 'knowing' risk (Carper, 1978; Goodwin, 1994) required to comply with the Duty. This underpins what Goodwin calls 'professional vision'; practiced ways of knowing and seeing, such as through the use of 'coding schemes' (Goodwin, 1994: 606), promulgated by policy, training and work-based interactions.

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<sup>47</sup> Online guidance for education settings were provided by Government in 2017 (HM Government, 2017c)

Coding schemes – introducing religion and age as proxies for risk for example – are key features of the VAF as a result of the research which informs it. As Sen notes of this kind of use of theory:

“Theories are sometimes taken more seriously in practical encounters than the theorists themselves anticipate. And when these theories are not only conceptually muddled but also readily useable for accentuating sectarian exclusion, they can be warmly welcomed by the leaders of social confrontation and violence.” (Sen, 2006: 179)

Racialised notions of ‘risky’ populations of children in need of increased surveillance are thus not only legislatively established, but maintained by the tools for guiding PREVENT’s implementation (Achieme, 2018; Breen-Smyth, 2012; Bolloten, 2015; Coppock and McGovern, 2014; Glover, 2008; Heath-Kelly, 2012; 2013; 2017; Hillyard, 1993; House of Commons Joint Committee on Human Rights, 2016; Kundnani, 2014; 2015; Miller and Sabir, 2012; Open Society Justice Initiative, 2016; Qureshi, 2016; Ragazzi, 2016; Thomas, 2010; 2016). The inherent danger within this is not only increased criminalisation of some children (Blomberg and Cohen, 2003; Cohen, 1972; 1985; 2011), but the failure to safeguard others who are excluded from the ‘professional vision’ of what radicalisation looks like. This runs entirely counter to the safeguarding narrative of PREVENT and has led to serious criticism. As the UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance noted in 2018, further affirming the criticism the year before of their counterpart reporting on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association (Kiai, 2017):

“[The] policy choice embodied in the PREVENT Programme ... mandates civil servants, social workers, care-givers, educators and others, to make life-altering judgments on the basis of vague criteria in a climate of national anxieties that scapegoat entire religious, racial and ethnic groups as the presumptive enemy.” (Achiame, 2018)

A key argument in *The Risk Society*, is that it proffers an opportunity for the lay public to challenge and replace the risk knowledges in society, thereby democratising risk knowledge production (Beck, Bonss and Lau, 2003). Obscuring the basis for risk identification by FPs is therefore significant. Risk identification for CR is neither an observable nor challengeable practice. ‘Significant harm’ is the threshold, albeit subjectively defined, which must be met to justify State involvement in family life in mainstream safeguarding assessments of harm and need (Barlow, Fisher and Jones, 2012). It is only after a referral of CR, that a form of ‘screening’ takes place to identify appropriate or inappropriate risk identification and in the latter case a referral may then ‘exit’ the process. In the absence of a process of appeal, there is no opportunity for the ‘risk’ label to be removed from a child who has been referred to PREVENT/CHANNEL, even if it is unfounded.

This structural feature of the PREVENT/CHANNEL process counts more children into unreasonably early contact with police and intelligence agencies, based on suspicion rather than evidence, in a way that adults do not experience<sup>48</sup> and in a

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<sup>48</sup> By contrast, the legal situation for adults who could pose a danger to children moves in the opposite direction. The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 introduced a mandatory duty to refer adults who ‘endangers a child or is likely to endanger a child’ that have been engaged as a paid employee or volunteer in local authority, education and social care sectors. The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) mandatory referral flowchart guidance states that if an allegation is made about an adult in these

way that is not replicated by mainstream safeguarding. This further supports concerns about criminalisation in this process and contributes to socially amplifying the public perception of how vulnerable children are to the risk of CR. If, as Slovic argues, the perception of risk drives behaviour and decisions more than the evidence of risk (Slovic, 1987), in turn this amplification impacts upon practitioner's judgement and decision making (Altheide, 2007; 2013; Baker, Gabrielatos and McEnery, 2013; Kasperson et al, 1988; Slovic, Sian, Law and Sayyid, 2012; Silva, 2017; Wilkinson, 2010).

In summary, the articulation of the PREVENT Duty as a safeguarding duty is highly problematic. Safeguarding vulnerable children suggests a welfare approach, but through an investigation of the processes put in place for dealing with the legislated risk of CR, a form of safeguarding framed within the 'pre-criminal space', welfare is shown to take a subordinate role to policing and crime control. If CR is truly conceived as a safeguarding issue for children, the claim it needs a separate Panel focussed on the judgement and decisions of police actors, instead of utilising the pre-existing statutory Safeguarding Boards with established expertise on child protection, is open to legitimate question.

Considering the design of the safeguarding processes for CR, that is, the tools and technologies used to forecast the risk of children potentially committing future terrorist crimes, it can only be concluded that the issue of 'pre-crime' has clearly been assigned priority over safeguarding. From this perspective, the PREVENT strategy to safeguard children 'vulnerable to the risk of radicalisation' is a continuing

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circumstances, that organisations should carry out an investigation before a referral 'to gather facts and establish evidence' (HM Government, 2016). Similar guidance – and protection – is not explicitly offered in the Duty or CHANNEL Guidance. This indicates that adults are afforded the opportunity of not being referred to a potentially stigmatising 'safeguarding' process without evidence, whilst children in the context of PREVENT are not given that same privilege.

manifestation, previously discussed, of attempts to control activities and prevent the imagined future crimes of children through an approach which is a hybrid of welfare and punishment (Jamieson, 2012; Sim, 2014).

### 3.4 Conclusions

Appadurai argues that terrorism is successful and powerful because of the social uncertainty it provokes; we do not know among who, when or where it may appear (Appadurai, 2006). With this in mind, it is fair to say that the Knightian Uncertainty (Knight, 1921), or incalculable risk of terrorism has compelled Government to provide a ‘mitigation’ response by assembling the PREVENT Duty. They have acted irrespective of the small numbers indicating the prevalence of CR (Appadurai, 2006; Tversky and Kahneman, 1971) and ‘not knowing’ the nature of this risk (Beck, 2007; 2009; Beck, Bonss and Lau, 2003; Beck and Wehling 2012).

This stands in sharp contrast with an evidence-based approach to Government policy, resembling more what Mythen, Walklate and Peatfield term as ‘policy-based evidence making’ (Mythen, Walklate and Peatfield, 2017), a trend argued to be emblematic of youth justice developments more broadly in recent times (Goldson, 2010). The making of CR through legislation has thus effectively developed the state of ‘not knowing’ into a structural condition. Without any evidence of need, a specific group in society has been targeted for intervention. To do so, the already contested theories of radicalisation have been grafted onto the problematic concepts of pre-crime and crime prediction. In this way, and more, CR has gone beyond the zombie categorisation attributed to risk by Gross, to that of a Frankenstein’s Monster (Gross, 2016; Shelley, 1818).

This policy area is Frankensteinian in several respects. It has been legislatively assembled in very specific ways, to the extent that it could not exist outside of the matrices of law, practice, theories and research that hold it in place (Hacking, 1991). In PREVENT's nexus of child protection and pre-crime prevention, a diverse range of policies and practices converge, informed by differing, conflicting and even unfounded theories, link welfare and crime policy in new ways. By yoking together safeguarding and radicalisation, a non-crime, in imagining a pre-criminal stage, PREVENT explicitly and paradoxically 'suggests that no crime has been committed, while simultaneously evoking the crime that hasn't happened' (McCulloch and Pickering, 2009: 641). A wholly welfare-based response to the safeguarding needs of children is made very difficult to maintain by the assemblage of this law and processes. A practical focus on welfare and a practical focus on pre-crime pull in different directions. This is an unstable entity. Fraught with problematic assumptions and prioritising criminological theory over that of child protection, PREVENT is a likely source of conflict and confusion for those who must put it into practice.

By compelling organisations to identify, assess and report suspicions of CR, Government has created the space for a coerced and constrained form of 'praxiology'. As part of this, non-CJS agencies have become key actors in developing the 'facts' of crime risk levels in relation to CR; as 'rate producing agencies' (Cicourel, 1968; Dequen, 2013; Duster, 2001; Kitsuse and Cicourel, 1963: 135; Sudnow, 1965: 255). It is the unguided, and arguably biased (Louati, 2018) judgements of FPs in these agencies which bring children into contact with the police-led CHANNEL process in the first place. This is the practice which ultimately produces the statistical levels of

referrals that are used in Government and media narratives to construct the risk reality of CR<sup>49</sup>.

Arguably, as referred to earlier, those making the decisions to refer a child potentially perceive their action to be required in fulfilling the Duty that has been imposed upon them. Identifying children as a priority in PREVENT, based on weak theory and questionable evidence, is undoubtedly going to place an unfair burden on already struggling services working with children, to be searching for risks that may not even exist (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Carson, 2015; Hacking, 1991). The interplay of austerity and mandatory monitoring ultimately makes it more likely that cases will be missed or wrongly assessed because of the pressure on human and other resources in organisations working with children, paradoxically making children and practitioners alike, less safe (Ainsworth, 2002; Beck, Ogloff and Corbishley, 1994;; Mathews and Kenny, 2008; Mathews, Lee and Norman, 2016; McGovern, 2016; Pietrantonio et al, 2013; Puffett, 2015; 2018; Stanley, Guru and Gupta, 2018; Vander Stoep, Evens and Taub, 1997). PREVENT is thus, in more ways than one, a ‘wicked problem’ (Rittel and Webber, 1973); a type of social policy that through attempts to address one ‘risk’, will likely create more<sup>50</sup> (Breyer, 1993; Hood, Rothstein and Baldwin, 2001).

PREVENT cannot however be fully understood through policy and legislative analysis. It is made real not by what is written in policy and law, but by what is done with and through it in practice. This underlines the need for a study that examines the operationalisation of PREVENT policy and legislation in terms of how practitioners

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<sup>49</sup> ‘Thousands of pupils at risk of extremism’ –See for example the article ‘Schools Refer Five Children A Day to Steer Them from Terror’ The Times 12 September (Cornish, 2016)

<sup>50</sup> A successful case of race discrimination was brought by a family against Bedfordshire local education authority. They were reviewing the guidance they give to schools as a result of the finding (Anderson, 23 July 2017).

work with and make sense of risk in this context as part of opening up this practical-processual ‘black box’ (Latour, 1987: 1).

## 4. RESEARCHING RISK

### 4.1 Introduction

The preceding chapters described how theories of risk have shaped social policy affecting children, more specifically in the making of the risk of CR in policy and legislation. PREVENT legislation attempts to apply risk theory to an area which is more accurately defined as a ‘Knightian Uncertainty’. It is an act of government which has leveraged various other knowledges to construct the risk of CR in circumstances of ‘not knowing’ the nature or extent of this uncertainty. ‘Not knowing’ is thereby established as a structural condition for those working with PREVENT.

PREVENT, as the law often does, claims to be neutrally applied, but the ‘proxies’ of risk theory, policy, legislation or problematic official statistics (Kitsuse and Cicourel, 1963) are incapable of telling the story of PREVENT in practice. This is because PREVENT *is* a practical reality. Thus, in order to understand, for example, how racial and religious profiling, criminalisation or labelling does or *does not* take place as a result of risk work, the routine everyday actions of the actors involved in the processes and procedures that potentially contribute to these issues need to be explored and understood (Bogen and Lynch, 1993; Spector and Kitsuse, 1973).

Arguments concerning the structural, systemic or ‘institutionalised racism’ that is produced and reproduced through stereotypical constructions of who is ‘a risk’ and the expectations of racial disparities brought about by the criminalisation and labelling of minority children as ‘at risk’ of radicalisation are important here (Abbas, 2012; Birt, 2016; Bolloten, 2015; Carmichael, 1967; Kundnani, 2009; 2014; Macpherson, 1999). However, they are also incomplete, analysing and critiquing PREVENT from the outside. Structures of intervention do not implement themselves, practitioners do. And, given the mandatory devolution of responsibility and authority at the base of

PREVENT, the actions and interactions of those tasked with implementing the policy and procedures play a central role in making PREVENT what it is.

In order to open up the making of PREVENT for systematic investigation, this chapter sets out the bases of the practice-oriented study subsequent chapters report on. Drawing upon various qualitative research traditions and considering PREVENT's unique characteristics, that practice oriented approach represents the best way of gaining an understanding of the cultural conditions and social means by which knowledge of risk and CR is produced in this context (Argote and Guo, 2016; Bourdieu, 1993; Beck, Ogloff and Corbishley, 1994; Douglas, 1985; 1992; Lipsky, 1980; Slovic, 1987; Wilkinson, 2010). The rest of this chapter sets out the background to the research, including the setting in which it took place, as well as outlining the overall research strategy and design. A key aim was to gather and understand the accounts and stories told by practitioners themselves about what is involved in working strategically and in frontline positions with children (Haraway, 1989; Oakley, 1998; Reay, 1996). These accounts and stories in turn provide insight into the processes through which risk is learned, defined, seen, assessed and managed in a rapidly changing and challenging environment.

## 4.2 Research Questions

Three main questions guided the study:

1. How is 'risk articulated in Government strategy in relation to preventing children from being radicalised, and how does Government conceive the scope of organisations involved?
2. What organisational decision-making processes exist for identifying 'risk' in children between 11-18 years?

3. How do practitioners interpret 'risk', and their responsibilities in relation to it, within the paradigm of radicalisation and safeguarding? More specifically;
- How do they match, contest or negotiate with Government strategy?
  - And how do they or their organisational decision-making processes safeguard from discrimination?

The articulation of risk within the narratives for preventing CR was explored through the preceding critical and investigative reviews of the conceptual and theoretical foundations of both risk and CR within literature, government policy and legislation. Moreover, it was through those critical investigative reviews that practitioner risk-work with the 11 to 18 years of age grouping of children was determined to be a priority for study as a result of the claims of potential criminalisation of children through the actions of PREVENT. As this is the age when children come to be defined as having 'criminal responsibility' for their actions under the law of England and Wales, this group of children are most vulnerable to potential criminalisation via PREVENT. How they are treated in practice is therefore crucial to know.

Bodies responsible for risk of CR were thus identified and practitioners in various organisations and with various backgrounds were approached to take part in the fieldwork exercises described later in this chapter. Finding out how the policy nexus of safeguarding and CR comes to be understood in practice, or operationalised, requires methods that enable practitioners' ways of interpreting risk and their responsibilities in relation to it to be probed deeply. Working with practitioners, the aim was to explore how 'risk-work decisions' are made actionable, transparent and

bias free at the earliest stage of identification of the risk of CR, in a period of legislative, policy and socio-political change.

### 4.3 Research Design

A flexible and ethically framed qualitative research strategy was required to gain insight into the multi-dimensional aspects of practitioners' processes for working with children, risk and PREVENT, including how they translate policy understanding into actions and decisions that can be transparent (Bryman, 2016; Denzin, 2009; Denzin and Lincoln, 2013; Punch, 2000; 2014). As a practice-oriented case study focused on a specific location (Cronin, 2014; Mills et al, 2010; Schön, 1983; Yin, 2004; 2014), the study endeavoured to respond to the absence of local practitioner voices and perspectives in national policy debates and discussions.

The methodologies which underpin the study were selected because they provided the best opportunities for learning more about how policy and legislation is being operationalised; that is, how local practitioners experience national government policy, what they do to make sense of it and what dilemmas they face in their work as a result of it. As a qualitative study it generated rich and detailed data, giving voice to the lived experiences of practitioners working with risk and children in Liverpool (Bittner, 1974; Geertz, 1972; Haraway, 1989; Huberman and Miles, 2002; Reay, 1996; Shore and Wright, 1997). The collaborative aspects of the research ensured that voices were not only heard but responded to, in relation to modifications to the research design, the research questions and the presentation of the findings.

#### 4.3.1 A Methodological Frame of Reference for a Practice-Oriented Study of Risk and ‘Not-Knowing’

The earlier discussions of risk theory pointed out that the concept of risk is one which is constructed and mobilised politically for a variety of purposes. Attempts to enact the ‘precautionary principle’ in risk prediction practices related to children, crime and welfare, entangle all sorts of actors in the management of possibilistic risks based on little or no knowledge (Gelev, 2011; Gross, 2016; Mythen and Walklate, 2010; 2013; 2016; Rasmussen, 2006; Simon, 1972; Stanley, Guru and Coppock, 2017; Walklate and Mythen, 2011). There is little practice-based research into the ways in which ‘not knowing’ (Beck, 2002; 2003) shapes the work of individuals tasked with operationalising risk policy and practice (Mythen, 2015; Mythen and Walklate, 2006; 2016; Walklate and Mythen, 2011) and this study was an attempt to address that directly. It was also an attempt to address the gap identified by Baker concerning practitioners’ decision making relating to children in risk contexts with high media exposure or, in other words, in the kinds of ‘socially amplified’ circumstances which heighten anxieties and compel responses without adequate information (Altheide, 2002; 2007; 2009; 2013; Baker, 2008; Baker, Gabrielatos and McEnery, 2013; Beck, Bonss and Lau, 2003; Ben-Haim and Demertzis, 2016; Füredi, 2008; 2009; 2016; Kasperson et al, 1988; Lash, 2003; Lean, 2012; Sian, Law and Sayyid, 2012; Silva, 2017; Simon, 1972; Wilkinson, 2010).

The starting point for doing this, as discussed above, was the recognition that CR is both a social construction and a reality (Hacking, 1988; 1991; 1995; 1999). Understanding the different ways in which this reality was being made in and through practice required a methodological framework that was practice-oriented. In that, the ethnomethodological custom of focusing on the ‘how’ rather than the ‘why’ (Atkinson,

1988; Kupchik et al, 2017; Lynch, 2002; Maynard and Clayman, 1991; Peyrot, 1992; Rawls, 2008) greatly influenced the design of the study. Taking up the question of how labels come to be applied to individuals or communities in criminal justice or welfare settings and how realities or social facts are assembled is not new. There are a number of classic studies of practices, procedures and interactions in ‘institutional’ domains such as education, medicine, police work, courts and welfare settings and these provided a set of exemplary studies which this project drew on as a resource (see Bayley and Bittner, 1984; Becker, 1985; Bittner, 1970; Cicourel, 1968; Garfinkel, 1964; 1967; Goodwin, 1994; Lipsky, 1980; Smith, 1978; Sudnow, 1965; 1972). The influence of those studies can be seen throughout the thesis.

The work of Michael Lipsky has been a particularly important influence. Lipsky’s theory of ‘street-level bureaucracy’ (Lipsky, 1980) in the administration of welfare, demonstrates that government policy in theory and policy as actually implemented in practice varies widely and often inequitably, mainly due to the exertion of discretionary power by over-stretched public service staff to manage often impossible workloads and contradictory demands. Lipsky focuses on the operationalising space between policy and statistical outcomes as it is in that space where actors make difficult and challenging judgements and decisions on the basis of how they understand, make sense of, interpret, modify or ‘simplify’ policy (Lipsky, 1980: 83). Hill and Varone expand on policy ‘simplification’ as being often with the intention of improving a policy which is perceived as flawed in practice (Hill and Varone, 2012). Exploring the risk of CR in practice, following the example of Lipsky’s work, makes it possible to move beyond analyses of how it is conceptualised in theory and imagined or built within legislation and policy.

It is the ‘risk-work’ (Horlick-Jones, 2005), the interpretations and actions of practitioners, rather than the associated policies, legislation and tools for identifying and assessing risk alone, which can make or counter CR becoming a tangible reality.

For instance, the classifications that are applied to a child’s actions or behaviours, involve subjective evaluations by practitioners about who ought to be sorted into which category. This often takes place in the early part of the decision-making process which attributes a specific classification label or status to behaviours or circumstances, an institutional point Duster refers to as the ‘site of rate construction’ (Bowker and Star, 1999; Dequen, 2013; Duster, 2001: 135; Jayyusi, 1984; Rappert, 2012; Scott, 1985; Shore and Wright, 2015). Practically engaging in categorisation of what behaviour is desirable and what is undesirable, who is ‘troubling’ or ‘in trouble’ and which child is ‘at risk’ and which ‘a risk’ (Bowker and Star, 1999; Cicourel, 1968; Hacking, 1999: 131; Heath Kelly, 2013; 2017; Jayyusi, 1985; Scott, 1985; Smith, 1978), is the point where suspicion of ‘vulnerability’ is transformed into official knowledge or ‘facts’ about the extent of the risk of CR (Kitsuse and Cicourel, 1963). Given this, how children come to acquire, or do not acquire, the label of ‘risk’ in the first place can only be discovered by focussing on the practitioners who work with them in everyday, frontline situations. This point of categorisation is outlined as the ‘identification’ stage<sup>51</sup> of the CHANNEL referral process for PREVENT.

A methodological framework which focuses on practice, makes it possible to discover the processes and procedures for how risk-specific knowledge and understanding is formed or adapted for practitioner judgement and decision making (see Finucane et al, 2000; Finucane et al, 2000a; Gregory and Satterfield, 2002;

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<sup>51</sup> CHANNEL Duty Guidance see Diagram 1, page 115

Henwood et al, 2011; Kemshall, 2014; Satterfield, Mertz and Slovic, 2004; Slovic, 1987; Slovic et al, 2004; Slovic, Monahan and MacGregor, 2000; Slovic and Peters, 2006). It also makes it possible to examine how the properties and value orientations of risk concepts, alongside any techniques of RA, are understood and implemented by practitioners. The role of practitioners is underplayed, if not altogether ignored in the legislative process of making the risk of CR. But, with work on discretionary decision-making in mind, the role of practitioners involved in identification at various levels within frontline services for children starts to look critical (Hill and Varone, 2012). Despite their involvement in making policy reality, the level of agency practitioners have, or perceive they have, in contributing to, upholding or undermining the risk knowledges of the social problem of CR which inform these classifications when they operationalise PREVENT, is not currently well understood.

Focusing on individual actors and their agency is central to a practitioner-focused study (Cuff, Sharrock and Francis, 2006: 169; Haraway, 1989; Oakley, 1998; Reay, 1996). In the present context, this is because the ways in which people are tasked with operationalising the PREVENT policy in practice makes them a vital part of how the risk of CR becomes reality. Rather than assume uniformity, a practice-oriented study in this field also makes it possible to explore and understand the internal tensions and inconsistencies in the multi-form and multi-purpose uses of the highly subjective term of 'risk' by practitioners from CJS and non-CJS fields. Focusing on what practitioners do with risk, can also provide lessons about how both policy and practice could be improved in the future (Everitt et al, 1992; Fuller and Petch, 1995).

The interest in 'operationalisation' is a key aspect of this study as it involves an examination of the detail of what happens and how when practitioners put policy into action. Operationalisation could also be read as 'praxis'; a concept which

foregrounds the point that theory and policy find expression in action (Quijada Cerecer, Cahill and Bradley, 2013). A third term might be ‘praxiology’ (Cicourel, 1968: 27). When actors from both CJS and non-CJS domains, through their expanded role in exercising organisational discretionary powers of intervention and subjective decision-making, socially construct the truths and realities or distort the social ‘facts’ about children’s involvement in crime, they are engaged in elaborating what Cicourel describes as an organisational praxiology (ibid). In probing the ‘praxiology’ that characterises the ways in which CJS and non-CJS practitioners develop the knowledge and understanding they need to ‘properly’ identify a child as vulnerable to the risk of CR and the procedures and practices for assessing that risk, this study borrows from the qualitative traditions of afore-mentioned ethnographic and ethnomethodological studies as well as classics of symbolic interactionist, interpretivist and constructionist research (Becker, 1963; Cicourel, 1968; Goffman, 1989; Kitsuse and Cicourel, 1963; Sacks, 1986).

What makes these traditions relevant here, is that they focus on uncovering and documenting the ways in which practitioners use knowledge, procedures, and considerations to give meaning to, make sense of and take actions in specific situations (Rouncefield, 2011; ten Have, 2004). Adopting such a strategy allows researchers to develop a more nuanced understanding of settings. In this study, this approach was adopted as it makes it possible to explore how policy, legislation and techniques for risk identification and assessment work in practice, and, through that, to gain insight into how the risk of CR is being constructed on the ground.

### *Exploring Risk Perception and Bias*

With risk decisions often motivated more by the perception of the presence of risk, than evidence of the presence of risk (see Finucane et al, 2000a; Satterfield, Mertz and Slovic, 2004; Slovic, 1987; Slovic et al, 2004; Slovic and Peters, 2006; Tversky and Kahneman, 1974), it was doubly imperative for this study to examine how practitioners themselves saw the risk of CR. This meant finding ways to explore discretionary judgement and decision-making, often said by practitioners to be innate, or an experience or skill that is difficult, if not impossible, to teach (Bayley and Bittner, 1984; Bittner, 1967; Dekker, 2007; Lacasse, 2017). Discretionary judgement and decision-making on risk, such as the idea of risk as ‘feeling’ (Slovic, 2002: 425; Slovic et al, 2004; Walklate, 1999), however, potentially also provides spaces and places for bias to germinate, manifest and develop into stereotypes which, inevitably inform these instinctive or ‘automatic decisions’ with ‘implicit biases’ about an individual based on aspects of their identity (see Amodio and Devine, 2006; Bayley and Bittner, 1984; Cameron, Payne and Knobe, 2010; Cicourel, 1968; Finucane et al, 2000; 2000a; Gendler, 2011; Gilliam et al, 2016; Goodwin, 1994; Hall et al, 2015; Payne, Vuletich and Lundberg, 2017; Strachan and Tallant, 1997; Sudnow, 1965; 1972; Van Eijk, 2017; Weyman and Barnett, 2016; Williams, 2015). Discretionary judgement and decision-making is acknowledged to connect to both positive and negative discrimination, playing, for instance, a significant role in contemporary CJS processes and the disproportionate discriminatory impact on BME individuals (Berk, 2009; Cicourel, 1968; Cohen, 1972; 1985; Fassin, 2011; 2013; Gelsthorpe and Padfield, 2003; Goldson and Chigwada-Bailey, 1999; Goodwin, 1994; Holdaway, 1996; Hood, 1998; McCulloch and Pickering, 2009; McCulloch and Wilson, 2016; Sudnow, 1965;

Van Eijk, 2017) a situation described as institutional or systemic discrimination (Carmichael, 1967; Macpherson, 1999).

The concept of systemic discrimination is limited however if the actions of individuals within those systems are not given sufficient acknowledgement in their establishment and sustenance. The ‘excessive’ discretionary practices within PREVENT exercised by a wide variety of actors is singled out for criticism by the United Nations (Kiai, 2017). Of particular importance in the context of this study, then, was the relationship between these large scale or macro-theoretical and conceptual issues relating to risk and bias, their mobilisation through government policy and the small-scale case study of related everyday organisational practices (Essed, 1991; Fassin, 2011; Garfinkel, 1964; Holdaway, 1996; Horlick-Jones, 2005; Scott, 1985; Tulloch and Lupton, 2003; Zinn, 2008). They are not mutually exclusive phenomena – to explore one, is not to deny the other. They are approached in the sense that investigation into the micro can be used to illuminate and explicate issues relating to the macro, or indeed vice versa.

### *Power in Story-telling*

Integral to the process of creating and managing this study was maintaining a reflexive attention to research practice (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Schön, 1983). The decisions researchers make about whose stories get told, from which perspectives and in what ways, as feminist standpoint theory argues, cannot ignore issues of power (Becker and Aiello, 2013; Doucet and Mauthner, 2008; Freshwater, 2008; Haraway, 1989; Reay, 1996). Therefore, ongoing considerations of the real, potential or unintentional manifestations of power, distortion, subjectivity or bias informed the design of the research as well as research in the field (McLain, 2002). The voices and

experiences of practitioners who work with children, as was made clear in earlier chapters, were not taken into account in the design of the PREVENT agenda, nor were they consulted about the challenges it potentially presents for their professional practice. Their exclusion was an integral part of the ethical deliberations that led this research to be framed as a qualitative practice-oriented study focused on seeing the issues from their perspective (Mills, Durepos and Wiebe, 2010; Schön, 1983). In recognition of the power dynamics within social research, it is a conscious effort of empowerment. The focus on practitioners and the work they do is thus one of the strengths of the methodological framework adopted in the study. It is also democratic insofar as it gives equal standing to the researcher and the researched by emphasising the point that actors' knowledge of the everyday world should be taken seriously (Atkinson, 1988; Rawls, 2008). In light of this, this study recognises practitioners' centrality, treating them as co-constructors of knowledge about CR (Freshwater, 2008; Lees, 2008; Williams, 2006).

Involving practitioners was not without its challenges, however. The unique multi-setting and multi-agency aspect of PREVENT, which simultaneously straddles criminal justice and welfare and involves children's practitioners from diverse institutions in diverse ways contingent upon geography, meant there was no single physical location or setting where decision-making could be studied all at once. PREVENT is what is implemented not what is written and that makes it difficult to study. The adoption of a case study approach (Hammersley, Gomm and Foster, 2009; Yin, 2004; 2014) was a response to those difficulties, as was the decision to focus upon the early decision-making processes for risk identification by utilising a variety of methods rather than just one.

#### 4.3.2 Case Study Background

The research interest in how ‘risk’ is defined, identified and worked with as it relates to children, grew out of an earlier study into youth hate crime prevention work in Liverpool (Vaughn, 2014). That study identified the increasing use of the ‘risk’ label as justification for geographically and demographically targeted community safety and community cohesion work, in both policy narratives and practice, involving both CJS and non-CJS practitioners. It also highlighted confusions in how practitioners understand prevention as well as the challenges associated with demonstrating impact, alongside a problematic vagueness in the definitions of the crimes that work was aimed at preventing, namely hate crime but also, by extension, in policing extremism.

The PREVENT agenda on counter-terrorism was outside of the scope of that earlier study but was often referred to by participants as a growing specialist and discrete area of police work, linked to hate crime strategies and an area of concern for the ‘at risk’ youth encountered by non-CJS practitioners. Work on preventing extremism linked to hate crime at that time was referred to as crime prevention or community cohesion work, but draft PREVENT legislation was already on the horizon to reallocate the PREVENT agenda into the realm of pre-crime safeguarding, thereby co-opting the language and providers of welfare services into this new approach (Goddard, 2012).

This fundamental shift suggested an interesting series of moves were underway. Exploring those moves, and the problems they might conceivably create, became the basis for the study this thesis reports on, which explored how practitioners work with highly contested policy and legislation in practice, at a time of acute economic austerity.

As a case study of Liverpool practitioners, the study was conducted over a period of two years<sup>52</sup>, spanning two different points of time – the period before and the period after the legislated PREVENT Duty. Leading up to and during enactment, very little was known about how organisations who worked with children, especially those in non-statutory welfare, education and youth work services, were responding or preparing to respond to the new Duty (Birt, 2016; Bolloten, 2015; Boora, 2015; Coppock and McGovern, 2014; McKendrick and Finch, 2016; Stanley and Guru, 2015; Thomas, 2016; 2017). Nonetheless, however unprepared they might have been, between April 2015 and March 2016 organisations in these areas across England and Wales referred 2,074 children aged 11 to 18 years to CHANNEL. A figure that represented over half of all referrals to CHANNEL in that period (HM Government, 2017; Stevenson, 2015a).

Undertaking a case study within geographical boundaries allowed for an in-depth exploration of these shifts ‘within a real-life context’ (Yin, 2004: 1; 2014). The unique historical, geographical and economic characteristics of the city of Liverpool, a location defined as a PREVENT Priority 2 Area, made it a significant case for studying how a new praxiology emerged at a point in time when actions to prevent CR became a statutory legal duty. As a particular context of practice, there were lessons to be learned from the Liverpool experience. Studying what was happening in the city around PREVENT was also an opportunity to deepen understandings of how FPs working with children in that area gain, create and utilise the knowledge and understanding of risk to help them identify children as ‘vulnerable to the risk of radicalisation’.

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<sup>52</sup> The fieldwork took place between March 2015 and October 2016, prior to the significant UK terror attacks in Manchester and London and the ‘snap’ general election in May and June 2017.

### *Historical and geographical context of PREVENT in Liverpool*

Liverpool became a PREVENT Priority Area (Tier 2) in 2012, according to certain benefits as previously described, after a request from Merseyside Police was submitted to the Home Office stating that evidence had been identified in relation to the local threat of radicalisation<sup>53</sup>. This evidence has not been made public. There were a small number of highly publicised terror-related allegations<sup>54</sup> related to university students in the city but, as with national statistics, there are no reported prosecutions of adults or children from the city for terror-related offences. Liverpool, however, has seen a marked increase in recorded racist and religious hate crimes,<sup>55</sup> an increased presence of the now proscribed far right organisation National Action and prosecutions of adults affiliated to it<sup>56</sup>. There is also a long history of community-led political and social activism against what has been termed ‘racial terrorism’ in the city since the 1980’s (Frost and Phillips, 2011; Husbands, 1984; Small, 1994; 2018; Taaffe and Mulhearn, 1988; Tibbles, 1996).

### *The ‘Conditions of Work’ – the Economic Context*

A central consideration in this study are, to use Lipsky’s phrase, the ‘conditions of work’ for practitioners (Lipsky, 1980: 27). Those conditions include the ways in which organisations prepared to implement the Duty during a period of ‘austerity’

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<sup>53</sup> WRAP session

<sup>54</sup> The case here was the arrest, failed prosecution and Home Office banning order for Liverpool John Moores student Rizwan Sharif in 2009 (Laville, Norton-Taylor and Bates, 2009). Three Manchester students believed to have travelled to fight for Islamic State in 2012/13, one of whom was reportedly a recruiter for IS and was allegedly linked to the perpetrator of the Manchester Arena bombings in May 2017, were also students at Liverpool John Moores University (Burke, 2017)

<sup>55</sup> Racist and religious recorded hate crimes on Merseyside rose from 1137 in 2011 to 1772 in 2016 (HM Government, 2016a). Liverpool has experienced race-related killings in the very recent past, including Marlon Moran (Liverpool Echo, 2007) and Anthony Walker in nearby Huyton in 2005 (Anthony Walker Foundation, 2017). This reflects the surge of race hate crimes recorded in advance of and around the Brexit referendum (Burnett, 2013; 2017)

<sup>56</sup> These ranged from threats to Luciana Berger MP, marches and attacks (BBC, 2014; McHale, 2015; Press Association, 2016; Whelan, 2015)

within the UK. Austerity is an approach to public resource allocation which has impacted greatly on the UK population<sup>57</sup> (Alston, 2018) and the funding and resources for LA's and others within the public, voluntary and community sectors to deliver public services (Hastings et al, 2015; Jones et al, 2016; Cooper and Whyte, 2017). Liverpool City Council has been particularly negatively affected under austerity. By 2020 it will have experienced a 68% reduction in central government funding, with staff and council leaders predicting the loss of key social services as a result (Maguire, 2017). Circumstances in which service providers saw diminishing resources but swelling demands were an important backdrop to this study of risk. The risk of CR has been consistently portrayed as a near imminent threat and thus an urgent priority for action. Yet, practitioners are operating in circumstances where they lack both time and resources (Ballard and Seibold, 2004)– something PREVENT does not address. This suggested operational tensions from the outset.

Given these background conditions, the research had to be designed in a way that made it possible to explore how knowledge and expertise for implementation of the Duty was communicated and developed within them, as well as how competing demands on time, attention and resources potentially impacted on decisions about risk identification or assessment. The practitioners expected to operationalise the PREVENT strategy and thus comply with the PREVENT Duty, despite the swift pace of change across the landscape of policy, had to deal with new layers of complexity being added to an organisational environment already fraught with uncertainty. In order to illuminate how the theories and concepts of pre-crime, risk and radicalisation

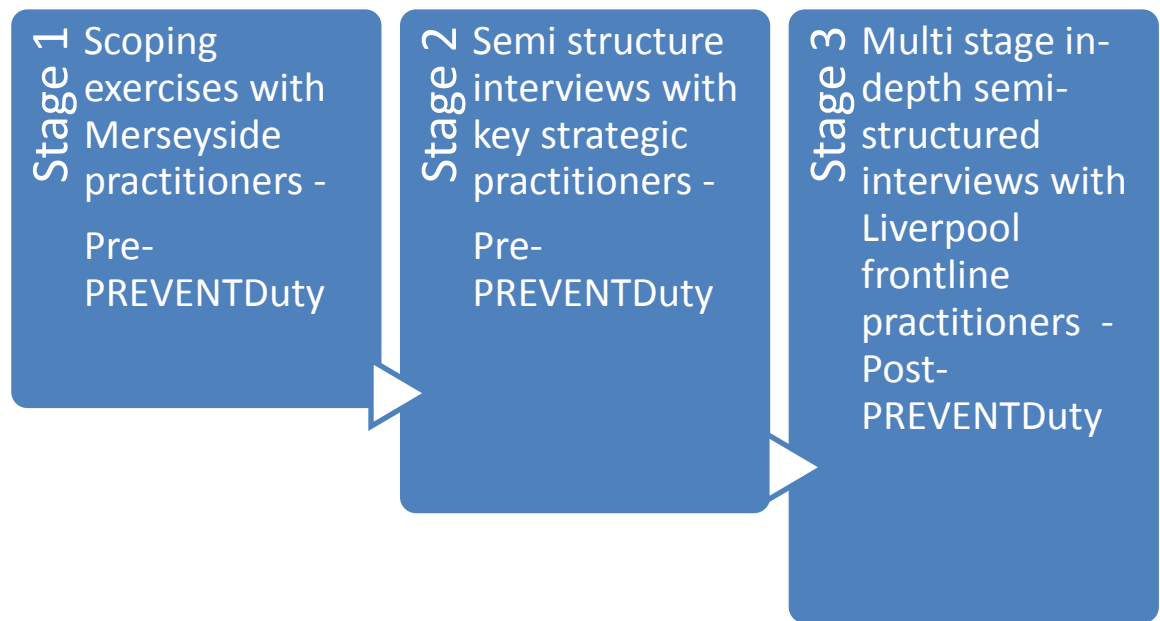
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<sup>57</sup> Statement on Visit to the United Kingdom, by Professor Philip Alston, United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights describes austerity as “a punitive, mean-spirited, and often callous approach apparently designed to instil discipline where it is least useful, to impose a rigid order on the lives of those least capable of coping with today’s world, and elevating the goal of enforcing blind compliance over a genuine concern to improve the well-being of those at the lowest levels of British society.” (Alston, 2018)

interact with the realities of welfare practice, namely safeguarding children, and to give practitioners the best opportunity to describe the challenges this presented to them in terms of their day-to-day work in Liverpool, the methodological approach needed to be as flexible and responsive as possible to keep in touch with a political and policy landscape that was and still is shifting constantly. These challenges were explicitly addressed in the process of designing a study that was always intended to be practitioner-led and practitioner-informed.

#### 4.3.3 Co-Designing a Multi-Stage Case Study

Drawing from aspects of various qualitative research traditions, particularly participatory and collaborative action research, early engagement with the participants as part of co-designing the study (and then frequent subsequent engagement from there) was both an ethical decision and a useful validity check (Altrichter, Kemmis and McTaggart, 2002; Costello, 2003; Creswell, 2009; Denscombe, 1998; Hart and Bond, 1995; McNiff and Whitehead, 2005; Punch, 2000; 2014; Reason and Bradbury, 2008). Taking guidance from principles of collaborative research, the practitioners who were central to the study were treated as equal contributors in the co-production of the knowledge (Hewison, Gale and Shapiro, 2012; Jasanoff, 2004). This ensured understandings of how PREVENT is operationalised in local practice were collaboratively worked up by the researcher and the practitioners together. This approach was also a safeguard against any researcher bias or preconceptions about what the dilemmas facing practitioners might be. In order to build a study of this kind, a multi-stage design was adopted, see Diagram 2 below:



*Diagram 2: Multi-phase fieldwork approach*

As the diagram shows, two stages of interviews with strategic and frontline Liverpool practitioners were preceded, shaped and informed by the first stage scoping exercises with practitioners working with children and PREVENT in Merseyside in advance of the enactment of the PREVENT Duty. The methodological details of these stages are expanded upon below, but the main benefits of co-designing the research in this way were three-fold. It ensures that the research questions focused on what practitioners regarded as relevant aspects of risk work in this setting, it made it possible to develop trust and rapport with participants (Appendix A) in a politically-charged atmosphere and it allowed for flexibility in developing different ways of capturing data in a rapidly changing practice environment.

#### 4.3.4 Accessing the Field

The socio-political background and ‘conditions of work’ described above meant that accessing participants for this research was a challenge. When first

contacted almost all potential participants, irrespective of their field of practice, expressed anxieties about participating linked to the controversial nature of PREVENT and the official secrecy surrounding the practices of CHANNEL. Practitioners from community-based organisations privately articulated their concerns about involvement in the research. However, while some were fearful, others were keen to be involved to demonstrate their organisations' transparency at a time when they felt under intense scrutiny by the media and Government.

Conducting a study that would highlight the real challenges for practitioners while simultaneously addressing personal and political concerns and anxieties about 'speaking out' about PREVENT was a significant ethical consideration. Expressing the purpose of the research clearly and stressing its neutrality was crucial (Appendix B). Following first contact, there were also continuous conversations about confidentiality and identifiability beyond the formal consenting process. As agreed with practitioners, all data has been anonymised (Oliver, 2010: 82), identifiability has been collaboratively monitored along with accuracy in the findings of the first scoping exercise (Vaughn et al, 2015) and data obtained from interviews has been presented based on post-interview consultation.

In explaining and negotiating confidentiality with practitioners as part of gaining informed consent, however, there was recognition and acceptance of the limited effectiveness of anonymity for practitioners in unique roles within the case study site, such as the LA or police PREVENT lead officers. This may have constrained these practitioners somewhat, but they were always, open, honest and engaged and the level and quality of the data provided does not appear to have been adversely affected. This aspect of confidentiality was one which placed an acute focus on the potential for harm to individual or organisational reputation in how the data was

presented, and this has been taken into account at each stage of analysis and in the presentation of findings. The methods and practices adopted aimed to provide practitioners with an opportunity to speak with confidence about their experiences and articulate practice-informed solutions. Based on their feedback, that has been the outcome.

While Merton famously argued that researching people that do or do not share one's own profession or identity (Merton, 1972) places researchers in the position of insiders or outsiders but not both, there is an argument that a space in between exists for 'insider-outsider' researchers who inhabit both spheres (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009; Kanuha, 2000; Kerstetter, 2012). In this study the researcher had been a senior professional in both criminal justice and third sector organisations within the geographical location but had not worked in the field of PREVENT, nor necessarily with the participants interviewed. Being 'situated on the hyphen' (Kanuha, 2000: 443) in this way had both advantages and disadvantages which will now be outlined.

At the time the research was conducted, for instance, the researcher was also a primary school governor and a trustee for an international charity. This provided insights into the challenges posed by understanding, resourcing and applying the PREVENT strategy but it also provided access to policy and training<sup>58</sup> as well as entry to networks and contacts for professionals in the field who could act as 'gatekeepers' (Broadhead and Rist, 1976; Jupp 1989). Gatekeepers facilitated access to both strategic and frontline staff within their own organisations and practitioner communities

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<sup>58</sup> The researcher also concurrently attended a Premier League Safeguarding training programme for Charity Trustees and the Liverpool local authority Workshop to Raise Awareness of PREVENT(WRAP) for school trustees and staff in February and November 2015, respectively. Through these further insight and information on the workings of the PREVENT and CHANNEL processes and procedures locally in this Priority area were gained.

connected to various organisations, making it possible to ‘snowball’ sample (Berg, 1988).

The potential for power dynamics to impact on how the researcher was potentially perceived and how far participants understood their involvement to be completely voluntary in the consenting process was frequently considered (Reay, 1996). Where the researcher’s background was known, it possibly influenced the participants’ responses inhibiting their perception of feeling able to refuse involvement or their candour, especially when exploring issues of bias within their understanding or judgements of risk. For FPs, the level of general anxiety regarding the subject area coupled with the austerity environment they were operating in, may have raised concerns about their own practice being negatively judged. As Bridge et al observe:

“Interviewing may change respondents’ attitudes about a topic if they come to see themselves as having insufficient information or opinions about something that they otherwise perceive to be socially important” (Bridge et al, 1977: 63)

This is particularly resonant when conducting research in circumstances of ‘not knowing’. Practitioners were, therefore, continually reassured that they were the experts in the field of working with children in order to allay anticipated concerns that the research was a test of their specific expertise on CR. This was further underlined by the collaborative nature of the study; their input framed the direction taken from the outset.

#### 4.4 Research Methods and Methods for Analysis

The methodologies employed for data collection whilst not ethnographic in the classic sense, nonetheless, had an ethnographic orientation or sensibility. This was a study of a process as it unfolded over a period of time and it used different methods to arrive at an understanding of the realities of that situation as seen from a practitioners' point-of-view (Bittner, 1974; Geertz, 1972; Shore and Wright, 1997; 1999; 2015). Finding out how practitioners were working with the risk of CR in a tense legal and policy environment required a mixed research approach. First, the flexible and responsive qualitative methods of scoping exercises (Arksey and O'Malley, 2005; Colquhoun et al, 2014; Levac, Colquhoun and O'Brien, 2010), and then two waves of in-depth semi-structured interviews with both strategic and FPs.

##### 4.4.1 Participant Group – Sampling and Recruitment Techniques

The study involved practitioners working with or for children aged 11 to 18 in the city of Liverpool and the scoping exercises were undertaken to identify who should be involved. The 'key informant' technique used in the scoping exercises indicated that a 'purposive sampling technique' should be employed, in which "particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide that cannot be gotten as well from other choices" (Maxwell, 1997: 87; 2002). As a study of how policy is understood and operationalised by those expected to implement it, this technique could also be described as 'stakeholder sampling' (Palys, 2008). The participants in this inquiry were purposively drawn from a variety of CJS and non-CJS fields and professions but with the common feature of working with or for children in this age range, to explore the earlier identified dilemma created by the combination of a pre-crime and safeguarding duty. They had not all had the experience of identifying children's vulnerability to the risk of CR but all of them

equally have the legal expectation that they would be able to do so under the newly enacted PREVENT Duty.

In the initial stage of participant recruitment, the only criteria for involvement was that participants had to work with or for children and young people. Following the scoping exercises this was broken down and refined for deciding involvement in the subsequent stages.

First, key strategic practitioners (SP) were identified as a distinct group because of their strategic responsibility for promoting or leading on PREVENT in the city of Liverpool. They were accessed either in follow up interviews after the scoping exercises if they had been involved, or via 'snowballed' introductions from the scoping exercise participants.

Second, FPs were identified as those delivering face-to-face working with children aged 11 to 18 in Liverpool. Following a second application for ethical approval for this stage of fieldwork, potential participants from this group were contacted for the second fieldwork stage (Appendix C). This group was accessed either: through a follow up interview after the scoping exercise; via direct email to organisations known to the researcher; by utilising practitioners from the scoping exercise as gatekeepers to others in their organisation; or on the basis of snowballed introductions.

In total, 6 participants took part in the two scoping exercises, 8 participants took part in the key SP interviews and 7 participants were involved in the multi-phase FP interviews (Appendix A).

Those who participated are drawn from diverse groups in terms of work settings (CJS, LA, social work, third sector, housing, education and youth work), job roles and positions, including those holding senior and junior 'internal expert' and

‘external expert’ roles on PREVENT and safeguarding. Those in ‘internal expert’ roles have responsibility for safeguarding or PREVENT within an organisation, whereas ‘external experts’ provide advice to other organisations on these issues.

Case studies are always likely to involve a degree of ‘selectivity’ in terms of participants and this could be interpreted as research bias which reduces the potential for generalisability (Lofland and Lofland, 1984). However, generalisability in that sense was not the aim here (Donmoyer, 2009; Stake, 1995). The ‘particularisation’ sought here allowed a full and thorough knowledge to be developed of individuals’ views and experiences. The level of information gathered from those tasked with strategic and frontline operationalisation of PREVENT was judged to be sufficient for ‘saturation’. It provided the best frame for exploring the multi-layered processes and practices of CR risk identification and assessment within this specific context. The study was thus intentionally specific to this time and place and was not meant to be directly generalised to a wider population of practitioners working with children. Nonetheless, lessons with more general relevance can be drawn from it. While the ‘conditions of work’ practitioners must orient to and act within will vary from one practice context to the next, the structural dilemmas they are posed with by PREVENT may not (Lipsky, 1980). If the study cast light on some of the invariant features of those dilemmas, it would therefore stand to make an important contribution.

#### 4.4.2 Stage 1 Scoping Exercises to Develop the Inquiry

A scoping exercise or study is traditionally a method for mapping research evidence with the purpose of identifying gaps and opportunities for innovation (Arksey and O’Malley, 2005; Colquhoun et al, 2014; Daudt, van Mosel and Scott, 2013; Levac, Colquhoun and O’Brien, 2010). The scoping exercises for this study were held in March and July 2015 and were treated as a form of ‘knowledge synthesis’ (Colquhoun

et al, 2014: 1292, Dixon-Woods et al, 2005). In other words, they constituted ‘an opportunity to identify key concepts, gaps in the research; and types and sources of evidence to inform practice, policymaking, and research’ (Daudt, van Mosel and Scott, 2013: 8). As such, they gave direction to the case study in its initial fieldwork phase.

Taking guidance from action research frameworks for improving professional practice (Costello, 2003; Denscombe, 1998), the scoping exercises were more than a method for data collection, however. They were key to collaboratively co-designing the study and provided practitioners with a strong statement of the study’s practitioner focus. The purpose of these scoping exercises was two-fold; to provide a space for practitioners to think and talk about the dilemmas of working with children and risk as defined within PREVENT in light of the forthcoming legislative changes and also to establish how the study ought to unfold from that point in conjunction with practitioners.

Utilising the researcher’s pre-existing knowledge and contacts, a sample of thirty-five practitioners, or ‘key informants’ (Schensul, Schensul and Le Compte, 1999: 86; Devine and Heath, 1999; Hart, 2005), who work directly with children in safeguarding, child protection or PREVENT were initially approached to participate. In advance of the meetings, participants were sent an information sheet that explained in detail how practitioners’ views would shape the research and how their input would be captured and anonymised (Appendix B). This was reinforced in the two sessions, held at the University as a neutral venue, but also through a shared statement of confidentiality for the group. Eleven people indicated that they would like to be involved, but ultimately six participants participated, predominantly from Liverpool – a combination of frontline staff and management from the statutory and voluntary sectors.

The discussion in the scoping exercise was guided by the use of vignettes. The vignette research method of elicitation involves the provision of images, texts or other prompts to participants for them to respond to and it is a method that has been used extensively in social work and health research (Finch, 1987; Gould, 1996; Hazel, 1995; Hughes and Huby, 2002; 2004; Rahman, 1996; Wilson and While, 1998). Creating theoretical situations for discussion rather than asking practitioners to talk about real cases, enabled practitioners to discuss and debate actions that may be taken without fear of judgement or recrimination on themselves or their organisation.

The scoping exercise vignettes presented two fictional cases of a male and female child shared in two stages (Appendix D). Firstly, the background of the child such as age, gender, health, family circumstances and educational situation was given. Indicators of racial, religious or ethnic origin were purposefully omitted so as not to influence the participant's judgements; this included consciously choosing names that were ambiguous in relation to assumptions of racial or religious identity. Secondly, the descriptions of incidents were representative of some of the behaviours, actions or attitudes outlined as vulnerability factors in the government and safeguarding guidance available at that time (Appendix E)<sup>59</sup>. The vignettes were deliberately generic so that practitioners from a variety of backgrounds, whether they were face to face youth workers or managers who managed the PREVENT portfolio, could relate to the scenarios and enlighten the researcher about the processes and procedures that would be utilised. The perspectives shared were thematically analysed and a draft report shared with participants for their feedback. All the practitioners who had been approached for involvement were then provided with a copy of this Practitioner

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<sup>59</sup> Participants were provided with handouts on the PREVENT strategy, including the Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF) from the CHANNEL Guidance document (HM Government, 2012) and draft legislative Duty after they relayed their responses to the vignette questions.

Perspectives Report (Appendix F). The rationale for sharing the report before publication and dissemination was that any concerns of identifiability and confidentiality could be properly addressed. This publication was useful for participants to share within their own organisations to evidence their involvement and the integrity of the research. It helped build trust and was a tool that participants used in their subsequent roles as gatekeepers to FPs.

Engaging with practitioners at this early stage of designing the research provided insight into what would happen in everyday practice and informed the design of further research questions, interview schedules and the identification of key actors to target for involvement. Overall, the exercises were crucial in determining the parameters of the inquiry. The features and characteristics of Liverpool as a PREVENT Priority Area, as opposed to non-priority areas in Merseyside, became clear. The practices and resources that distinguish it, such as key strategic roles and access to training, indicate that there is a local level of threat that has been assessed for CR and underlined again that a geographically bound case study approach would work best in answering the core research questions. The discussions also clarified that both frontline and SPs needed to be included in the research as two distinct membership groups as this would provide a holistic view of the operationalisation of PREVENT; from the local framework for dissemination of policy and legislation, to the processes for identification and assessment of risk of CR on the ground.

Practitioner feedback from these sessions confirmed the need for the inquiry to be located at the site of ‘rate construction’ within the risk decision-making process (Cicourel, 1968; Dequen, 2013; Duster, 2001; Kitsuse and Cicourel, 1963). When the VAF was discussed in these exercises it became clear that practitioners would only consult this document after deciding that CR was the type of risk being dealt with, if

at all, in the frontline identification process. This implied decisions about the likelihood of the presence of CR have already been made before the ‘neutral’ tools and techniques of RA are applied. This research could therefore not be limited to ‘formal’ RA work, it had to try and get underneath how practitioners viewed risk of CR, especially in relation to the generic conception of safeguarding children. The qualitative methods employed to allow for this are explained later in subsequent sections of this chapter.

In summary, the scoping exercises were the first stage of a collaborative, practitioner-informed study into the main challenges in CR risk identification and assessment. By actively engaging participants in the research at the earliest opportunity, a more sophisticated, reflexive understanding of the field of inquiry was developed. It also established relationships between the participants and the researcher which were continued both informally through e-mail exchanges and formally through the process of gaining access to other participants and co-constructing knowledge through the subsequent qualitative data capture fieldwork exercises. Practitioner and practice-informed refinements made to the research questions and fieldwork exercises improved the relevance of this study to the needs of the specific context of practice and to the needs of the participant group being worked with. The research questions and the associated diverse and responsive data collection methods used are detailed in the next section.

#### 4.4.3 Stage 2 Fieldwork Interviews with Key Strategic Practitioners (SP’s)

Key SPs, as previously defined, were interviewed in the period immediately following the enactment of the PREVENT Duty (July 2015), with the intention of capturing any post-legislative changes that would not have been known during the

Stage 1 engagement. This was an ‘elite interviewing’ approach (Dexter, 2006; Tansey, 2007) to gaining data from a non-random, purposive sample, in the sense that participants were targeted because of their unique roles as key senior actors in relation to PREVENT in the city. Some participants had been involved in the scoping exercises and others had been recommended by those early phase participants, but all were in some way part of promulgating or managing the CR risk identification and assessment processes required in operationalising PREVENT. They were and still are, therefore, key actors in the local framework for PREVENT’s delivery.

This stage of the research was also a means of developing and maintaining established and future relationships. Raising awareness and understanding of the research through these interviews made it easier to gain support or ‘buy in’ from key actors across the city. It was helpful too in allaying anxieties about the study and, in some circumstances, made access to frontline staff easier through SPs becoming gatekeepers or facilitators who helped identify participants for the next stage (Broadhead and Rist, 1976).

More substantively, the interviews were a means for data triangulation and added layers to the information acquired across the multiple stages of the fieldwork (Flick, 1992). They followed up the dilemmas and challenges raised in the scoping exercises and provided data to verify information from the next stage of FP interviews. The insight gained into the strategic challenges, including resources and process changes, may not have been apparent at FP level experience.

In acknowledgement of the seniority of these actors and the difficulties in gaining a commitment of time, the semi-structured face-to face interviews (Denscombe, 1998; Green and Thorogood, 2009; Wengraft, 2001) were conducted over a one-hour timespan and the schedule was shared with practitioners in advance

(Appendix G). A standardised interview, insofar as the same five questions were asked of everyone in this group of participants, the process combined features of a structured interview (Bryman, 2016; Edwards and Holland, 2013) but one undertaken in a semi-structured way, allowing for deeper exploration of answers and additional follow-up questions.

Five interviews were undertaken with eight practitioners, again reflecting the researcher flexibility in delivering dyadic and triadic interviews to lessen practitioner anxieties about being interviewed alone on a controversial subject. Public spaces, favoured by some practitioners concerned about doing an interview in the workplace, were not, however, conducive to this form of interview. These types of interviews thus posed practical challenges such as finding appropriate venues, transcribing interviews and attributing comments accurately.

To gather some understanding of the current, expected or desired modifications to practice resulting from policy and legislative change, ‘Appreciative Inquiry’ (AI) methods were utilised (Cooperrider, Barrett and Srivastva, 1995; Norum, 2008; Randolph, 2010; Robinson et al, 2013; Scott, 2014). This involved asking participants about what works well already and what could be improved in an ‘ideal world’ where they had limitless resources. AI interviews allow participants to be creative in their responses without the anxiety of criticising one’s own, or one’s organisations, practices and without having to explicitly formulate the constraints imposed by ‘conditions of work’, that is the real-world resource limitations and political expectations. Continuing the principle of collaborative development, participants were also asked what questions they would like the study to put to practitioners working directly with children in the next stage. These particular methods empowered

practitioners and countered the feelings and experiences of disempowerment expressed in the scoping exercises (Robinson et al, 2013: 17).

#### 4.4.4 Stage 3 Fieldwork Interviews with Frontline Practitioners (FP's)

This stage of the study went to the heart of the issue of how policy and legislation is experienced and operationalised in frontline practice. As Bloor has observed; "...the real opportunities for sociological [insight frequently] ... lie closer to the coalface than they do to head office ... with practitioners, not with the managers" (Bloor, 1997: 234). In this setting, semi-structured interviewing was employed as a method for empowering participants by giving them voice (Haraway, 1989; Oakley, 1998; Punch, 2000; 2014; Reay, 1996). Participating allowed practitioners to identify for themselves both the enablers and the barriers to operationalising policy; the real and potential impacts of PREVENT policy on practice; and their recommendations for how policy and practice could be improved.

Seven participants took part in the in-depth, semi-structured interviews. They were frontline staff working with children between 11 and 18, either in direct one-to-one work or in family settings. Primarily based in third sector or community organisations, participants work spanned the diverse fields of community cohesion, community safety, criminal justice, welfare and education. Their common characteristic, discovered through the interviews, was that all were delivering projects or services commissioned by specified authorities which must comply with the PREVENT Duty, such as the LA or local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). Interviews lasted between 2 and 3 hours in total per participant, and a level of flexibility was necessary in order to gain access to very busy staff. Interviews were undertaken over 2 or 3 meetings, ranging from a period of 3 weeks to 3 months, in their offices, other work settings or on lunch breaks in non-work locations.

The interview schedule (Appendix H) focused on how these practitioners, all working with children, experience, action, or would potentially action, decision-making in relation to the risk of CR. The issues raised by SP interviews about what they wanted to ask frontline staff were incorporated, but the questions were primarily about the challenges for frontline practice revealed in the scoping exercises. The interview schedule was lengthy but was designed to support the researcher to navigate interviews with a heterogeneous group of participants. In relation to participant risk knowledge levels, experience ranged from those who had identified and referred children as ‘at risk’ to the PREVENT/CHANNEL process, to those with virtually no experience or knowledge of CR or PREVENT at all.

The schedule groups the key questions for participants under four main headings related to the operationalisation of policy; the role of the practitioner and the organisation in relation to safeguarding and CR knowledges; practitioner decision making processes to identify and assess risk; practitioner insights on CR and PREVENT in the media; and improvements for practice. Each part of the schedule builds upon the established understanding gained in the preceding one, with specific prompts for the different risk knowledge levels. This helped to guide the conversation and acted as an aide memoire for the researcher when presented with a range of information or experiences by practitioners.

Narrative questions were also included in the schedule to overcome the potential fracturing of the accounts given by practitioners or reproduction of what the researcher wants to know which can occur when questions are asked sequentially (Wengraft, 2001). Elicitation tools (Hughes and Huby, 2004; Wilson and While, 1998) were also used to enable FPs to give views on CR irrespective of their pre-existing knowledge. This included sharing the Vulnerability Assessment Framework alongside

sections of the local Safeguarding Children's Board and CHANNEL Guidance to gather their feedback on how they were being used or could be used and the usefulness and the challenges both could present for their everyday work (Appendix E).

As the scoping exercises had highlighted the media as a major source of information for understanding of the extent of the CR risk, and considering the assertion by Baker that little is known about how children's practitioners manage risk in situations of high media attention (Baker, 2008), a diverse range of media sources were also utilised as visual elicitation devices (Appendix I). The balanced cross-section of media articles and headlines on PREVENT and CR, ranging from mainstream newspapers such as *The Sun* to professional publications, were there to provoke discussion about if or how the debates might reflect issues for everyday practice. The interview section on recommendations for improving policy and practice in this area of safeguarding children, again uses the Appreciative Inquiry method (Cooperrider, Barrett and Srivastva, 1995; Norum, 2008) to gain insights into what an 'ideal world' scenario would look like for keeping children safe from CR from the perspective of frontline practice (Dekker, 2007).

#### 4.4.5 Methods for Data Analysis

The considerations which informed the choice of methods for data analysis were the same as those for the data collection strategy. As a practitioner-led and practitioner informed study of practice and procedures, the aim behind conducting the case study was to be in a position to describe the risk work of practitioners in Liverpool rather than build, prove or disprove theory, at least in the first instance (ten Have, 2004: 146). The problematically 'abstract empiricism' of risk theory was something the study deliberately sought to avoid (Mills, 1959).

With information collected using multiple qualitative data collection methods, a method of analysis was needed that would facilitate the organisation and synthesis of a significant amount of data from a range of sources. Among the different options, Thematic Analysis or TA (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun and Clarke, 2006; Tuckett, 2005) proved to be the most transparent and inclusive way of doing this. TA allows patterns to be identified, analysed and reported (Huberman and Miles, 2002) in a way that reduces the data enough to formulate conceptual arguments and findings without losing the voice of the practitioners. Here it is used to illustrate the typologies or classifications used in the context of risk work, situating the specific experiences of practitioners in a wider context (Silverman, 1997), whilst minimising the potential injustice of over-interpretation, or misinterpretation, of practitioners' stories.

The iterative nature of TA, undertaken at the end of each exercise or interview, at the end of each stage of the fieldwork and then repeated at the end of the data collection period, made it possible to 'drill down' into the data to discover deeper seams within it (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Fieldwork diary notes alongside the physical transcription of the interviews and scoping exercises supported full immersion in and familiarisation with the data. Coding the data cyclically and iteratively to reduce, aggregate and cluster commonalities and patterns was undertaken primarily by hand and then transferred into NVivo for the purposes of information organisation under thematic headings or categories. The resulting themes are interpretations of the information given by participants in their stories. To arrive at a broader depiction of the phenomena, information was reviewed and refined to either elevate patterns to a theme heading or relegate them to a sub heading, as part of the process of gathering the stories under each theme (Huberman and Miles, 2002; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003; Ryan and Bernard, 2000).

This method of analysis overcomes the difficulties presented by a study spanning a period of two years. Speaking with different actors with different roles and responsibilities at different times provided real insight into the policy experience and impact pre- and post- the PREVENT Duty and the analysis helped unlock that. Providing opportunities to cross-check findings and understandings in an iterative way, it also supported thematic triangulation of the data for reliability and validity (Bryman, 2016). Therefore, operating the same thematic analytical approach for all fieldwork stages has allowed for confident triangulation across the data. Every stage of fieldwork has generated rich, thick descriptions (Geertz, 1972), individually and cumulatively, which are relevant to the different research questions. That richness is reflected in the findings discussed in the following chapters.

#### 4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has set out the bases for a careful, thorough and ethically robust study that sought to gain insights into the practice of risk work in a politically sensitive area of policy directly from practitioners. The study was designed to be responsive and collaborative to best understand how practitioners ‘do risk’ as seen from their own perspective and reveal what happens in the operationalisation of CR policy and legislation. The results of the study are discussed in the next three chapters.

## 5. LEARNING RISK

### 5.1 Introduction

‘Risk knowledge’ is a term which is used to refer to the ‘knowns’, often articulated by ‘risk experts’, as to what constitutes a risk; who or what poses it; its prevalence; the potential extent of its impact; who it affects and what can be done to avert it (Beck, 1995; Beck, Bonss and Lau, 2003; Hansson and Aven, 2014; Tulloch and Lupton, 2003). These knowledges of risk, as described earlier, are socially, culturally and politically shaped and mobilised for various ends within social policy. The policy and legislative making of risk knowledge around CR was analytically untangled in the previous chapters to reveal that PREVENT intertwines, reimagines and mobilises a future-focussed and danger-oriented language of ‘risk’ to frame CR prevention in circumstances of ‘not-knowing’ about CR. It sews together inter-dependent, but hitherto ‘officially’ unrelated, risk concepts and ‘knowledges’ relating to adult actors, in both ‘terrorist’ crime and the claimed ‘pre-crime’ process of radicalisation, with knowledges of child protection and safeguarding, in order to give life to a policy, legislative and ultimately statistical risk reality.

The making of CR in this way uncovers the symbiotic relationship between the creation of ‘risk knowledge’ and the social amplification of ‘risk consciousness’ for a risk we do not know about, but are afraid of (Beck, 1995; 2003; 2009; Füredi, 2009; Kasperson et al, 1988; Renn et al, 1992; Sen, 2006; Slovic et al, 2002; 2004). These processes interact cyclically and simultaneously to inform, develop and reinforce each other within policy and legislation to create ‘evidence’ of their existence and to justify the need for preventive action. At the same time, following Beck, this seemingly closed process could also potentially bring into play a new set of open political possibilities.

That is, if CR risk knowledges and risk experts are available and transparent, there is the potential to ‘democratise’ risk understanding by giving practitioners the opportunity to challenge and influence risk knowledge in practice (Beck, 1995; Beck, Bonss and Lau, 2003; Tulloch and Lupton, 2003). The potential for a dynamic process of movement and counter- movement to create the practical reality of CR is central to the examination of the accounts in this chapter, and subsequent ones, of how frontline and SPs working with and for children in Liverpool learn about, see and would act upon the risk of CR.

The focus of this chapter is to first consider and illuminate how practitioners learn, acquire or leverage ‘risk knowledge’ in attempts to understand and make sense of the risk-work (Horlick-Jones, 2005; Stanley, 2018; Stanley, Guru and Gupta, 2018) required of them to operationalise PREVENT. The use of the term ‘knowledge’ here relates to the information that practitioners’ access to learn about this risk; the perceived facts and evidence of this phenomena which have become the basis of the ‘knowns’ which frame their imagining of CR. It does not imply that the information is gained through formal education, nor does it imply that it is correct. As Shapin notes, there can be no hard and fast distinction between knowledge and what passes for knowledge in various times and places (Shapin, 1995; 1999; 2005). It is not an easy matter to reconstruct ‘what counts as knowledge comes to so count’ (Shapin, 1999: 3), given the absence of formal or official opportunities available to practitioners to learn the risk knowledge of CR. The approach undertaken to represent this part of the story of CR therefore needs to be explained.

### 5.1.1 Making Sense of the Learning Story – Learning Risk in a Specific Time and Place

Understanding how the risk knowledge of CR, as framed by national policy and legislation is understood and interpreted in local practice, means understanding, among other things, how practitioners come to comprehend the ‘knowns’ of this specific risk. Grasping the challenges presented by ‘conditions of work’ in a specific time and place are an important element of that too, and case studies are important in drawing out the complexities of practitioners’ stories in this regard.

Practitioners working with or for children in a variety of settings who are responsible for identifying children vulnerable to the risk of CR, find themselves in a peculiar scenario in several respects. Among other things, the emotive nature of the subject and the high levels of media attention CR receives means the risk narratives and knowledges available to practitioners, the understandings which frame their orientations to CR, incorporate a great deal more than official sources such as government legislation, policy and training materials. The complex and problematic aspects of learning risk in the officially mandated way, through safeguarding training and the WRAP, emerge clearly in practitioner explanations of the strategies they subsequently must employ to make sense of and give meaning to CR.

The practical strategies described by practitioners to help them grapple with PREVENT and fill the gaps in their knowledge about CR, bring out the different kinds of ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’ understandings woven together in practice in this context, demonstrating the epistemic as well as organisational challenges it poses. The upshot is practitioners’ experiences are multi-faceted and multi-dimensional and, as a result, there is no single, linear story to tell about how they learn this form of risk knowledge and then put it into practice. Practitioner explanations are at times retrospective, at

times prospective and at times in the moment. In order to synthesise the thematic aspects which emerge from their experiences, the information practitioners give is arranged sequentially or procedurally to reflect the cycle of experiential learning. Within this experientially-grounded pedagogy (Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 2015; Ord, 2009) to iteratively learning through observation, hands-on experience and review has central importance. This chapter on ‘learning’ is thus the first in a sequence, followed by ‘seeing’ and ‘acting’.

Practitioner experiences are undoubtedly affected by their roles, whether as FPs (referred to as *FP* in data extracts within the chapter) or SPs (referred to as *SP*), and are also significantly inflected by the geographical, political, generational, contemporary and historical contexts within which they work and live. Moreover, the legal enactment of the Duty and the organisational changes which followed were an ongoing theme, reflecting the fact that some practitioner roles were transforming substantially as part of those changes. For example, many FPs became SPs over the period of the study (and are referred to as SP/FP consequently in the text). Practitioners also, however, report different experiences from different perspectives at different times, with their views and opinions, sometimes slightly and other times dramatically, shifting in response. As an example of this, several high-profile incidents of ‘terrorism’ in the UK and mainland Europe coincided with the fieldwork, with some interviews undertaken on the same day or in the immediate period after an event. These cases had a definite impact on how practitioners spoke about their risk knowledge of CR, with their tone and views sometimes differing markedly post-incident (Lerner et al, 2011). There was, then, a complex relationship between temporality and how practitioners storied their experiences and knowledge running through their responses.

### *Case Summaries: Practitioner Types*

To provide the greatest insight into the different aspects and challenges expressed by practitioners in the course of learning to operationalise this already contentious policy, and to contextualise the individual quotes from the data used from herein, the following case summaries are a guide to types of practitioner experiences across a number of sectors and across the period of the research among those involved in the research:

**Case Summaries: Type 1 Practitioners** – Two FPs when first contacted had never heard of PREVENT, CHANNEL or the term radicalisation at all. One works in a third sector organisation delivering youth work in socio-economically deprived, predominantly White, areas of Liverpool. They are the organisational safeguarding leads and very recently trained in safeguarding children. This low level of engagement with official risk knowledges is particularly conspicuous in their personal views on defining CR.

**Case Summaries: Type 2 Practitioners** – Three FPs working with ‘vulnerable’ children and families across Merseyside, initially vocal in their concerns about PREVENT, who came to take on additional responsibilities as the organisational SPs, or ‘internal experts’ for PREVENT, during the period of research. In the scoping exercises, they expressed great scepticism about PREVENT, anxieties about racial profiling and worries about the disproportionate impact on BME families due to experiences of PREVENT training and media stories. In their new strategic roles, they remain sceptical but have become an integral part of rolling out PREVENT training and policy

for their organisation and partner agencies. This is a significant change for them and something which reframes their reflections on the issue of working with the risk of CR as the inquiry progresses.

**Case Summaries: Type 3 Practitioners** – An FP in a third sector further education<sup>60</sup> organisation working in a socio-economically deprived, predominantly White area of the city. Prior to the Duty they attended a WRAP and subsequently identified and referred to PREVENT/CHANNEL two females under 18 suspected to be vulnerable to the risk of CR. 7 months later, they still did not know the outcome of these referrals, but because they had made them, their organisation gave them the SP or PREVENT lead role. In this role they are expected to be the first point of contact for colleagues who suspect a risk of CR, attend further external and internal PREVENT ‘training’ for ‘experts’ provided by JISC<sup>61</sup> and deliver PREVENT ‘training’ to child service users.

**Case Summaries: Type 4 Practitioners** – Liverpool has been a PREVENT Priority 2 Area since 2012 and therefore, as previously explained, has specific lead officers. The RPC (Regional PREVENT Coordinator) had been the original appointee, but during the fieldwork was about to resign from the post. The RPC and PREVENT and CHANNEL Officers at the time of the inquiry were all past or present police officers, the latter located in the Merseyside Police Special Branch team. The appointments to these police roles are short

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<sup>60</sup> Children aged 16 to 18 years attend this setting

<sup>61</sup> JISC is a not for profit company that provides ‘digital solutions for UK education and research’ including online training packages to further and higher education sectors.

term, and personnel changed during the time of the inquiry. In response to an invitation for one PREVENT officer to be interviewed, all three PREVENT and CHANNEL Officers attended at the same time indicating a level of anxiety about participation.

These summaries group practitioner stories into types shaped by time and place, organisational location and political context (Creswell, 2009). This is a powerful lens for thinking about the learning process for the risk of CR, assisting in bringing the issues more clearly into view.

## 5.2 A Legal Responsibility but No ‘Official’ Learning – the Continuum of ‘Not Knowing’

PREVENT legislation now mandates practitioners to act to avert CR, categorising actions as safeguarding children in the ‘pre-criminal space’. In preparation for this legal requirement, it might be assumed that safeguarding training and procedures would be revised to include the risk knowledge of CR and that, vice versa, PREVENT training, policy and procedures would be revised to present knowledge of CR within a safeguarding framework. This was not the situation that was reported on during the stage of the scoping exercises:

*“I don’t know much. It’s not really filtered down from top level policy; I’ve never had any training.”*

*Scoping Exercise 2*

*“I probably don’t know enough, we had some awareness training a while ago. We could do with a refresher.”*

### *Scoping Exercise 1*

As these brief examples indicate, practitioner accounts presented a far more fragmented picture than the policy and legal positioning implies. Across the board, the following analysis shows that a lack of investment in resources, initially to prepare for operationalising the new Duty and then to implement it, had resulted not only in inadequate training for practitioners but was seen to have encouraged a ‘tick box’ organisational culture focussed on compliance in practice (Anderson, Sharrock and Hughes, 1990; Bittner, 1974).

#### 5.2.1 Not Learning CR in Safeguarding

Despite absent or inadequate training in PREVENT, all practitioners, albeit with varying meaning and interpretation in different settings and among different practitioner groups, nevertheless consistently use the language of safeguarding and risk; it is a familiar professional idiom. Interchangeably presented as a way of working (*‘what you do all the time’*, *‘thinking of it all the time’*) and as an organisational procedure to be followed for making referrals to social services (*‘doing your safeguarding’*), practitioners routinely differentiate between the types of knowledge needed in both contexts.

In the former, practitioners express an instinctive understanding of risk and ‘on the job experience’ as the ‘embodied’ sources of knowledge and understanding for safeguarding children from risk on an everyday basis (Lam, 2000; Polanyi, 1958; Schmidt and Hunter, 1993; Slovic et al, 2002; 2004; Walklate, 1999). In the latter, learning the official safeguarding procedure ‘risk knowledge’, and related risk

knowledges such as CSE, is commonly described as the transmission of information through a specific formal process.

In this process, practitioners describe being briefed upon new government agendas through organisational safeguarding policy, via emails or team briefings, often disseminated by internal safeguarding ‘experts’. These are subsequently followed up by training programmes delivered by external ‘experts’ to address the practical dimensions of implementation, such as identifying the indicators of safeguarding risks and understanding the ‘risk thresholds’ within the procedures for making referrals to children’s services:

*“Well we go to safeguarding meetings and courses. So, you’re obviously aware of some of the stuff they say about the kids. Now we’ve got [a member of staff] who is the safeguarding officer and so you know a bit more about it, but lots and lots of people don’t know about the safeguarding rules.”*

*FP01*

*“Over the 8 years that I’ve worked in the centre it [safeguarding] was maybe a member of staff. Maybe we’d have a meeting on safeguarding beginning of the year, probably a mid-way refresher. Now it’s a lot. It’s a lot more. We’ve had the WRAP training, we also went on training in Newsham Park where he was from PREVENT, he was a Police Officer. We’ve just done one this week with our Safeguarding Officer. So, it’s more constant. It’s like more day to day rather than an actual one-off type thing.”*

*SP/FP03*

*“It is on our team meetings every week, a safeguarding agenda item so if anyone’s dealing with an issue at the time its logged at our team meetings. I think about it all the time but in terms of when we’re asked to really look at it or do training around it. I don’t know it could be anything from 100% to 5% of my work.”*

*SP/FP04*

*“I did quite a bit of safeguarding training in that job, looking at lots of different things. We used to go into people’s homes as well and I was taught to look out for different risks and so on, but I know a lot of policies have changed since then so I’m always trying to refresh safeguarding. Once you’re doing it, you just do it every day and then something new comes out. We’ve reviewed our safeguarding policy quite recently and we’re going to go, the whole team, on a full day safeguarding training”*

*FP02*

The official positioning of CR in policy and legislation as a safeguarding issue for children is, however, contradicted by practitioners’ accounts of their experiences. Practitioners did not present CR as being part of the content of their safeguarding training and most in frontline roles do not realise that it is now articulated as a safeguarding responsibility at all. Practitioners who had undertaken safeguarding training concluded that it has not equipped them with the knowledge or skills for working with this new safeguarding risk. Furthermore, most confirm that it is not explicitly mentioned in organisational safeguarding policy either:

*“Well we have had PREVENT training and we are due for an update. Honestly, I don’t think it’s been connected [to safeguarding] in a big way. I was looking through our safeguarding policy for radicalisation, but it doesn’t mention radicalisation. Even though we’ve had PREVENT training, it’s not in there.”*

SP/FP04

The absence of CR from mainstream safeguarding training is therefore reinforced by its non-appearance in organisational safeguarding policies and procedures. A number of FPs and even SPs say they do not always easily see CR as part of what they personally should be doing when it comes to safeguarding children. Some practitioners even contest the location of CR within a safeguarding policy framework explicitly.

In the latter cases, practitioners either dispute the claim that a local threat of CR is present or argue that their demographic of clients/service users will not be vulnerable to this particular risk. While the presumption of which type of children CR applies to is explored later in seeing or identifying the features or ‘normal character’ of risk in practice (Sudnow, 1965), suffice to say at this point that racialised understandings of CR are revealed when practitioners describe the lack of local provision of safeguarding training on CR and their experiences of managerial decisions to question or even stop access to learning:

*“I got a list of training not long ago again from Liverpool Safeguarding Board. We got an email about training on radicalisation. I asked my manager would it be something he would send us on. I think it’s probably the only area of training I feel we haven’t had. He said that we didn’t really*

*need it with our clients. It doesn't really apply to them. The clients we have coming through the door. Our manager didn't see the training as relevant to us. You know because all our kids are White British."*

FP06

CR is not, therefore, connected into practitioners existing practical knowledge and understanding of safeguarding but stands separately and incongruously apart from it. The only practitioners to present CR as an integral part of safeguarding from the outset were those with a strategic role. This knowledge, for them, was not obtained from specific training but rather from a deeper level exposure to or engagement with PREVENT policy, legislation and regulatory requirements.

The conceptualisation of CR as 'pre-crime safeguarding' found expression in this practitioner type's adoption of associated terminology. For example, in talking about intervention they would use the phrase '*pre-crime*' and tend towards using the term '*extremism*' over 'terrorism', reflecting the very recent shift in Government narratives (HM Government, 2015; 2015b). This might be expected of an organisational 'expert' role established to disseminate government policy. These divergent terminologies employed in practice are also an early signal, to be explored further later, of the bases for the problematic attribution of a 'knowledge gap' that divides those seen as 'experts' and those seen as 'novices' tasked with frontline identification of children at risk of CR in their everyday work (Benner, 1982; Herbig and Glöckner, 2009; Sonnentag, 2000; Speelman, 1998).

Attributions of that kind – that practitioners lack knowledge which 'experts' have – can have consequences. For instance, deviations between local practical

understanding<sup>62</sup> and the government positioning of CR as safeguarding, might mean that an exclusively ‘pre-criminal’ understanding driven by ‘experts’ will take priority, especially in the absence of a specific safeguarding risk knowledge for CR. Spaces for other knowledges may well be closing down. Given this, how practitioners learn about CR through the official learning provided by WRAP, the only other learning option for practitioners to gain information on PREVENT and the related safeguarding risk of CR beyond the experts, is of some importance and worth exploring in-depth.

### 5.2.2 Not Learning CR in the Workshop to Raise Awareness of PREVENT (WRAP)

The locally delivered Home Office endorsed and funded WRAP, commonly referred to as ‘PREVENT training’, is a workshop established a number of years before the study took place to build awareness of the PREVENT strategy in organisations. There are two versions of WRAP (referred to as WRAP1 and WRAP2) indicating the potential that the practitioners interviewed have attended different versions, delivered in different ways and by different professionals, something that came across when considering practitioners’ experiences with it<sup>63</sup>.

In Liverpool, the workshop is face-to-face, 2 to 3 hours in length and delivered either by the RPC or the PREVENT and CHANNEL officers. Practitioners refer to WRAP as the official ‘training’ that is on offer to learn about implementing PREVENT; a

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<sup>62</sup> These accounts are substantiated by the Merseyside Police and the Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner Office website statements that hate crime, ‘harmful cultural practices’ and CSE, but not CR, were the focus of the vulnerable people team at the time of this study (Merseyside Police, 2015; Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner’s Office, 2015). This reinforces the separation of ‘mainstream’ safeguarding, such as CSE, and matters connecting to CR.

<sup>63</sup> It becomes clear over the timeframe of the study that practitioners’ access to WRAP was concentrated in the period immediately following the designation of Liverpool as a priority area (2012-13) but not in the period following the enactment of the Duty (Vaughn et al, 2015). SPs are required to have attended at least one WRAP in the last 5 years but access to or knowledge of WRAP for FPs varies widely; from never having heard of WRAP to having very recently attended a WRAP, with several variations in between. Some practitioners attended WRAP years before the Duty but not since; only undertook a sector specific PREVENT e-training module (online) after the Duty; had been denied attendance on the WRAP; and/or were on a waiting list for WRAP.

programme that would or should ‘train them’ in working with or identifying children at risk of CR. The accounts from practitioners who had been WRAP ‘trained’, however, reveal the problems that come from perceiving WRAP as ‘training’ practitioners in CR and providing expert knowledge (Herbig and Glöckner, 2009; Sonnentag, 2000). In so doing, they highlighted discrepancies between the ‘expert’ label and the reality of expertise in the risk knowledge of CR.

Notwithstanding the multiple versions of WRAP that practitioners may have attended, it remains the case that they do not see this training as being a safeguarding training package, but rather something separate and specialised. In contrast with policy, safeguarding is not the primary framework adopted by the WRAP programme:

*“The legislation, it’s police driven legislation. The training is police driven.”*

*SP03*

WRAP is a Home Office initiative dominated by police perspectives in how it is delivered, and this is seen by practitioners as potentially problematic. Practitioners disclose, however, that they often do not feel that they have the expertise, power or ability to challenge the PREVENT policy in the WRAP. One practitioner provided a distinct example of feeling intimidated and being ‘asked to leave’ a WRAP because they challenged the view of the police officer delivering it:

*“I remember being on the PREVENT training and then being asked to leave because I questioned the word terrorism and what it is. An act of terror causing fear and panic in people, well I was basically saying dropping bombs from the*

*sky is an act of terrorism. They kind of had a zero-tolerance policy on any views that were, well, not the PREVENT strategy views in what was being delivered. The people who were running it were from the police. It was very assertively put that 'we have to get these people'. And I was like, well, who are 'these' people?"*

*FP07*

This example may have its roots in conflicting professional perspectives between WRAP trainers, who are police trained and oriented towards detecting crime, and frontline workers who are practitioners trained to safeguard children and children's rights. It also may indicate a lack of understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities in the context of preventing CR, especially the relatively new emergence of police actors in public protection/safeguarding leadership roles. Whatever the reason, the outcome is that even after attending WRAP, practitioners may problematise the impact of the police dominating the training but still refer to them as 'experts' in CR:

*"There was one case recently for example. Him and his family moved into a lovely new place, then someone made an allegation that he had been showing beheading videos to children. Well that to me is an alert when it comes to the PREVENT strategy because why would you be showing kids things like that? But social services and the police were already aware of it, so we kind of let them deal with it. It was probably something that we could have done ourselves, but we didn't. Because I think we're not sure about what we can and can't do in that arena at present. I think they're*

*probably in the best place to deal with it because they've had tons and tons of PREVENT training, they're aware of all the terrorism Acts, whereas our knowledge is very, very little. We could probably do with a refresher or training on what to do. If there's any lines of referral. Because I don't think we really do know."*

*FP02*

Practitioners speak about CR in ways which devalue their own expertise in working with children and risk, amplifying the previously identified presentation of CR as being a specialist risk that cannot be understood through their pre-existing practical knowledge about safeguarding children. Practitioners often intimate a deference to WRAP trainers, and other SPs, as 'experts' in this risk knowledge, even when their own professional or personal experiences indicate that they have knowledge resources to draw upon to translate and make sense of safeguarding children from CR. The role of WRAP is understandably articulated as key to practitioners' understanding of their role within the PREVENT/CHANNEL referral process by both those in frontline and strategic positions. As noted earlier, the practical reality of PREVENT is visibly observed in the figures of children referred to CHANNEL. A WRAP trainer talks of how WRAP should be training people to be able to identify risk, distinguish when a referral is needed and understand the process to do so:

*"To understand, 'Right, I know what PREVENT is', 'I know how to refer, when to refer it and if I'm unsure, who to call'."*

*01/SP02*

Paradoxically, FPs who had attended the workshop only express their understanding of WRAP as a method for instructing them to refer all suspicions about a child being vulnerable to CR ‘to PREVENT’. They remain unclear on the ‘why’, ‘when’ and ‘how’. Practitioners do not talk about WRAP as helping them to understand why CR is now a safeguarding responsibility or why they are responsible for dealing with it. Practitioners would report that WRAP is ‘interesting’ but of insufficient length or detail to provide practical guidance or support for them to implement the Duty and thereby confidently work with CR. This speaks to real problems in the way WRAP is presented and expected to support the operationalisation of PREVENT in practice:

*“At the time when we had it there was a lot of gang stuff going on in Liverpool. I wonder whether that was a bit confusing maybe. How many people came away thinking ‘Oh this is all about gangs’? I wonder whether it was specific enough in that sense.”*

*SP/FP04*

Equally the knowledge that practitioners do gain from WRAP raises specific dilemmas for practice. The strongest criticism of WRAP is the programme’s ‘*surveillance*’ orientation and ‘*Muslim*’ focused content. WRAP participants describe only cursory references to far-right and other forms of extremism within the session, and, as a result, specifically challenge what they perceive to be the racialised or securitised dimensions of PREVENT:

*“It wasn’t really [looking at other forms of extremism]. No not really. The majority of it was looking at Muslims. Yeah, I mean they did touch a little*

*on things like the IRA even though they've kind of fizzled out now. There wasn't really much on right-wing, which is a bit strange."*

FP02

*"You hear PREVENT and you automatically just think that's about radicalisation of Muslims. It's not. PREVENT is about radicalisation of anyone who stands against the status quo, who doesn't believe in what the Government and everyone else tells us. I'm definitely on that list."*

FP05

WRAP is described by practitioners as raising their awareness of terrorism and the general issue of radicalisation, from this limited perspective, by going through the 'signs to look out for' in people (adults) who may be heading towards terrorist action. Child-specific detail on these signs was absent, however, and there was no discussion of risk levels or thresholds for reporting in practitioners' accounts of the programme. Furthermore, and confusingly, none had seen the VAF document from which the 'signs' of radicalisation used in WRAP are taken from<sup>64</sup>. Just as they could recall being given no information on the specific features of CR, the WRAP also skirted the issue of the specific risk of CR locally. WRAP's exclusion of specific knowledge of CR presents practitioners with problems as to how they should subsequently interpret it. They are left unclear, for instance, as to whether it is or is not a 'real' priority for their child service users, but also as to whether it can or cannot be understood within practitioners pre-existing, and often expansive, knowledge for identifying and managing safeguarding risks facing children.

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<sup>64</sup> For this reason, the practitioners' views on VAF, a document expected to have been shared in WRAP, are not included in this section.

Guidance on how and when to refer a child is another significant aporia in recounted experiences of WRAP. The workshop passed over the technical aspects of identifying children who are vulnerable to the risk of CR in their everyday safeguarding risk-work, and the details of how to work with these perceived vulnerabilities once they are seen. In the absence of information on how to make a referral to any other agency or seek advice from any specified contact, practitioners came to understand their role to be to refer all suspicions to police PREVENT practitioners. This understanding is both mirrored and qualified by the WRAP trainers who stated that the desired outcome of WRAP is an initial increase of CR referrals. These were held to subsequently decrease as FPs come to learn which cases to refer inter-organisationally and which to manage via ‘in-house’ safeguarding procedures. Increasing referrals was treated as a de facto indication of increased confidence in practitioners about the nature of CR. A sign that the training and policy work well in a locale. Trainers simultaneously acknowledge however that inadequate training will also continually increase referral levels. Ironically, this reflects the FP default position, explored later in this chapter, of referring all suspicion about children because they do not feel that WRAP provides them with any greater understanding of CR:

*“I’ve seen this with NHS. If you don’t give the right sort of training well, you are setting yourself up to fail straight away. If people are going out doing PREVENT training and have no PREVENT experience, then when people ask questions, all they’re going to say to them is refer everything.”*

O2/SP02

WRAP did not equip practitioners with specific knowledge on CR, how it affects children or how they should work with this potential risk. WRAP is therefore a knowledge transfer process (Argote and Guo, 2016) which, intentionally or unintentionally, communicates the policy position which underpins the Duty but not the detail of how to act on it. It is an attempt to get practitioners to treat particular issues as vulnerabilities and risks in children, primarily and problematically those seen as associated with Muslim identity. It heightens practitioners 'risk consciousness', both for terrorism and the justifications of the need for PREVENT but did not furnish them with specific knowledge or skills to make sense of how CR should be located in their understanding of everyday safeguarding practice. Thus, practitioner accounts confirm WRAP as part of the push to treat CR as a 'special risk' which requires expert judgement. In turn, WRAP increases the likelihood that all suspicions of children being at risk will be referred and thus subject to the formal PREVENT/CHANNEL process. Worryingly, referring 'upwards', in the absence of any other knowledge about CR and legal compliance, is seen by many as demonstrating fulfilment of the Duty.

### 5.2.3 Learning to Tick the Box: Regulation and Compliance as 'Conditions of Work'

Based on their experiences with it, newly introduced safeguarding legislation and procedures were regularly presented by practitioners as involving '*knee jerk reactions*', in which '*priorities change*', swinging from '*everything's CSE now*', through '*everything's grooming*', to '*trafficking is hot on the agenda now*'. A result of Government reacting through increased risk regulation, after-the-fact, to catastrophes in child protection<sup>65</sup>. Practitioners represented these 'latest trends' for Government as placing often unrealistic expectations upon their practice:

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<sup>65</sup> High profile, poorly handled child protection cases are often cited such as Baby P and the Rotherham sexual abuse ring (Jay 2014)

*“In the current times of violence and fighting and radicalisation and stuff like that, it [PREVENT] could be gone tomorrow. It’s for the minute, not for the future. I’ve traditionally done safeguarding in the broadest sense of managing groups, activities and events. I think it was from 2010, after serious case reviews had to be done in relation to kids dying within families, and social services not getting on it. It’s now law that every organisation has to have a safeguarding policy, a nominated safeguarding officer and that people have got to be trained up. I think it’s every 3 years you’ve got to do a starter course. Your organisation could adopt a 5 year one though. I know that in September I’m doing a half day training to top up on what I had 3 years ago. But again, that is policy driven.”*

*FP07*

*“There’s always new buzz words in the arena of safeguarding and if you don’t know about them you do start to feel out of your depth. And you do second guess.”*

*FP02*

*“I feel like extremism is kind of a taboo word and in some areas, people don’t want to acknowledge it. Some professionals don’t want to believe that it’s going on. Maybe it’s one other piece of work on vulnerability that they don’t want to have to work on because there’s enough out there. And they probably feel, like I do, that the chances of someone belonging to an extreme group are very slim to none. So, what’s the point of going on about*

*it? Putting it in our risk assessment and pulling something out of thin air that mightn't be there? So, for me, I think that's the reason that it [PREVENT] doesn't hit with a lot of organisations."*

*FP06*

*"With regards to [social workers] not being able to do their job and manage to keep children safe, there's increasingly high caseloads. We are working in times of austerity when every service is being cut. So, you know, Birmingham has just been taken over by a Trust, so obviously that's the first step towards privatisation of children's services."*

*SP03*

Practitioners draw out the dilemmas that new and constantly changing Government priorities have on their everyday work. Their attempts to ensure they are up to date with the changing lexicon and processes are a source of professional anxiety when considered against all the other demands placed upon them in this already highly pressured and scrutinised sector. The interaction of austerity-driven funding cuts with the legal responsibilities ushered in by the Duty in particular, were, and still are, having a substantial impact. Not just on the organisational capacity to respond to PREVENT, but also upon the expressed organisational motivation to engage with it. In this context, PREVENT is an imposition, mandating an 'enforced' engagement with this particular risk knowledge among certain organisations and their practitioners. Organisations wanting to comply with the Duty tell practitioners that they need to meet the changed requirements within LA or clinical commissioning contracts and most urgently, not fail regulatory inspections by the likes of OFSTED. Practitioners who voice their

concerns about organisations and training focussing solely on being ‘PREVENT compliant’, dispute the claims that training is making practitioners more confident in supporting children or helping keep children safe. A context such as this produces a principal dimension to the activities of organisations, what Bittner (Bittner, 1974) called ‘gambits’ of compliance:

‘When we consider the set of highly schematic rules subsumed under the concept of rational organization, we can readily see an open realm of free play for relating an infinite variety of performances to rules as responses to those rules. In this field of games of representation and interpretation, the rules may have the significance of informing the competent person about the proper form for doing things that could probably never be divined from considering the rule in its verbal form. Extending to the rule the respect of compliance, while finding in the rule the means for doing whatever needs to be done, is the gambit that characterises organizational acumen.’

(Bittner, 1974: 78)

The skewed logic of rules which enforce having to undertake actions for PREVENT that *‘they wouldn’t normally do’* in everyday activity just to prove compliance, even when those actions were regarded as counterproductive and often disruptive of regular activities, was often referred to as a *‘box-ticking’* or *‘tokenistic’* approach to safeguarding. This situation could be symptomatic of the responsabilisation or co-option through funding relationships and statutory regulation of non-traditional criminal justice actors into processes of crime prediction and prevention. It is equally

possible that this is an outcome of the economic ‘conditions of work’ (Lipsky, 1980: 27) within which practitioners are operating.

### *Compliance and Austerity*

Practitioners’ stories bear remarkably similar characteristics to those of the “street level bureaucrats” of Lipsky’s study, where amidst problems of resources and the pressure of performance driven practice, individuals delivering public services persistently struggle to operationalise public policy in the best way they can. Most practitioners in organisations that depend on clinical commissioning or LA funding streams, over the time period in which the Duty is enacted, came to express similar fears and desires as those initially expressed by practitioners within the statutory sector. They were also clear they had to show legislative and regulatory compliance, however shallow. This had consequences in other ways. PREVENT training can come to be viewed as compulsory for practitioners to meet their legal responsibilities, even though internal budgets for training are simultaneously being scaled back:

*“We’ve had to go on PREVENT training for some of our contracts. Face to face training by a tutor from the police. As well as the online CHANNEL training. That was originally for employed staff but our contracts now say that even self- employed staff, we have to prove they’ve done the online training before we can go for our contracts. We’ve just had to put 18 people through WRAP training in the last 2 weeks and followed that up with face to face training as well.”*

*L/SP04*

Although discussions with FPs indicated that other, more discriminatory, factors influence decisions on practitioners being able to access training, which will be explored later, SPs explicate decision-making as being guided by one over-riding issue. The availability of resources in the challenging context of reduced funding and increased legal and policy demands. PREVENT thus has a twofold impact on compliance practice. It is a legal requirement because organisations dependent on external funding for income must evidence they have undertaken PREVENT training if they want to access funding and resources. It is simultaneously a legal liability because it creates new organisational vulnerabilities:

*“We used to have regular emails, training, updates on current laws, good safeguarding practices. A work bank of risk assessments, all that kind of stuff. Now there’s one guy left doing that for the whole of the city. The health and safety unit has really been shrunk down to just the safety around buildings. The resources centrally for safety around engaging with young people, it’s really been diluted down. Schools have a safeguarding officer or a PREVENT officer, but it’s still everyone’s responsibility to do it.”*

FP07

*“I don’t see the PREVENT stuff being prevention. I don’t see it’s a good thought-out, well-spent bit of money. I see it being punishment at the end of it. The real issue is what sort of resources do we need to have in this community? Services, play provision, housing, green space, schools and all the rest of it. There’s no money really for that now.”*

SP05

In line with the future orientation of risk, PREVENT works to inculcate the sense that organisations need to be prepared for something to go wrong in the future. When that happens, they must be able to either demonstrate that it was not their fault or take full responsibility. Against this background, practitioners in these settings are learning about how to see and act on CR, not through information on its specific nature, but through the lens of regulation and compliance. Practitioners are both cognisant and critical of this. At a time when mainstream safeguarding resources and services are being withdrawn, outsourced or reduced, practitioners specifically point to the restructuring of organisations and the re-allocation of limited resources to address PREVENT compliance as having a significant impact on their work. This includes the loss of managerial time when a staff member becomes an ‘internal expert’. Practitioners imply that this diversion of resources is unjustified, linking to an earlier assertion that CR is not a risk they are convinced exists for the children they work with.

The impact of the combination of austerity driven actions and compliance focussed legislation are however shown to be resisted, akin to ways in which Scott refers to as the ‘weapons of the weak’ when faced with State power (Scott, 1985). WRAP trainers articulate their own small ‘acts of resistance’ to changes by the Home Office to the programme’s ‘*London focussed*’ training content (referred to as WRAP1 and WRAP2), which were perceived as being influenced by cost-saving. This initiative, later withdrawn, to train up practitioners in their own organisations to deliver in-house training and change the process of trainer accreditation, is seen as in direct competition with resources to support on-going delivery by the RPC and police practitioners:

*“We used to have 9 WRAP accredited trainers in the authority. With changes in departments, with losses and natural wastage, that has been depleted. Now there is only [one person] in the LA who is delivering WRAP training. That is externally as well as internally. So, if somebody makes a mess and marginalises a community because of what they say in a WRAP session, then the Home Office can say ‘well it’s got nothing to do with us’. Which I think is dangerous. Having seen the NHS staff trying to deliver it<sup>66</sup>, all the fears I had were absolutely evidenced in what you saw. You are going to get private organisations or individuals setting themselves up and going out and delivering the training. And there is no control over the quality of what you are delivering or the type or way that it’s being delivered.”*

SP01

*“It is concerning that due to the austerity there are only 2 officers dealing with radicalisation and terrorism. Whilst the policies are there, there just aren’t enough people to drive it forward.”*

SP03

*“The Duty came in July. Then September when the schools came back, we got told by the Home Office that we should stop all training to the schools. Let the LA’s train their own staff. The legislation has come in but there’s no-one really. They’ve told us to stop. Well, we’re not going to stop”*

O1/SP02

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<sup>66</sup> ‘My NHS Counter Terrorism Training Session’ written by an anonymous health professional criticised the content and purpose of the training (CAGE, 2014).

This indicates the challenges experienced in delivering a nationally formulated risk knowledge across highly varied local practice contexts; not only in terms of ethics but also in terms of negotiating resources. This ‘trickle down’ training approach is perceived as linked to central funding constraints but is also seen as proving that the government did not forward-plan in preparation for the Duty.

Without enough trainers to deliver the free WRAP training, some practitioners are concerned that organisations will favour alternative free or cheap training, of questionable quality, simply to evidence they have undertaken it for contractual purposes. Practitioners’ concerns about the absence of adequate training are further compounded by the acknowledged lack of quality assurance of training related to PREVENT. This extends across both government-endorsed and independent programmes, whether those provided for free by community or third sector organisations or bought in from private sector companies or consultants. Attempting to do PREVENT ‘on the cheap’ by not providing additional resources to provide training to prepare for compliance, combined with increasing demands left practitioners feeling exposed in multiple ways:

*“It should have come with funding. It’s very easy to say to a LA ‘we are now placing a legal duty on you’ without giving them the funds to implement it. You can’t just leave that to LA’s to pick up the training, for all the organisations. I mean the Duty also applies to those commissioned providers. You’ve either got to be an authority that raises awareness for your commissioned providers, or at least point them in the right direction.”*

*SP01*

Reflecting on this situation, practitioners cast light on how, in the rush for time-pressured and resource-poor organisations to become ‘compliant’ and gain access funding or contracts, a particular process for transferring a specific risk knowledge of PREVENT is emerging (Argote and Guo, 2016). The information imparted through this process is related to compliance with the Duty rather than a knowledge of the CR risk. Utilising tools and methods such as online training, internal briefings, multi-agency groups and external inspections, SPs, as ‘internal experts’ within organisations, are often then tasked with delivering briefings about the information gained through this process to influence the practice of other colleagues on PREVENT.

For example, in the education sector there is a focus on knowledges to demonstrate actions to promote the highly contested concept of FBV as a means of preventing CR for child service users. Some SPs see this process as helpful and cost-effective for organisations, with a few particularly enthused about the value of these methods for disseminating ‘good practice’. However, this stands in sharp contrast with the underwhelming reality experienced by most of those who take part in the process. For instance, a training forum for ‘PREVENT Leads’ in the further education sector was described by one practitioner as an online meeting of staff for sharing experiences of PREVENT across the country. The only benefit from attending was described as the ‘comfort’ they could collectively take from the fact that they are all confused and frustrated by the lack of clarity given to them about PREVENT and safeguarding children under 18.

More broadly, online PREVENT and radicalisation training, in a multiple-choice format, is singled out as particularly problematic to practitioners, but also acknowledged as appealing for over-stretched services subject to regulatory inspections. The absence of face-to-face interaction is of specific concern as it removes

the opportunity for facilitators to challenge problematic practitioner views or interpretations of the Duty, as well as providing a chance for people to fraudulently complete training for other colleagues. The ability for a ‘trainee’ to constantly change their answers online until they get it right leads one practitioner to conclude that *“It’s not really worth the paper it’s written on to be honest”*. Others label it as a ‘tokenistic’ approach to safeguarding; being both literally and metaphorically a tick box exercise.

The risk knowledge of CR, its specific nature and prevalence, is therefore again established as conspicuously absent from these official learning experiences. This illustrates a clear misinterpretation of what is considered as training under PREVENT. It also establishes a set of circumstances in which practitioners can contest or construct their own versions of what they believe are the ‘knowns’ of CR. Any future inter-agency working, across various sectors and geographical locations, will inevitably be complicated by the multiple and inconsistent variations and interpretations of CR that will consequently emerge in practice.

### 5.3 Filling in the Gaps – Strategies and Practices for Learning, Imagining and Contesting the ‘Normal Character’ of the CR Risk Knowledge

The anticipated, and then newly enacted, PREVENT legislation places an expectation on practitioners to be able to identify if a child is vulnerable to the risk of CR in their day-to-day work. Yet, the preceding discussion shows that practitioners, across the study’s time-frame, were unable to access the sort of officially provided training for safeguarding and PREVENT initiatives which would give them either practical or theoretical understanding of the concepts brought together under CR as it is assembled within the legislation. CR is therefore not formally established as a safeguarding knowledge for practitioners’ risk-work. This vacuum must be filled, and the study

caught practitioners in the middle of the process of attempting to make sense of CR, even, for some, during the interviews themselves.

Discussions with practitioners revealed that their knowledge of CR is predominantly derived from engagement with, and leveraging of, ‘unofficial’ knowledge sources to try to make sense of and operationalise PREVENT. Sense-making for CR is therefore principally achieved by deploying other knowledges analogically to find a way of knowing about this ‘unknown’ entity (Carper, 1978). Leveraging, in this context, is a process of adapting and mobilising the pre-existing experiences or knowledges of ‘old’ safeguarding risks to make sense of this ‘new’ risk. Practitioners then supplement what is salvaged and made usable, with information gleaned from colleagues, friends, family and the media to inform their beliefs and opinions about the character and prevalence of CR.

### 5.3.1 Leveraging the ‘Knowns’ of Existing Safeguarding Risk-Work

Practitioners hold a specific form of risk knowledge related to safeguarding and child protection. Conceived, more specifically, as broadly child-focussed and child-centred (HM Government, 2015c; Munro, 2012) in its imagining and focussing on the accustomed practice of recognising the evidence of dangers facing children that exist in the present time or imminent future. This form of knowledge is the one practitioners struggle to expand to accommodate the new risk of CR. It is the more contemporary forms of safeguarding risk knowledges related to the exploitation of children for involvement in sex, gang or drug crimes, and the hybridised forms of safeguarding knowledge frameworks that underpin them, that practitioners use as leverage to make sense of CR:

*“It’s very similar. It’s a grooming process. Preying on vulnerable young people. Children, families. Groom them to such an extent that they feel they belong within that group. People can identify more with CSE because it’s so dominant on the agenda isn’t it? Although, the focus has come off CSE. We’ve dealt with it now. Now that Rotherham has finished. Now that all the enquiries have finished. Until the next one.”*

*SP03*

*“The nearest [to CR being in safeguarding policy] was CSE. Really some of those things could indicate someone is vulnerable to radicalisation too. Coercion. Intimidation. Someone being groomed, being influenced, all of that.”*

*SP/FP04*

*“Were they groomed? [Jihadi Brides newspaper article]. No one knows and it’s scary. Probably they’ve been enticed by a world that didn’t exist. A prince charming. That can appeal to all girls who want to feel protected. They could have been suffering racism and they want this person to go and fight the world for them. Fight against people who have been racist to them or hurt them in other ways.”*

*SP/FP03*

*“Maybe they’d met guys who had sold them a dream. We’ve all been 16 and we’ve all done that. I don’t class that as being radicalised. You’ve just been given another way to look at life. That’s a dream girls have. A knight*

*in shining armour who's going to save the world. The amount of girls that age who probably hide little Johnny's contraband under their bed because he's their world. Then they end up in jail. Have they been radicalised? If you look at CSE and gangs and grooming, they've taken that approach. But not with this. It's ridiculous."*

FP02

### *Grooming as Proxy Knowledge*

The conceptual and terminological adoption of 'grooming' gives additional purchase to making sense of the unknown risk of CR, although, as previously discussed, it has no legal definition and is beset with problematic gendered notions about vulnerability. There is a shared understanding among practitioners that grooming is a process of adults, or older children, 'befriending' vulnerable children with the intention of exposing them to immediate or future harms or dangers, including committing crime. 'Grooming' therefore appears to centralise the protection of children from adults but, as outlined above, it is shown to only make sense to practitioners for CR when those children, especially females, exclusively behave 'vulnerably' and without agency.

The more recently-trained practitioners, however, indicate that an emerging future-oriented framework of safeguarding children from risk of exploitation is changing how 'grooming' is framed:

*"I've been on countless amounts of safeguarding training with Liverpool Safeguarding Board. A lot of the young people we get through the door are either LAC [Looked After Children], child in need, child protection or on*

*a full care order. So, we do work with safeguarding on a daily basis. It is mainly the young people who first of all are putting themselves at risk. And therefore, putting their kids at risk. They can't comprehend that. It's trying to help them understand how they can improve in order to not put their kids at risk. For example, not taking them out to meet men off the internet, staying in hotels with men off the internet. A lot of them they don't understand that having a DV [domestic violence] incident in front of your child is a safeguarding issue. For our young kids I'm trying to teach them where they are going wrong."*

*FP06*

The practitioners' role is explicated here as helping children to see the ways they can reduce their own vulnerability. In this framework, sometimes referred to by others as improving 'resilience', children's existing vulnerabilities are annexed to predictions of the risks that they are 'vulnerable' to experiencing or presenting to others. These predictions are based on identities, behaviours or circumstances, often which children have no control over. Paradoxically, in this form of safeguarding knowledge, children are responsibilised for their own future victimhood – their vulnerability to being groomed and exploited by adults.

Treating CR as a variant of 'grooming', is interpreted by the practitioners who adopt it as a logical extension to safeguarding knowledge on exploitation. CR is understood as a process in which children can be seduced by adult ideologues into committing violent criminal acts. Interpreting and framing CR as a process wherein children are 'groomed' fortifies and upholds the 'conveyor belt' conceptualisation of the radicalisation process (Kundnani, 2012), which often contradicts in a number of

ways with practitioners' views on the concept of radicalisation, explored in detail in the next chapter but briefly observed here.

Firstly, practitioners understand and critique the term radicalisation, alongside terrorism, radical and extremist, in non-dichotomous ways that allow for benign definitions to exist for children. Secondly, practitioners go on to challenge the sequential and linear nature of the radicalisation concept, especially that a child can progress from 'extreme' thoughts and ideas to violent actions. Thirdly, and most significantly at this point, practitioners identify that they do not know if, or how, they can act to prevent children from 'self-radicalising' (Ramakrishna, 2014) or becoming lone actor extremists:

*"In terms of things like sexual abuse, the young person is told that if they tell anyone that things will happen. They're threatened to keep silent and I think there might be an aspect of that with radicalisation. The 'we have to keep this to ourselves because if people find out they won't be happy'. So, I just wonder if there are similarities in terms of safeguarding around this. But if they're radicalising themselves. Well, how would you, you know, if they're doing it themselves?"*

*SP/FP04*

In other words, practitioners are unsure of how to understand CR if there is no 'groomer' or identifiable, older person exploiting or harming a child. This scenario clearly creates a dilemma for practitioners in expanding their existing knowledge of safeguarding to accommodate CR.

Nevertheless, despite the problematical aspects and acknowledged limited usefulness of the ‘grooming’ concept, it is understandable why FPs try to make sense of CR by using it. In the absence of a clear and consistent definition of CR as a specific form of safeguarding risk, this particular form of sense-making practice – that of overlaying one risk knowledge, in which ‘the basics’ are understood, with another which is often described as outside of their expertise – helps practitioners to feel that they can understand the unknown entity which they have been tasked to prevent.

### *Leveraging Crime Prevention Risk Knowledge*

Practitioners who have been involved in criminal justice work similarly leverage their crime prevention risk-work knowledge, vis-a-vis which children are deemed at risk of posing harm to others through criminal offending or re-offending, to make sense of CR. Practitioners fuse together crime prevention with traditional child-welfare safeguarding approaches in their descriptions of a hybridised risk knowledge for CR safeguarding. Within this, practitioners oscillate between a focus on children being at risk of doing harm and a focus on them as at risk of being harmed.

Sometimes children are treated as being in both states simultaneously. In youth work settings for example, practitioners refer to historically working only with children who have been referred to them by police as ‘*at risk of offending*’, or currently delivering targeted activity programmes for all children living in ‘*tough*’ areas that have been labelled ‘*hotspots*’ by police and LA crime prevention and crime reduction initiatives:

*“There’ll be stuff that we do in hotspot areas [geographical areas], that the police tell us. Where we do activities and there’s trouble with the kids. It’s more like a gang territory thing.”*

*FP01*

Crime prevention is therefore depicted as an intervention at the stage when children are imminently likely to commit a crime, for example, as a result of association with known criminals. However, pre-crime prevention, particularly as articulated by PREVENT, is not like crime prevention. FPs accounts especially do not reference the pre-criminal risk notion, except for those who are ASSET<sup>67</sup> trained to assess or contribute to the assessment of risk and protective factors in children who have offended which indicate their likelihood of further offending. Nonetheless, the SPs treat pre-crime intervention for CR as a simple extension of crime prevention work, one that allows FPs to intercede one stage earlier when children are vulnerable to committing a crime at some point in the future:

*“What we’re always looking for and what we try and get across to teachers is that it could be the pre-cursor. So, a little kid who draws a swastika on his book. Or an adult with learning difficulties. Or someone who said something. It could be the first of a series of events that leads to. Well, what you find is that your 7/7 bombers, 9/11, everyone. When they do these big case reviews on them, they always go ‘this happened, that happened and there’s loads of stuff that went on’. The Glasgow bombers. There’s loads of stuff that happens prior to it that no one reports because they think ‘ah*

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<sup>67</sup> ASSET is a risk assessment tool for children within the youth offending framework (Briggs, 2013).

*it's a load of nonsense'. But when its pieced all together you think 'if she'd just have said that, and if he'd just reported that'. It's that kind of thing. A precursor. So, when you might report a student, 18 who says 'I hate the government always spying on us'. We're not going to do anything with that. That's their view. If you challenge it there and then, you don't have to report that. But if this kid is constantly saying stuff and giving out leaflets saying 'Hate the government'. We might not do anything with it. But it will be recorded on our system. He might get so far down the line that when we get a referral at 21, we look and say well when he was 18, he was doing this. Now at 21 he's not just doing leaflets. He's got a megaphone standing in the middle of Liverpool shouting it. That's what PREVENT is all about. It's the pre-criminal space. They put so much money into Pursue with surveillance and everything else. The way the world's gone with ISIS. You can't pursue everyone. You can't surveil [sic] everyone. There's just too many people. So, it's all about the pre-criminal stuff now. Trying to get in there before they do something that we have to lock them up for."*

O3/SP02

The 'pre-crime' approach is communicated here as a policy need; due to the size of the risk posed, it is a surveillance necessity that local practitioners must adopt for the safety and security of society. However, the government decision to compel interventions at such an early stage in a possible journey to criminal action is seen by practitioners, at least in part, as financially motivated. Indeed, practitioners point out the enlargement of policing to non-crime areas of people's lives under the banner of 'vulnerability' (Keay and Kirby, 2017; Robinson et al, 2016; Rumbaut and Bittner,

1979), areas traditionally the territory of social work or youth work practitioners<sup>68</sup>, has accompanied a reduction in resources for welfare and youth work:

*“In an ideal world you would have youth clubs’ kids could access. You would have extracurricular activities within schools. You’d have that one-to-one time to work with a kid. You’d have family support workers going out. They’ve cut them. You’d have children centre staff. They’ve cut them. Who have we got now? We’ve got a basic skeleton service which consists of school, health, police and children’s services.”*

*SP03*

The expansion of policing into welfare is an issue practitioners raise time and again as shaping all aspects of ‘doing risk’. What comes across especially clearly is that the understandings of risk expressed in safeguarding and (pre) crime prevention terms highlight significant inconsistencies in the ‘knowns’ within the respective risk knowledge frameworks. Those inconsistencies stem from differential approaches to risk orientation. That is, the point in time at which a situation will come to be treated as risky, and whether the risks are posed by or to children, depends entirely upon the perspective taken. Next, that there are varying levels of expectation of practitioners in different organisations to predict risk of harm or risk of vulnerability to harm, and these do not always align with their primary or established way of working with risk. What practitioner accounts show us, in other words, is that even when they try to leverage their understandings of these two risk frameworks to make sense of CR,

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<sup>68</sup> There is current debate in the profession and a continuing discussion within academia about the expanding role of UK police work into ‘vulnerability’, see Keay and Kirby (2017) and National College of Policing (2017).

separately or together, that there is still room for confusion, misunderstanding and internal tensions within practice.

### 5.3.2 Drawing Upon ‘Informal’ Information and Media Messages

Leveraging safeguarding knowledges to provide a framework for doing risk-work for CR, is supplemented by practitioners by drawing upon various information sources both to develop or assemble the knowns of CR but also to deconstruct them. The views of friends, peers, family members and colleagues, the media and other open knowledge sources, for example newspapers, social media, internet research, books, film, are frequently cited as influencing the interpretations of CR by practitioners and their colleagues. In their attempts to understand CR and make sense of how it may be an issue for them to manage locally, practitioners’ question or undermine its prevalence based on their experiences of working with children. Concurrently, they also inflate or amplify the possibility of its existence on the basis of what knowledge they have accessed through the media. The media are often acknowledged to be a problematic source of information, but the influence is manifest. The specific use of the phrase ‘*moral panic*’ to describe how CR is presented to the public in ways that have been seen historically, indicates that practitioners recognise this risk as one which the media is part of politically and socially amplifying (Altheide, 2007; 2013; Baker, Gabrielatos and McEnery, 2013; Cohen, 1972; 2011; Kasperson et al, 1988; Mythen and Walklate, 2006a; Renn et al 1992; Ross, Mirowsky and Pribesh, 2001; Sian, Law and Sayyid, 2012; Tulloch and Zinn, 2011). The damaging and even dangerous effects of this are also implied. Particularly acknowledged, is how the media plays a major role in their perception of risk with the explicit and biased association of the terms ‘terrorism’ or ‘terrorist’ with Muslims or Islam identified by practitioners as problematic (Baker, 2008; Baker, 2012; Baker, Gabrielatos and McEnery, 2013).

### *Racialised Risk Knowledge*

Practitioners give international examples of Ghandi, Nelson Mandela and the Black Panthers and national examples of the portrayal of Thomas Mair<sup>69</sup> and the White Man's March<sup>70</sup> in Liverpool to challenge the media portrayal of terrorism. This resistance to what is being understood as media knowledges attempts to direct the understanding of the 'normal character' of CR explicitly signals practitioners' understanding of these concepts as being framed and defined in situated ways, as well as temporally and geographically understood:

*"I don't know if I know what it [radicalisation] is really. I know that there are people who have a lot of influence who would like to influence other people. I suppose that's ok to a certain point. There have always been people who have influenced other people. Some of that, like Ghandi, is fantastic. But then there might be some influence where you might think 'Well I don't think that's helpful'. If you're living in Britain and you're influenced to think it's wrong to believe in British values, well, I think that leads to some issues."*

*SP/FP04*

The interaction of media knowledge, political views and professional pragmatism is thus a feature of how racialised meaning seeps into the developing knowledge of CR. This is exacerbated by examples of practitioners being tasked to address in concert

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<sup>69</sup> Thomas Mair was imprisoned for the murder of Jo Cox MP. The Judge in sentencing him acknowledged his affiliation to far-right wing organisations (Wilkie, 2016)

<sup>70</sup> The White Man's March was a part of a far-right, neo-Nazi demonstration and presence in the city from 2014 to the current day (McHale, 2015; Murphy, 2016).

several racialised government agendas<sup>71</sup> assumed to work together under the ‘PREVENT’ banner. This is particularly noticeable in relation to agendas around FBV and ‘harmful cultural practices’, such as honour-based violence and female genital mutilation (FGM), which problematically connect and conflate issues of immigration, cultural integration and community cohesion through the contestable safeguarding lens of ‘vulnerability’ to CR. Practitioners talked of work on these and other issues as being ‘combined’ or confusingly separated out in their organisations, due to the factors of limited resources, regulatory requirements or just for convenience:

*“A big massive change to me would be to have everyone going PREVENT is safeguarding. Just like CSE, FGM, honour-based violence. It’s all the same thing.”*

01/SP02

*“I think the extremism it’s like a hot potato. People don’t know what they are doing, and they just want to pass it round. One minute it’s the police who are putting the training on. The next minute one of your colleagues has then been told that they’re the PREVENT officer. But I don’t reckon they’ve got the skills, the knowledge or the ability to do it. The PREVENT team in there [different department] is CSE, that’s got loads of money around it. The PREVENT worker here is one nominated worker doing*

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<sup>71</sup> This has recently been referred to as a characteristic of the ‘hostile environment’ policy established by the previous Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition Government and continued by the current Conservative Government. Now referred to by Government as the ‘compliant environment’, this agenda came to light because of the Windrush Scandal in May 2018. It is a set of policy and administrative measures which have permeated education, housing and employment rules designed to limit migrants’ rights and deter them from entering or remaining in the UK. Due to its racialised understanding, it has been exposed as enabling racially discriminatory outcomes against people who are legally UK citizens but perceived as the immigrant ‘other’ (Fassin, 2001; Said, 1978), namely Black British citizens of the African-Caribbean ‘Windrush’ generation (Taylor, 2018; Younge, 2018).

*extremism, forced marriage all that. That's got no money. Then the Safeguarding officer for the organisation, is also head of the service. It's just a tag on, an add on."*

FP07

*"British Values is a massive thing that we're working on, you know OFSTED. But what is British Values? Other than abiding by laws, what is it? It's borderline racism sometimes. We just do our British Values here on our rules. 'This is what we expect of you in college, your code of conduct, respect each other, no bullying'. But safeguarding is massive with OFSTED. A big thing they are zooming in on and it's so hard. The amount [CR issues] we've had for the number of students we get is scary"*

SP/FP03

In referring exclusively to Muslims in their own understandings of CR, practitioners adhere to the bias and amplification they also decry. A partial explanation as to why this occurs – explored here and expanded upon in Chapters 6 and 7 – is that the convergence of these differently motivated agendas in policy and practice results in misunderstandings and misapplications of PREVENT. That is, practitioners are leveraging contradictory knowledge to make sense of CR and those contradictions feed through into their practices.

For instance, practitioners explain that, even when they have not professionally engaged with PREVENT, they have developed an understanding of it from the extensive media coverage it receives. This frames the multi-layered and often oppositional understandings of both PREVENT and CR in several ways. Firstly, it

directs their understanding of CR exclusively to the dangers conveyed as posed to the UK by Islamic State or ISIS, Muslims and Islam. This was particularly clear in responses when ‘real time’ terrorist acts were saturating the press and media at the time of the interviews. Secondly, the terms made popular in the media of PREVENT being a ‘*toxic*’ policy (Lepper, 2017) for community relations and a method of ‘*spying*’ on the wider public<sup>72</sup>, especially prevalent in the lead up to the PREVENT Duty, are terms echoed by practitioners to explain why they chose to avoid engagement with it before the Duty was enacted. They are often confused by the knowledge and information they are sourcing and left uncertain as to any actions they should be taking.

### *Contesting Risk Knowledges*

In the period post-legislation, instead of uncritical acceptance of PREVENT, many practitioners nonetheless continued to display a high level of engagement with political discourses, especially those relevant to their work with children and CR, and still underscore the dilemmas working with a problematic policy like PREVENT poses for them. They relay feeling responsible to children and communities in how they interpret and implement PREVENT and stress the need to show transparency. Practitioners working with communities they judge to be unfairly ‘*targeted*’ by the policy stress the moral dilemmas that attend implementing a policy they don’t agree with. Some directly vocalise their fears about the securitisation of their professions and some even further contest the Government counter-terrorism approach by referring to State actions, specifically foreign policy and the ‘war on terror’, as either a causal factor in encouraging the spread of terrorism or as a source of grievance for people who support ‘extremist’ groups or ideologies (Abbas, 2012; Amoore and De Goede,

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<sup>72</sup> Concepts of securitisation and surveillance are explained in the previous chapters on Framing and Legislating Risk.

2008; Cherney and Murphy, 2016; Cockburn, 2015; McCulloch and Pickering, 2009; Neocleous, 2011; Sabir, 2017). PREVENT policy is subsequently described by both frontline and SPs as an exercise to facilitate, often on the grounds of racist assumptions, increased surveillance of individuals and communities (Glover, 2008). They see it as '*politically biased*'; part of a '*warfare strategy*', that involves the '*surveillance*', '*monitoring*', '*profiling*' and '*criminalisation*' of racial minorities.

Nevertheless, contesting policy whilst simultaneously, sometimes inadvertently, implementing features they disagree with, such as adopting the language or concepts from PREVENT, was a common feature of interviews across the time from pre to post-PREVENT Duty:

*"During the training that I've done, I put four pictures up. The twin girls, sisters Selma and Ayesha. Michael Adebolajo and Michael Adebowale. And after that I show Pavlo Lapshyn, the Polish guy who killed the 80-year-old guy outside the mosque in Birmingham. And the White Man's March last year in Liverpool. And I put them four up. Out of all of them pictures, they can only identify them 2. Adebolajo and Adebowale, and the girls who are now Jihadi brides. They could not identify the others. Which is really interesting because if you turn it on its head and look at White extremism, there is no recognition of that. It's concerning. And we have still not had a referral in the last 6 months with regards to radicalisation."*

*SP03*

*“And I did take that [CR being included in the safeguarding policy] to senior management and they’re really up for looking at how we put that in, and what we can do because I just think it needs to be named in a way.”*

*SP/FP04*

As the legislative changes begin to permeate their work, many practitioners’ protests shifted from a political or policy level to more practical, work-based concerns. Practitioners who openly disagreed with PREVENT at the initial stage, for example, appeared to ‘buy into’ the agenda by becoming ‘expert’ practitioners or trainers. This is indicative of a wider pragmatic approach adopted by practitioners to working with CR after the enactment. Many practitioners come to accept that CR is a ‘big’, ‘major’, or ‘massive’ issue, often while noting that they and their colleagues have little to no knowledge or experience of working with CR. This illustrates a form of ‘risk dramaturgy’ (Mythen, 2015; 2018) wherein they are acting out what they think they should do in the face of a risk that they have been told is significant. However, the above examples which SPs outline of their work in these ‘expert’ roles can also be interpreted again as small acts of resistance (Scott, 1985) which subvert the policy orientations and national training messages, through the provision of alternative realities for developing CR knowledge. How effective this ‘resistance’ can be in the face of the influence of the more pervasive policy and media messages in framing how practitioners should ‘see’ the CR risk in everyday risk-work practice, will be explored in subsequent chapters.

## 5.4 Conclusion

The significant paucity of formal training in the official risk knowledge and ‘knowns’ of CR creates a reality for practitioners in which they are expected to operationalise

this safeguarding legal duty with little or no knowledge. Beck acknowledged that for the increasingly unmanageable risks appearing in the ‘World Risk Society’, this is a state that many will have to accept (Beck, 1996). However, for practitioners accustomed to evidencing decision-making in child safeguarding practice, this state of ‘not-knowing’ is not an acceptable condition.

These problems are characteristic of situations in which ‘doing something’ is stressed under conditions of not-knowing. Rappert refers to this type of governmentally-produced scenario as a ‘state of ignorance’ (Rappert, 2012). That is, circumstances in which States require people to act under ignorance, thus compelling them to adopt all sorts of local work-arounds, ad hoc strategies and desperate searches for sources of enlightenment – things which can never materialise given the problem’s unknowability.

This is an accurate depiction of practitioners’ attempts to make sense of CR. Training, policy and assessment tools are viewed by practitioners as a panacea for the CR knowledge gap, even when they do not offer any deeper understanding of the ‘risk’. Practitioners continually adopt strategies to enable them to make sense of and operationalise, prepare to operationalise or in some cases resist operationalising, the legislatively mandated task of identifying CR in their everyday risk-work. They take up different concepts, for instance, public protection and child protection, characterised by interrelated tensions and incompatibilities, stitching them together to create a combined safeguarding ‘entity’ in practice that they can make sense of.

The multiple, heterogeneous sources drawn upon, from policy, training, regulatory interactions, contractual relationships and the mainstream media, to create the typicality, or in other words, the ‘known’ or ‘normal character’ of CR (Sudnow, 1965), means that many actors and confused or confusing agendas are involved in this

assemblage. The unavoidable result is a wide variation of what practitioners come to believe to be information that they have learned about CR, rather than information that they have acquired which may be factually or ethically questionable, subjective or biased. It is a non-knowledge, arguably created by practitioners out of necessity and not by design, but nonetheless, it is not neutral. It is a set of disparate set of understandings coloured by particular intentions to present or dismiss a particular issue or group as a future danger. It is muddled in how it is understood and therefore has the potential to become further confused in praxis. The way in which the CR knowledge is built can therefore provide those tasked with acting upon CR with a very particular lens with which to see and judge certain risks, and not others, as acceptable (Douglas, 1985; Heyman and Brown, 2013). The next chapter illustrates how practitioner understandings of the ‘knowns’ of CR interact with how they will ‘see’, or won’t see, the risk of CR in situations with children in their everyday practice.

## 6. SEEING RISK

### 6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter demonstrated that legislative guidelines for CR, unpacked and communicated in various ways, tell practitioners ‘that’ they must be able to see risk but are largely silent on ‘how’ to see it (Ryle, 1949). To fill the vacuum this aporia creates in their understanding of the specific features of CR, practitioners are shown to develop, to varying degrees, a praxis or ‘way of knowing’ (Carper, 1978) utilising alternative knowledges instead.

The legislative responsibility requires practitioners to accept the risk of CR exists and that it falls within the domain of safeguarding. They must also accept they can identify and prevent this new addition to their field of professional responsibilities. Practitioners, of course, already know a great deal about safeguarding children and their rights as their work is predicated on that. In having to accommodate CR as an expert risk knowledge, however, they are led to devalue their existing expertise and professional experience.

In attempts to ameliorate the anxiety of being responsible for an issue they feel they do not really know or understand, they leverage auxiliary knowledges from media sources or bootstrapped from safeguarding concepts (Beck, 1995). Yet they are unstable and inherently biased. Within these conceptualisations of CR, often conflicting and highly variable interpretations of child protection and crime prediction present children as posing a risk, to themselves or to others. Children are thereby framed in the binary terms of being ‘at risk’ or being ‘a risk’ (Coppock and McGovern, 2014; Heath-Kelly, 2013; 2017; McKendrick and Finch, 2016). From both perspectives, children’s vulnerabilities are viewed as aspects of their identity, lifestyle

or behaviour that they must personally take responsibility for, and that practitioners should safeguard them against. Utilising these flawed knowledges to begin to make sense of and operationalise the concept of CR means that practitioner practices for seeing risk ‘by proxy’, and later for acting on the risk that is seen, are prone to be problematic from the start, with significant potential for misapplication and misunderstanding.

Focussing on practitioners’ orientations towards who and what does or does not, or should or should not, be taken to constitute risk in the process of identifying vulnerability to the risk of CR is thus important for several reasons. Practitioners are expected to identify, corroborate and take steps to deal with the risk of CR on behalf of the public in line with the law. As practitioners have been made societally responsible for finding CR, or in other words, for seeing it in the society, the difficulties they encounter in doing so are instructive. The risk of CR is not simply there to be seen by anyone who would look, so fulfilling this role is far from an automatic process. It requires them to continuously exercise professional judgement and discretion. This is open to obvious subjectivity and bias drawn from their understandings of what they have learned to treat as CR’s ‘normal character’ (Sudnow, 1965: 259). The ‘normal character’ of CR must then be read into the actions or behaviours of children. Those packages of action and identity are ‘seen’ by practitioners as indicating the risk of its presence. Practitioner responses highlight the distinct quandary for a praxis when children are viewed in dual terms: as either presenting evidence of their vulnerability, that is being a future victim; or their dangerousness, that is being a future criminal. It is a predicament that has practice-shaping consequences. Under the current way of seeing CR, a child is less likely to be seen to be *at* risk, they will be seen to be *the* risk.

## 6.2 Professional Vision – Frameworks for Seeing and Making Risk Reality

Goodwin argues that if professionals are to properly engage with the phenomena that provide the focus of their work – in this context the work of identifying safeguarding risks to protect children from CR – they must first develop a distinctive form of ‘professional vision’. This is the profession and context-specific set of sense-making practices which foreground the ‘objects of knowledge’ that are the focal points of their professional work (Goodwin, 1994: 606). Following Goodwin, it is important to note that ‘evidence’ is consistently emphasised in practitioner depictions of safeguarding risk-work. As with the examples in Goodwin’s research, ‘evidence’ is understood here in safeguarding risk-work as practitioners’ ‘objects of knowledge’, the pieces of information which signal or prove to practitioners the existence of risk and harm to children.

As discussed in the previous chapter, when it comes to safeguarding risks like CSE, practitioners learn about the conceptual and statistical realities related to the risk as part of developing their frameworks for understanding and operationalising it. These frameworks are therefore key to their ‘professional vision’. They are part of a process which enables practitioners to ‘see’, identify or categorise children’s circumstances, actions or behaviours as evidence of ‘risk’; to ascertain evidence of its presence; to judge the level of risk acceptability and to share that ‘evidence’ with others. It renders safeguarding risks to children in some way visible and knowable for practitioners and thus positions practitioners’ decisions and judgements as transparent or ‘seeable’ to auditors, whether internally or externally.

However, in relation to CR, the frameworks and evidencing processes that have developed around this new risk are simply too unstable and underspecified to provide a secure base for the simple extension of safeguarding ‘professional vision’ to this new

risk domain. A significant strand within practitioner interviews, even interviews with those tasked with leading on the PREVENT agenda, was the perceived absence of evidence or statistical information<sup>73</sup> about children's involvement in terrorist acts and the prevalence of CR as a specific threat to children they work with. This outlines the challenge of being given the responsibility to identify or 'see' the imagined future threats of CR, without information on what real, present threats look like.

### *Seeing Without Knowing*

What 'seeing risk' under these conditions of 'not knowing' means must thus be worked out in other ways. The focus of this chapter is, as a result, these other ways. That is, it examines how, in the absence of practical knowledge of what evidence of CR looks like, practitioners come to define, develop and give meaning to their own 'knowns' or 'objects of knowledge'. The frameworks which provide the parameters of their 'professional vision' are analysed to outline the practical and conceptual complications which arise in applying theoretically-based risk policies and frameworks in frontline practice. The development of the 'objects of knowledge' are discussed from this perspective to highlight challenges they face in doing so. This is particularly pronounced around the grafting of a concern for 'pre-crime' onto a 'safeguarding' framework, a suturing of logics that gives rise to real, practical dilemmas for risk identification.

In practitioners' safeguarding risk-work, the lens of 'evidence' is one that is regularly expressed as shaping and influencing 'professional vision' for practice. Evidence is an articulation of the collective 'objects of knowledge' which justify safeguarding risk judgements and decision making in work with children. The official

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<sup>73</sup> Reinforcing the knowledge voids within training and policy expressed in the previous chapter Learning Risk.

position that CR is a risk ‘reality’ from which all children need safeguarding, sits uneasily with practitioners’ beliefs that CR is not a risk that the children they work with face and also with institutional and professional commitments to ‘evidence-led’ policy and ‘evidence-based’ judgements of risk (Goldson, 2010; Mythen, Walklate and Peatfield, 2017; Robinson et al, 2016).

It is here that the first conceptual and practical conflict between PREVENT and ‘everyday’ safeguarding becomes most apparent. If one holds the belief, as many practitioners do, that evidence of CR must be assembled so it can be positively identified to demonstrate fulfilment of the PREVENT Duty in practice, then one cannot simultaneously hold that CR is ‘everywhere’. This is not what the available evidence shows. In an evidence-led or evidence-based view of the world, CR only exists where the evidence shows it exists; its existence cannot be projected. CR is, thus, only as prevalent as the fully documented and actioned ‘cases’ show it to be. ‘Cases’ therefore play a critical role. They are a key point at which the CR ‘risk reality’ acquires or fails to acquire a determinate shape and form (Kitsuse and Cicourel, 1963; Latour and Woolgar, 1986: 154).

In the risk-work of assembling ‘cases’ from available evidence, then, practitioners can assist in making CR real. Where they see evidence of a child’s vulnerability to the risk of CR, that risk will be treated as real. In tasking practitioners to identify and report suspicions of ‘vulnerability to the risk of CR’ as opposed to the practice they are accustomed to in providing evidence of the presence of risk, and in defining vulnerability to include issues such as children’s identity, PREVENT thus has the potential to distort<sup>74</sup> the established meaning of ‘evidence’ in safeguarding risk work.

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<sup>74</sup> Published statistics on PREVENT referrals are the numbers of reports of suspicions, and yet are often referred to as ‘cases’ of CR (see Cornish, 2016; HM Government, 2017; 2018).

If practitioners, however, instead successfully question, contest and deconstruct the evidence that a future case might be made of, it can fail to ever become a 'case' and will not be treated as real. The practical determination of what should and should not be 'evidence' of risk is therefore highly consequential; it directly shapes the 'risk reality' by establishing what will and will not come to be included in it (Becker, 1963; Cicourel, 1968; Hacking, 1996; Kitsuse and Cicourel, 1963; Lipsky, 1980; Sudnow, 1965; 1972).

### 6.2.1 'Everyday' Safeguarding Risk-Work

Specific kinds of risks are seen by practitioners as part of 'routine' or 'everyday' safeguarding risk-work with children. Their accounts indicate that the term 'routine' not only applies to the categories of risk they most frequently encounter and their ordinary features or 'normal character' (Sudnow, 1965), but also to the processes for managing them (Tulloch and Lupton, 2003). Doing safeguarding risk-work for routine or everyday issues is treated as a matter of 'common understanding' among practitioners, their peers and other frontline service colleagues, what Garfinkel calls '*what anyone like us necessarily knows*' (Garfinkel, 1964: 236). Practitioners give examples of balancing and managing these routine risks in a routine manner, making visible the normalisation of these 'everyday' risks for certain children, very often related to violence within the home and the community. These categories of 'risk' are regarded as ordinary; the 'real' risk issues for the children they work with. This leads some practitioners, as discussed earlier, to question why CR as a specific category is given such priority in their work when it is not seen to fit with the realities of the situations they deal with on the ground:

*“I’ve obviously heard kids saying they’re going to fight with bricks and sticks. Even knives. Like the boy who got killed over there, they were kids who come on the scheme with us. 10 of them ended up getting pulled in over it and 2 are doing life because they stabbed the lad. It’s things that you come across all the time isn’t it? You deal with all this violence on a regular. We go into schools talking about racism, bullying, drugs and alcohol and that. One of our lads got shot so we talk about drugs and gangs. We have conversations with the kids where they tell you there’s trouble at home, their mothers are drinking and stuff. But I can’t see extremism happening anywhere in Liverpool. But then you read in the paper that it has happened<sup>75</sup>.”*

*FP01*

The most significant barrier that practitioners identify to their numerous attempts to see CR as ‘ordinary safeguarding’, is the fact that it has been presented as a separate, special, expert knowledge and one which they have not been given access to information, evidence or statistical rationale for understanding. The ‘special’ nature of CR as both a safeguarding and pre-crime intervention thus often renders CR a breach of most practitioners’ common understanding<sup>76</sup> of everyday safeguarding risk work (Garfinkel, 1964), despite several attempts by practitioners to include it within their field of vision:

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<sup>75</sup> A recent counter-terrorism police raid in the city (Dodd and Weaver, 2015) which later did not result in charge or prosecution.

<sup>76</sup> Garfinkel (1964) in his breaching experiments refers to the rules and features, sometimes spoken but often unspoken, which guide social interactions and underpin ‘common understandings’.

*“K: I think it [CR] is safeguarding myself. It all comes under that. But now they’re taking the bits out, they’re just making more issues out of things. If you’ve got a good safeguarding lead all of that will come into it no matter what that safeguarding problem is.*

*L: I feel as though we’ve been doing that for years and years within early years and we’ve never had major issues have we? It’s high on the agenda now, but it should be running right through our normal training.*

*K: It’s just duty of care isn’t it? The care that we give and what we do for them. That’s just the norm for us. But now, you’ve got to try and tick boxes and stuff. It’s wrong.”*

*L/K SP04*

*“I just wonder do we need a separate policy? For that? Or could it just be another factor to look out for? I mean, would we respond any differently? I don’t know. Maybe we would.”*

*SP/FP04*

*“I wouldn’t have seen PREVENT as safeguarding. I always would think if I was doing it, it’s because you assume that certain communities are involved in terrorism.”*

*SP/FP03*

*“I don’t follow the PREVENT strategy. Safeguarding for me is about vulnerable people getting harmed rather than going into terrorism.”*

*FP05*

The ‘pre-criminal space’, as previously outlined, is simply not part of FPs’ understandings of safeguarding risk-work and even among the SPs there is confusion about whether PREVENT is a crime prediction (Ashworth and Zedner, 2012; 2014; McCulloch, 2015; Mossman, 1994; Zedner, 2007; 2010; 2010a), or a crime detection policy and process. This further signals that the policies of Pursue and PREVENT have become conflated in knowledge and praxis. The described misapprehension among those tasked with leading the agenda, means that the confusion expressed by FPs about how to see risk in safeguarding vis-a-vis crime prediction terms should be seen as contextual. Irrespective of practitioner efforts to understand it as a safeguarding risk, how CR is built through law and policy and then processed, as this chapter shows, creates dissonances with ‘everyday’ safeguarding practice. A specific form of ‘professional vision’ for CR risk-work is therefore obligated by policy and legislation for frontline practice, even though it is not explicitly communicated to those working in such roles. Therefore, practitioners are in the predicament of having to make, or unmake, the ‘objects of knowledge’, ‘evidence’ or ‘facts’ which help them make sense of CR safeguarding risk-work for themselves *in situ*.

### 6.3 ‘Objects of Knowledge’ for Seeing CR – Contesting and Upholding the ‘Ubiquity of Bias’

The earlier described open acknowledgement by practitioners of the subjectivity surrounding what or who is seen as indicating a risk of CR in practice specifically points towards a practical consciousness of what Lipsky refers to as ‘the ubiquity of bias’ in the discretionary practice for how they, or other practitioners, imagine, build or construct the present or future ‘client’ (Hacking, 1991; 1996; 1999; Lipsky, 1980:

111). Practitioners' accounts demonstrate that bias does permeate their risk perceptions of CR, but also simultaneously provide insight into how, with an acute awareness of the potential for discrimination, practitioners attempt to resist and challenge bias in their own practice and the practice of others.

### *Risk Perception and Bias*

'Terror' attacks that took place during the fieldwork period influenced how practitioners saw the risk of CR, in much the same way that global events inform and determine local views and perceptions of risk more broadly (Beck, 1996; 2003; Douglas, 1992; Kasperson et al, 1988; Lash, 2003; Tulloch and Lupton, 2003; Tversky and Kahneman, 1973; Wilkinson, 2010).

The immediacy of these events and their portrayal within the media exacerbate the uncertainty, or 'not knowing', caused by the absence of professional knowledge for CR. The leveraged knowledge, or indeed non-knowledge of CR that practitioners use to fill the void created by policy communication failures and secrecy, including inadequate or irrelevant training, is consequential for practitioner expressions of their understanding and interpretation of risk in practice. Risk-thinking in these circumstances operates as a 'simplifying heuristic' (Kasperson et al, 1988: 185). That is, to make sense of complex risks or risks that are difficult to manage alongside many other risks, practitioners employ simplified schemes or 'heuristics' to evaluate risk and shape their responses to overwhelming or diverse information, missing or unreliable data.

As part of the simplification process, practitioners do draw upon their own risk 'instincts' or previous risk experiences, such as the earlier described adaptation of practitioner understanding of safeguarding and grooming to make sense of CR in their

risk knowledge, but also, somewhat problematically, apply their own individual values and interpretations of CR risk based on what has been gleaned from the media as a primary ‘knowledge’ source. Practitioners interviews illustrate that they are more attuned to seeing the risk of CR as a salient issue for their practice in the time following a reported attack, often making mental shortcuts to the then very current IS/ISIS attacks in Paris and Nice or incidents of UK children travelling to join IS in Syria when outlining their view of the extent, nature and threat of CR (Agans and Schaffer, 2010; Keren and Tiegen, 2004; Kasperson et al, 1988; Slovic and Peters, 2006; Slovic et al, 2004; Tversky and Kahneman, 1974). If perceiving the risk of CR is limited to only seeing risk in actions related to ‘Islamist’ extremism or cultural practices related to Islam, all variants of which are invariably lumped together, then this has the potential to disproportionately influence the ‘objects of knowledge’, or what comes to be seen as evidence, within practitioners’ ‘professional vision’ when they interpret, imagine and categorise certain children as at risk and others not.

‘Risk’ as a feeling (Lacasse, 2017; Slovic, 2002; Slovic et al, 2004; Walklate, 1999) is regularly referred to by all practitioners as an essential and positive component of safeguarding risk judgements but in this context is equally contemporaneously understood as a potential source of problematic explicit and implicit bias in risk decisions (Strachan and Tallant, 1997; Van Eijk, 2017; Weyman and Barnett, 2016):

*“If you’re asking me about other people, that they’re going to react in a way that only the things they see in the media that is what is seen as high risk. I do. I think there’s this idea of high risk and I think, ok. But it is a real worry for people. The hype is, well it’s come from media, that’s where I think it’s come from. But then you have to think about teachers. Who are*

*the teachers, what are their backgrounds, where do they come from, do they feel threatened? Do they feel scared? Are they acting out of their own fear? Rather than what's right for the young person? You know like 'our school can't be seen to be'. I mean I know. I've worked with schools and I know that's how they operate."*

*SP/FP04*

The function of 'practitioner instinct', also known as the 'affect heuristic' (Finucane et al, 2000; Slovic et al, 2002; 2004), is therefore significant, especially for a professional vision which requires practitioners to see suspicion as evidence. Perceiving the risk of CR in this context is the primary way in which practitioners can develop their 'objects of knowledge' for a specific form of risk-work for CR. It is inarguably impacted by numerous forms of bias, a situation which Kasperson et al claim to ultimately very likely result in 'distortion or error' in identifying and acting upon risks (Kasperson et al, 1988: 185). Practitioners, as previously explained, allude to the significant power and negative influence of the media in shaping or colouring the public perception of the risk of terrorism and CR. Furthermore, the fear and panic contained in media messages about terrorism is expressed as impacting upon their own, and their colleagues, views and values in relation to extremism and thus to negatively affect and inform decisions to refer children to PREVENT:

*[Question: 'What do you think is driving that increase in CR referrals?']*

*"It's mostly schools but other places too. I think it's a combination of the knowledge from what they are getting from the awareness training. The press as well. People talking."*

*O1/SP02*

Practitioners portray the objects of knowledge in this risk-work context, as the indicators of ‘who’ and ‘what’ falls within the professional vision for CR. These ‘objects of knowledge’ can be usefully linked to Lipsky’s notion of the stereotypical ‘potential client’ (Lipsky, 1980: 59). Who a policy is seen or not seen to be aimed at, combines with Sudnow’s concept of ‘normal character’ when it comes to the behaviours, attitudes or actions which are seen, or not seen, as constituting evidence in CR risk-work (Sudnow, 1965: 259). These are argued to be sensemaking practices for individuals who can exercise high level discretionary decision-making, in order to manage their workloads and prioritise resources. Both concepts help tease out the pervasive bias within these understandings in two key ways in this study.

Firstly, the way in which practitioners comply with how they understand CR to be evidenced. Secondly, the way in which they try to contest those same processes, often when trying to extend their ‘everyday’ safeguarding field of vision to accommodate CR and running into difficulties, anomalies, incongruities and the like. Pushing practitioners in different directions, the construction of ‘objects of knowledge’ for CR in pre-crime safeguarding risk-work generates conflict and confusion in practice.

### 6.3.1 Dichotomies of Seeing Risk in the Safeguarding/Pre-Crime Nexus

As discussed in earlier sections, practitioners’ most significant attempts, instinctively rather than explicitly, to resist adopting a myopic view of CR is to include it in the expansion of their vision for everyday safeguarding work on grooming. This is not without its difficulties, mainly due to its epistemic origins in the concept of preventing crime.

The ‘pre-crime’ space is established as a notion outside of FP understandings of safeguarding. The potentially problematic focus on pre-emptive signs of criminal behaviour in children (Creaney, 2013) prompts tangential concerns to be regularly raised about the criminalisation and securitisation<sup>77</sup> of children and the spaces they inhabit:

*“I know hate crime sits under the Protecting Vulnerable People’s Unit. So [question to interviewer] wouldn’t that be the team who would look after people and investigate radicalisation of children? I’d assume so. It wouldn’t go into the Terrorist Unit. Or then again it probably does. Then you’re looking at the kids instead of being victims, as being perpetrators. Which throws the whole agenda into a different arena. PREVENT isn’t about protecting, then. It’s about prosecuting.”*

*SP/FP02*

*“I have a real fear about labelling. I have a fear about the person who is making that judgement in terms of their background. What their ideas of what radicalisation and radical thinking are.”*

*Scoping Exercise 1*

Within the processes of identification of the risk of children committing future crimes, particularly within a police-led referral process, the possible misperceptions, labelling and discriminatory profiling (Amodio and Devine, 2006; Bayley and Bittner, 1984; Cameron, Payne and Knobe, 2010; Cicourel, 1968; Gendler, 2011; Gilliam et al, 2016;

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<sup>77</sup> Earlier defined

Goodwin, 1994; Hall et al, 2015; Payne, Vuletich and Lundberg, 2017; Strachan and Tallant, 1997; Sudnow, 1965; 1972; Van Eijk, 2017; Weyman and Barnett, 2016; Williams, 2015) were given as specific areas of concern with CR. As part of making CR visible within their field of professional vision of everyday safeguarding risk work, practitioners tend towards the framing of CR as ‘vulnerability’ to being groomed. This requires both concepts to be analytically disentangled.

### *Seeing Vulnerability*

‘*Vulnerabilities*’ are described as the ‘what’s’ of the objects of knowledge for this risk work. They are the ‘things’, the actions, behaviours, events or circumstances, that safeguarding risk-work assessments undertaken by FPs are looking for to identify whether a child is knowably at risk of harm. Practitioners explain that *all* the children they work with are identified and categorised as vulnerable prior to their work with them. This is not related to a specific assessment of identifying features that make an individual child vulnerable, but rather to the social realities of the children they work with. It is treated as a state of being; one that is organisationally and professionally certified as such.

PREVENT legislation does not, however, task practitioners to identify whether a child is generally vulnerable, but whether they are specifically vulnerable to CR. This leads to a situation where practitioners refer to all children who are vulnerable as being vulnerable to ‘*everything*’, while at the same time stating clearly that the children that they work with are not be vulnerable to CR, a seeming non-sequitur. It is therefore clear that practitioners have to work to establish links between their understanding of CR’s character and how it might be imagined in practice, but also that CR changes the nature of the ‘objects’ which signal vulnerability. CR is not of a piece with the other

things they are geared up to deal with. It is the expectations that surround their role in identifying the peculiar risk object of CR, which practitioners' express anxiety and confusion about, or challenge directly.

The VAF – which is designed to guide assessments of vulnerability for CR by CHANNEL Panels – is not a document practitioners recall seeing or using in frontline practice. When shown it and asked to discuss it in interviews, however, they were quick to remark on the vagueness of the criteria said to have generic applicability to all forms of safeguarding risks:

*“In terms of radicalisation and grooming and maybe sexual exploitation they would cross over a lot. So, it would be hard to pinpoint really. Because it's the same vulnerabilities that a young person would have for radicalisation as they would for sexual exploitation. You know, it's the same things making that young person vulnerable.”*

*FP06*

*“This could mean anything. Literally, this could be every child we work with.”*

*Scoping Exercise 2*

There is therefore an implied understanding of the potential for 'confirmation bias' in misinterpreting vulnerabilities listed in VAF as CR instead of other types of risk. Unexpectedly, and despite the critiques, when they realised the VAF is provided to Panel members only, a number of practitioners suggested that they too would like some

form of ‘tool’ or ‘aide memoire’ to assist them in identifying the risk of CR in their everyday work:

*“Something I find really helpful is we get these cards, this one is on CSE and it says ‘the following outline typical vulnerabilities in children prior to abuse’. I love these cards. I’d love one of these on radicalisation. It’s like an aide memoire. I just have it on my desk and I’ll be like ‘hmm there was something the young person said just let me see’. Because very often unless something’s really obvious you don’t want to over-react.”*

*SP/FP04*

This desire is indicative of a ‘comfort zone’ for some practitioners in safeguarding risk-work – they are used to being given risk-work tools and ‘technologies’ (Horlick-Jones, 2005; Rutter, 1987). A ‘list’ of things to look out for. Practitioners want a way to see and act on risk that provides consistency, that is shared and offers baseline understanding. This creates distance from any accusations of bias and provides a trail for transparency. They are looking for their practice to be assured and want to support children in becoming safe, or, in relation to counteracting concerns of stigma and labelling, to give children a chance to have their risk status reversed or removed – issues returned to in later sections in discussions of risk level thresholds. However, practitioners were also clear that they only use these types of assessment tools in safeguarding risk-work, for example for CSE, when an initial suspicion is there. That is, it is only when a practitioner has already decided what type of risk they suspect is present that assessment frameworks are utilised for confirmation. This is a discretionary process, in other words, which opens up room for selectivity and

potential bias in terms of who and what practitioners may be on the lookout for, particularly in the case of CR.

The risks practitioners regularly describe working with, are posed by, or involve, an identified adult or circumstances beyond a child's control. For example domestic violence at home, poverty or neglect. Some FPs especially define their role as prioritising the child's voice in safeguarding discussions of risk perception, identification and reduction, arguing that safeguarding practice should be led by the needs of the child and include the child as an active participant. This is referred to as a 'child-centric' practice perspective (HM Government, 2015c). Even among those who took a 'child-centric' perspective, however, the explanatory framework supplied by the concept of grooming put the emphasis on what children do to place themselves at risk, risky experiences which they have no control over (for example. being in care) or what they should do to avoid risks.

### *Vulnerability and Responsibility*

For CSE, vulnerabilities are spoken of as what is observed in the behaviour of children; behaviour characterised by a child posing a threat to themselves and other children. Entirely typical is the earlier cited description of vulnerability to CSE provided by a practitioner working with teenage girls, where a child is said to be vulnerable due to the risk their behaviours pose to themselves. There is, therefore, an element of responsabilising children for the risks they experience, especially in practitioner interpretations of indications of 'grooming' (Brown, 2014; Craven, Brown and Gilchrist, 2006; Eaton and Holmes, 2017; Lee et al, 2013; Salter, Crofts and Lee, 2013). In talking through the transferability of grooming to CR, practitioners reflect

upon the appropriateness of using this as a proxy for seeing risk in victims of discrimination:

*“I’ve had service users get angry [about discrimination or attack]. Say things like ‘I’ll get a gun and shoot them’. But you know they are speaking in anger. There’s no way they are going to do it. Because you wouldn’t go out and tell everyone ‘I’m going to do this. Blow that supermarket up’. You just wouldn’t. They let it out, vent. And when it’s out, it’s out and forgotten about. However, the way the Government and PREVENT is, now if someone says something in frustration and anger its ‘Oh write that down, we’ve got to report that’. It’s not allowing victims to express themselves. And that’s when the possibility is then that they may go and do something stupid.”*

FP05

*“In my life, I’ve often felt very different from people. That has led me on some occasions to be filled with rage. I know that, and I’ve calmed down as I’ve gotten older. I would hate to think that if a teacher heard me on one of those days, they would think that I was a risk to society. I don’t know what that would have done to me. It might have made me more full of rage and more determined actually to get back at people. It might be that if you’re in that vulnerable place, you might be drawn to a group that you may not have been drawn to before. Because they’re offering you something that you’re looking for, that’s missing.”*

SP/FP04

There is a specific concern highlighted here about the negative or iatrogenic impact of recalibrating experiences of discrimination as vulnerability to committing crime by pathologising ‘normal’ emotional responses to being victimised. It especially elides the risky actions of adults towards children:

*“It’s easier to go ‘these kids are grooming each other on Facebook’. They are 15 or 16 ‘grooming’ a 13-year-old. That’s the easy option. I’m more interested in which man is abusing kids in this city. Let’s go and take him out of the equation. I imagine the same will happen with the mishaps or missteps with extremism.”*

*FP07*

The ‘grooming’ concept, as it is shown to be understood, is thus an uneasy fit for CR which creates various tensions when practitioners attempt to apply it to other non-traditional ‘grooming’ scenarios. Grooming children to be a victim of, for example sexual abuse, is understood and accepted as vulnerability to being harmed. Practitioner explanations of what behaviours and actions would indicate the risk of grooming for CR muddies their earlier described resistance to pathologising normal child development and thoughts and beliefs through the concept of radicalisation. Practitioners interchangeably and confusingly draw upon perspectives of vulnerability and dangerousness, coming to a common conclusion that grooming a child for CR is getting them to undertake an act of violent terrorism in the future. As such, the risk ‘objects’ are often communicated as indicators of a child’s threats of future violence or current display of violence, with the consequences of not identifying them cast in catastrophic terms:

*“If someone was telling me about an actual thing that was going to happen. If they told me that they were involved in a group who were making bombs. If they were storing weapons to do something with. When you think about how it could escalate and how many people you know died in Nice. How many died in Orlando. I know that that is the absolute extreme. But is it? I don’t know, I’m not sure. But in my mind, I am thinking I am preventing a lot of deaths here by doing this.”*

*SP/FP04*

*“Ultimately if there is an event or an attack, and it comes out they were known to children’s services, ultimately we will be named and shamed.”*

*SP03*

*“How many people might die, blow a place up, shoot up a school?”*

*FP01*

Seeing the ‘objects’ of CR as behavioural displays involving violence by the child is in direct contrast with protecting children from the physical and emotional harm inflicted by others in traditional ‘grooming’ understandings. To an extent, this is a replication of the original ‘preventing violent extremism’ narrative of PREVENT prior to 2015, where the emphasis was on those involved in organised groups or activity already. It is also a form of resisting the newly included non-violent extremism (NVE) within their professional vision for CR; “[W]e respond to actions not words”. Most practitioners suggest that viewing children’s expression of radical thinking as a direct

indicator of future violent actions, is a hazardous perspective to take, inevitably based on assumptions rather than evidence. Nevertheless, a number also stated that they would treat interest or involvement in ‘extreme’ ideologies as indications of risk, or even as a sign that a child is beyond the stage of safeguarding:

*“If I walked into a house and there is an ISIS flag there. Or you walk in and catch them watching beheading videos I’d refer to PREVENT.”*

*FP05*

*“I think if a lot of their attitudes changed towards things and their behaviours changed. If they lost interest in friends and activities. If I could see they were belonging to extreme groups and they were changing. Because that’s seeing that the young person is at risk. When you see them putting their cultures and beliefs on other people that’s when you realise, ‘wow this person is taking this really serious’. It’s a form of grooming for ideology and beliefs. That’s alarm bells. I’d take it to the next level. Because its proof then isn’t it? They’re starting to put their values, opinions and extremist beliefs on other people who are vulnerable.”*

*FP06*

*“You’ve probably already lost the child into that system when you’ve got to the point where they’ve got possession of material. Because they’re fully committed to that cause. If you’re walking round with a swastika on your arm, you’re gone, aren’t you?”*

*FP02*

In summary, then, the starting position for practitioners is that in order to become a safeguarding concern, a child must be vulnerable. However, seeing children as vulnerable to CR involves a messy and difficult process of re-interpretation of ways they already have for seeing generic safeguarding risks, where issues of agency, positionality and temporality must be reconciled with policy.

Practitioners often try to resist seeing risk in the reductive sense imparted to them in learning the risk knowledge of CR, risk knowledge that is associated with only one aspect of a child's identity or life circumstances. Discussions with practitioners show that their risk-work experience does not ordinarily encompass having to identify which specific risk a child might be vulnerable to. Seeing CR as a risk that is beyond their expertise, exacerbates their struggle to employ their familiar approaches to everyday safeguarding. Thus, in order to do what PREVENT says they must do, some analogue has to be found. That analogue process, 'grooming', is the main framework they draw on to enable them to see a child as vulnerable to this specific risk.

Nonetheless, while this is a creative process of conceptual accommodation, practitioner interpretations of CR and grooming contain deep-rooted tensions, partly because grooming is not ultimately a particularly good analogy. Practitioners struggle to reconcile their knowledge of grooming in their descriptions of what the CR objects of knowledge are. This is because CR departs from practitioner 'norms' of seeing safeguarding risks.

Vulnerability to harm is central to practitioners understanding of safeguarding children, yet the risk of CR is seen only through the lens of the risk of committing a future crime of terrorism. A child's propensity to violence is seen as an inherent part of a child's vulnerability to the risk of CR. It is a form of risk very separate and distinct from all other forms of risk practitioners are used to identifying in everyday

safeguarding risk-work, but has some synergy with very contemporary, and equally problematic, approaches to grooming for involvement in crime. The future risk that children might pose to others is central to this new way of seeing. It indicates that if a child is angry or seen to be acting in a 'threatening' manner, even if they have been 'groomed', they will be very unlikely to get the opportunity to be safeguarded in the traditional internal or external safeguarding process because they are potentially dangerous.

Grooming, in the way practitioners comprehend it, thus becomes an incompatible concept for CR and safeguarding. This can affect practitioners in two ways; to completely exclude CR from their vision of safeguarding or to create a new hybrid understanding. In this study, most practitioners had followed the latter route, coming ultimately to see CR from a compromise position that they can make sense of in their work; a risk of children being vulnerable to being violent.

From a positive perspective this could potentially raise the threshold so high for PREVENT/CHANNEL referrals that they may not happen. Creating alternative spaces for children who may fall under the suspicion of vulnerability to CR, but not be judged to be at risk of violence, to be retained within mainstream safeguarding. In this sense, it can be understood as an act of small resistance by practitioners who are overwhelmed by the way of seeing that has been given to them and is legally required of them in relation to CR. This small and ordinary way of pushing back against oppressive, hegemonic power reflects what Scott refers to as 'everyday forms of resistance'; the only forms of resistance deemed to be available to those with little scope to do much else, or, as he puts it, '*weapons of the weak*' (Scott, 1985). The problem is that this resistance to PREVENT's enforced 'way of seeing' creates indeterminacies. It opens up spaces for all suspicions or no suspicions of CR to be

referred on to PREVENT/CHANNEL, depending on how children are perceived. The visibility of some children, and not others in the vision for CR therefore determines who the opportunity to bypass the PREVENT/CHANNEL process may be afforded to.

### 6.3.2 Seeing ‘Who’ and ‘What’ as Evidence – Resisting and Complying

Practitioners challenged the fundamental notion of being able to see CR at numerous points in the inquiry, primarily through statements that they have no expertise in extremism or counter-terrorism:

*“I don’t know much about different types of extremism. How extreme it could be and how dangerous this extremist could be. How much of a risk they pose to themselves or others from this extremism. I don’t have any expertise in the area of extremism.”*

*FP06*

*“Safeguarding is CSE. PREVENT is separate. I think that would put people off when they’re assessing [CR] risk. People will think they’re not the expert. It just seems to be all so high level.”*

*FP07*

Furthermore, practitioners offer alternative views on radicalisation and to varying degrees contest the formulation of children as a constituent group universally vulnerable to being radicalised. Practitioners illustrate that they understand the negative aspect of radicalisation but also offer positive interpretations to outline the subjectivity of the term (Faure Walker, 2018; Middleton, 1987; Sedgwick, 2010;

Schmid, 2013; 2013a). The symbolic status of Liverpool as a ‘radical’ and rebellious city was commonly raised in these discussions, based on political and social historical events.<sup>78</sup>

### *Natural Born Radicals: Children and Liverpool*

In empathetically relating to the concept of CR, practitioners often draw upon their own lived experiences to claim radicalisation as a ‘natural’ part of child development and maturity. Being ‘radical’, articulated as a derivative of this type of radicalisation, is thus a status that a number of practitioners find to be unproblematic for children:

*“Anybody could be radicalised. As a youth I could have been. I was really into black power in the 80’s and 90’s. Reading stuff from the 60’s, you get quite angry about how your people were treated. So, if you become a community activist are you now a radical? I don’t think radicalisation is always bad. Martin Luther King was a radical, Nelson Mandela. They would have put all the kids of the people in the Civil Rights movement through the CHANNEL programme because they were seen as anti-establishment. So, you don’t know what point of view these people may*

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<sup>78</sup> The presentation of Liverpool as different to other UK locations politically, socially and culturally is explicitly linked to community and organised radicalism and activism, for example Hillsborough, the 1980’s Militant movement, anti-racism campaigns, links to Ireland and Irish Republicanism, the miners and Dockers’ strike and more (for the academic version see Belchem, 2006; 2006a; Belchem and Biggs, 2011; Frost and North, 2013; Taaffe and Mulhearn, 1988). SP’s reinforce this view of Liverpool as an ‘exceptional’ case, albeit on a different basis. Regularly describing PREVENT as Whitehall-driven policy or London-centric, implies that it is a ‘blanket approach’ to a multi-faceted problem which does not accommodate localised application or interpretation in ways that respond to local need. SP’s therefore describe implementation in the city, as a result of a ‘special case’ being made by local police, being a ‘softer approach’. One which was locally advocated for in resistance to the Home Office directions given for local practice.

*have. Like they feel things need to change. They're not happy about how this world is treating Muslims. It's very strange though, I think the percentage of young people who have become extremists is that small that it doesn't warrant this huge furore."*

*FP02*

*"The concept of radicalisation, when you look at yourself and your own views and where you fit into it. That's me. I'm a radical. My family. Come and take my mum and dad away. Yet it's one rule for one and another rule for another I think."*

*FP07*

*"My family hated the police. Anything to do with the police. And some people could have called us extreme because of that. We were very anti-authority. What I'm saying is, it depends very much on your own background as to maybe what you can tolerate?"*

*SP/FP04*

The applicability of the VAF to this age group is therefore often challenged on the basis that the indicators of CR problematise and stigmatise the 'normal' behaviour of children in exploring views, beliefs and politics. An interesting perspective given is that the VAF has potential to be used as a tool for starting conversations and dialogue with children either to help them identify their own 'vulnerabilities' or to open discussions generally about radicalisation, but should not be used as a tool for 'counting in' children for risk surveillance. 'Counting' vulnerabilities is argued to

potentially create a convincing portrait of risk without any evidence of intention. That is, all the ingredients may be there, but it does not mean a child is going to be radicalised. For several practitioners this directly conflicts with their described professional role in upholding children's rights to freely express their thoughts and their feelings in confidential and safe spaces, and reduces their opportunities for 'teachable' moments (O'Donnell, 2016; Ramsay, 2017; Thomas, 2016; van San, Sieckelinck and De Winter, 2013):

*"Changing style of dress or physical appearance according with the group. She could decide to be into gothic dressing and we would be like 'what is she doing dressing all black, what is she doing, is she being groomed?'. It could just be her being an individual and we're like 'right that's it lets report her'. You know what I mean? She's decided to be a bit different, express her individuality and that's the way she wants to be. We should not be thinking 'woah she's dressing different what's going on now?' and 'ooh hang on has she changed her attitude?'. And yes, she might have changed her attitude. She might be having more of an opinion of her life. Actually, growing up and thinking 'no I don't want to do that anymore' or 'I want to believe in what I want', which is what we're constantly asking them to express. To tell us how they feel. And then sometimes we're like 'oh she's just said she doesn't believe in Jesus lets report her', but you know that's up to her! That's their rights. We go on about British Values and expressing your opinion and 'you believe in what you want'. But when they do, we're like 'oh that's not the right opinion to have'."*

FP06

*“Who doesn’t have a desire for political change? Or feel they are under threat? Be in a transition? I think they’re very general. This is part of growing up as a human being. They’re a healthy thing. You’ve only got to look at Liverpool and the injustice for the 96. It’s positive. We’ve got young people with hope, desire, wants and needs for a better place, a better way. Imagine that some people if they were using this as a strict guidance would start to tick extremist type of indicators, when really they are indicators of a human being who wants things to be better.”*

*FP07*

Children exploring and developing their own views and ideas, sense of morality and critical thinking are viewed as desirable and vital elements of the process of children learning, becoming passionate about social issues and becoming politically and socially engaged in their communities. For FPs who understand their role to be that of informal and formal educators, for example youth workers and teachers, they see themselves as active agents in this, often without identifying that this ironically contradicts their ‘grooming’ interpretation of CR. Another aspect of the complexity of attempting to transpose this knowledge onto the risk of CR that will be returned to later. Practitioners, despite their reservations, nevertheless come to accept the legal responsibility to see CR.

### *Problematic Radicals*

The ‘objects of knowledge’ that practitioners begin to formulate unavoidably import the inherent biases of the knowledge sources they leverage to make sense of

CR. Practitioner perceptions of risk are amplified towards the extremism or terrorism they perceive PREVENT as aiming to detect and interrupt. A perception that PREVENT applies only to the threats posed by 'Islamists' to people in the West, is indicated by the numerous references, previously described, which practitioners make to ISIS flags, IS, Daesch, and travelling to Syria and impact on how Muslim children are viewed by practitioners and their colleagues:

*"Young Muslim people are questioned now. 'They could be easily radicalised them' or 'they're not having a good time so you have to be careful with them'. Last week a kid was disclosing that he'd been on websites. He looked at one that promised him, well, he had no friends and they got onto that. Said they'd get him a wife. But because it's PREVENT and because it's extremism, I email you and say 'haven't you got a girlfriend? I can get you one' is big news. Probably 20 million cases happen in England every week when a lad goes to another lad 'come out with me and I'll get you a girl'. And it's not seen the same way."*

*FP07*

*"I think people are focussing on Muslim extremism as opposed to, we have White extremism out here. People aren't getting it. It's not sinking in. They're still not acknowledging or paying as much attention. But a lot of people are influenced by the media aren't they with regards to its ISIS. It's Daesch. It's all that focus."*

*SP03*

How practitioners indicate who they understand to be excluded from their vision as a potential client, reveals the impact of not only the media but also how the PREVENT policy and legislation has been communicated over time. The understanding that ‘no Muslims equals no need for PREVENT’ reflects the original methodology of Home Office identification of PREVENT Priority Areas and is perceptible in the visibility of some children and the invisibility of others in practitioners understanding of their proper ‘objects of knowledge’. Even when this perspective is explicitly identified and acknowledged as problematic racial and religious profiling by practitioners, this differentiation is criticised and yet simultaneously replicated in how practitioners see this risk as a reality, or not, for children in their everyday practice:

*“We don’t have an issue. It just wouldn’t affect our kids.”*

*FP01*

*“Where there are lots of Muslims and things like that or whatever it’s going to be [a big issue] and so then they might need to do a bit more.”*

*K/SP04*

*“I would always think that radicalisation wouldn’t happen to White individuals. Only people of like different ethnics or different religious groups. I don’t know if that’s narrow minded but if I was looking out for radicalisation, all our clients at the minute are White British. So maybe that’s why we don’t have to worry about it.”*

*FP06*

*“It’s not in Liverpool. I think radicalisation is of Middle Eastern people rather than home-grown terrorists. I hate to say it, but young White English kids are more likely to be extremist. When we’re fighting for our jobs, maybe doing socialist marches, doing union marches. But there’s some schools, they’re not all inclusive. That tends to be in the likes of Birmingham and Leeds and places where there are major cultures. Well, you have these in Bradford. But maybe don’t worry about PREVENT, worry about the child sex grooming.”*

*FP05*

Understanding ‘White’ or ‘right wing’ extremism as a local reality but also understanding it to be omitted from the intended gaze of PREVENT is a dichotomy further illuminated by what actions and behaviours are seen to constitute objects of knowledge for CR risk-work. In the explanations of how they see, or do not see, the risk of CR, practitioners share extensive knowledge about the prevalence of hate-based risks in their locality, both individual and organised<sup>79</sup>. ‘Everyday’ experiences are recounted of dealing with gender-based violence, Islamophobia, racism and homophobia in their provision of services, in their personal experiences and in working directly with children who voice or act upon these beliefs. The fact that these descriptions are part of the practitioners’ contributions indicates that they have established a logical relationship between everyday ‘hate’ experiences and the ‘hate’ narrative described within PREVENT as an indication of CR. Nevertheless, this relationship is under-developed. The majority of practitioners do not articulate everyday ‘hate’ occurrences involving children as situations indicating a safeguarding

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<sup>79</sup> Practitioners referenced Jo Cox’s murder; White Man March; Liverpool anti-Pride protests and the attempted beheading of an Asian man by a National Action member in Wrexham.

risk of CR. Only a few practitioners link their knowledge of local hate-based activity to their perception of what the local threats or indicators of CR may look like, and just two practitioners express how they would be alert to hate-related attitudes when identifying evidence of CR:

*“[the safeguarding policy] says that it is linked to hate crime and equality policies, which it should be. So that radicalisation isn’t kind of gotten, it doesn’t spiral out of control, in terms of thinking this is something that we’ve never seen or witnessed before. Because let’s be honest, there have been horrible things done to people in the past. That’s not been called radicalisation. Or terrorism. That’s been called domestic violence, it’s been called child sexual abuse. You can think about racism, it’s happened since time immemorial, so what makes this so different? Last week I went to Manchester Pride. There were obviously some people who didn’t like it. They made extremely homophobic comments and quite threatening comments. In fact, it’s in the hands of the police now. But it’s, it’s that sort of thing isn’t it? These things happen every day. You know I think people think that radicalisation is something that is very new. Well it’s not new. These things happen all the time.”*

*SP/FP04*

*“Hate crime and radicalisation isn’t linked enough. It’s strange. PREVENT is always an add-on and people don’t really talk about it.”*

*SP/FP02*

*“I’ve been in schools and kids have gone ‘you Paki, you Nigger’. I’ve got hold of them and gone ‘right come here’ and they don’t even know what it means. Obviously they’ve heard it somewhere else haven’t they? At home, the parents or the people. The kids don’t know, and you get them together then, shake hands, play football, carry on and then that’s it.”*

*FP01*

*“Engage with young people and find out what are their attitudes towards themselves and their own identity, other cultures and other identities. Just a simple thing like that could be like the first step to getting them to engage in discussion about whether people’s views are oppressive or offensive. And you’d pick up on low level attitudes towards like domestic violence or other religions on a very low level.”*

*FP07*

The ‘hate crime’ strategies or policies in practitioner organisations are mainly experienced and understood as having no explicit or assumed link to safeguarding in general or CR specifically. Practitioners who are involved in multi-agency work on hate crime, safeguarding or PREVENT<sup>80</sup>, state that these roles are kept separate and that no fora exist to consider how these concepts overlap in reality. The ‘everyday’ manifestations of hate-based ‘extremism’ targeting minorities, therefore clearly stand separately and are treated as distinct from the extremism continuum in both national and local CR policy and practice. Practitioners acknowledge that the evidence of CR is linked to expressions of hate based on culture, religion or race but in practice, for

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<sup>80</sup> Practitioners shared that at the time hate crimes were strategically placed alongside PREVENT within the remit of Liverpool City Council ‘Safer and Stronger Communities’

most, they see it as expressed by minorities, rather than against them. In this sense the impact of the (in)visibilising nature of PREVENT starts to emerge in practice; making minority experiences invisible whilst contemporaneously making minority people hyper-visible in CR's field of professional vision (Settles et al, 2018).

The fact that few relate events known to them and discussed in other ways, close in both time and geographical space, but linked to hate crime or far-right activity demonstrates that the 'availability' lens through which CR is seen is both restricted and racialised. Hate crime is consciously filtered out of practitioner interpretations of 'who' and 'what' are seen as evidence of CR:

*"We've had to go into a school once because there was a child drawing a swastika on the wall. We did anti-racism workshops and looked at diversity. I'd be interested to see then if this child was reported to anybody for drawing swastikas. I don't know if there is a symbol for Muslim extremism but if a child was writing that on the walls, I'd assume that child would get reported. So, what's the difference? Just because we look at them [Muslims] a little bit more as that's who we're now afraid of, but we're not afraid of the others. As yet."*

FP02

*"A few years ago, we had a young lad from St Helens. He was in care. He came out with lots of things that were worrying. We just passed that on because it wasn't the big PREVENT then. It was just passed on to social services and his support worker. I think they were already aware of it and*

*they say, 'yes we'll monitor it, this is what is happening to him'. No-one was making an issue out of it."*

*K/SP04*

*"Looking back, we had one child who came to us who used very racist, bigoted language. And he was only 2 and a half. Going on about the army and guns and saying, 'I'm going to shoot your head off, and smash your head into the pavement you Paki this and that'. We had concerns about the child and their language because of what they're repeating from the mother. Could have been something. Probably not radicalisation, but definitely extreme beliefs from the mum. We passed that in for general safeguarding because we knew that the child's language was totally inappropriate for their age."*

*FP06*

*"I know 2 lads who actually watched Taleban videos years back. They'd sit there of a night having a smoke and watching beheadings. I said to the lad's mother, 'if the police ever come in and saw his search engine they'd be in trouble'. But it was a White British lad so, you know. I know some do go over and fight for ISIS but this lad, he ended up doing time for beating women up. So, it shows you his mentality. But there's no way in the world he's a terrorist. It's the violence side of it."*

*FP05*

These stories inform practitioner opinions about what CR risks will look like and who the ‘potential client’ may be. The professional vision for CR is tacitly understood in practice (Nonaka and Von Krogh, 2009) to exclude hate aimed at women, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or BME people; the ‘everyday’ hate crime affecting these groups is normalised and unexceptional (Essed, 1984; 1990; 1991; Walklate et al, 2017). This is a direct result of how practitioners learn to see and define hate, demonstrating the cumulative impact of problematic knowledges on practical safeguarding understandings. Practitioners are consequently regularly made complicit in their criticism of the exclusive and racialised perception of risk within this policy.

Retrospective assessments of previous experiences involving White children’s involvement with racist and far-right activity could weaken the existing racialisation of CR in developing practitioners’ beliefs of what the objects of knowledge are for this risk. Nonetheless, the messaging within the media and government narratives on terrorism seemingly remains strong enough to undermine this personal knowledge or experience. A simple and acknowledged reproduction of bias ported from mainstream media does not capture the more complex and intangible influence, however, of the expressed racialisation of the contexts within which practitioners work and live. Practitioners describe their organisational settings, as signalled earlier, as involving overlaid policies and agendas relating to race, culture, religion and immigration, often conflated with PREVENT. In tandem they consistently refer to the city’s cultural and racial divisions in their descriptions of the homogeneity of the demographic groups that their child service-users belong to. Practitioner accounts not only show how they think others with a lack of contact with people racially or culturally different to themselves will be susceptible to prejudice (Allport, 1954), but also paradoxically reveal how the practitioners who work in culturally diverse settings, or describe

themselves as being from culturally diverse backgrounds, are not immune from articulating a racialised understanding of what indicates the risk of CR.

### 6.3.3 Double Vision – Who is Made Visible and Who is Made Invisible

Seeing or not seeing CR is a political act. Not only is seeing risk informed and framed by how the knowledge of the risk has been constructed and taught, but also as practitioners demonstrate, especially in the absence of any assessment tool for CR in frontline work, they have substantial agency in their judgements about what comes to be seen as evidence in relation to whom. In the preceding accounts of how practitioners will or won't see indicators of this risk, practitioners demonstrated a political awareness in descriptions of the dilemmas they are posed with by PREVENT. Whether resisting or upholding the bias which the acquired risk knowledges of CR requires of them, they have to develop a way of seeing risk which is age-specific, gendered and racialised. This form of professional vision, built on taken-for-granted understandings, is therefore difficult to counter, even for practitioners who relay long histories of personal involvement in child-centric and anti-oppressive/non-discriminatory training or practices (Dominelli, 1996), or who voice moral, ethical or political objections to PREVENT.

#### *Breaching Safeguarding Common Understandings*

CR is a breach of practitioners established 'common understanding' (Garfinkel, 1964), not just about safeguarding in general, as previously discussed, but also about safeguarding children from the dangers integral to hate or identity-based bullying, discrimination or attack. In considering the role that professional vision plays in building cases that will come to be 'evidence' of the reality of CR, this section explores in-depth what appears to be the foremost act of compliance reported in

practitioner accounts. That is, children who express racist, homophobic or misogynistic views are obscured from the professional vision for CR in almost all frontline perspectives. However, rather than acts of complicity with the identified racialised nature of PREVENT, this exercise of agency is considered as an example of an act of complicated, partial resistance:

*“I’d be reluctant to go to the national PREVENT team. I’d rather keep it local and low key and see if it was that. As a White male in Liverpool, and I’ve worked all across Liverpool even though I’m from Liverpool 8, I’ve heard that many right-wing White extremist kids. Well, if there was a PREVENT strategy for them, I’d have phoned it a million times. Do you know what I mean? It’s not seen as extremism. It’s just seen as like socially acceptable. I think if you just looked at White people alone, the service would be done after the second day or something. Just collapse.”*

*FP07*

*“Right wing families, like EDL flag wearing members, does anyone look into their children? It’s a bit different isn’t it? I think the majority of the risks we would see are people who have been radicalised by the right wing to think everybody in this country needs to be White and Christian. They’re the ones going around and causing damage to this city. More than the Muslim extremists who apparently want to bomb us all and kill us all. The children are probably more damaged via that side than they are in their own communities. Probably you’ll come across people reading paraphernalia that maybe they shouldn’t do maybe once or twice every*

*couple of years. But calling someone the P word. The N word. Getting their hijab ragged off them. That can happen to someone every day. You've got kids as young as 4 or 5 now telling people to get back to where they came from. Is that kid going to be put through the CHANNEL programme?"*

*SP/FP02*

Regularly encountered everyday 'hate' risks (Essed, 1991) are not depicted by practitioners as 'acceptable'<sup>81</sup> and ignored or dismissed (Douglas, 1985). Instead, they are treated as normal, ordinary behaviour or threats that are processed according to practitioners' routine ways of seeing safeguarding risks for children. They are seen, but just not using the lens of CR. This is an act, sometimes conscious but mostly unconscious, of resisting how 'everyday risks' are re-categorised and re-packaged into the new and more dangerous, 'expert' risk of CR.

In this way practitioners block the grafting of children's 'vulnerabilities' from a safeguarding framework onto a pre-criminal process. They are resisting the social amplification (Kasperson et al, 1988; Renn et al, 1992) which they identify as happening with terrorism and CR. Specifically, the inflation of hate to a predictor of politically motivated violence, instead of a very ordinary emotion, expressed by ordinary children in ordinary everyday life (Iganski, 2008). Practitioners expressed resistance to the enlargement of their professional vision for safeguarding into one of

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<sup>81</sup> "Most common everyday dangers tend to be ignored. On the other end of the scale of probabilities, the most infrequent, low-probability dangers also tend to be played down. Putting these tendencies together, the individual seems to cut off his perception of highly probable risks so that his immediate world seems to be safer than it is and, as he also cuts off his interest in low-probability events, distant dangers also fade. For a species well-adapted to survive, neglecting low-frequency events seems an eminently reasonable strategy. To attend equally to all the low probabilities of disaster would diffuse attention and even produce a dangerous lack of focus." (Douglas, 1985: 30)

surveillance of future (hate) crimes, nonetheless, takes place alongside the work of operationalising the acquired racialised knowledge of CR:

*“If there are concerns about some form of racial hatred or abuse, then that should be dealt with as a racial case by the school in the first instance. Only when you feel that you have concerns about association with a really strong ideology advocating violence, or a link to an extremist group or an individual with extreme views, should it then be considered to move up the chains. Through your normal safeguarding process. In Liverpool this is the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub [MASH] and into CHANNEL.”*

*SP01*

The way in which the CR knowledge is understood has direct consequences for practitioners. It shapes their views of who and what is visible or invisible to the professional vision required for PREVENT. How the responsibility to see CR as a distinct safeguarding risk has been legally prescribed by the PREVENT Duty and how the CR risk-work process for supporting children believed to be at risk of CR has been differentiated from conventional safeguarding processes, reinforces this. Seeing the risk of CR and judging it as different to ‘everyday hate’ is a racialised phenomenon in all practitioner accounts. The emerging two-tier, racialised practices for safeguarding children from hate, acknowledged in the duality of how practitioners think the safeguarding system will treat children differently who express hate if they are White or if they are Muslim, is regarded fatalistically as unchangeable. Thus, as an act of resistance it is incomplete:

*“We are constantly thinking, we don’t want to get any negative impact out in the public. Well, you know, we are from PREVENT. The next thing we are on the front page of the Daily Mail, for saying the wrong thing.”*

*O2/SP02*

*“You know it will be all over the media. ‘Social workers were aware of this family’. Failure to protect. Because in this day and age now that is the shift. Towards blame. Making social workers accountable. Also, criminally responsible eventually. We will be held accountable ultimately if that family is known to us. There would be a serious case review. ‘Children’s services failed to take action again’. We will own this. It won’t be the police. It will be us.”*

*SP03*

*“It is a bit frightening because I don’t know whether I’m looking at this the wrong way. Will she think that I’m being a bit racist? Does she think that I don’t think she should marry and become a Muslim because I don’t agree with Muslims? It’s totally not, but you don’t know whether they are going to turn on you.”*

*SP/FP03*

*“I think it’s always an anxiety provoking process [safeguarding]. I suppose there may be some anxiety in terms of if you were working with someone who is of a different faith or race. I guess you always have to consider are*

*you jumping to a conclusion that is based around that? Rather than the safety of this young person?”*

*SP/FP04*

In their partial resistance to PREVENT, practitioners show they know how to exercise the agency to block its logics, especially through avoidance in the period before the legislation. Practitioners now state they have ‘worry’, ‘concern’, ‘anxiety’ and ‘fear’ about the legal responsibilities they bear to identify CR as the specific safeguarding risk that a child is vulnerable to and the possible blame they might incur if they see or do not see the risk of CR. The fear of losing their job or losing their organisation’s funding/grants/resources/contracts by not identifying CR risks, portrayed as significant to practitioners in the previous chapter, is equally experienced alongside the fear of the legal and moral repercussions for wrongly referring a child due to being over-sensitised, or ‘*seeing risk that isn’t there*’, based on racial and religious assumptions. To complete their acts of resistance, in a time of legislative responsibility, they would either have to count every child ‘in’, or every child ‘out’ of the purview of PREVENT:

*“I’ve been working a lot recently with young men who never leave their bedroom. Who are constantly on the internet. I get a bit concerned about that. It could be a sign of being vulnerable. To radicalisation. I guess. I don’t know, it could be. But then as a practitioner I would work with that the same way I’d work with anything. Like ‘is this what you want for your life?’. Regardless of whether its porn sites or radicalisation sites, whatever they are getting themselves into, the response from me would be the same.*

*'Is this what you want? What is it getting in the way of you doing something in your life? How is it holding you back? What is it giving you?'. I'm lucky that I work with families as well. I'd bring them into it and say, 'what are you doing about getting your son out of the bedroom?'. What do they do after he's been in his bedroom for three days or whatever? I would just do my best to help the young person to think about is this the life they want.'*

*SP/FP04*

*"I'd take it [CR] out and just have it within safeguarding. The way it should be done really. When you're dealing with anything like that it comes under safeguarding. You don't need to take that bit out. Taking it out, making it separate, has been detrimental."*

*K/SP04*

No practitioners articulated the confidence to 'count every child in', or in other words to universalise the new risk of CR to include all forms of 'hate' as 'extremism'. When it was considered, it was almost instantly discounted on the basis of practitioners not knowing what was 'extremist' and what wasn't. These two practitioner reflections, both of whom recount their professional experience as being trained in child-centred, anti-oppressive practice, represent the closest practitioners came to consider counting every child 'out'. The first practitioner describes expanding the view of safeguarding to retain children in mainstream safeguarding risk-work, rather than expanding the view of CR to refer children into the specific CR risk-work process. The second practitioner, reflecting on how this 'special' treatment had been problematic for frontline work, voices a desire for the law and policy to be changed.

In summary, this analysis of practitioner recounts demonstrates that when the basis for ‘ways of seeing’ CR are so inherently political; most practitioners find it difficult to bring the problematic elements for praxis to the surface and subject them to challenge.

#### 6.4 Conclusion

This chapter stresses the blurriness of the emergent professional vision for safeguarding children in the current statutory context of PREVENT. Practitioners express a desire to position CR within ‘everyday’ safeguarding risk-work but demonstrate how difficult it is to do so because of the specific ways in which CR has been built within the narratives of media, policy and legislation. The tensions that arise for anyone who attempts to take a dutiful approach to fulfilling professional and legal responsibilities, suggests that the expectation to see and name CR in safeguarding risk-work transforms the process from one of child protection into one of quasi-criminal or security intelligence gathering.

Practitioners’ dilemmas in trying to operationalise a professional vision for CR that reflects their understanding of safeguarding reveal how, in attempts to harmonise their existing safeguarding risk-work ‘professional vision’ with the incompatible ‘objects of knowledge’ acquired in ‘learning’ about CR, they simultaneously resist this transformation but also comply with it. Despite agreements that CR is and should be part of ‘everyday’ safeguarding, the idea that a holistic safeguarding approach is needed for all vulnerabilities, one in which a child’s behaviours are set in the context of their individual life experiences and circumstances, offset by their perceived levels of ‘resilience’ or strengths, was raised only once. By contrast, the descriptions of the

objects of knowledge for seeing CR are depictions of child involvement in actual crimes.

Practitioners' descriptions of the visual cues for this specific safeguarding risk in children as involvement with terrorist organisations, or threats or acts of violence, result in a struggle to make sense of CR risk work which can only be resolved by developing a new hybridised form of professional vision for safeguarding and pre-crime risk-work. This puts them on the lookout for situations where they can pre-empt the 'grooming' of vulnerable children into being dangerous, violent criminals. It is via such strategies that the blending of pre-crime and safeguarding policy moves out of legislation and into the world, something which further illuminates the confusing overlap of PREVENT and Pursue agendas in practice.

These strategies also suggest that irrespective of practitioner efforts to understand CR as a generic safeguarding risk, CR is understood to have significant dissonance to mainstream safeguarding practice. Consequently, an inverse logic is shown to exist in safeguarding risk-work for CR. Crimes that are prevalent in the 'everyday', are easily depicted and understood by practitioners as safeguarding issues to be managed<sup>82</sup>. Children in this context as seen as 'at-risk'. Yet vulnerability to CR, which may never result in a crime being committed, is viewed as so far outside of most practitioners' safeguarding understanding that it has the potential to become criminalised through referral to a 'pre-crime' safeguarding process. Confirming as earlier indicated that children viewed through this lens are seen as 'risky'.

The pre-conceived notions of the 'potential client' and the 'normal characteristics' of CR are shown in praxis to mutually reinforce practitioners'

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<sup>82</sup> The possibility of actual crimes taking place are part of the examples practitioners give of managing safeguarding risks of hate-related incidents, domestic violence, child sexual exploitation/grooming, alcohol and drug abuse, use of weapons and underage sexual activity.

orientation exclusively to groups considered in policy and media to have a latent vulnerability to the risk of CR. The probability that the children determined to be 'risky' will be BME or Muslim is heightened by this. Even for those who state it is wrong for PREVENT to be so racialised, White children are explicitly excluded from practitioners' objects of knowledge for CR, and Islam and Muslims dominate their responses about how the risk of CR can be seen. This problematic specification of appropriate objects of knowledge, constructed using unreliable sources, increases the potential for the earlier indicated 'confirmation bias' in the process of seeing risk (Kahneman and Tversky, 1973; Perrin et al, 2001). That is, practitioners may only look for evidence which confirms the characteristics or 'objects' they believe relate to this risk, then interpret them solely as indicating and confirming the presence of this risk.

Displayed resistance to securitising the 'normal' behaviour of White children is an indication of practitioners' agency in developing their own ways of seeing CR rather than borrowing them from outside their practices. Yet they do not see this through for all children. Consequently, the possible vulnerabilities of children linked to Islam or belonging to minority groups will likely be viewed exclusively through the lens of CR. In terms of how this bias can shape the support a child may receive, in adherence to the explained process of 'confirmation bias' in risk-work, the only 'safeguarding' referral process used will be that of PREVENT/CHANNEL and the only tool used to assess if they are vulnerable to risk will be related to CR.

In the next chapter, the focus shifts to an analysis and comparison of practitioner understandings and experiences of the processes and procedures for acting on or managing 'everyday' safeguarding risks and the 'extraordinary' safeguarding risk of CR. By focusing on how practitioners act on risks once seen, the specific

challenges and discord within the PREVENT/CHANNEL safeguarding framework become much clearer.

## 7. ACTING ON RISK

### 7.1 Introduction

In these structural conditions of not knowing, practitioners do not know ‘how’ to find the specific risk knowledge of CR in its own terms or ‘how’ to work with CR in practice but know ‘that’ they are required to see it (Beck, 1995; 2009; Ryle, 1949). As such, to make sense of this responsibility, they seek, and find, numerous ways of doing so. Their use of various implicitly biased sources and problematic proxy knowledges leveraged from policy, media and alternative risk concepts shapes their understandings of who the ‘potential client’ is (Lipsky, 1980: 59). That is, it helps them determine who should be under PREVENT’s gaze, and who should not. Yet it also concurrently, contrary to their expressed instincts, places the CR risk outside of the purview of their everyday safeguarding risk-work. Their professional vision, in dissonance with their intuitive ways of seeing other risks to children, is therefore both distorted and limited (Goodwin, 1994; Kasperson et al, 1988; Lipsky, 1980).

The need to act on CR is not only imposed by legislation but in other ways too. CR as part of a responsibility requiring the prediction of future terrorist crimes, is understandably interpreted as an ‘expert’ risk. This has significance for practitioners’ judgements of the professional ability, of themselves and others, to identify and act on this risk. Often concluding that they were under-trained and consequently uncertain of their risk perception for CR, practitioners would question and devalue their own professional expertise, understanding and knowledge of risk identification. When CR is viewed as both unacceptable for inaction and unacceptable for action within mainstream safeguarding risk work, the imperative to act is perversely reinforced. Counter-intuitively to practitioners understanding of child-centred risk-work, their

options are therein limited to a decision under ignorance – the referral of a child suspected to be at risk to the ‘pre-crime’ safeguarding process of PREVENT/CHANNEL.

Against that background, this chapter analyses the organisational praxiology (Becker, 1963; Cicourel, 1968; Kitsuse and Cicourel, 1963) that is revealed in practitioners’ stories concerning acting on CR, compared to doing risk within mainstream safeguarding risk-work. Rule-following epitomises the safeguarding landscape which practitioners outline, nonetheless the rules and features (Garfinkel, 1964), or procedures, which typify the latter contrast problematically with those which characterise the former.

The opening case summaries provide insights into practitioners’ discretionary risk judgment and decision-making within the CR risk-work process of PREVENT/CHANNEL (Tversky and Kahneman, 1974). They establish a sense of how these practitioners observe, work around, or work with the rules of this separate and specific safeguarding process for CR risk-work. Their interpretations, ‘simplifications’ or ‘modifications’ of policy in practice (Lipsky, 1980: 83) speak to the proceeding challenges and barriers other practitioners identify for operating in this unfamiliar pre-crime safeguarding risk framework.

## 7.2 Abiding by the Rules

‘Rule-following’ (Mair and Watson, 2008; Merton, 1957; Weber and Parsons, 1964) is a significant component of practitioners’ explanations of their risk decision-making processes. Practitioners often characterise general safeguarding risk-work as a ‘*catch 22*’, a ‘*damned if you do, damned if you don’t*’ or ‘*better safe than sorry*’ situation. As a result, they often ‘err on the side of caution’ by presenting their evidence of risk to

others for them to decide if the risk is significant enough to act upon. The point at which they do this, however, is contingent on a series of factors. The level of knowledge of the ‘rules’ which determine when practitioners need to act and when they need to ‘refer on’ inter-organisationally, varies both by sector and by risk type. Social services thresholds are, nonetheless, mainly interpreted and understood as the legal safeguarding rules that must be followed for instigating any form of physical or bureaucratic intervention by the State in a child and family’s life. Practitioner views on how this risk-work process operates, including its drawbacks such as the perceived expanding and contracting of statutory risk level thresholds, are returned to later. At this point it is enough to note that it is, albeit to differing extents, an understanding shared across all practitioner types.

With respect to the Duty, however, the rules for safeguarding have a distinctive interpretation. Operationalising PREVENT is described as trying to follow or ‘abide’ by the rules as part of a balancing act that also involves maintaining trust and safety with children, families and communities (Dekker, 2007). Concurrently, by both those tasked with leading and operationalising its implementation in frontline practice, the work done to follow the rules is accompanied by a lack of trust, present to varying degrees, in what they are being tasked by Government to do and how they are being tasked to do it:

*“Sometimes you do follow things [policy or guidance] but you think, that could be interpreted this way or that way. However, you cannot ignore it because it’s part of the mechanics of the guidance that you are working in accordance to.”*

*SP05*

*“Sometimes the funding comes and creates a subculture that was never there. That we never even identified a need for it to be in the first place. So, the work is often directed by the funding.”*

*FP07*

*“We’ve got no say over it. Its government-led, isn’t it? And its government policy with regards to retention dates [for information on children referred to PREVENT/CHANNEL].”*

*SP03*

In this context, practitioners are again affected by their conditions of work. The quandary practitioners articulate about the political motivation of PREVENT is simultaneously expressed with a feeling that they cannot challenge or resist it, consequently interpreting all related PREVENT policy and guidance as mandatory under organisational desires for compliance with the Duty. This is especially discernible in the described actions for ‘referring on’ to PREVENT/CHANNEL. Practitioners accounts of the pressure they feel to implement PREVENT and refer children to ‘*cover our backs*’, ‘*get it off my hands*’ and/or ‘*abide by the rules*’, highlights a complex interplay between a ‘blame culture’ and ‘litigation culture’ manifest in deliberations to act on CR (Dekker, 2007; Douglas, 1992). It explains why, despite the problematic and contradictory rules and features of the CR risk-work process compared to mainstream safeguarding to be later explored, that practitioners will still ‘refer children on’.

### 7.2.1 Referring On

The practitioners who administer the PREVENT/CHANNEL process use the term ‘risk transfer’<sup>83</sup> to explicate the motivation behind referrals from practitioners, especially those in education. This term is described as being a technique to shift the responsibility, and thereby also the liability, for deciding to act on CR risk onto someone else (Anderson, 2003; Stanley and Guru, 2015):

*“One of the patterns that is a trend for the region, is for schools to phone us the day before the summer holidays with all these referrals. But they can give a reason. Sometimes it is that cases are quite sensitive, and they had to do various checks. But sometimes I think they do transfer the risk. And we put that message across in all the training we do. So hopefully that will stop in the future. When, for instance Paris happened [Bataclan attack, October 2015], there was a big panic with teachers. They’d just pick up the phone without actually challenging what the individual had said. Just transferring the risk really. Thinking ‘Oh, PREVENT can deal with it, get on the phone to PREVENT and CHANNEL. Done’.”*

*O1/SP02*

Yet the problem pointed to here is contradicted by the encouragement of these practitioners, and others, as previously described, for practitioners to refer all of their suspicions onwards:

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<sup>83</sup> This is, interestingly, a concept with fiscal and actuarial roots (Banks, 2004)

*“I sometimes wish there wasn’t safeguarding leads, I’d rather everyone just ring me and ask me. You know but everything goes through the safeguarding lead which it’s got to, but it’s how good the safeguarding lead is really.”*

*O2/SP02*

*“The sorts of concerns that they were coming up with [in WRAP] were about recognising radicalisation. I think being fearful of naming that as a risk, rather than going with their gut instinct and making the referral. I think a lot of people are scared to be judgemental. Are frightened of labelling it at that stage. But talking to a lot of people after the training. A lot of people will feel more confident in phoning the PREVENT team”*

*SP03*

The FPs explain their past and potential future decisions to ‘refer on’ inter-organisationally in a more multi-dimensional sense. That they feel it ‘*gets it off my back*’ or ‘*takes the pressure off me*’ corroborates the pragmatic approach to referrals that PREVENT practitioners assume is taking place, but more on the grounds of not wanting to make a mistake or make difficult judgements about the presence of CR which they feel ill-equipped to do. More so, they explain abdicating from decisions to act as being underpinned by the belief that they are ‘*not the expert*’. They believe and trust, in ways that are contradicted by previous references to the lack of training in ‘PREVENT-lead’ appointments, that other actors in the process must have that expertise.

Four practitioners working in frontline positions in this inquiry had either made a referral to PREVENT/CHANNEL or worked with a family that had been referred. In one example a practitioner was informed of a ‘live’ referral only after they sent a volunteer worker on a visit to family home and subsequently asked the police, the referring agency, for further information on the family:

*“The conversation the worker had with the man on a home visit, she felt quite uncomfortable. So, we always ring police and do a little background check. Not in a bad way but just to see has there been like any violence in the house if we’re going into a situation where someone is prone to that. That was how we got into that conversation about the beheading video. It just came out. It wasn’t on the referral and it probably should have been.”*

*FP02*

The perspective of ‘increasing referrals indicates increasing confidence’ held by police and other SPs, as described earlier, is undermined by the lack of feedback and communication conveyed as significant problems in this and the other practitioners’ experiences of the CR risk-work process. The example of one FP who had made the initial identification and decision to refer a child to PREVENT/CHANNEL, is presented here as a case summary to highlight several dilemmas faced in the CR risk-work process by practitioners.

### 7.2.2 Well-Intentioned Harm

Practitioner SP/FP03 works in what she refers to as a predominantly White area of the city and has recently attended WRAP. She describes a situation in which a

White British teenage girl who she had worked with for some time had converted to Islam. This is explained as being done in order to be allowed to marry and live with her boyfriend and his family. The practitioner was concerned for two reasons.

Firstly, that the child had not expressed a romantic reason for the conversion – *‘if she’d have said because she loved him and wanted to be his wife’*. Secondly that the child did not seem to have any detailed understanding of the religion or the conversion ceremony. The practitioner concluded this was a potential situation of what is interchangeably referred to as *‘forced’* or *‘arranged’* marriage. The practitioner then made the link to the ‘harmful cultural practices’ described in the WRAP she had just attended. The practitioner took her concerns to the organisational lead Safeguarding Officer. After discussion it was agreed that the child should be referred to PREVENT/CHANNEL. This was done by the safeguarding lead and proceeded without the child or family’s knowledge. The practitioner waited for information from PREVENT/CHANNEL. The child continued to have contact with the practitioner, but they did not discuss the referral. The practitioner recounted her feelings at the time:

*“I become her social worker to her and I’m not qualified to do that. I’ve known her since she was a little girl, and she’s expecting me to go ‘You need to do this and do that’ and we can’t. Because that’s our opinion, that’s not the right decision. It’s very hard. As a tutor you never switch off. I’m not trained to do that, I’m not a counsellor. I’m not a social worker. Coming in on the Monday saying, ‘I haven’t got her out my head all weekend’. I wasn’t on my own in that, the rest of the staff were the same. Thinking ‘Is she ok? Where is she? Who is she with?’ It is, it is a very big burden when you, when all that we’re here for really is to get them an education and get them set up for the world.”*

During the time of the practitioner being interviewed, the child asks the practitioner for a reference for a housing application. The practitioner was fearful of doing this in case there was any truth to her suspicions about the boyfriend and his family having a connection to terrorism:

*“When she come to me, I don’t even know if she knows it was me that referred her. She didn’t say even anyone had been in contact with her but I’m assuming they’ve maybe assessed her and said nothing. But other than seeing her I wouldn’t have known. She came to me for a reference, but even doing that, well I was frightened to do it because of what was going on.”*

Seven months following the referral, the practitioner and her safeguarding lead still awaited feedback on the referral. The child was still unaware she had been referred. The practitioner felt anxious about her decision:

*“It [the PREVENT referral] goes off. It’s gone, it’s just gone. You don’t get any information and you can’t assess if the risk has lowered or increased. With another young girl [looked after child suspected of being trafficked] she’s got problems with mum; the social worker is coming to see me, and he won’t give me loads of details, but he can tell me like ‘Since I spoke to you 3 weeks ago everything has been fine’. Or they’ve put this in place or that in place. So, they’re reassessing all the time, but with PREVENT there’s nothing.”*

As a result of dealing with this case, the practitioner becomes the PREVENT lead for her organisation.

### *Secrecy and Suspicion-based Risk Work*

A feedback loop from PREVENT/CHANNEL practitioners to the practitioner, even with minimal detail such as stated in the case summary, could have been a way to assuage the clear anxieties expressed. She doubted her capabilities and judgement but conversely, however, at times, the absence of communication convinced her 'hopeful' side that her actions were correct. She trusted that a risk had been found that she could not be informed of for 'intelligence' reasons, thus irrespective of 'not knowing' confirming for her a number of things. Firstly, that the 'signs' were correctly recognised and secondly that appropriate support was being provided to the child; therefore, confirming that she should act the same way again in a future situation.

It remained that significant anxieties, especially on issues of safety and integrity, were provoked by this form of suspicion-based risk-work and its unknown consequences, with sharp contrast to mainstream safeguarding processes as described here and later in Diagram 3.

In relation to personal and organisational integrity, if the child found out she had made the referral 'secretly' then consequently there was a fear the child would lose faith and trust in them personally and in their organisation. In relation to the safety of the child, the concerns were that the referral may consequently have made the child's situation less safe by adding to the child's vulnerability for potential domestic or familial violence. This is reflected in other practitioner's reservations about CR risk-work involving the police in a child's life or exposing a child as responsible for bringing scrutiny upon their family.

The absence of knowledge or evidence of harm was not a barrier to action in this case. This is a practical indication of a form of 'satisficing' taking place (Ben-Haim, 2016; Simon, 1972), where the 'tolerable harm' is both the potential

stigmatisation and labelling of children and their disengagement from services which thereby endangers them in other ways.

### *Acting on Suspicion, Reducing Every-Day Protection*

Significantly, the practitioner admitted that this current way of working was incongruent with established safeguarding of the recent past. Under previous, pre-PREVENT safeguarding guidelines in her organisation, this situation would most likely have resulted in a ‘notice of concern’<sup>84</sup> being raised on the grounds of domestic violence<sup>85</sup>. It would not have resulted in an external referral to police. She reflected that if the conversion was to Christianity it may not have concerned her, but she interpreted this scenario as a signal of vulnerability to CR because of the understanding gained of the ‘harmful cultural practices’ outlined in PREVENT policy and training. This demonstrates the practical impacts of the inherent and problematic biases previously described within the ‘professional vision’ for CR, and how this is amplified by the conflation within PREVENT narratives of immigration, culture and religion with issues of security and risk, with potentially criminalising results. This is one of two examples given by practitioners of girls not being actively supported in a way that they ordinarily would have, after suspicions of forced marriage and FGM, hitherto progressed through established VAWG (Violence Against Women and Girls) safeguarding processes (Vaughn and McGowan, 2016). Referring a child to

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<sup>84</sup> A notice of concern is the first stage internal to this organisation for FPs to raise a safeguarding concern with the Safeguarding Lead Officer. This is usually discussed with the child and family.

<sup>85</sup> This case would appear to hold the characteristics of the Liverpool Safeguarding Children’s Board definition in operation at that time: “Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been, intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality’. The main characteristic of domestic violence/abuse is that the behaviour is intentional and is calculated to exercise power and control within a relationship.” (Liverpool Safeguarding Children Board, 2007)

PREVENT in this case caused the practitioner to hesitate in the provision of what would be ‘everyday’ support:

*“She wanted to get a flat with her boyfriend. I spoke to my safeguarding lead and I’m saying ‘What if she is involved in terrorism and I’m saying she’s a great person? And they’re plotting?’. And I know that sounds awful but I’m saying she’s a fantastic person, very trustworthy. It was a big thing, it was a big deal. So, I went ‘Right ok, but she just wants a flat! She wants a flat, somewhere to live and to be settled’. I’m thinking, she was so uncomfortable in his home because of their religion and a bit of racism. She was having racism towards her because she was not complying with some rules in Muslim religion. So, then I’m thinking well then, she needs her own flat to get away from all that. It was a big massive issue. So, in the end I just had to do a reference saying, ‘She was in college from this date to this date’. I was scared to do anything more than that.”*

This reflects Satyamurti’s findings (Satyamurti, 1981) in her study of social workers ‘survival’ strategies for managing challenging workloads and pressurised environments. She identified that well-intentioned actions to ‘manage’ clients cumulatively led to doing ‘less for clients than they might have’ with often damaging results (Satyamurti, 1981: 82). This echoes the previously outlined experience of other practitioners, that in the current environment they feel compelled to act or behave in ways which contradict what they describe as their ordinary practice, vocational training or ‘instinct’ for safeguarding children. This negates the claims of PREVENT/CHANNEL practitioners that this process is helping vulnerable people get

enhanced support or be ‘fast-tracked’ to it (Heath-Kelly, 2017a; Heath-Kelly and Strausz, 2018):

*“A couple of people that we’ve rehoused lately, it’s been really easy to do because of PREVENT legislation. In the past it’s been difficult. So, you go ‘We need to get someone rehoused’ and they go ‘Do you really? We’ll put them at the bottom of the pile.’ Then you go ‘Well they’re a bit of a priority’, they go ‘So why was he?’ and we go ‘He’s Prevent, blah blah...to do with terrorism’ and they go ‘Yeah, still at the bottom of the pile’. But now because of the PREVENT legislation change... Well, we’re actually getting a premium service, aren’t we? I suppose if the public knew that too much, they’d probably kick off a little bit and go ‘So if I want a decent house all I need to do is say I support ISIS’. You’d probably get that sort of reaction. But these people that we work with are genuine threats, people we are concerned about.”*

O2/SP02

This modification of policy, or ‘rule-bending’, to help gain access to support services otherwise inaccessible in a time of austerity-led shrinking resources, is presented as an unanticipated benefit for those identified as at risk, albeit one unlikely to have been envisioned by the policy makers (Lipsky, 1980; Weatherley, 1980). It is acknowledged to likely be harmful to public opinion but is expressed with well-meaning intention. Again, this satisficing decision to apply a difficult to lose risk label, linked to terrorism, to vulnerable people is viewed as acceptable if it gives them access to support that is otherwise difficult to acquire. However, if the CR risk-work process is open to

manipulation in order to circumvent problems of resources in service provision for children, then it is also open to manipulation and distortion of the evidence to present children as more of a risk than truly exists.

In summary, the actions practitioners articulate in ‘referring on’ in the PREVENT/CHANNEL process further illuminate the enduringly problematic nature of a ‘special’ safeguarding approach for this specific risk. Well-intended actions within a pre-crime framework carry unavoidable possibilities for harm; paradoxically ranging from disproportionately serious interventions in children’s lives to reduced support for children. In the case summary, acting on the suspicion of risk resulted in proliferating feelings of being unsafe for all parties. Given the importance practitioners routinely affix to the topography of ‘everyday’ safeguarding risk-work, in frontline positions especially, then how the rules and features of the process for ‘referring on’ children in CR risk-work problematically breach them needs to be systematically unpacked – the focus of the next part of this chapter.

### 7.3 Problematic Rules: Evidence and Transparency Dilemmas

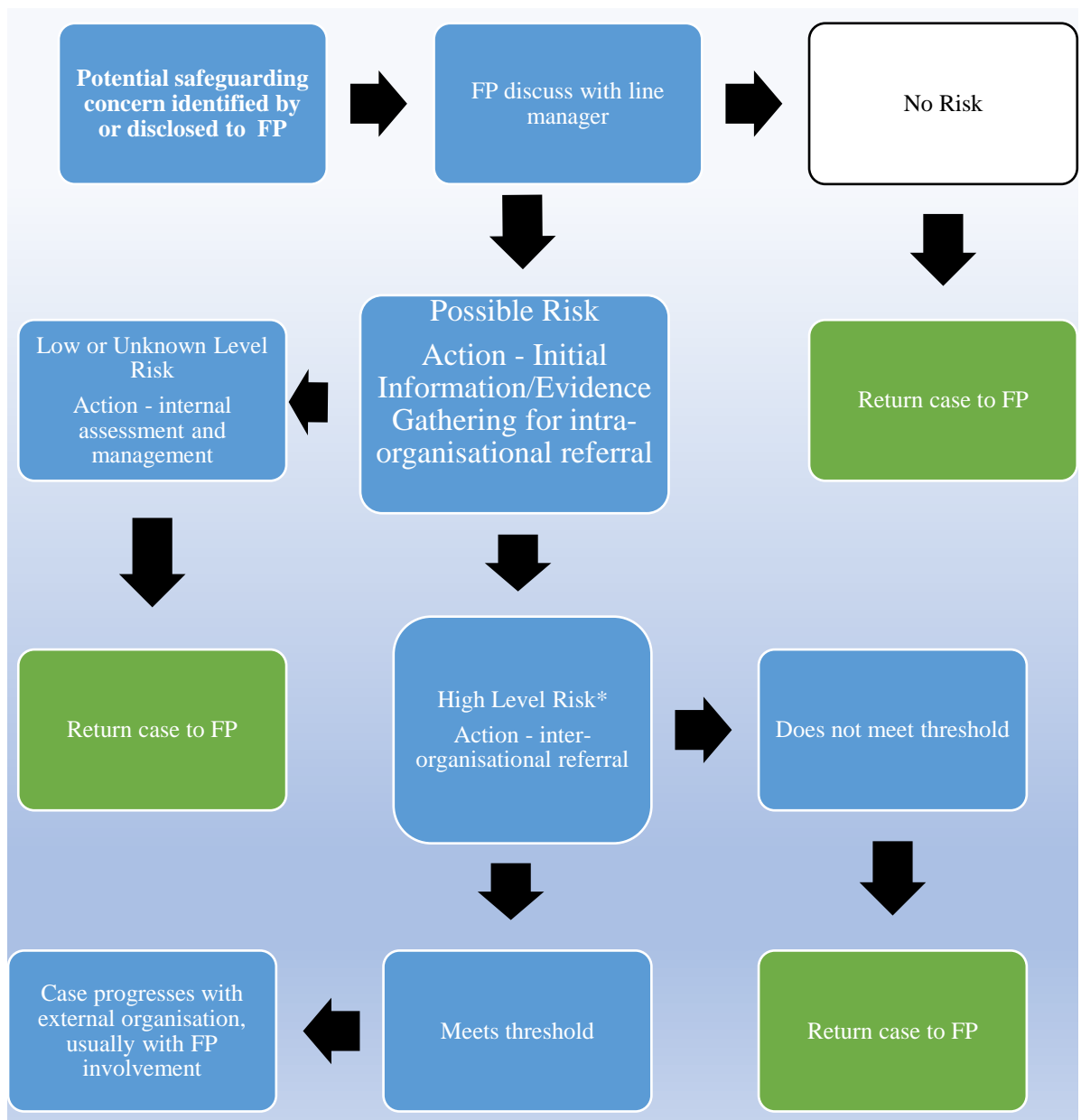
Most practitioners had not dealt with a suspected case of CR. However, the preceding case summary elucidates a point that some practitioners suggested earlier; that a process which affixes a CR risk label to children based on what practitioners ‘diagnose’, or assume, they are exposed to, may in fact leave them more vulnerable to the other risk types that practitioners have excluded from their professional vision:

*“There is no need for any special processes for identifying risk of radicalisation, if agencies just focus on keeping children safe.”*

#### *Scoping Exercise 1*

In the previously described attempts to broaden their field of vision, practitioners try to see CR in their future work as part of a universal approach to their responsibilities to generally safeguard all children from all forms of dangers. Within this, practitioners explained the ordinary processes for identifying what makes a child vulnerable to harm. The separate safeguarding risk-work process which they are expected to progress CR ‘cases’ through, with distinctive rules and features that stand in sharp contrast to those used for everyday risks, are shown to raise specific dilemmas and conflicts for practice. These have been alluded to in the previous case summary and are expanded upon here. Diagram 3, below, is a composite representation of what practitioners described as the normal features of the everyday safeguarding risk-work process:

Diagram 3: Features of 'Everyday' Safeguarding Risk-Work Process<sup>86</sup>



<sup>86</sup> \* The published MASH threshold for high level risk includes risks judged as 'acute or specialist'; an issue to be returned to when considering referrals to PREVENT: "Level 4 Acute/Specialist need where a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm". (Liverpool Safeguarding Children Board, 2016: 6)

‘Referring on’ suspicions intra-organisationally through gaining advice from ‘internal experts’ is often portrayed as a welcome option for FPs for validation of their initial suspicions;

*“Rather than ‘Let’s phone CHANNEL up’, I’d raise it with the manager. That’s the good thing about not being a manager, it’s like, I’ll just leave it there.”*

*FP05*

*“One policy was interpreted differently by 2 different people [referring to poor decision making in the past]. Fortunately, now I’m the lead here and advisors will come and speak to me about it. We try to minimise forceful intervention on people if we can.”*

*SP05*

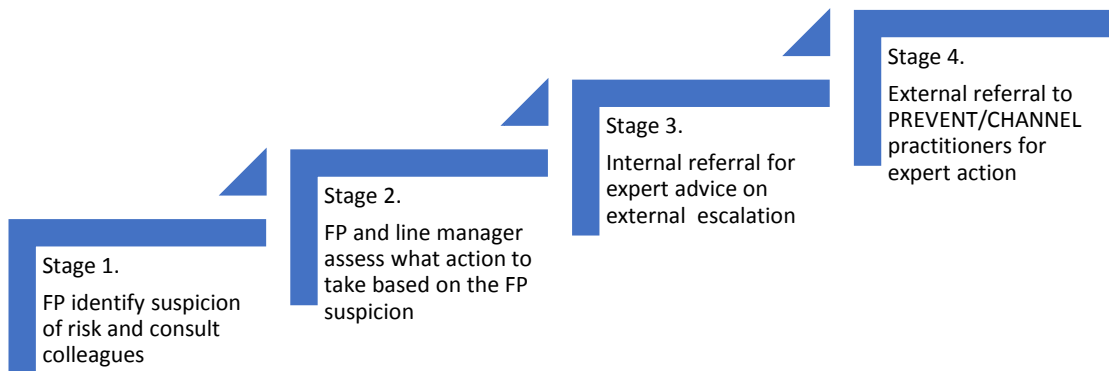
Practitioners describe referring on in this way as a method of transferring the responsibility to act onto someone more senior or experienced than themselves; or as a way to avoid a ‘bottle-neck’, or backlog, of unnecessary formal inter-organisational referrals. Practitioners acknowledge the potential in CR risk-work for these internal experts to also be a mechanism to safeguard against bias or prejudice in frontline identification, and thereby avert children from being referred unnecessarily to police.

### *Police-Led Safeguarding*

The process for acting on CR (Diagram 4), as with general safeguarding, is hierarchically organised, based on individual actors’ seniority and safeguarding

‘expert’ status, but with authority linked to the supposed possession of a high level of CR knowledge:

*Diagram 4: Features of the CR Risk-Work Process*



In comparison to mainstream risk-work, however, the CR risk-work is described as much more heavily truncated by the practitioners who had or would initiate or manage the process. Practitioners further explained that assessment stages 1 to 3 in Diagram 4 are sometimes superficial or taken out of sequence, with variations directly correlated with the level of confidence the internal ‘experts’ feel they have to make independent decisions to act. Treating CR as an exception to mainstream safeguarding not only confirmed many practitioner’s beliefs that managing CR was beyond their capability, but the fact it is police-led also reinforced frequently invoked and deep level discussions of criminalisation as a consequence of taking actions for PREVENT:

*“K: I think it’s better the way it used to be so with [a previous CR case prior to PREVENT]. The social worker knew him. They knew his family. They were more aware of it. Whereas, well, I think police have then got to follow up on whatever is their agenda.*

*L: I don’t think they understand it themselves.*

*K: No, I don't. They've got their own views and beliefs and everything else.*

*You hear in the media about the police having racism and all the rest of it, so should it be them? I don't think so."*

*L/K/SP04*

*"My idea of the police has always been that they can over-react. There're always anxieties about the police being involved in anything in terms of how they deal with things. I might speak to the PREVENT team. I might."*

*SP/FP04*

At the furthest end of the spectrum, practitioners refuted the appropriateness of a safeguarding process led by police due to their training and orientation toward crime detection; their lack of child protection/welfare expertise and the longstanding accusations of racism against them. This public and professional perception about police being 'heavy-handed' was also acknowledged by police actors themselves. The reinterpretation of national guidance '*going against the grain*' to adopt a '*softer approach*' to the rest of the country on PREVENT, one that had to be negotiated and agreed by the Home Office, was presented as a necessary level of resistance or modification of national policy to protect from real or perceived complaints of criminalisation and racial profiling:

*"When we do get a referral in, police checks are done. You know, they're not created on criminal systems. But obviously have to go through a process. Its what's called de-conflicting and information gathering to make*

*sure that there's no, for instance, 'blue on blue' operations that could occur."*

*O2/SP02*

Practitioners' anxieties about the PREVENT/CHANNEL referral process are thus given credence by the PREVENT/CHANNEL officers' explanation of the police actions that a referral initiate. This is also substantiated by the PREVENT/CHANNEL referral process representation on the Liverpool Safeguarding Children Board website, which indicates that every suspicion or concern that practitioners raise about CR (the first stage at the top of the Diagram 5 below) would at some point be reviewed by police within the Special Branch division:



*Diagram 5. Liverpool CHANNEL Referral Process (Liverpool Safeguarding Children Board 2015)*

Practitioners question the way the police are positioned as the sole agency to refer children to for CR, but nevertheless a reluctant acquiescence or ‘psychological

withdrawal' (Lipsky 1980: 142) is also manifest in the ultimate decisions for acting on CR. Once more, this is primarily because practitioners assume that in a central 'expert' safeguarding process, such as PREVENT/CHANNEL, an expert will decide if a child is vulnerable to the risk of CR. Practitioners, for example, contrary to its earlier revealed foundations, expect that the VAF is based on real experiences of young people being radicalised. They also trust that in response to a referral, that an expert agency will begin supporting the child. This reflects the earlier discussion of how trust is pivotal to practitioners complying with their legal responsibility to prevent risk. The realities elucidated by SPs, even in social work, LA and police, that they do not have extra training or support, and that the PREVENT/CHANNEL practitioners deliver 'de-radicalisation' work themselves with additional support from local religious and community 'leaders', who are not experts in CR, undermines the basis of this trust significantly.

To summarise, the features of the CR risk-work process, a police led process which does not accommodate the traditional multi-level stages for checking, mitigating or removing risk, are shown to fundamentally negate practitioner confidence in PREVENT/CHANNEL. Moreover, the detailed rules of the process, significantly at variance from their idealised depictions, exacerbate this situation. These are detailed in what follows.

### 7.3.1 Evidence Versus Suspicion

Practitioners state that their policy and training for safeguarding is to only begin a formal process regarding children's welfare when they have evidence of their vulnerability. This evidence is then used in the internal and external processes for

determining the level of risk present, and influences decisions on external referral or ‘escalation’:

*“As a professional you can always have an idea that something’s going on, but if you’ve got no evidence then it’s really, really hard to pinpoint it and support the person. Unless I had evidence there’s nothing I could do to pursue it.”*

*FP06*

The import attached to evidence, both in the preceding outline practitioners gave of their ‘objects of knowledge’ for CR and here, illuminate how the referral of suspicion sits uneasily with practitioners accustomed to having to provide evidence for mainstream safeguarding risk-work decisions. In descriptions of their own current and future practice of identifying and acting upon CR, FPs describe their actions to gather ‘evidence’ of a child’s vulnerabilities to formulate a referral as predicated upon a praxis of learning to follow their instincts about safeguarding. In other words, even though they feel that they do not know CR, they feel that they know a safeguarding risk when they see it. This is a praxis characterised by discretionary judgement or practitioner ‘*instinct*’, ‘*gut feeling*’ or ‘*common sense*’, gained over time and with experience (Slovic, 2002; Slovic et al, 2004; Walklate, 1999). This contrasts with the formalistic and decontextualized ‘tick box’ framework of VAF that is somewhat alien to their practice, but contemporaneously appealing given its reassuring qualities in a context of pervasive uncertainties. To instigate the CR risk-work process on the basis of this intangible praxis, with concerns about how quickly a decision to act on suspicion can escalate to police involvement in children’s lives (Diagram 4 and 5), is however a source of anxiety for practitioners in all roles, including the ‘experts’:

*“You’ve got to, you know, use common sense and some reasonable logic to determine what to do with an alert. Sometimes people can throw out comments in anger. It doesn’t mean they are going to go off, and you have to 999 and all that. It is sensitive, and it is difficult but it’s just about being proportionate.”*

*SP05*

*“For me it’s meant to be done at the lowest level. So that’s why I say I don’t trust PREVENT. I don’t really know exactly how it is. I just know that it’s heavy handed. There’s been some young people in the past whose houses have been raided. The kids already been arrested for one thing and now their house has been raided for that? It’s a big tag on him ‘oh he’s a young Muslim lad and he’s quite wild’ and so on. In my experience those people making these decisions will quite often be people who are into enforcing. We have got a PREVENT worker in the service who likes to upturn any stone that they find uncomfortable. And quite often go to the extreme of it. So, a little bit like the media, jumping the gun and go straight to it being high risk. And they mightn’t have even really met with the young person and the family. But they jump to assuming it’s going to be worst case scenario. And that ‘these people need this intervention’.”*

*FP07*

These problems outlined, stem from discretionary judgement or instinct which are acknowledged to often embody imported bias, specifically on grounds of religion or race, from the knowledge sources practitioners have had to draw upon to make sense

of CR. This is returned to in later exploration of the issue of what qualifies as low or high risk in interpretation of risk thresholds. At this point, it is simply worth noting that identifying and referring a child based on a feeling that they are at risk of CR is understood to have significant, and potentially stigmatising consequences. The overriding apprehensions, highlighted in the preceding chapters, about ‘not knowing’ what CR is or how to see it but knowing that they are mandated to do so have a peculiar impact. They lead some practitioners to conclude that it is better to act than not. Irrespective of the stated concerns about referring a child based on suspicion, most practitioners accept that they will have to do so. The challenging aspects to this are multi-fold and exacerbated by the following additional dilemmas.

### *Child-Centred Assessment of Risk*

Practitioners outline the positive aspects of pursuing evidence of vulnerability with a child or their family in conventional safeguarding processes as presenting an opportunity to discuss or challenge a child’s perceptions of their own vulnerability. Giving the child a chance to contribute at this point, even in conditions suspected to be ‘grooming’, provides practitioners with the prospect of uncovering the issues behind behaviours that have raised concerns in the first place. These may not be found to be the issues first suspected, and thus the process allows them to be identified in a supportive, non-criminalising way that obviates the need for an external referral:

*“We speak to the young people. It can take a long time to try and approach the subject with them. I might get them in and say, ‘how’s it going, where did you go out today, is everything alright’. It might be a few months and then you know I’d say like ‘A lightbulb’s gone off in my head and I can’t*

*help feel like this relationship that you're having with this person' etcetera. I've done it before when it's come to grooming. 'This person may come across as inappropriate to professionals, do you understand why it's come across that way? You're 16 and he's 63 and he's putting money in your bank. Put money in your bank and bought you a new TV. Do you understand what grooming is?'. You know you've got to take a very softly, softly approach. When you know the young person you kind of know what sort of approach you can or can't take and what's best. So, most of the time we do try and approach it and educate them on it as well. When I'm doing a risk assessment with the young person and I'm trying to explain to them that they're vulnerable. They generally don't see they are. They're like 'what do you mean vulnerable?' and I'll explain 'you've come from a very chaotic background, in the past you've been groomed or influenced'."*

*FP06*

Gaining insight into the perspective of a child about their own vulnerabilities is described as helping practitioners to identify or confirm risk suspicions, assess risk levels, gather evidence of their needs and formulate proportionate responses. Time is a defining feature of this aspect of everyday risk-work:

*"Because of the way we're set up, we can get kind of a bit more involved in that young person's life in a way. I might be able to find out a bit more about what's going on for them. Maybe see them in other contexts, when they're in a group or when they go out to do an activity. I would think we're a really good organisation to a) pick those things up and b) be able to do*

*something early enough to maybe put in some other options for that young person. If it is around them feeling that there's been injustice, or feeling a need for status or, you know other things can be put in place to satisfy those needs for a young person. So, I'd like to think that even if there was some concern – unless it was a risk right now and we need to do something about it – that there's always time.”*

*SP/FP04*

*“It's small here and I know if someone has been arguing with their boyfriend. I can spot that she's not herself. You couldn't do that in a big college. I've got tops 10 to a group. If you've got 30, 40 students, it could easily slip under the net.”*

*SP/FP03*

Practitioners state that if they have time to get to know a child, their background and environment, they can gain information that will help them identify unusual or out-of-character behaviours. They get the opportunity to initiate a ‘safeguarding conversation’ and can work with them to reduce their vulnerability to being harmed. This is raised as integral to a practitioners’ ability to undertake proper assessments of safeguarding risks that maintain trust and integrity and allow for actions to ameliorate any potential risk.

### *Thinking Time*

Compared to these normal safeguarding practices, practitioners outline the impact that not having much ‘thinking time’ has on decisions to act on CR (Bell, Raiffa

and Tversky, 1988; Kahneman, 2012; Shafir and Tversky, 1992; Tversky, 1974). Firstly, as the preceding discussion demonstrates, that they do not have enough time to understand and get to know the changes to policy and the impact on their practice causes practitioners to doubt their ability to deal with CR. Secondly, and related to the ‘problem of resources’ (Lipsky 1980), increasingly having less time and resources in a general context of austerity can adversely affect decisions to act or not act on a potential risk.

*“It’s really sad now that in this day and age with all the austerity measures that we are going to miss a lot of these kids. Social work, now, we probably spend about 6 hours a day at a computer. How many children will we not identify as being at risk? A lot of them are going to slip through the net and we’re not going to be able to reach out to them.”*

*SP03*

*“If I need to go and speak to one of the managers and then I might need to make a referral to Careline, it’s a big process. You have to fill out a form online. It takes a bit of time. Someone was dealing with a safeguarding issue last week and said ‘Do you know what? It has taken me 4 hours today to deal with that.’ If its 4 hours out of your day and you’re already seeing clients and doing all your other stuff. It doesn’t leave a lot of time then to go and discuss with your colleagues what that was like. That’s actually the problem I think.”*

*SP/FP04*

These pressurised ‘conditions of work’, with the legal duties they are bound to uphold uppermost in their mind, are seen as creating a context within which decisions have to be made too quickly and without first gaining a sufficient understanding of context. Not having the time they used to have with a child, combined with the perceived need for quick and early interventions on CR, limits practitioners’ opportunities to have this form of discussion for CR risk-work. The practitioners themselves noted that making a report based on suspicion, without this thinking or talking time, can have major negative consequences (Bell, Raiffa and Tversky, 1988; Kahneman, 2012; Shafir and Tversky, 1992; Tversky, 1974).

For practitioners working with children with existing complex or multiple needs especially, ‘*jumping to conclusions*’ or ‘*making assumptions*’ which will instigate some form of police or LA involvement with the family jeopardises their hard work to open dialogues with children and their families. Their practice is focused on building and maintaining trust, respect and rapport in a relationship with a child who is already marginalised or deemed to be ‘at risk’ for some other reason, such as offending, abuse, neglect and so on. Therefore, reporting a child based on suspicion is seen to damage the organisational and practitioner reputation and endanger this connection; the relationships and trust built up with children and their families over long periods of time. Trust is depicted as paramount to securing what is essentially voluntary involvement with youth or community services; losing it risks a child’s disengagement from the service, which may place them in greater risk.

Although the context is different in statutory organisations with whom children usually have compulsory involvement, such as school, in both compulsory and non-compulsory attendance settings damaging this relationship precludes any opportunity to have the ‘difficult conversations’ necessary to safeguard the child from activities

which may be dangerous. At this point, it becomes clear that it is the overall ‘clandestine’ nature of CR risk-work which creates the greatest dissonance with everyday risk-work, exacerbating previously discussed concerns about ‘secrecy’<sup>87</sup>. The inadequacy of information about what happens post-referral, that is, how and where information on children is stored, what actions are undertaken and with whom, all contribute to a lack of confidence in this new process. However, as discussed earlier, this also contributes paradoxically to the conceptualisation by practitioners that CR is a significant risk connected to security and intelligence that *requires* such a high level of secrecy.

A process which allows for anonymous referrals based on suspicion, likely premised on gendered and racialised bias and stereotypes, is perhaps unsurprisingly judged by practitioners as potentially accommodating unreliable reports of suspicions or malicious, targeted harassment of vulnerable children (Louati, 2018). The assumed expectation that practitioners will act on the ‘sensitive’ issue of CR by referring their suspicions about a child covertly to PREVENT/CHANNEL – the message many state is promulgated by WRAP or emerges de facto from developing practice – is not compatible with their everyday safeguarding work, and to some, is antithetical to child-centred practice.

### 7.3.2 Consent Versus Secrecy

The practice of acting without gaining consent, or not informing children and families of concerns about vulnerability to CR, such as is depicted within the case summary, raises significant concerns:

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<sup>87</sup> The lack of evidence and local statistics on CR and the absence of a rationale for Liverpool gaining Priority 2 status earlier outlined.

*“People look up to our roles. They think you are there to support us not there to inform on us. You’ve got to understand the community concerns but also the protection of the wider public. That requires us to be familiar with the impact and also not to let our community down by not explaining the background to this policy and also the impact.”*

SP05

*“[for general safeguarding] You’d look at the house and if you feel that the house is unkempt to a point where it’s like ‘hang on there’s kids here’ then you’d raise that. You’d raise that concern. But you’d always make sure that the parents were aware. You don’t want to be going there and then coming back and doing it behind their back. You’d lose that trust. It’s about being honest because we don’t want people to lose trust in our organisation. If we lose trust, then we can’t work with them to support them. So, you’d have to be pretty certain to make a referral to the CHANNEL. Because you’d lose all trust.”*

FP05

The consequences for children, communities, practitioners and their organisations feature heavily in practitioner considerations about referring on a child suspected of CR without their knowledge or consent. Practitioners conceive of this form of action, in the context of safeguarding children wherein actions are assumed to be accountable and transparent, as reifying the public’s pre-existing concerns about secret actions under PREVENT and counter-terrorism more generally. This perception of secrecy

also pertained to how the information generated by actions under PREVENT/CHANNEL is used and stored:

*“Confidentiality is always the backbone for the majority of the services that I work for. It’s challenging for people to just go ‘and she’s doing such and such, and he’s doing such and such’. I think the majority of community-based organisations in Liverpool have probably got 1001 safeguarding things to disclose that they just wouldn’t. Because trust would go out the window. Or they’d spend the next 6 weeks saying, ‘well she does this and he does that’ and doing all the paperwork. That would all get written up and stored somewhere. And what would be done with it? I don’t know.”*

*FP07*

*“There’s a lot of information we already have about children before we’ve even knocked on a front door. And with something like PREVENT, radicalisation. Well. We will have that strategy meeting before we inform the family that we are involved. So that we can gather every piece of information from every agency and make a decision about what we do next. We can now access databases for school, health, police, housing every agency who will provide information and we do what we call a 360-degree profile on that family to see if there are any arrests or concerns. What is interesting is that there is no consent. So, families are unaware, sometimes, that a referral may have come in on their child. They have been exposed, been subject to all these checks, but it may never go anywhere. They will never be aware that all that information has been provided.*

[Question from researcher – And held for how long?]

*99 years for those who've had involvement, its 75 years for others. So, it must stay on your file until you have got grandchildren. Even if you have no involvement. It is scary. It is big brother territory. But unfortunately, that's how it is these days isn't it? Surveillance and monitoring."*

SP03

Risk, needs and vulnerability assessments are commonly referred to and accepted ways of everyday safeguarding work but are also recounted as powerful ways to apply categories which negatively label children and families – especially when they recast needs or disadvantages, for example, poverty, as risk categories (Bateman, 2011). Sharing information is nonetheless regularly referenced among practitioners as being part of multi-agency safeguarding. Differing notions existed as to how, why, when and with whom information should be shared on an inter-agency or intra-agency basis, but practitioners were generally enthusiastic to do so. These often-automated information sharing processes, for example online forms, were referred to as increasingly relied upon in case management. The advantages communicated were that every person who works with a child knows the same information about past and present risks and therefore, in theory, future risks won't get missed and can be prevented. However, at the same time, significant criticisms are also levelled by practitioners at the sharing of information in this way in the CR context. These include the possibility of subjective interpretation of decontextualized information by people who do not know the child and the potential errors that arise from relying on score-based rather than personal judgements of risk (Bovens and Zouridis, 2002), to name but a few. The questions that practitioners asked of the CR referral documentation – how long they are kept for, how

they are shared, who they are shared with – were underscored by anxieties of covertly attaching the stigmatising ‘risk’ of future terrorism label to children which moves from agency to agency, in a way that cannot be contested or removed. Every frontline practitioner, even those who also occupied a strategic role, acknowledged their distrust. They all worried about the fact that the process for CR risk-work is a system for generating and holding information in anticipation of a child doing wrong in the future. For most, this was recognised as an assumption predicated on what they had heard or read about PREVENT. The one practitioner, quoted above, who could explain the details of how information was stored, however, confirmed all of their doubts. This clandestine way of sharing and storing information about suspicion of a child’s vulnerability is not what practitioners are normally used to. To make a referral without the consent or knowledge of a child or family in everyday practice is something practitioners believe should only happen in cases with evidence of ‘high risk’ of significant harm to a child:

*“When I had a concern about him [boy suspected of gang involvement]. I phoned his mum and said I’m concerned about this and I want to make a referral to Careline because I don’t think he’s safe. Well, the family were not happy with me doing that. But when I took it to [management] they were like ‘Yes, we need to do this’. There were other things as well that were happening in the family where I thought, this young person has not got the right support to be involved in this. Not to have the right support tipped it over the edge for me. I had to do something. And I don’t like to have to do that when you haven’t got the families on board. But sometimes you can tell them and they’re not happy. But you still have to do it.*

*Sometimes you tell them, and they're ok about it. So, for this, I'd have to be worried enough that that young person was at risk of significant harm"*

*SP/FP04*

This understanding refers back to the 'objects of knowledge' where a referral was said to only be made when violence is a threat to the child or threatened by a child. Guidance for which risk levels correspond with the thresholds for referrals to external agencies, as is provided for everyday safeguarding risk-work, is therefore the issue of primary significance for practitioners in the context of the rules for acting on CR.

### 7.3.3 Risk Levels Thresholds: The Rules for Action and Transparency

Assessments of risk levels in generic risk-work are treated as tools for determining if a safeguarding case does or does not meet the legislative definition of 'significant harm'<sup>88</sup>; the trigger point for social services involvement. This formal understanding frames the vulnerabilities described by practitioners in their accounts of 'everyday' risk, of the kind discussed earlier:

*"If I felt there was enough emotional abuse or psychological abuse or other forms of abuse, sexual abuse [in a suspicion of CR]. It would have to be significant. And imminent. Imminent I think is the word. Because if someone is just thinking about something, that is not the time to kind of react and think 'Oh, I've got to do something about this'. Thinking about something, we all think about things. It doesn't necessarily mean we're going to go and do them. If there's a chance to get into it early on I'd speak*

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<sup>88</sup> Previously outlined as the term derived from The Children's Act, 1989 and Adoption and Children Act, 2002.

*to the young person and work with the family. It would be very much on a start at this level and if they mention guns it's like this level [raises hands in air]. I think you've just got to use your judgement. Some young people will mention things like that, but it doesn't mean to say that they're going to go and make a gun and start shooting people."*

*SP/FP04*

For those with a more advanced understanding of the definitions of significance and the categories of harm, imminent harm or danger is treated as the priority for safeguarding action in the conventional framework for referring a child to Careline (social services). This creates conflict in understanding the risk of CR as always being 'high level'. Seeing a child as being in imminent 'danger', from sexual or other physical violence or a threat of violence, from others or as posing that danger to others, is described by practitioners as out of step with making referrals when a child is 'vulnerable' to a future risk. Predicting the likelihood of future risk is not something most practitioners describe doing, nor feeling equipped to do.

In their feedback on the VAF as a risk assessment tool for CR, practitioners indicate that even if a child 'ticks' all the VAF indicators, this will not meet the social services safeguarding threshold of significant harm. This is based on relayed experiences of raising safeguarding referrals with Careline that are '*batted back*' to their organisation for not meeting the threshold. Consequently, even in the presence of issues classed as significantly and immediately 'risky' in the view of practitioners, these returned referrals are understood as being demoted by social services rules to 'low risk':

*“It’s quite difficult really, trying to keep up with the times. Trying to keep up with the changes in paperwork and other professionals’ attitudes and ethics towards it. If you ask me, now, when we contact social services their thresholds have gone up a little bit more. So, what a couple of years ago I might have perceived as a massive risk, now it’s not really seen as big a risk as it would have. They’re not being bad parents, it’s more a positive parenting kind of thing. It’s just that thresholds have changed across the board.”*

*FP06*

Practitioners describe social services’ actions, subsequently, as inconsistent, problematic and difficult to understand. Some practitioners alluded here to the newly introduced EHAT (Early Help Assessment Team) process, which was being adopted by the LA at the same time as changes were being made to the ‘new’ threshold definitions for social services. The perception of a persistent but nuanced ‘changing of the rules’ by social services is communicated as resulting from austerity cuts (All Party Parliamentary Group for Children, 2017). Thresholds are increased as a technique for filtering out and reducing the numbers of referrals which require children to be provided with a service. This is a process change akin to the ‘psychological’ coping mechanisms referred to as adopted not only for the categorisation of clients and their needs, but also as a pragmatic method of managing caseload levels and demands (Lipsky, 1980: 140).

### *PREVENT: Absence of Reporting Thresholds*

FPs who had not made a referral to PREVENT/CHANNEL assumed that these thresholds for mainstream safeguarding would apply, and as such they did not understand why police are involved at all levels of CR risk (low, medium, high). This breached their understanding of safeguarding and the thresholds for acting to involve the LA. Most did not consider engagement with the PREVENT/CHANNEL process to be voluntary. The expectation of obligatory involvement with police, in the same way social services involvement was perceived to be, underpinned some of their anxieties about referring. More so, the absence of formal written threshold guidance for what level of CR risk is deemed to necessitate a referral, and the lack of details of the process which this referral sets in motion, caused real unease.

Notwithstanding the contested aspects of the VAF as an assessment tool, practitioners are accustomed to working with the thresholds set out in conventional safeguarding to guide their judgements. As such, the desire for an unequivocal equivalent document for CR is understandable. The lack of stated thresholds for a CR referral is therefore a source of misperception of risk; one which could lead to children ‘informally’ coming into contact with police. The vague or ‘unwritten’ rules and expectations (Bittner, 1967; 1974; Bogen and Lynch, 1993; Garfinkel, 1964; Gelsthorpe and Padfield, 2003; Goodwin, 1994; Sherman, 1984; Sudnow, 1965; 1972) for accurate, professional discretionary judgement in the process of CR risk-work is confusing in practice, as illustrated by the case summary, for those observing it and for practitioners. FPs complaints of the changing rules for social services to take up safeguarding cases, combined with their own lack of confidence to make independent decisions on CR risk, indicate that the absence of referral thresholds may appeal to some practitioners keen to ‘refer on’ this controversial and anxiety-inducing risk to

‘specialist’ or ‘expert’ decision-makers and support services. This illustrates the paradox of being legally required to safeguard children from a risk that has not been clearly defined, complicated further by there not being any rules or tools to aid assessment and action. It also has the potential to distort what are understood to be official ‘cases’:

*“Definitely from the schools’ point of view, they were unsure...They were referring everything through. Which is fine. Having worked in a domestic violence department where we used to say, when we were trying to get that in the public eye, that people should be reporting everything.”*

*O1/SP02*

*“I’m always conscious of the fact someone might just refer a job that even from the outset you think is a load of nonsense. But you’d never ever say that to the person. You’re trying to make them feel like ‘Yeah, that’s great, thanks very much’. At least they’ve thought about it.”*

*O3/SP02*

The omission of thresholds for referring children into PREVENT/CHANNEL are often reflected upon by SPs, the actors consistently viewed by FPs as being the ‘experts’ within the decision-making process for CR. These police practitioners describe a process of de-escalating cases by ‘pushing back’ referrals to the organisation it originates from. Their accounts that it is acceptable for practitioners to report every suspicion of CR until PREVENT is ‘properly established’, reinforces the practitioners experience of WRAP. However, the approach of the officers conflicts with other SPs,

especially those who are part of the CR safeguarding decision-making process in the  
LA:

*“Reacting badly to a piece of information can put that child and that family through unreasonable focus. First of all, it would be good [for frontline practitioners] to understand what information was presented to them fully before they jump to conclusions. You know, give it some thought. Try to break up the information they receive into components. So, the source of it, the nature of it, the level of risk it presents, are you with me? So, if you jump because a child says ‘Allah al Akbar’ or whatever phrase is said, that doesn’t mean. Look that is said over 20 times during prayer, you know what I mean? It doesn’t mean you are a terrorist. And people have said that – ‘he didn’t say that phrase so it can’t be terrorism can it?’.”*

SP05

*“It’s about being proportionate. If you have got a young child using the word terrorist instead of terraced [Referring to Blackburn school case January 2016] in his essay, then that’s an issue for the school to address. In terms of PREVENT we don’t want to know about that. Deal with that internally, within the organisation. Within the school under your normal safeguarding policies. Then if you want some advice off the CHANNEL Police Practitioner, then fine, give him a ring. It’s only when your concerns become raised that there may be an affiliation with some sort of extremist group or organisation, then that’s when you should start thinking about a safeguarding referral.”*

SP01

*“We were having to emphasise especially on our awareness training, look you need to challenge that. In company with the parents. Get the guardians in. We always say, we will take a proportionate response. And quite often, it is a soft approach. Quite often we leave the teachers to deal with it. If concerns remained, they can formally submit an official referral then.”*

*O2/SP02*

These depictions outline the unwritten ‘rules’ for a more discerning approach to submitting referrals which involves significant judgement and discretion within the preliminary assessment to identify a child as vulnerable to the risk of CR. The CR knowledge gained through WRAP, articulated by practitioners in a previous chapter, however, does not support practitioners in learning these ‘rules’ in two key ways. Firstly, the WRAP training is acknowledged to encourage practitioners to ‘raise concerns’ at any point with PREVENT/CHANNEL officers. Secondly, the knowledge does not equip practitioners with the in-depth understanding of what ‘extremist groups’ or ‘ideologies’ exist locally and what level or ‘signs’ of CR constitutes an affiliation to them. The non-knowledge they hold on CR combined with the convoluted message to ‘not over-react but refer everything’ creates understandable confusion, even at the most crucial moments of decision-making:

*“Sometimes, I wonder what I’m doing to be honest with you. Because it’s not really, it’s not set. It’s not like children’s services where it’s set in stone and you’re going ‘well this is what you should do’. It is genuinely professional judgement on every case.”*

*O1/SP02*

### *Violence: Threshold for Action*

In frontline practice, the interpretation of imminent violence as the threshold for referring a child is a counter-move to the absence of CR thresholds, previously outlined. As this is something which by their own definition is highly unlikely to be encountered, this categorisation constitutes an act of resistance through category restriction. By cutting down the number of people who will qualify for inclusion within the category, such moves make space for alternative responses to children who may be vulnerable. For most of the SPs and a minority of frontline staff who were trained and working with EHAT, it is a collaboration with the child and family to identify their own needs and strengths across various safeguarding issues:

*“Parents and the young people working together would be a good thing. It could be transforming for the family, transforming. Instead of children feeling isolated, traumatised by being referred to police. All the things it takes years really to recover from.”*

*FP07*

*“The Early Help prevention is a tier before you actually get to safeguarding where action needs to be taken. Other organisations are drawn in to help to work with that family. Before it gets to the stage where then PREVENT are having to come in, you know, ‘Let’s go and break someone’s door down’. What’s really good is that the threshold levels 1-3 is covered by the EHAT now. At 4 you know it’s a Careline issue. And that’s great to see, because the majority of that is early help. There’s just that last little quarter of it that means you have to take some sort of official action.*

*Families love it. It's like they own it. It's the families' document. It's the mum, the dad, the child thinks, the grandma thinks, this is what they all think. There is no threat there for them. They're not going to have social workers knocking on their door. Or going to the school. That is always a big fear. There's a lot of shame around that. You can say 'the strengths of this family are' this but these are some of the needs. Let's just keep using that. So, if we've got a young person who is being drawn into something and you're thinking 'ooh aye-up this is not right', let's do an EHAT. See what other organisations we can get in to fill the gaps for this young person. So, they don't go looking for something that gives them status. Something that gives excitement. Identity. They are then getting all that from somewhere else."*

*SP/FP04*

For those explicitly cautious of police involvement with children, or who acknowledge that this is an issue for CR, the EHAT is cited as an opportunity to respond proportionately to concerns for children and families. The EHAT was thus positioned as a technique for safeguarding against stigmatising, criminalising or labelling children unnecessarily. However, it became apparent in the interviews with police practitioners that any EHAT which explicitly flags up potential CR concerns in this city will trigger an automatic involvement of PREVENT/CHANNEL. This convergence of the conventional LA-led safeguarding processes, which require evidence to meet defined thresholds, with a police-led process based on suspicion, is incompatible with the everyday safeguarding risk-work practitioners describe:

*“They did have a child and they worked really well with Prevent. They linked this child, a young person and the family up with an Imam in the community. They don’t deem that they are any longer at risk, that they are cooperating. The only issue we have is, if they don’t cooperate then we will be implementing child protection procedures. Because it’s a safeguarding issue with regards to parental failure to protect them from the risk of harm. PREVENT is a voluntary process, but I would surmise that if we have got a child and a family working with Prevent, it would either be held on a TAF [team around the family] with support by schools leading that meeting or it would be a Child in Need. If they failed to engage, we would have to look at child protection procedures for safeguarding. And that would be the risk of emotional harm. Highly likely. The category for a child protection plan.”*

*SP03*

In the void of transparency, this practitioner describes the prospect for suspicions of CR to confusingly instigate child protection proceedings based on a lower evidential threshold than would be demanded of other cases of safeguarding concerns. A child can be assessed under one process, PREVENT/CHANNEL which is instigated without evidence of risk, but if they do not engage with this ‘voluntary process’ it can lead to them and their family being punished under a different process of social services safeguarding. A process which the case would not have met the threshold for action in the first place had it not been instigated via a CR risk call.

In summary, then, the development of a parallel safeguarding world for CR where suspicion counts as evidence and thresholds for invoking police led investigations are

not necessary, represents a very significant ‘breach’ of practitioner understanding of safeguarding. Treating the referral of all suspicions as actions to identify possible ‘precursors’ to terrorism, highlights the inherent problem of creating a safeguarding process for (pre) crime prediction. In attempts to predict the risk of a child becoming vulnerable to being radicalised for a future imagined act of terrorism, evidence and thresholds lose relevance in the process – what has not yet happened cannot be evidenced. Moreover, in making referrals, practitioners do not see themselves as acting to prevent imagined future crime (McCulloch and Wilson, 2016); they see their actions as ones which prevent harm to a vulnerable child. The everyday safeguarding risk work process provides several opportunities for risk escalation and de-escalation. This is described as providing practitioners opportunities to work with children to reduce vulnerability and remove risk statuses along the way. None of this, for the reasons described above, is afforded to children processed through the CR risk-work procedure of PREVENT/CHANNEL.

#### 7.4 Conclusions

In tracing the contortions in practice that come with PREVENT, it becomes clear that the claim that ‘increased reports means increased confidence in the agenda’ is a fallacy. A combination of fear and lack of guidance, rather than confidence, is demonstrated as both potentially increasing, and decreasing, the likelihood of practitioners making referrals to PREVENT/CHANNEL. Neither of which are desirable outcomes in safeguarding risk-work with children. For frontline practitioners, the separation of CR from everyday safeguarding policy and risk-work processes is revealed to create dilemmas and confusion in practice. Under these conditions, a ‘micro-climate’ has emerged which differs from the surrounding climate of safeguarding actions for other

risks and is inflected with racialised and religious meaning (Ward, 2016). Under these conditions, cases of suspected CR are rapidly progressed through the stages of the CR risk-work process, without evidence or opportunities to gather more information to contextualise the risk that is suspected. Prematurely externally referring children, particularly those from racial or religious minority backgrounds, to PREVENT/CHANNEL is just one of the practical consequences.

Apprehensions about increasing risk for children through a referral to a police-led process that practitioners know little about, are countered by the equal fear of the repercussions that their actions, or inactions, on CR may generate. This seemingly impossible task (Rittel and Webber, 1973) of getting CR decisions right in practice for everyone involved – practitioner, child and wider community – is inflected as a professional and moral burden within every practitioner account.

The earlier concerns of an inability to see the indicators of a child's future involvement in terrorist crimes because they don't know what it could look like, are, however, contradictorily reinforced by the accounts of those who have referred children to PREVENT/CHANNEL because they don't know what CR looks like. Their decisions made under conditions of 'ignorance' or not knowing (Beck, Bonss and Lau, 2003; Fox and Tversky, 1995; 1998), that is, on grounds of suspicion and not evidence, not only compel these practitioners to legitimise the government CR narrative but also give it additional credibility. These actors performatively establish local ways of looking for, and finding, 'evidence' of the risk of CR in this governmentally-staged 'risk drama' (Mythen, 2015).

This drama uses the language of safeguarding, one which is at least superficially familiar and meaningful, to co-opt practitioners into pre-crime risk-work. Practitioners are, on the one hand, invited to make sense of CR by expanding pre-

existing safeguarding knowledge, wherein children are perceived as victims. On the other hand, by establishing conditions within which practitioners imagine the future crimes of children to refer them into PREVENT/CHANNEL, without discussion or consent being gained, the agency of children is both denied and stressed. Denied for the self-identification and management of risk by children and stressed in perceiving children as upcoming criminal actors. The interaction of PREVENT policy and practice simultaneously does two opposing things within praxis. It contemporaneously adultifies and infantilises children; implying some element of consensual involvement and understanding of ‘extremist’ ideology, whilst at the same time not accommodating children as independent actors with any level of agency (Burton, 2007; Coppock and McGovern, 2014; Dancy, 2014; Ferguson, 2001; Gilliam et al, 2016; Wollons, 1993).

In settings of suspicion of the sort PREVENT has inculcated, children are not being given the conventional opportunities of child-centred safeguarding work to exercise agency, discuss angers or frustrations in a situation of mutual trust. Secrecy and suspicion are not just a local phenomenon in decision-making, they are a structural feature in how PREVENT has been assembled. The absence of reporting thresholds or evidential criteria in the risk-work structures is the main rule which diverges from everyday safeguarding, funnelling every suspicion, be it high, medium or low-level risk, into the CR process. Without these parameters, the method of ‘counting in’, rather than ‘counting out’, is shown to characterise how actions are taken on CR. This problematic feature is buttressed by PREVENT/CHANNEL practitioners expressed reluctance to explicitly or formally communicate to referring actors that a referral is inappropriate or to reveal the actions they have taken in response.

Actions within the CR risk-work process consequently are shown to have the iatrogenic effect of making every actor in the safeguarding process feel less safe and

ultimately proliferating risk for children. Well-intentioned ‘rule-following’ by practitioners results in well-meaning damage to children and families. Those experiencing ‘everyday’ harms, such as domestic violence, are potentially being inadequately supported because their vulnerabilities are being recast under the problematic CR risk-work process. The observed widening of the net of criminalisation for some children, as already established, is thus shown to run parallel to a widening of the holes within the safeguarding net for others. Furthermore, for children being exposed to the risk of CR, but within the practitioner understanding of ‘everyday hate’, they may actually ‘fall through’ both nets.

## 8. DISCUSSION

The present-day usage of the ‘risk’ concept, which places the responsibility to predict and pre-empt harms to both individuals and to society onto individuals and organisations, has specific impacts on Government policy and those tasked to operationalise it. These impacts are acutely observed in this thesis’s analysis of how ‘Childhood Radicalisation’ (CR) is made legislatively and through praxis.

By adopting methodologies for a flexible, collaborative, qualitative study of praxis, it has been possible to investigate the professional work situations for CR risk-work from the perspective of those working within them. The accounts of Liverpool practitioners, working in statutory and third-sector welfare, education and criminal justice settings, offer rich insights into the interpretive and sense-making practices involved in operationalising this ‘pre-crime safeguarding’ framework with children in the city. In focusing on how the risk of CR was perceived, understood and employed in risk-work practices for learning, seeing and acting on this safeguarding ‘risk’, the dilemmas and challenges practitioners face in operationalising this highly problematic form of risk policy in a specific time, place and context have been laid bare.

Practitioner stories reveal a disjointed experience of operationalising, or preparing to operationalise, PREVENT policy and legislation in a state of ‘not knowing’. Rather than reflecting the cycle of ‘learn, see, do, review’, they reveal a confusing process of ‘to-ing’ and ‘fro-ing’ between learning and not learning, seeing and not seeing, acting and not acting. Operationalisation is thus complex, messy and ultimately, done in a hurry; resulting in a distinct lack of opportunity and time to review risk-work actions or ‘objects of knowledge’ for CR.

The way in which PREVENT, through policy and law, mobilises and applies to children problematic theories and ungeneralisable empirical studies relating to risk,

radicalisation, safeguarding and pre-crime, directly affects the experiences of practitioners in several ways. In the absence of an ‘expert’ risk knowledge of CR, or in other words an evidential basis for its establishment, ‘nichtwissen’ has become statutorily embodied. This is consequential:

“Invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of void, but out of chaos; the materials must, in the first place be afforded: it can give form to dark shapeless substances but cannot bring into being the substance itself.”

(Shelley, 1818: 3)

CR is a concept built from chaos - various dubious theories and scant evidence, or non-knowledges. To fill the aporia of the ‘substance’ of CR within policy, as earlier observed, substitute and conflicting knowledges, namely of pre-crime and safeguarding, have been utilised to assemble and stitch together the policy and legislation to prevent it. It is a ‘Frankenstein’s Monster’. This conceptual device, building on Beck’s ‘zombie category’ risk concept (Beck, 2002; Gross, 2016), not only aides understanding of the assemblage of CR risk policy, but also the development of CR risk-work praxis.

Practice, or operationalisation, is the method through which false life is given to the Frankenstein CR risk, or in other words is how the CR ‘risk reality’ is put together, shaped and moulded (Hacking, 1991). CR comes alive as a classification through retroactive ascription to a child’s ‘risky’ behaviour, attitudes or characteristics. This is enabled and required within the operationalisation of PREVENT legislation and policy in safeguarding risk-work practice. These legislative

regulatory frameworks and reporting mechanisms thus continually keep this monstrosity artificially resuscitated, and in an inherently politicised way. The power and the privilege to identify and categorise some children, and not others, as at risk of CR is facilitated through the legislative duty, and the processes and tools provided for its implementation (Bowker and Star, 1999; Hacking, 1991; 1999; Jayyusi, 1984; Scott, 1985; 1998).

The reality for practitioners in operationalising and making sense of PREVENT is that they must simultaneously give meaning to and interpret CR related concepts within legislation whilst demonstrating their compliance with it. Practitioners stories elucidate how their practice is shaped by attempts to annex other forms of knowledge regarding risk and harm, in order to make sense of this unknown and unfamiliar risk of CR and ameliorate its potential harmful consequences. Contemporaneously, however, practitioners also make clear the ways in which their ‘conditions of work’, namely the factors of austerity and legal compliance, constrain their resistance to what they understand to be problematic policy and practice. The key issues are discussed from herein.

### 8.1 The Impact of Legislating for Action on the Unknown Risk of CR

This study has illuminated the practical impacts of policy and legislation that is not evidence-based (HM Government, 1999) and is not informed by those who are tasked to enact it. Empirical evidence on the nature and extent of a social problem within this form of policy-making provides an explicit rationale which, in relation to safeguarding, assists practitioners to make sense of what ‘risks’ they are being tasked to find and prevent. The unprecedented act of legislating for the prevention of future

‘pre-criminal’ risk of involvement in a crime is riddled with conceptual and practical problems.

### *CR Policy: The Frankenstein’s Monster*

CR has been assembled within legislation as a risk for questionable welfare and pre-crime prevention purposes. Radicalisation is highly contested as a process and antecedent to a terrorist act. Children have not been empirically evidenced to pose the greatest risk of being radicalised for terrorist crimes in the UK yet have come to be treated as a primary site for state-led intervention for pre-crime prevention. Even if evidence could be provided, however, the political definition of what is and what is not terrorism would still result in a politically skewed approach. The annexing of safeguarding to pre-crime prevention is oxymoronic. Children are subsequently viewed as future criminals, rather than future victims. The responsibility to predict which children are possibly ‘vulnerable’ at some point in the future to involvement in ‘terrorist’ crime, without any form of research or evidence about what CR is or how it can be prevented, embodies the idea of what Beck, Bonss and Lau refer to as a ‘reflexive modern situation’ in the global risk society:

‘...without recourse to the authority of scientific knowledge. The practical motto is as follows: ‘Even when we don’t know what we have to know, we still have to decide – or at the very least to decide that we won’t decide now, and to decide on a date when we will.’ A good example of this motto in action is the precautionary rule: under conditions of uncertainty and doubt, decide for the doubt.’ (Beck, Bonss and Lau, 2003: 20)

CR as a 'risk' is therefore a misnomer. The 'precautionary rule' for CR has been decided 'for the doubt'. The Duty is a way to demonstrate that the Government is 'doing something' to alleviate fears about terror attacks, not based upon evidence of need but on the foundation of no knowledge or 'non-knowledge' (Beck, 2007; Simmel, 1906). In other words, 'we know nothing about CR but are fearful of it happening and wish to control it'. Government does not know if CR constitutes a danger significant enough to require legislation and the development of associated risk tools, technologies and institutions, but it has developed them anyway. In so doing, practitioners' perceptions that CR is a significant enough danger to warrant this statutory Duty is reinforced. Consequently, the Duty to identify children suspected as vulnerable to future radicalisation compels practitioners to act on a risk they have not been helped to understand, to demonstrate that 'something' is being done to address this socially amplified danger.

That CR is unknown and cannot be calculated in the traditional financial or epidemiological sense of risk, is itself consequential. Given the uncertainties involved, practitioner action and decision-making must be based on suspicions and taken under conditions of 'ignorance' (Fox and Tversky, 1995; 1998). This permits actions based on bias, prejudice and misunderstandings leveraged from the publicly available and problematic knowledges on terrorism and radicalisation (Kasperson et al, 1988; Keren and Tieggen, 2004; Slovic et al, 2004). Nonetheless, acting without information is a breach of most practitioners understanding of everyday safeguarding children risk-work. The actions practitioners describe taking in the specific CR risk-work process are shown to proliferate experiences of risk, rather than reduce them. Therefore, the impact of legislating for preventing the risk of CR is shown through this study to lead to the unintended or unanticipated production of different risks (Breyer, 1993; Hood,

Rothstein and Baldwin, 2001), with no indication as to how it may be affecting the phenomena it is seeking to avoid (Barr and Pease, 1990).

The significant shift in safeguarding understanding and risk-work practice which PREVENT legislation has initiated, reveals a lack of import attached to the experiences of practitioners who work to safeguard children every day from various forms of harm. This study was the first space and opportunity for many practitioner participants to consider the specificities of PREVENT and CR. Effectively, these practitioners had been given a legal liability with no opportunity for discussion or feedback on their experience and perceptions of risk in safeguarding risk-work with children, at both the policy development and implementation level.

At a local level, no forum had been provided to consider the practical impact of the CR concepts which underpin PREVENT prior to the Duty nor once it was in place. The absence of adequate training and resources from central Government to the LA in advance of enactment of the Duty is a general feature of practitioner experiences of the processes for transmitting information to enable them to operationalise PREVENT. The WRAP programme, where it was experienced pre-Duty, told practitioners what the PREVENT strategy was, but did not help them in how to make it work in safeguarding practice with children. The contemporary reports of the deployment of ex-soldiers with military training perspectives to train teachers and children on Merseyside about this safeguarding issue, embody all the previously described confusion and anxieties over securitisation and criminalisation (Belger, 2017).

‘Nichtwissen’, or not knowing, is not only a description of the absence of knowledge and information in legislating for CR, it is a structural condition for operationalising it (Rappert, 2012). That most practitioners conclude that what they

already know about keeping children safe, they no longer know when it comes to CR risk-work, is just one of the many troubling manifestations of this central problem in PREVENT.

## 8.2 Making and Moulding the CR Risk Reality

Studying the unfolding of this risk reality in ‘real time’ contributes significantly to our understanding of how CR is given meaning through operationalisation by practitioners in strategic and frontline practice with children. The nature of CR is not made known in legislation and policy nor, as is evident in the accounts of practitioners, is it known in practice. Responsibilising practitioners to act on no knowledge, or non-knowledge, where it is enacted, contributes to the creation of faulty bodies of facts or ‘evidence’. The praxiological ‘risk-work’ (Cicourel, 1968; Horlick-Jones, 2005), the cumulative and iterative interactions between practitioner experiences of policy and legislation and interpretations into practice, is where the ‘evidence’ of the ‘risk reality’ of CR is produced. The figures of referrals of suspicion become ‘cases’ which can be utilised to prove the extent of the danger CR poses in this ‘risk performance’ (De Goede and Simon, 2012; Mythen, 2015). The higher the number of referrals of suspicion, the bigger the risk CR is perceived to be, and this justifies the mandate to refer more children to safeguard them from this ‘big’ risk. The axiom seems to be ‘if we can count it, it becomes real’ (Bowker and Star, 1999; Cicourel, 1968; Dequen, 2013; Hacking, 1991; 1999; Jayyusi, 1980; Kitsuse and Cicourel, 1963; Rappert, 2012; Shore and Wright, 2015; Spiegelhalter, 2017).

The risk-work practices which generate ‘pre-crime safeguarding’ referrals for children are only now beginning to receive serious scholarly attention (Boora, 2015;

Stanley and Guru, 2015; Stanley, Guru and Coppock, 2017; Stanley, Guru and Gupta, 2018). This study contributes to this emergent field of understanding. The most recent official reports indicate PREVENT/CHANNEL referrals of children are disproportionately related to suspicions of 'Islamist' extremism and disproportionately ultimately unfounded (HM Government, 2017; 2018b). By providing an insight into how a group of practitioners in one geographical area grappled with poorly assembled legislation that mandates action on an unknown problem, to develop a specific and often problematic 'professional vision' for CR and risk-work practice, we can see how this risk reality can come about.

### *The Frankenstein's Monster of CR Praxis*

The assertion that there is a problem whose characteristics are unknown, paradoxically helps reinforce CR's 'normal character' (Sudnow, 1965) in practitioner understandings as an omni-present risk and danger of future terrorism.

Pre-criminality is an uncertainty. CR is therefore something that can only be approached as an unknown; existing only in the imagination of practitioners (Beck, 2003; Lash, 2003). PREVENT therefore has the ability to create its own, often racialised and gendered, realities of CR. As has occurred in recent times, specifically for Irish communities (Hillyard, 1993), and continues in the present day for Black and minority ethnic people, identity-based stereotypes are established in the suspect communities of UK crime and security policies and invariably permeate and persist through frontline practice (Allen, 2017; Awan, 2012; Breen-Smyth, 2014; Cherney and Murphy, 2016; Eddo-Lodge, 2017; Gilroy, 1987; Hall et al, 1978; Hillyard, 1993; Kundnani, 2009; Lennon, 2015; Macpherson, 1999; Miles, 1989; Williams, 2015). In a time of media-led mistrust and 'moral panic' (Cohen, 1972; 2011; Hall et al, 1978)

around children and Muslims in particular, CR within PREVENT has galvanised ‘imagined risk’ and suspicion on a grand scale. ‘Islamist’ radicalisation was the primary form of CR that practitioners claimed to marginally understand, through WRAP and the media, and therefore it was likely to be the only one they would be alert to (Agans and Schaffer, 2010; Finucane et al, 2000; 2000a; Keren and Tiegen, 2004; Kasperperson et al, 1988; Slovic and Peters, 2006; Slovic et al, 2004; Tulloch and Zinn, 2011; Tversky and Kahneman, 1974). As Hall et al explained in their work on the racialised moral panic over street muggings in the 1980’s, “Labels are important, especially when applied to dramatic public events...they assign events to a context. Thereafter the use of the label is likely to mobilise this whole referential context, with all its associated meanings and connotations” (Hall et al, 1978: 23). Thus, irrespective of the ‘widening’ of the definitions of terrorism and extremism, or the addition of a right-wing extremist group to WRAP or the proscribed organisations list<sup>89</sup>, it is clear in practitioner’s explanations of what CR looked like, that practitioners would look for the risk they were being told to see. The ‘imagined truths’ about children, especially those who are Muslim, dangerously translated into the ‘real policies’ (Sen, 2006: 105) of PREVENT, are shown in this study to be in many ways problematically, and often unintentionally, corroborated through practice.

Beck argued that the risk society challenges the role and knowledges of experts in a way that empowers people (Beck, 2007), suggesting that in a setting such as contemporary Liverpool discriminatory perceptions of risk could be undermined. However, challenging the legislative ‘expert’ risk knowledge of CR, was not easy for practitioners, nor without consequence. The statutory responsibility to act on CR being integrated into practitioners ‘conditions of work’ – the legal duties, regulatory

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<sup>89</sup> National Action and its alias organisations (Scottish Dawn and NS131) were proscribed by the Home Office in 2016 and 2017 (HM Government, 2017a)

frameworks, funding and commissioning agreements for their organisations – created a situation where even attempting to challenge the CR knowledge was revealed as a ‘high-risk’ strategy. Working without adequate understanding or directions for implementation of the Duty, and in circumstances of financial austerity and rising precariousness of employment, practitioners articulated their struggle to understand the seemingly impossible task of predicting and averting future terrorism by leveraging various incongruous knowledges to try to make sense of it and be ‘legally compliant’. Thus, to a great extent, they acquiesced in the dispensation of their role. The tortured reasoning of ‘I know nothing about CR and see no evidence of it locally, but I assume it must be a problem, given I’ve been directed to find it’ (Shafir and Tversky, 1992), grounds a peculiar Frankenstein-like assemblage of ‘professional vision’ in practitioners (Goodwin, 1994).

The Government coupling of ‘pre-crime’ to safeguarding in this police-led risk-work process, contradicted practitioners established understanding of safeguarding children risk-work and caused confusion for practice. The desperate attempts by practitioners to develop ‘objects of knowledge’ for CR risk-work that reflected their existing safeguarding principles and understanding, were often undone by the conceptual mismatch of safeguarding notions, such as grooming, with the realities of the CR pre-crime risk-work process. Therefore, it is concluded that this union of ‘pre-criminal safeguarding’ has not been deployed to assist operationalisation. Framing CR in this way led practitioners to simultaneously challenge but ultimately defer to CR risk ‘experts’ and expert knowledge, often by devaluing their own existing knowledges and expertise for risk and anti-discriminatory practice. Practitioners were thus required to draw upon knowingly problematical concepts and sources of information, which for some convinced them to make

decisions they would not have ordinarily made (Herbig and Glöckner, 2009), namely, referring a child in need of welfare support into a police-led process.

The features of the CR risk-work process are a direct consequence of how CR has been legislatively made. The symbiotic relationship between acting without knowledge of a risk, with the purpose of creating knowledge of evidence of that risk, is compounded at every stage of the process of making a referral to the now statutory CHANNEL Panel. The Panel's role is to act as an 'ad hoc decision-making institution' (Beck, Bonss and Lau, 2003: 21), the adjudicator of these 'nichtwissen' actions and decisions made by frontline practitioners.

Yet, practitioners did not know what Panels do or who sits on them. The decisions of the Panel are guided by the VAF, but this was recognised by practitioners as a likely tool for confirmation bias (Keren and Tieggen, 2004; Nickerson, 1998). Indeed, practitioners, without knowing anything, could see that the ERG22+<sup>90</sup>, from which the VAF is derived, posed significant challenges to safeguarding risk-work decisions for children. The Panel, nor the police officers who convened it, did not give feedback on the CR referrals made and therefore practitioners could not judge if their actions were correct (Dekker, 2007). This situation cumulatively demonstrates that not only do Panels operate in a state of 'nichtwissen' in relation to CR, they also play a vital role in 'risk reification' (Stanley and Guru, 2015: 256) which validates the risk status for an issue no-one knows anything about. The life of the Frankenstein's Monster of CR is thus sustained through mandating actions for compliance which thereby assemble its own evidence of need. Or, put differently, PREVENT manufactures the 'official statistics' of the risk reality of CR to retrospectively justify

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<sup>90</sup> Earlier discussed as premised on problematic positivist research with adult 'terrorist' actors which approach radicalisation from a position that pathologises Islamic identity as inherently violent and separatist.

its existence. On multiple levels, consequently, it is ‘policy-based evidence making’ (Mythen, Walklate and Peatfield, 2017: 196) and practitioners have become ensnared within it. Despite this ensnarement, however, practitioner stories provide glimpses of the various modes of resistance to attempt to minimise and reduce what they described as the potentially harmful features of CR risk-work; criminalisation, surveillance and racial-profiling.

### 8.3 Disobedience to Improve Flawed Policy

The risk-work process of PREVENT/CHANNEL represents an evolution of the criminal justice tradition of responding to ‘moral panics’ by institutionalising suspicion of children, especially those who are viewed as ‘others’ (Said, 1978). Unlike the outright criminalising legislative enactment of 1980’s ‘sus laws’<sup>91</sup>, suspicion in its contemporary form is now wrapped in the velvet glove of ‘safeguarding’ as a form of ‘soft-policing’ certain groups of people (Allen, 2017; Dafnos, 2014a; Jamieson, 2012; Marx, 1998; Ragazzi, 2016). The forthcoming legislative changes<sup>92</sup> to PREVENT, which name the LA in place of police as the body which will agree the progress of future referrals to the PREVENT/CHANNEL Panel (Counter Terrorism and Border Security Bill, 2018: 21), partially address and confirm this reality. Even though

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<sup>91</sup> Section 4 of the Vagrancy Act, 1824 was the legal basis given for excessive stop and search of young males in black communities in the 1970’s and 1980’s (Hall et al, 1978). However, as Hall et al argue in the later edition of ‘Policing the Crisis’ (2013) the subsequent Police and Criminal Evidence Act, 1984, with the undefined term of ‘reasonable grounds’, combines with the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1989 and Terrorism Act 2000 to continue arbitrary and disproportionate stops and searches of people from BME communities.

<sup>92</sup> Changes outlined in the Counter Terrorism and Border Security Bill, 2017-19 also reflect the new safeguarding arrangements to replace Safeguarding Children Boards brought in under the Children and Social Work Act, 2017

radicalisation is not a crime<sup>93</sup>, the criminogenic understanding and theories of radicalisation as ‘pre-crime’ at the time of inquiry and within the current context nonetheless still dominates policy, law and the CR risk-work process and guidance. It is this misalignment of addressing children’s welfare through a crime prediction process which was at the root of practitioner anxieties for operationalising the PREVENT Duty.

Practitioners in this study wanted to operationalise keeping children safe under PREVENT and comply with the Duty. Many accepted that CR could harm children and as such they agreed they should act to safeguard children if an issue arose, but practitioners simultaneously explained that they did not want to operationalise the problematic aspects in the given processes to do so. Not fully understanding what they were legally being asked to do or how they were meant to do it, created apprehension about doing things in the ‘wrong way’ or invoking intrusive and criminalising police and LA actions and inquiries into children’s lives. Within this setting, even practitioners experienced at working with children to keep them safe perversely felt de-skilled and incapable of judgement and decision making on CR.

Accounts given over the period of the research show some well-intentioned welfare practitioners in a setting they self-defined as the securitised apparatus of State surveillance, had gradually been co-opted as PREVENT ‘risk experts’. This points to the insidious character of narratives of risk, particularly in child welfare. They can influence the practice of people who are ideologically opposed to the position taken by the State to nevertheless conform and ‘follow the rules’ in their role as pseudo risk

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<sup>93</sup> At the time of writing, even though there is still no criminal law to define a threshold of evidence or a set of characteristics for radicalisation, elements of CR currently presented as ‘vulnerability factors’ were proposed to become crimes. For example, repeatedly viewing online terrorist content will be criminalised through an amendment to Section 58 of the Terrorism Act 2000.

‘administrators’ (Allport, 1954; Hacking, 1988; 1991; Heath-Kelly, 2017a; Scott, 1985; 1995; Shehadeh, 2015). The interaction of austerity and a legal requirement which compels compliance, is shown to shape the operating context for CR by increasingly restricting the opportunity or motivation for practitioners to resist (McGovern, 2016). Nevertheless, practitioner stories show how they still attempt, at times consciously but mostly unconsciously, to counteract the risk knowledge of CR in general and the specifically problematical rules and features of the CR risk-work process of PREVENT/CHANNEL.

The varying grades of agency that practitioners exerted, or believed they could exert, in operationalising PREVENT were highlighted by alternate practices of ‘rule-following’ and ‘rule-bending’, or modification, at different stages or in different parts of the decision-making hierarchy for this controversial policy (Hill and Varone, 2012; Lipsky, 1980; Mair and Watson, 2008; Weber and Parsons, 1964). In particular, the blurred lines, overlaps, conflicting directions and high levels of discretionary decision-making within the multi-layered risk-work processes for CR and mainstream safeguarding, provided unanticipated opportunities for some practitioners in frontline and strategic practice to modify and make sense of CR in ways which reconciled with their professional principles. These small acts of resistance, in the face of extensive legislative and State power (Scott, 1985), motivated by a desire to ameliorate the highly likely negative impacts of policy implementation on children, are the only ‘weapons’ available to most practitioners. Modifying this controversial policy by effectively creating policy through frontline practice, as stated by Hill and Varone “may be seen as ‘disobedience’ at the street level, [but] from another they can be regarded as the improvement of a flawed policy” (Hill and Varone, 2012: 255).

However, well-intentioned modifications were also shown to often inadvertently reify age-specific, racialised and gendered conceptualisations of risk.

### *Unfinished Resistance to Racialised Risk*

As the previous chapters have shown, under PREVENT diametric perceptions of children as wholly vulnerable or perpetually dangerous and risky, combined with a racialised understanding of extremism, reduced children's multiple identities to a singular one. They were viewed through the binary lens of being a victim or a perpetrator, usually on the basis of race, religion or gender. These 'singular identity' narratives claimed to be used by 'radicalisers' to make children gravitate towards extremism, are shown to be replicated here through analysis of policy and praxis. This reproduction creates the possibility of a 'solitarist illusion' (Sen, 2006: 82); an environment which exploits or creates feelings of alienation and fear, not only potentially for children (Hoque, 2015; Mythen, Walklate and Khan, 2009) but also, as observed in this study, in the people responsibilised to enact CR. Duplicating single identity narratives, for example explicitly through the concept practitioners regularly challenged of 'Fundamental British Values', is very unlikely to undermine, counteract or resist 'extremist' ideologies of the same nature.

Accordingly, many practitioners revealed concerns that PREVENT was counter-intuitive; stating it had more potential to fuel racial and religious violence and divisions rather than reduce them. PREVENT, in other words, is a racialised policy which has the potential, unchecked, to create racialised practice:

“Of what a strange nature is knowledge! It clings to a mind when it has once seized on it like a lichen on a rock.”

(Shelley, 1818: 93)

Despite practitioner’s consciousness of racialised risk, the interaction of the PREVENT Duty, the required promotion of ‘Fundamental British Values’ and the correlation of ‘harmful cultural practices’ with extremism, was shown to still prejudice or ‘cling’ to practitioner’s ‘risk perception’ in their professional vision for CR. This assemblage of racialised policies under the umbrella understanding of PREVENT resulted in practice that only certain groups were seen as needing to be safeguarded within this process<sup>94</sup>. The PREVENT/CHANNEL case summary is a clear example of how counting children ‘in’ was a practitioner judgement intersectionally racialised and gendered; the White female Muslim child was vulnerable and the Asian Muslim boy dangerous, but both were deemed in need of control (Crenshaw, 1989; Hill Collins, 1990; McGinty, 2015).

The ‘professional vision’ for CR was shown to be further impaired by PREVENT’s convoluted recalibration of what practitioners state to be children’s ‘everyday’ lived experiences of racial, religious and gendered forms of discrimination and abuse, into the indicators of children being ‘risky’ to others. Settles et al trace this phenomenon to what they call the collective practices of ‘(in)visibility’, wherein minorities are constantly scrutinised but their experiences are not recognised, and their needs are not addressed (Settles et al, 2018). In this context, those children who experience everyday ‘hate crime’ are made invisible for support but are spotlighted for

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<sup>94</sup> In this sense, again, it replicates the current Conservative Government agenda for a ‘hostile environment’ for ‘illegal migrants’.

control. PREVENT as a 'colour blind' policy (Alexander, 2010) targets all forms of vaguely defined 'extremism' yet erases the known forms of everyday hate, especially racism and Islamophobia, from its definition in practice. The consequence was shown to be two-fold 'double vision'. Muslims and BME people were hyper-visible in the imagined indicators or 'objects of knowledge' for CR. Contemporaneously, White children exposed to or involved in hate crimes were obscured from practitioners' field of vision for who was at risk of CR.

A few practitioners displayed an explicit awareness of this exclusion. Their attempt to improve the policy was by counting every child 'into' their vision for CR. However, no-one went as far as to explicitly count every child 'out'. Most instead made smaller adjustments or engaged in minor acts of resistance regarding who gets 'counted in' and which process they get counted into, by creating their own thresholds for action and inter-organisationally referring on. The capricious impact of (in)visibilisation nevertheless endured as a characteristic of these work-arounds. In this way, practitioners are observed to not fully exercise their agency for complete resistance.

### *Reducing the harm of PREVENT/CHANNEL*

Practitioners strongly articulate the problems caused by the conflation of criminal justice and welfare processes and procedures for children in the process of PREVENT/CHANNEL. Frontline practitioners are unhappy about referrals being made based on suspicion and without permission, consent or knowledge of children and families. This negatively impacts upon practitioner confidence and feelings of safety and trust between practitioners, children and their families.

Practitioners worry that information will be kept, irrespective of whether CR is proven, which unfairly labels a child for unknown lengths of time and will be shared with unknown parties for unknown purposes. Secrecy and safeguarding children are claimed uneasy partners. Secrecy is a facilitator of the continuation of abuse, specifically in children's experiences of sexual and physical abuse. The power offenders often exert over children by forcing them to acquiesce to secrecy is outlined by practitioners as a challenge for safeguarding, and yet this 'safeguarding' process is understood to encourage covert practice.

For those practitioners who contest the need for a PREVENT/CHANNEL referral process to exist, they do so on the basis that organisations identifying vulnerabilities for all children and working directly with children to reduce them, as per the pre-existing safeguarding legislation, should be enough. The PREVENT/CHANNEL process is shown to problematically circumvent the established legal evidential thresholds for social services involvement in a child's life, with the potential for civil punishment to be enforced on the basis of suspicion (Bolton, 2015; CAFCASS, 2016; Qureshi, 2016; 2018). This is illustrative of Lipsky's assertion that accountability is impossible when such a high level of discretion is exercised at 'street-level' (Hill and Varone, 2012; Lipsky, 1980).

The absence of thresholds for action at this time are, however, shown to provide the biggest opportunity for practitioners to use this discretion to 'narrow the net' for CR. In other words, to increase the thresholds of referrals in order to reduce the criminalising and stigmatising impact of PREVENT/CHANNEL on children, albeit often in ways which indirectly reinforces racialised policy. Guidance for CR risk assessment in education settings has now, two years after the Duty was enacted, been given to educators and parents by Government (HM Government, 2017b). It provides

them with a list of behaviours ‘to spot’ with thresholds for escalating areas of concern – ‘insignificant’, ‘troublesome’, ‘worrisome’ and ‘alarming’ activities. When the latter two stages are reached, a concern should be escalated. The guidance instructs readers ‘not to think of vulnerabilities in terms of a tick-box approach’, but in the absence of any knowledge or support beyond what is written, as outlined by the practitioners in this study, it is very likely they will be. This, in turn, may now be giving rise to another set of dilemmas.

This thesis has shown PREVENT to be a flawed and dubious policy but seeing that required engagement with practice. In opening this up, this study has done something distinctive and represents a foundation on which future research can securely build.

## 9. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This study was time-bound and geographically-specific. As such, there are limits to the generalisations that can be drawn from it. In identifying the gaps within this study that can be used to help inform future research directions, this section continues the collaborative approach taken to the inquiry by giving voice to the practitioners' recommendations based on their professional expertise in welfare, education, youth and community work. Practitioners' perspectives are presented in relation to two aspects of this study.

Firstly, in relation to children's experiences of PREVENT. Government has recently announced an independent review of PREVENT (HM Government, 2019). In the context of continuous agenda changes from Government, recommendations are made for future inquiries to build on the insights provided by this study into the impact of policy and legislative changes and address the gap in empirical information on the experience of children.

Secondly, in relation to the praxis of preventing harm to children. Practitioners proffered their opinions on alternative approaches to keeping children safe and preventing violence. These are reflected in recommendations for future research.

### 9.1 Children's Experiences of PREVENT

PREVENT is a statutory duty which significantly impacts on the lives and rights of children in England and Wales, yet their experiences are largely absent. Their views are not represented in any policy or legislative guidance, nor current research. This study has highlighted the impact of this policy and legislation on a group of practitioners who work with children in one geographical location but gaining insight into the experiences of children themselves was beyond the scope of such a study.

Concerns about PREVENT/CHANNEL as a criminalising and stigmatising process, could be further explored through research which captures the lived experiences of children and their families who have been referred into this process (Hickman et al, 2012).

Information is just emerging on the potential effects on Muslim children and families (Qureshi, 2018), but research has yet to empirically establish how the contemporary policy and legislative approach to CR impacts on the numerous intersections of nationality, race, religion, class, gender, disability and age within the processes and procedures for its operationalisation. Data protection and the infringement of children's rights are significant concerns in the generation of a PREVENT/CHANNEL referral. Several children's rights and human rights organisations have raised this issue (Achiume, 2018; Birt, 2016; Bolloten, 2015; Kundnani and Hayes, 2018; Liberty, 2017) but as increasing numbers of children are processed, this may present a growing area for socio-legal research. This research could also incorporate or be complemented by the following aspects.

#### 9.1.1 Geographies of PREVENT Praxis

This study has also shown that different localised interpretations of a national strategy can lead to significant variations in approach and implementation. Liverpool is a PREVENT Priority 2 Area, but a similar study in an area with no priority status and therefore no additional resource, may give a different insight into how this national policy translates into practice. Given that austerity is an integral feature of practitioners 'conditions of work' for CR, further research is needed to explore how the 'professional vision' for CR is influenced by the economic, social, political and historical settings and demographic context within which practitioners are situated. It

would also potentially reveal the extent of the strain which has been placed upon public bodies, for example social services, in having to deal with cases that are based on suspicion rather than evidence. Comparing how CR is interpreted and operationalised in these ways in different locations is an area for further research and exploration.

### 9.1.2 Pre-Criminal Safeguarding: Forthcoming Changes to Law and Policy

Concerns about how children are criminalised instead of supported in CR risk-work are exacerbated by the responsibilisation of practitioners to enable this under mandatory referral legislation. Regulatory changes, existing and forthcoming, which mandate or are perceived to mandate the identification of ‘pre-criminal’ risk in welfare settings, such as ‘grooming’ for the ‘trafficking’ or exploitation of children in future sexual, drug or gang-related crimes<sup>95</sup> (National Crime Agency, 2016; 2019), is an area for future exploration to identify the similarities and differences in operationalisation experiences and practical outcomes.

The new changes to safeguarding legislation (Children and Social Work Act, 2017) and the forthcoming changes to PREVENT (Section 19, Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Bill 2017-19) do not appear to offer much to allay the concerns practitioners expressed with regard to children, without evidence of significant risk or harm, having contact with police at such an early stage of safeguarding risk-work. LA’s are intended to replace the police in the role of deciding which referrals progress to PREVENT/CHANNEL but following the disbanding of LSCB’s in the new legislation, LA’s are also allowed, in theory, to choose only to work with police in

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<sup>95</sup> National Crime Agency manage the National Referral Mechanism - a tool for reporting suspicions of human trafficking established by the Modern Slavery Act, 2015 (MSA15)- and the ‘County Lines’ Strategy. The latter is the new agenda for Government providing guidance for utilising MSA15 for prosecutions of those who ‘trafficked’, ‘groomed’ or ‘exploited’ children to undertake crime on their behalf.

safeguarding situations. These arrangements require further exploration in relation to how they are interpreted in different locations and budgetary settings, the qualitative impact on the risk-work processes for CR and the quality of decisions made. This move is posited as an improvement for local multi-agency safeguarding (Wood, 2016), but also signals an increasing expectation of police involvement in safeguarding as part of LA dispensation of regulatory duties. In other words, a further expansion of criminal justice into welfare processes.

### 9.1.3 PREVENT and ‘Implicit Bias’

How legislation and policy is assembled directly correlates to how practitioners know who and what to see as at risk of CR in practice. Practitioners ‘professional vision’ for CR is shown to demonstrate the ‘ubiquity of bias’ particularly by invisibilising women and minorities through exclusion of the acknowledged highly prevalent risks facing children of DV and hate crimes; racial, Islamophobic and homophobic crimes in particular.

The depictions of racialised understandings of risk in this study signals the role within practical interpretations of policy, processes and procedures of the acknowledged psychological theories of unconscious or ‘implicit bias’ which this study was not equipped to explore more thoroughly (Amodio and Devine, 2006; Cameron, Payne and Knobe, 2010; Devine, 2001; Dovidio et al, 1997; Fazio and Dunton, 1997; Geisinger, 2007; Gendler, 2011; Gilliam et al, 2016; Greenwald and Banaji, 1995; Greenwald and Krieger, 2006; Greenwald, McGhee and Schwartz, 1998; Greenwald et al, 2009; Hall et al, 2015; Nickerson, 1998; Payne, Vuletich and Lundberg, 2017; Smith and Alpert, 2007; Swanson, Rudman and Greenwald, 2001; Van Eijk, 2017; Weyman and Barnett, 2016).

Investigating CR referrals to identify which agencies are referring which children and on what basis, would give insight into potential ‘implicit bias’ and the influence this has over ‘seeing risk’. Schools have consistently been the second largest referring organisation to PREVENT/CHANNEL after police (HM Government, 2018b). Recent data also indicates that a record level of children are being excluded from school for racial bullying<sup>96</sup>. Research which examines how educational practitioners make judgements and discernments between the processes for CR and bullying, will uncover if, as this study indicates, on the basis of identity different children are being afforded different opportunities to avoid the CR label.

## 9.2. Changing Praxis in Preventing Harm to Children

Practitioners, concerned by the increasing focus of safeguarding risk-work as a tool for crime prediction, offered alternative approaches to preventing harm to children. The two options of incremental changes working within the existing system of safeguarding, and a more radical rethinking of work to prevent violence are explicated in the following recommendations for future inquiry.

### 9.2.1 Safeguarding - Shifting from A Deficit Model

Stanley and Guru’s findings in their research on PREVENT and social work, posit that ‘risk thinking’ is characterised by a deficit model approach to risk identification, rather than one which is strengths-based (Stanley, 2018; Stanley and Guru, 2015: 356, Stanley, Guru and Gupta, 2018). This reflects the position of practitioners who

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<sup>96</sup> The requirement to record racial bullying, established by the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report (McPherson, 1999) was overturned in 2015 by the then Conservative/Liberal Democrat Government. As such, there are no longer figures of how many incidents are occurring in schools, just how many exclusions are based on racial bullying. In 2017 there were a reported 4590 school exclusions on the grounds of racial abuse (Marsh and Mohdin, 2018).

explicitly identified the need for protective factors to be incorporated into risk assessments of CR. Strengths based assessments and the associated contested concept of ‘resilience’, present in emerging mainstream safeguarding practices and tools such as ‘Early Help Assessment’, have not formed a substantive part of this study. It is an area that would benefit from further research.

### 9.2.2 Violence Prevention – A Public Health Alternative

Violence was a primary characteristic of practitioners’ perceptions of CR risk in this study. It was also the ‘normal’ feature of the everyday safeguarding risk-work recounted as dominating work with children; domestic violence, physical abuse, bullying, guns and knife crime. The concept of a violence prevention framework (Bellis et al, 2012; Woods et al, 2010) to address all of these harms often arose in discussions on better ways of working.

In the UK, the first Youth Violence Commission, a cross-party parliamentary group established in 2017 working with the University of Warwick Policy Lab, published a report which recommends reducing violence through public health strategies (HM Government, 2018; 2018a; Wood et al, 2010; World Health Organisation, 2014; Youth Violence Commission, 2018). Extremism and terrorism are not currently included, but as CR is articulated by Government as a safeguarding issue with the prevention of ‘terrorist’ violence at its core, the opportunity for its expansion is implied<sup>97</sup>.

A public health model (Bellis et al, 2012; Bhui and Jones, 2017; Bhui et al, 2012) which supports children to avoid involvement in all forms of violence, including

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<sup>97</sup> A Calgary project to stop youth from being radicalised for violence by criminal or terrorist groups identifies that vulnerabilities to violence can lead children into a range of violent criminal actions, including those which are terror-related (Graveland, 2017)

those which are ideologically driven (racial, religious, homophobic and gender-based) could hold potential for a more appropriate response to children that averts a stigmatising and criminalising ‘pre-criminal’ risk-work process (Stanley and Guru, 2015; Stanley, Guru and Gupta, 2018). Nonetheless, it would likely still mobilise problematic notions of risk and prediction; such as the novel ‘Adverse Childhood Experiences’ notion (Quigg, Wallis and Butler, 2018). How the presently embryonic violence risk and prevention models aimed at children, similar to recently devised domestic violence prevention education models for young victims and offenders (Fox, Hale and Gadd, 2014; Fox et al, 2016), are developing and experienced by children and practitioners should be closely analysed by researchers.

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## 11. APPENDICES

### Appendix A – List of Participants Organisations

Scoping Exercises	Interviews
Criminal Justice Agency/Local Authority	Criminal Justice Agency (Youth Offending)
Local Authority	Criminal Justice Agency
Local Authority (Social Work)	Criminal Justice Agency
Charity (Youth Work)	Criminal Justice Agency/Local Authority
Charity (Youth Work)	Local Authority (Social Work)
Education	Local Authority (Social Work)
	Education and Training
	Education and Training
	Education and Training
	Charity (Youth Work)
	Charity (Youth Work)
	Charity (Youth Work)
	Charity (Children and Families)
	Housing (Young People)



Appendix B – Scoping Exercise Invitation, Information Sheet and Consent  
Form

School of Law and Social Justice  
Department of Sociology, Social Policy and Criminology  
Eleanor Rathbone Building  
Bedford Street South  
Liverpool  
L69 7ZA

3rd March 2015

Dear Colleague,

**Invitation to a Practitioners Scoping Meeting**

***Identifying risk: safeguarding children and young people from radicalisation into violent extremism - Practitioners Scoping Meeting***

Tuesday 31st March 2015, 12-2pm **including lunch**

**Venue: University of Liverpool** - Seminar Room 6, Rendall Building,  
Bedford Street South, L69 7ZA

Campus Map (Grid D2): <http://www.liv.ac.uk/files/docs/maps/liverpool-university-campus-map.pdf>

I am a PhD Sociology student at the University of Liverpool, supported by the John Lennon Memorial Scholarship for students demonstrating an active interest in global, community and environmental issues.

My specific interest is in the concepts of risk and risk identification, and how they relate to safeguarding children and young people in the context of the Government PREVENT counter-terrorism strategy for preventing radicalisation. The recently enacted Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015, places a general duty to have ‘due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism’ on specified authorities, including education, local authorities, health and social care in addition to criminal justice agencies. This is referred to as ‘the Prevent Duty’.

As experts in your field, I would like to invite you to a practitioners scoping meeting to hear your views on the topic - this will be invaluable to informing my research which aims to impact upon local and national policy. My research will look at how practitioners working with children and young people work with and make sense of government policy and translate that policy into everyday practice.

I have included a Participant Information sheet for your consideration (Sheet A) and you will also be provided with a Practitioner Report following the meeting.

The meeting is for 2 hours including a short exercise on fictional case studies. Lunch and refreshments will be provided.

Please can you email or post the form (Sheet B) to confirm your attendance and consent to be involved: [leona.vaughn@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:leona.vaughn@liverpool.ac.uk) or if you would like any further information please contact me by email or phone **0151 794 9423**

If you feel that another colleague would be more suited to come along, please feel free to pass on this invitation.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation – I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

*Leona*

***Leona Vaughn***

***Postgraduate Researcher***

## **SHEET A**

### **Committee on Research Ethics**

#### **INFORMATION SHEET - Practitioners Scoping Meeting**

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#### **Identifying risk: safeguarding children and young people from radicalisation into violent extremism**

##### ***The Researcher:***

***My name is Leona Vaughn and I am a Postgraduate Researcher at the University of Liverpool.***

***You are being invited to participate in this research study. Before you decide whether to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and feel free to ask me if you would like more information or if there is anything that you do not understand.***

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##### **What is this research about?**

The recently enacted Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015, places a general duty to have ‘due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism’ on specified authorities, including education, local authorities and health and social care in addition to criminal justice agencies. This is referred to as ‘the Prevent Duty’.

This research focuses on the concepts of risk and risk identification as well as radicalisation, as applied to children and young people and the organisations involved in safeguarding them.

Using Liverpool as a case study, the research aims to explore how practitioners working with children and young people work with government policy and translate that policy into practice in the context of the Government PREVENT strategy for preventing radicalisation turning into extremism and terrorism.

The ultimate goal of this research is to gain a greater insight and develop understanding of how organisations and partnership decision making structures construct and identify risk and vulnerability among children and young people in relation to radicalisation, as well as policy relevant findings as to how those structures and processes can be improved.

##### **Why am I being asked to take part?**

This research is at the very earliest stage of design - as the experts in your field, I would like to invite you to a scoping workshop meeting of practitioners to hear your views on the topic

- this will be invaluable to inform my research. Your voice as practitioners will help to develop research that will influence local and national policy development.

### **What is involved?**

The meeting will be in a workshop style guided by a fictitious case study to gain your initial views on the subject and the challenges and issues you see yourself as facing on a practical level.

### **Is it confidential?**

Yes, this workshop will not be used to attribute any comments or experiences to any individual or organisation. You will not be asked to talk about actual past or present cases that you may have been involved in – it is for the researcher to gather an understanding of the current issues for practitioners that will shape the research from here e.g. what tools or guidance organisations are using to help them in this process, what organisations understand to be risk factors, what the process would be in an organisation if risk was identified, how organisations would work together in this context, etc.

Participants are asked to respect the confidentiality of others during and after the meeting. You do not have to answer a question if you prefer not to. You are free to stop being involved at any point.

The written record of this meeting will not attribute the issues raised to any individual or organisation. Manual notes taken will be scanned and then securely destroyed, with electronic versions kept securely for up to 5 years.

### **Do I have to be involved after this event?**

No, you do not have to. You will be sent a Practitioner Report after the event.

However, if you feel that it would be useful for you and your organisation to participate in the research in the future I would very much appreciate your expert involvement.

***If you need more information, are unhappy, or if there is a problem, please let me know and I will try to help [leona.vaughn@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:leona.vaughn@liverpool.ac.uk) or 0151 794 9423***

If you feel that you cannot raise your concern with me, you can contact my supervisor:

Professor Barry Godfrey, University of Liverpool 0151 794 3021  
[barry.godfrey@liv.ac.uk](mailto:barry.godfrey@liv.ac.uk)

If you remain unhappy or have a complaint which you feel you cannot come to us with then you should contact the Research Governance Officer at [ethics@liv.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@liv.ac.uk) with the name of the study (**Identifying risk: safeguarding children and young people from radicalisation into violent extremism**), the researcher (Leona Vaughn) and the details of the complaint you wish to make.

## SHEET B

### Committee on Research Ethics

#### **PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - Practitioners Scoping Meeting**

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##### **Research Project:**

**Identifying risk: safeguarding children and young people from radicalisation into violent extremism**

**Postgraduate Researcher: Leona Vaughn**

**Please put an 'x' in the box if you agree to the statement:**

1. I confirm that I have read and have understood the information for the above project. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. ☐
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my rights being affected. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. ☐
3. I understand and agree that what I say will be noted during the workshop, but only for writing up what has been said, not for attribution. Notes will be destroyed after this. ☐
4. I agree to take part in this stage of the above research project. ☐
5. Confidentiality: I understand that the purpose of this meeting is for the researcher to gather preliminary views on the key issues for practitioners in this field. I will respect confidentiality of others during and after the meeting. The written record of this meeting will not attribute the issues raised to any individual or organisation. ☐  
☐
6. I understand that, under the Data Protection Act, I can at any time ask for access to the information I provide and I can also request the destruction of that information if I wish. ☐

7. I understand and agree that once I submit my data (information) it will become anonymised and I will therefore no longer be able to withdraw my data.
8. I would like to receive a copy of the report/findings that result from this research project

X

I have dietary or other requirements: (please state)

Vegetarian

Participant Name	Date	Signature

<b>Principal Investigator:</b> <b>Professor Barry Godfrey</b> University of Liverpool, School of Law & Social Justice <a href="mailto:barry.godfrey@liv.ac.uk">barry.godfrey@liv.ac.uk</a>  <b>0151 794 3021</b>	<b>Postgraduate Researcher:</b> <b>Leona Vaughn</b> PhD Candidate Sociology University of Liverpool <a href="mailto:leona.vaughn@liverpool.ac.uk">leona.vaughn@liverpool.ac.uk</a>  <b>0151 794 9423</b>
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### **Information Sheet for Participants**

#### **Research Project: Identifying risk - safeguarding children from radicalisation**

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**My name is Leona Vaughn and I am a PhD Student Researcher at the University of Liverpool.**

**You are being invited to participate in this research study. Before you decide whether to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and feel free to ask me if you would like more information or if there is anything that you do not understand.**

#### **What is this research about?**

The Government Counter Extremism strategy has been to ‘Pursue’, ‘Prevent’ and ‘Protect’ the UK from terrorism.

The Prevent strategy aims to prevent radicalisation into extremism and terrorism, providing organisations with the Channel guidance for identifying vulnerable people at risk of radicalisation. The Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 places an additional statutory terrorism prevention duty on public bodies, including local authorities, teachers and social workers. However, little is known about how practitioners experience this government policy, translate the policy into practice and use their expertise to make decisions on risk in relation to children and radicalisation.

This research focus is on the processes by which Liverpool practitioners who work with children understand, work with and make sense of policy linked to the Government strategy. The aim is to gain a greater insight and understanding of how practitioners, organisations and partnership decision making structures identify risk and vulnerability for children in respect of radicalisation. Practitioner experiences and perspectives as to how the structures and processes for identifying children’s vulnerability to radicalisation can be improved will inform the research findings.

#### **Why am I being asked to take part?**

Your experience and expertise will provide valuable insight into how practitioners work with policy, practice and process challenges in this area. The feedback from practitioners in Stage 1 of this research identified that it was important to speak to practitioners who regularly work with children and risk; both from organisations who have experience of identifying radicalisation risks and those who have not.

#### **What is involved?**

**This is not a review of individual cases.**

This research is a case study and will involve in-depth interviews and observation to understand how you and your organisation are working with policy in relation to safeguarding children from radicalisation; including the impact on processes, practice, decision making, risk assessments and referral processes. A minimum of 2 face to face interviews will take place, for about one and a half hours each time. Interviews will be arranged at a time and venue convenient to you.

**Is it confidential?**

Information provided by participants and through observation is treated confidentially.

The researcher is committed to ethical research principles and abides by ethical standards of the University and the British Sociological Association.

- In the unlikely event that an interview raises concern for the welfare of the participant, the researcher has a duty of care to discuss this with the participant and the supervisor.
- Interviews will be recorded digitally. Any observation notes and/or recordings taken will be securely kept until they are destroyed following the write-up.
- Participants are free to stop being involved at any point or to decline to answer any question. Once interview data has been transcribed from audio recording and anonymised (usually within 2 weeks of interview) it is not possible for data to be withdrawn. Interview transcriptions will be shared with participants and agreed for accuracy.
- Information used from the research will be anonymised as far as possible to prevent individuals from being identified; comments or experiences will be attributed to an organisation type (e.g. charity) or role type (e.g. panel member) not an individual person or organisation. However, if you are in a unique or specialist practitioner role, it cannot be guaranteed that you will not be identifiable; therefore you may choose to be identifiable and interviewed 'on the record' - this will be discussed and agreed with you in advance.

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*If you need more information, are unhappy, or if there is a problem, please let me know and I will try to help [leona.vaughn@liv.ac.uk](mailto:leona.vaughn@liv.ac.uk)*

If you feel that you cannot raise your concern with me, you can contact my supervisor: Professor Barry Godfrey, University of Liverpool 0151 794 3021 [barry.godfrey@liv.ac.uk](mailto:barry.godfrey@liv.ac.uk)

If you remain unhappy or have a complaint which you feel you cannot come to us with then you should contact the Research Governance Officer at [ethics@liv.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@liv.ac.uk) with the name of the study (**Identifying risk: safeguarding children from radicalisation**), the researcher (**Leona Vaughn**) and the details of the complaint you wish to make.

**Committee on Research Ethics**  
**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM – Interview and/or observation**

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**Research Project: Identifying risk - safeguarding children from radicalisation**

	<b>Please 'x' the box if you agree</b>
I confirm that I have read and have understood the information for the above project. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my rights being affected. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.	
I understand and agree that what I say will be recorded or noted, and that these will be stored securely then destroyed after the research is completed.	
I understand that the researcher will treat my information as confidential and what the limits are in relation to this. I have had the opportunity to discuss and consider options of anonymity.	
I understand that, under the Data Protection Act, I can at any time ask for access to the information I provide (interview recording) and I can also request the destruction of that information if I wish.	
I understand and agree that once I submit my information it will be transcribed and anonymised (usually within 2 weeks of interview) and I will therefore no longer be able to withdraw my information. Interview transcriptions will be shared with participants and agreed for accuracy.	
I agree to take part in the above research project.	

_____	_____	_____
Participant Name	Date	Signature

_____	_____	_____
Researcher	Date	Signature

## Optional Statements

I would like to receive a copy of the findings that result from this research project.

I agree for the data collected from me to be used in relevant future research.

The information you have submitted may form part of future academic published journal articles. I would like to receive details of where this can be found.

<b>Principal Investigator: Professor Barry Godfrey</b>  University of Liverpool, School of Law & Social Justice <a href="mailto:barry.godfrey@liv.ac.uk">barry.godfrey@liv.ac.uk</a>  0151 794 3021	<b>Student Researcher: Leona Vaughn BA (Hons), PG Cert, MRes</b>  PhD Candidate Sociology University of Liverpool, School of Law & Social Justice <a href="mailto:leona.vaughn@liv.ac.uk">leona.vaughn@liv.ac.uk</a>  0151 795 8516
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## Appendix D – Vignettes (Stage 1 Scoping Exercise)

### Scenario A

#### Background

Zane is a 13 year old male.

Recently diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), but still in mainstream education.

He is underachieving in school but interested in computing.

He constantly uses social media but does not appear to have a physical friendship group.

He gets involved in sports and recreational activities but comes across as quiet and shy.

Zane noticeably has been losing weight for the past year.

Zane has recently started dressing in a militaristic style, with certain emblems that although you don't know what they signify, you have noticed some of the older youths wearing them.

#### Incident

There is a fight with another young person. Zane states it started because the other young person was verbally abusing him for not having the latest trainers.

Zane says his parents have been out of work for a long period of time. Zane blames the 'people like' the other young person for taking all the work. He feels that this young person and others like him have 'got it in for him'.

#### Incident

Zane has been withdrawing from activities he previously enjoyed.

Zane refuses to go on a residential weekend.

He is asked why, and says that he isn't allowed to stay with the group, there are too many who are not his 'own kind'. If he went he would have to 'protect himself'.

### **Incident**

In class, Zane has his phone confiscated by the teacher as he is not paying attention.

The teacher sees his Facebook status open and reads posts from Zane which are accompanied by pictures of him posing with what appears to be knives and guns.

## **Scenario B**

### **Background**

Sami is a 15 year old female.

She is a high achiever in school but wants to be famous for singing.

She is outgoing and has a large circle of friends.

Sami is in foster care and has been with her current family for 2 years - longest placement in 10 years. She has no contact with her birth family.

### **Incident**

Sami has set up a Youtube Channel to share her music.

Her foster parents come across the Channel by accident; they are concerned by the lyrics and Sami's outfits in the videos. They are also worried about the comments others are posting, particularly males.

They speak to her school and youth group - they raise concerns about her friendship groups and what they see as 'sexualised' behaviour. They think she is being led astray.

The school see her as a leader in her social group, and say that they are concerned about her influence over others. The school particularly doesn't like the 'radical' nature

of Sami's song lyrics that she regularly performs at break times. The school stop Sami from performing on the school grounds.

### **Incident**

Sami is caught truanting from school to attend a political rally in a city 150 miles away from her home. This is the first time Sami has done this.

### **Incident**

Sami has not been seen at her youth group for a couple of months.

When she returns to the group she is visibly different in her appearance - with no makeup and wearing baggy sportswear. She is unusually quiet.

Sami tells her friend that she has spent every evening and weekend in bed crying. Her friend notices marks on Sami's wrists.

Sami says that her foster parents are stopping her from living her life and they don't understand her because 'they haven't come from where I've come from'. She says she feels like there is no point to her life and she can't wait for them to 'kick her out' on her next birthday, as her friends have a plan to take care of her.


### **Scenario Questions**

1. From your perspective and experience, what factors, if any, indicate that the young people in these scenarios are 'at risk'? Why?
2. What do you think these young people may be at risk of and why?
3. At what point, if any, might you make an intervention? Why?
4. What actions might you take and why?
5. What other agencies or people might you involve? How and why?
6. What factors would facilitate your ability to make an intervention and why?
7. What factors would create barriers for your ability to make an intervention and why?

## Appendix E – FP Interview Liverpool Safeguarding Children Board and VAF

### Extracts

#### Liverpool Safeguarding Children Board (Website)



- contents
- keywords & contacts
- quick guide
- values
- local contacts
- register for updates
- search

Size: [a](#) [a](#) [a](#) [a](#)

Working Together

### Contents

1. Definition
2. Risks
3. Indicators
4. Protection and Action to be Taken
5. Issues
6. Further Information
7. Contact Numbers

**Appendix 1: Channel Referral Process – Liverpool City Council**

### 1. Definition

Radicalisation is defined as the process by which people come to support terrorism and extremism and, in some cases, to then participate in terrorist groups.

“Extremism is 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” (HM Government Prevent Strategy 2011).

Since the publication of the **Prevent Strategy**, there has been an awareness of the specific need to safeguard children, young people and families from violent extremism. There have been attempts to radicalise vulnerable children and young people to develop extreme views including views justifying political, religious, sexist or racist violence, or to steer them into a rigid and narrow ideology that is intolerant of diversity and leaves them vulnerable to future radicalisation.

Keeping children safe from these risks is a safeguarding matter and should be approached in the same way as safeguarding children from other risks. Children should be protected from messages of all violent extremism including, but not restricted to, those linked to Islamist ideology, or to Far Right / Neo Nazi / White Supremacist ideology, Irish Nationalist and Loyalist paramilitary groups, and extremist Animal Rights movements.

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On-line content in particular social media may pose a specific risk in normalising radical views and promoting content that is shocking and extreme; children can be trusting and may not necessarily appreciate bias, which can lead to being drawn into such groups and to adopt their extremist views.

Recent case evidence indicates that specific groups such as young Muslim women have been targeted for radicalisation and grooming, which has led to attempts to travel to the Middle East placing them at risk. Any information about a young person or child that raises concerns should be discussed with their parents, schools, Children's Services and the police as part of the risk assessment.

### 3. Indicators

With regard to issues that may make an individual vulnerable to radicalisation, these can include:

- **Identity Crisis** - Distance from cultural / religious heritage and uncomfortable with their place in the society around them;
- **Personal Crisis** - Family tensions; sense of isolation; adolescence; low self-esteem; disassociating from existing friendship group and becoming involved with a new and different group of friends; searching for answers to questions about identity, faith and belonging;
- **Personal Circumstances** - Migration; local community tensions; events affecting country or region of origin; alienation from UK values; having a sense of grievance that is triggered by personal experience of racism or discrimination or aspects of Government policy;
- **Unmet aspirations** - Perceptions of injustice; feeling of failure; rejection of community values;
- **Criminality** - Experiences of imprisonment; previous involvement with criminal groups.

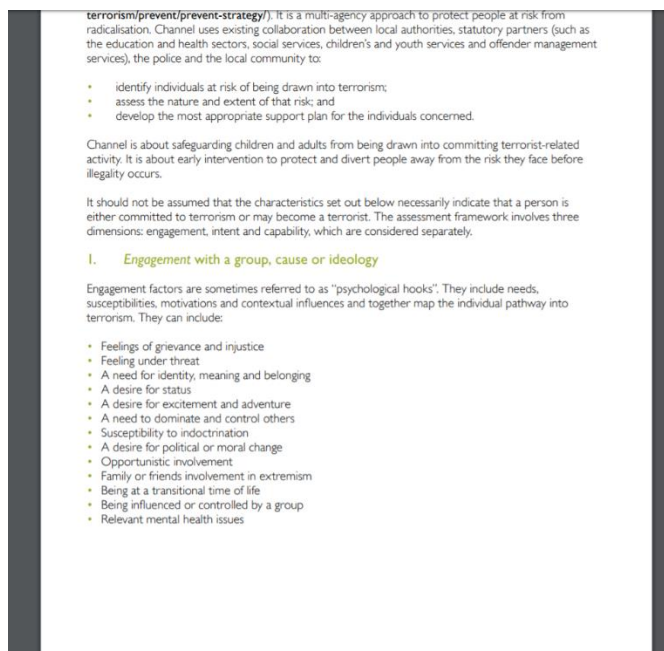
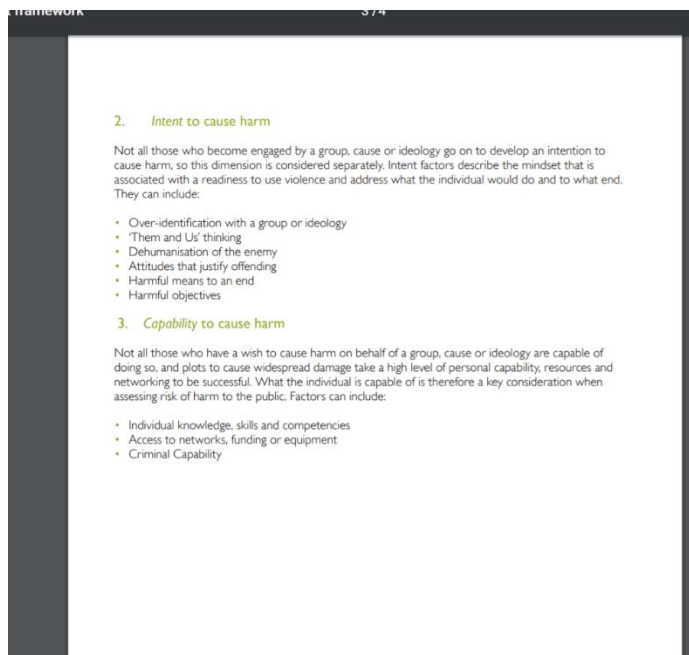
However those closest to the individual may first notice the following changes of behaviour:

- General changes of mood, patterns of behaviour, secrecy;
- Changes of friends and mode of dress;
- Use of inappropriate language;
- Possession of violent extremist literature;
- The expression of extremist views;
- Advocating violent actions and means;
- Association with known extremists;
- Seeking to recruit others to an extremist ideology.

There an obvious difference between espousing radical and extreme views and acting on them and practitioners should ensure that assessments place behaviour in the family and social context of the

young person and include information about the young person's peer group and conduct and behaviour at school. Holding radical or extreme views is not illegal, but inciting a person to commit an act in the name of any belief is in itself an offence.

## Vulnerability Assessment Framework (Channel Guidance 2012)



## Appendix F – Practitioner Perspectives Report

Practitioner Perspectives: Safeguarding children and young people from radicalisation

*Leona Vaughn, Barry Godfrey, Sara Waring & Michael Mair*

*University of Liverpool*

*April 2015*

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### **About the research**

*'To reduce the risk from terrorism, we need not only to stop terrorist attacks but also to Prevent people becoming terrorists.....Supporting vulnerable individuals requires clear frameworks including guidance on how to identify vulnerability and assess risk.'*  
*Channel Guidance (HM Government 2012: 3)*

Channel is the UK Government's multi-agency approach to protecting vulnerable people, particularly young people, deemed to be 'at risk from radicalisation' (2012:4). It is part of the Prevent (Prevention of violent extremism and terrorism) work stream within the overall UK Government Counter Terrorism strategy called CONTEST (HM Government 2011, 2012).

The recently enacted Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 places a 'Prevent Duty' on agencies in education, local authorities, health and social care, and criminal justice to have 'due regard to the need to Prevent people from being drawn into terrorism'.

S26 (1) Counter Terrorism & Security Act 2015.

This research focuses on understanding how organisations involved in safeguarding children and young people conceptualise risk, risk identification and radicalisation. Using Liverpool as a case study, a city identified as a Prevent priority area in 2012, the long term aim of the research is to explore how practitioners working with children and young people work with government policy and translate that policy into practice for identifying and assessing the risks of radicalisation. The research will provide greater insight into understanding how organisations and partnership decision making structures define and identify risk and vulnerability among children and young people in relation to radicalisation, as well as policy relevant findings on how the associated structures and processes can be improved.

## **Executive Summary**

On the 31st March 2015, four practitioners from the local authority, social work, criminal justice and charity sectors attended a scoping meeting at the University of Liverpool. The purpose of the meeting was to gain practitioner insights into the key challenges and issues they face in making sense of government policy relating to the

Prevention of radicalisation and the translation of that policy into everyday practice when working with children and young people.

In summary the key challenges and issues were:

- Differing definitions of risk and risk assessment frameworks used within and across organisations
- Practitioner subjectivity in identification and assessment of risk
- Practitioner capability, support and training
- Practitioner and organisational understanding of the impact of the ‘Prevent Duty’
- ‘Filter down’ approach of policy to practice
- The conflict of risk versus need in allocation or provision of services/resources
- Inter-agency and multiagency challenges and opportunities in gaining information and supporting young people
- Practitioner concerns about perception of action or intervention, and consequences for children and young people

Overall, practitioners placed the risk of radicalisation firmly in the arena of safeguarding. However, while organisations and practitioners were felt to be strong on safeguarding policy and culture, there was a ‘fear factor’ when it came to discussing and addressing risk of radicalisation that could only be overcome by sharing information, practice and training.

## **Method**

This report is based on reflections generated during a practitioner scoping meeting in relation to the topic of risk identification and radicalisation.

Thirty practitioners identified as experts in their field working with children and young people were invited to attend the meeting at the University of Liverpool on 31st March 2015. Invitations were sent to expert practitioners from a range of sectors including social work services, secondary schools, universities, voluntary, community and faith sectors, local authority, and a small number of criminal justice agency practitioners working with young people. Four practitioners attended the meeting, with representation from the local authority, social work, criminal justice and charity sectors.

The meeting format was a combination of open and structured discussion on questions focused around two vignettes that presented scenarios involving children and young people at risk of becoming radicalised. These vignettes were developed based on the common ‘drivers’ and ‘risk factors’ to look for when identifying risks and Preventing radicalisation, as identified in central government documents, guidance and policies.

Practitioners engaged in detailed discussions on a number of issues relevant to identifying and managing risk in relation to the radicalisation of children which will be of vital importance for shaping the next stage of research activity. These discussions have been summarised in terms of the following themes:

- Challenging and identifying and assessing risk (capability; defining risk; risk assessment thresholds; gaining information; and leading on action and intervention)
- Organisational process challenges to identifying and assessing risk (policy; resources; and inter-agency and multi-agency working)
- Practitioner strengths in identifying and assessing risk (safeguarding culture and practice; child-centred practice; and objectivity)

- Organisational process strengths in identifying and assessing risk (safeguarding policies and culture; and established local infrastructure)

### **Practitioner Prior knowledge**

The majority of practitioners had received some awareness training on Prevent from the Local Authority or Police, but had not received training since the Duty was enacted. The Social Work practitioner was from Liverpool but currently working outside of the city in a non-Prevent priority area. They were keen for further opportunity for discussion and additional information.

Practitioners who had a specialist or lead role on radicalisation felt that they had a good level of understanding and knowledge about risk identification. However, the practitioners who also had front-line service delivery roles with children and young people, but no specific role on radicalisation, felt that not enough detail had filtered down from ‘top-level policy’ to give them guidance about their role and responsibilities:

*“I don’t know much. It’s not really filtered down from top level policy; I’ve never had any training.”*

#### *Social Work*

*“I probably don’t know enough, we had some awareness training a while ago. We could do with a refresher”.*

#### *Charity*

*“I know the city became a Prevent priority area after the police submitted a paper to the Home Office in 2012... But there is now a legal responsibility on all local authorities to engage in Prevent.”*

#### *Criminal Justice*

*“Part of my role is working on Prevent in addition to my other work”.*

*Local Authority*

## **Key Issues**

### **1. Practitioner challenges to identifying and assessing risk**

#### **a) Capability**

On several occasions, practitioners raised the issue of staff capability for risk identification and assessment; the levels of understanding, the need to acknowledge personal prejudice and gain access to training:

*“I have a real fear about labelling. And also I have a fear about the person who is making that judgement in terms of their background; what their ideas of what is radicalisation and radical thinking.”*

*Charity*

*“It depends on the value base doesn’t it of the person making the decisions about what is or isn’t radical. I’d like to think professionals wouldn’t agree with some of the views but it is possible”*

*Social work*

Practitioners noted that many of their colleagues would not know where to go for advice on assessing or identifying risk. They felt that there was a lack of knowledge regarding how to discuss cases anonymously, and that this may inhibit practitioners from involving other agencies for fear of labelling a child. Similar concerns were raised in relation to gaining access to practitioner support and information on how to prevent risks of radicalisation.

#### **b) Defining risk**

All practitioners acknowledged that risk is a subjective notion, with the issues brought to the fore in the vignettes regularly interpreted in a number of different ways. For practitioners from the criminal justice and local authority sectors, assessments of risk were informed by the risk factors or drivers identified within the guidance provided in the Channel framework and Prevent strategy. In social work practitioner practice for assessing risk was informed by the concept of harm as described within the Children's Act 1989. Within charities practitioner practice appeared to apply more holistic concepts of risks to questions of child safety, welfare and emotional well-being. However, when it came to identifying risks all of the practitioners talked about contextual factors, such as the individual young persons' vulnerability, their personal/family/social circumstances and their trajectory, acknowledging how far individuals lives may diverge from perceived norms:

*"This is the stage of identity development for young people"*

*Local authority*

*"You need to find your place in life, but it can be a good and a bad thing to be so open to influence"*

*Charity*

*"I've come across situations where kids have travelled abroad to countries where hunting or having weapons is the norm, they pose for a photo, post it online when they come back here and then it raises alarm bells"*

*Criminal justice*

*"This could be an issue of their ethnicity – is this a Black child living in a predominantly White area, who feels that he does not fit in and may experience being targeted? I'd want to know more about the child's experiences and background."*

## *Social Work*

All practitioners agreed that within the vignettes, the risk was actually the young person's vulnerability to negative influence; they felt they could be at risk/vulnerable to many things and that it was ultimately the practitioner's role to address the young person's safety.

Adult roles in relation to presentation of risk were initially discussed in relation to influencing opinion or 'grooming' children for radicalisation. However, there was a wider discussion after a practitioner asked about what to do when the parent or family member of the young person is deemed to be 'the risk':

*"What happens if it is the parent who the radicalisation issue is with? See, I work with families.... So my safeguarding would be around the child. It's all quite complex isn't it?... I mean more than likely I would pick something up through working with the whole family. Or would I? That's a big question isn't it?"*

## *Charity*

*"It depends really, about whether the ideology is being passed down...It depends how it comes to light really. If it comes to light by a child going to school, the teacher raises the issues – we start looking at it."*

## *Criminal Justice*

*"How can you demonstrate safety outcomes for a child living with a parent with those views and that risk? How do you change that? It would have to be similar to what we do for domestic violence and substance misuse, wherein if there is no change we would have to enter into legal proceedings if you predict that the risk to that child would be too great."*

## *Social Work*

The vignettes were based on a scenario outlining the case of two young people: one male and one female. When it came to identification of risk, practitioners stated that they felt more comfortable working on the vignette involving the female as they understood it to be a clear case of sexual exploitation and felt able to deal with this. Radicalisation was not seen as a priority issue in her case. Considerations of gender thus played an important role in the way in which practitioners made sense of degrees and forms of risk and how risks should be differentiated, assessed and acted on. This suggests practitioners rely on their background knowledge of risk more generally to steer their judgements on what risk of radicalisation looks like for males and for females, something perhaps related to how risk is construed through policy, training, media and communications as well as working practice and experience:

*“It may just be girls speaking ‘there is no point to my life’...in terms of extremism there is probably nothing there except that little bit about that political group.”*

*Criminal Justice*

### **c) Risk assessment thresholds**

For practitioners who worked in an environment where a ‘risk threshold’ or ‘risk level’ determined whether or not they would be involved in service delivery, they felt that this circumscribed their singular ability to respond to the needs of the child but that they could ‘refer down’ to others or recommend a ‘team around the family’:

*“If that came to us, we wouldn’t take it. We wouldn’t say this child is at risk of harm. It’s definitely not a Level Four...We would be saying, back to you school you have concerns, deal with these. We would not respond as an organisation. Sadly.”*

*Social work*

*“We would go out and have a chat with the school...probably the teachers have a better relationship with the child to address some of the issues.”*

*Criminal Justice*

For practitioners who did not operate in this type of organisation, they felt that they would want to work to reduce vulnerability and risk no matter the level but that resources or waiting lists might get in the way. All practitioners acknowledged that there was potential for children’s needs to be missed in either organisational environment.

#### **d) Gaining information**

Practitioners were very open to collaborative inter or multi-agency working – they identified in both vignettes the need to gain more information before acting. Practitioners felt these were important issues to take back to schools, but also observed, conversely, that practitioners in this sector were least likely to get the opportunity to be trained on the subject:

*“Teachers getting time or access to training is an issue. It’s good if we can integrate it into School Improvement programmes – we did that and reached 100+ schools”*

*Criminal Justice*

The vignettes purposefully omitted details on race, religion and the type of ‘radicalisation’ the individuals were at-risk of. This sparked an interesting discussion about the practitioner ‘fear factor’ on asking questions about race or religion – even as preliminary monitoring information for referrals. It was widely felt that practitioners were in general concerned with labelling children on the basis of the stereotypes widely associated with their religion, racial group or political beliefs, thereby contributing to societal racism and prejudice:

*“Professionals need to own this and take responsibility for their worries and fears of being branded racist – we learned this from Rotherham’s serious case review.”*

*Social Work*

*“You don’t want to be making links between ethnicity and radicalisation. And neither do you not want to be making those links if they are there. Either way you can get stuck.”*

*Charity*

*“It’s like political correctness gone mad isn’t it? Your race and your religion is such a big part of your identity, you can’t just turn a blind eye to it. If you want to understand the problems – and it could be isolation or bullying, you can’t turn a blind eye to that”*

*Local Authority*

*“You need to understand the child’s racial and religious background – that’s a big part of a child’s makeup, so you need to understand that before you can make a judgement on this”*

*Social Work*

## **e) Leading on action or intervention**

In responses to the vignettes, the main emphasis was on talking to other agencies and talking to the child to find out further information. Practitioners felt that there needed to be timely and proportionate responses to the risks or perceived risks identified. There was some apprehension about taking action or making 'interventions' – the term 'interventions' itself was perceived as some form of legal action to be taken by police, social services, mental health or school:

*“Passports are taken quite frequently in court proceedings, predominantly with Black and Asian families. This could happen in these cases. The Court often state that families have to present birth certificates and passports to them - I had a case just last week.”*

### *Social Work*

*“In all the institutions and in all the sectors, there is a real fear of people that if I say I think Mr A is involved in something that may mean he is on that pathway to extremism – then what is the response to that going to be?...There is this myth that the police will get involved, flashing blue lights, arrested etc.”*

### *Criminal Justice*

*“In something like this (child sexual exploitation) I know what I’m doing, but when it comes to Zayn and it’s all a bit grey, I’m not quite sure. I’d bat it back on to others. I don’t really know what my role is or if I have one, in terms of child protection.”*

### *Social Work*

## **2. Organisational process challenges to identifying and assessing risk**

### **a) Policy**

Practitioners identified different challenges for organisations that operate a) on the basis of assessing risk/harm at the point of referral – wherein the threshold is set high or b) on the basis of need rather than risk/harm – wherein there is no threshold that referrals have to meet but the wait to access services is long.

*“It shows how if you are more risk focussed or less risk focussed as an organisation, then this will determine how you see things differently or do other things”*

*“What is worrying for me is that our Section 47 investigations outcomes box I’ve noticed has just had a box added for risk of radicalisation, with no explanation whatsoever, no policy, no indication of where that goes. What does that lead to? Does that lead to Child protection conference? Are we instigating legal proceedings? What are the further steps?”*

### *Social Work*

Practitioners were concerned that organisations can often respond to changes in law or policy by changing systems or adding new sections to, for example, forms without explanation or training for practitioners. This was felt to potentially contribute to a lack of confidence or fear. There were also anxieties that the political agenda or climate in relation to counter terrorism would determine the responses of organisations to radicalisation:

*“That’s the political climate that we are living in now, it would be expected that children’s services would step in and those children would not go home...this may not*

*be logical because then it would apply to parents of children who get involved in guns and gangs, but this is what's high on the political agenda and the government driving forces, and unfortunately that will be the knee jerk reaction, I think."*

#### *Social Work*

In relation to the recent case of the three girls travelling to Syria, practitioners discussed the issue of treating the children as victims or criminals with the overall feeling that they were victims unless they had become involved in criminal activity. However, if this then leads to actions against the parents – being found to have 'failed to protect' the children with the children subsequently taken into care - this was felt to be contentious and open to allegations of victim, parent and community blaming;

*"It would be a shame if this is what will happen, it will make Prevent implode. Never mind communities."*

#### *Criminal Justice*

### **b) Resources**

Linked to the political environment, the issue of austerity arose on a number of occasions. Practitioners felt that the impact of budget cuts could be such that only severe risks are being addressed by services, meaning that there is the potential to miss any escalation in risk or need:

*"Some practitioners are saying that situations they believe to be higher risk that are being pushed down to Level 1 or Level 2 – personally I wouldn't go near the house in that situation"*

#### *Criminal Justice*

*“That wouldn’t get through the door of children’s services, unfortunately. It is all about commissioning now...it may all change when there is a child death and a serious case review and the Government may realise they have pulled everything, we are now running a skeleton service and this is the outcome.”*

#### *Social Work*

*“By the time it comes to us as practitioners, this whole situation could have escalated in that time. It comes down to resources. We aren’t the only agency where there are huge waiting lists; this is down to resources, staff and demand. The person who is taking the referral, which would be our administrator, would have to think about this going somewhere else as well.”*

#### *Charity*

This raised the need for training to be multi-level (including policy makers, practitioners and support staff) in order to ensure knowledge and understanding of risk identification and the child’s needs from the first point of contact. However, again the issue of funding and resources were raised as a barrier.

### **c) Inter-agency and multi-agency working**

Practitioners raised the issue of prioritising or separating out elements of a case when multiple issues or vulnerabilities exist. They pointed out that this can be problematic for organisations in terms of knowing who to involve or refer to.

Practitioners referred regularly to the different processes or multi-agency frameworks for identifying and assessing risk such as the Safeguarding Children's Board, the Channel Panel and MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) in addition to child protection proceedings. Practitioners were unsure about how these

processes or frameworks currently address risk of radicalisation, with some concerns that processes had the potential to not 'speak to each other':

*"The local Channel Panel can 'piggyback' existing processes if there are multiple issues involved in any case. We are looking to have a regular panel soon, there wasn't the need before."*

#### *Criminal Justice*

*"In multi-agency meetings, everyone will have their own views about what they want to do, and actually it may be providing too much too soon for that child. Focussing on one thing really is better."*

#### *Local Authority*

*"We would focus on the predominant risk. When it comes to child protection though, sometimes the police action will directly conflict with for example social services... there was one case where the police threatened a family whose child was at risk of CSE (Child Sexual Exploitation) with a PPO (Police Protection Order) and actually the child had been stable for the last 6 months, there was no CSE issues - it could have destabilised the whole situation"*

#### *Social Work*

### **3. Practitioner strengths in identifying and assessing risk**

#### **a) Safeguarding culture and practice**

All practitioners talked about risk of radicalisation in a safeguarding context. The discussion was focussed on reducing vulnerabilities: the nature or form of the radicalisation was not actually the primary concern – it was child safety. Taking such

a holistic view of safety is a practitioner strength in identifying other types of harm that the child may be at risk of:

*“If you reduce a child’s vulnerabilities, whether it be CSE (Child Sexual Exploitation) or something else, then you reduce the risk of other vulnerabilities such as being radicalised as well”*

*Local Authority*

*"We actually need to get involved much earlier and this isn't necessarily about terrorism, it's about vulnerability, behaviours, attitudes."*

*Charity*

## **b) Child centred practice**

Practitioners discussed the vignettes from a welfare or ‘victim perspective’, with heavy emphasis on child well-being through raising issues such as vulnerability, stability, identity, safety and improving emotional or mental health. Practitioners expressed the need to involve the young person in planning and decisions, with the young persons' views and capacity to protect themselves (this is increasingly referred to as 'resilience' in policy discourse) central to any actions.

*“It's actually about working with her to increase her capacity to protect herself from others. It's down to the police to disrupt the relationships, but it should be at her pace.”*

*Social Work*

## **c) Objectivity**

Practitioners did not interpret the vignettes as predetermined cases of radicalisation, often seeing behaviours as a possible response to bullying, experiences of discrimination or feelings of alienation. Practitioners suggested that the same factors

or concerns posed by the vignettes could signify gang related crime, drugs, sexual exploitation, self-harming, low self-esteem, poverty, bullying or identity crises:

*“A lot of these things you see in young people, in fact all the young people that I see display some or all of these behaviours”*

*Criminal Justice*

*“This could be bravado – his parents are out of work so he can’t get involved in the trips because they can’t afford it.”*

*Social Work*

*“These behaviours could be that he could be struggling with his sexuality”*

*Charity*

#### **4. Organisational process strengths in identifying and assessing risk**

##### **a) Safeguarding policies and culture**

Practitioners felt that there is an established safeguarding culture in their organisations and this is reflected in their policies:

*“This is just an add-on to your normal safeguarding procedures, the same as if concerns were raised about drink, drugs, sexual exploitation. It’s no different”*

*Local Authority*

*“There is no need for any special processes for identifying risk of radicalisation, if agencies just focus on keeping children safe.”*

*Charity*

For Looked After Children especially, practitioners felt that these children would be less likely to be over-looked and more likely to get support or extra involvement because of the services already involved in their lives:

*“It’s a bit easier with this one as she is a foster child. There should be loads of agencies already involved and in contact with her.”*

*Charity*

*“When the local authority is a corporate parent, you should see there is more of likelihood to get involved”*

*Social Work*

## **b) Established local infrastructure**

Practitioners referred frequently to the local multi-agency processes and frameworks that centre on the risks facing children and young people. The Channel panel, the local authority process to respond to identified risks of radicalisation, was initially unknown by the practitioners who did not have a specialist role, but, through the discussion, this Panel was increasingly seen as a way to ratify what was or was not a real risk of radicalisation:

*“All Liverpool Channel referrals go through CARELINE anyway, as a way to reinforce that this is a safeguarding issue.”*

*Local Authority*

*“Because there were so few referrals, we decided to have a lead in Children’s and a lead in Adults (services) and if we needed to call a Channel panel we could do it on an as and when basis. Now as awareness and referrals are increasing and after the Act, we are thinking of setting up a proper panel with regular members but also able to call on other expertise when it is required.”*

*Criminal Justice*

## **Summary**

### **Way Forward – Building capability and practitioner confidence**

Central to the ability of organisations to fulfil the Prevent Duty is the issue of practitioner understanding of risk identification and assessment for children and young people, and the efficacy of organisational policy and processes related to this. The practitioners who took part in this meeting felt that, fundamentally, risk of radicalisation was an issue of safeguarding but believed that many practitioners will see the management of risk of radicalisation as intimidating because it is presented as something separate and ‘special’.

However, in response to the Prevent Duty, guidance is needed for practitioners to understand and know what their role is, when to step in and what their personal and organisational duties and responsibilities are. Without this guidance, the potential is for practitioners to feel radicalisation falls outside their area of statutory competence and the resulting danger would be that they only address the issues that feel ‘safe’ and not the issues that are ‘risky’ such as those related to race, religion and culture.

Practitioners felt that much more training will be required in relation to the Prevent duty to develop knowledge, skills and ability for identifying risk and knowing what to do next. Concerns were raised that resources were too limited to facilitate this. Practitioners need to know who can support/advise them - for those frontline practitioners involved in identifying potential risks for young people it was felt that more training was needed in asking ‘skilled questions’.

Practitioners would feel more assured about the process of risk identification and referral if information was shared about current practice in these cases including how many children are identified, how many are referred to the Channel panel and what actions have been taken as a result. This could be on a national and local basis –

for example, the case of the teenage girls who travelled to Syria was one which practitioners found of interest, especially when it came to working through the appropriate action to take on their return in terms of them and their families.

### **Clarity of policy and procedure**

Differing definitions of radicalisation, risk and harm in organisations and in Government documents and guidelines have the potential to create confusion in policy and practice. Policies were thought to be open to conflicting interpretations among practitioners, and the concern was that in some circumstances this could be problematic or controversial. For example, when considering the issue of parents who have been identified as radicalised and managing the risk presented to the child, practitioners seemed uneasy about potential actions and consequences. The process for assessing risk depends on practitioner instinct, discretion and prediction; all highly subjective. Continuous training and opportunities to discuss cases may provide a safeguard from bias here.

Assessing risk in situations of multiple, diverse and complex needs, requires a process that can be flexible and responsive. Organisations need to be able to have a fluid, intersecting way for identifying and responding to the multiple needs of young people, including clear referral processes to other agencies and processes for reassessing risk or risk reduction.

Thresholds of risk that determined organisational interventions or provision of service were a major point for discussion. In developing policy and procedures from here, there is a need to ensure that there is clarity about what is defined as risk and what the thresholds are for services to be involved.

On the basis of the discussions, evidencing risk alleviation will be a future challenge for organisations in relation to reassessing risk and proving the risk (even if it is low or medium) has been reduced or removed.

### **Strengthening multi-agency/inter agency working**

It was acknowledged that practitioners in welfare-oriented organisations who are much less risk focussed may have more options for supporting the child than those who operate in a rigid risk assessment framework that does not really include wellbeing. Recognition of this provides an opportunity to think more broadly about risk identification and Prevention as practitioners in a multi-agency framework.

Practitioners identified a potential conflict in risk based assessments depending on the field worked in and the legal framework followed. For example, a (statutory) social work needs assessment is focussed on potential for harm as defined by the Children's Act, which differs from the Channel risk assessment and potentially a third sector assessment of need.

Schools were identified as key partners to involve and work with as they were felt to have a significant influence in the life of a child or young person and should have the rapport to facilitate the skilled conversations needed. Practitioners felt that it was necessary to involve educational practitioners in any multi-agency work and training.

It seems that reliance on the local Channel Panel will likely increase as a result of awareness of the Prevent duty. Practitioners were keen for the Local Safeguarding Children's Board to be an active part of this. If so, it seems likely that consideration will have to be given to whether a single referral process will assist practitioners; how to safeguard against 'bottle necking' in the system; and how to ensure the Panel can manage the increased demand for advice, assessment and training. Any developments

in this area will have to strike a balance between the Panel providing a primary source of expertise while also developing capacity within organisations to make confident risk assessments.

**Research Project: Identifying risk - safeguarding children from radicalisation**

**Expert interview**

**Purpose:**

- To gain policy insight
- Prediction for impact of policy changes on practice

**Questions:**

1. What recent changes have taken place in relation to the Prevent strategy?
2. What do you think will be the impact of these changes on you and your team in Liverpool?
3. What do you think will be the impact on organisations working with children in Liverpool?
4. Think about the future, when your organisation and the Prevent strategy is working just as you would want it to be. What is making it successful? What has changed? What has stayed the same?
5. What questions do you think this research should ask practitioners about implementing Prevent (identifying risk in children)?

## Appendix H – Frontline Practitioner (FP) Interview Schedule

### Interview aims:

**Understand the role of the practitioner and the organisation. Inquire into how the infrastructure is set up within the organisation to address safeguarding and radicalisation, and how policy informs practice.**

<b>Practitioner role and organisation</b>	<p>Can you tell me about your personal history and experience of working with children?</p> <p>Can you tell me about your current role and your organisation?</p>
<b>Issue knowledge (Risk and safeguarding)</b>	<p>What would you describe as safeguarding in your work?</p> <p>There is a lot of new legislation about risk and safeguarding – how has this affected your work and your colleagues?</p> <p>What does risk and vulnerability look like in these circumstances?</p> <p>What proportion of your work is focussed on this?</p> <p>How does your organisation develop staff knowledge on safeguarding, vulnerability and risk?</p> <p>(models used- Children’s Act, Child in Need, other assessment framework)</p> <p>How confident do you think you and your colleagues feel to work with issues of risk and children? Why?</p>

	<p>How does your organisation engage with children on what they see as risks or risky?</p>
<p><b>Issue knowledge (Radicalisation)</b></p>	<p>How has the recent focus in legislation on preventing terrorism affected the work of you and your colleagues?</p> <p>What are your thoughts on defining radicalisation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Differentiate between non-violent and violent extremism?</li> </ul> <p>Where does your understanding of radicalisation come from?</p> <p>How confident would you or colleagues feel working with issues of risk of radicalisation with your children?</p> <p>Why?</p>
<p><b>Working with policy</b></p>	<p>What do you know about Prevent?</p> <p>What information do you and your colleagues get about radicalisation and children?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Training, briefings etc</li> <li>- Part of your overall safeguarding/child protection work or separately?</li> <li>- Linked with other policies? (equalities, hate crime, child protection etc)</li> <li>- Specific to the legal duty?</li> </ul>

	<p>Do you feel that policy reflects the experience of practitioners?</p> <p>How has the status of Liverpool as a Prevent Priority area had an impact on your work?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Benefits? Disadvantages?</li> </ul> <p>How relevant do you think it is to your organisation or children?</p> <p>Do you, your colleagues or organisation think there is a local threat of risk to children?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is this based upon/where does your information come from?</li> </ul> <p>What processes or tools have been developed to help you and your organisation put policies into practice?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (Structure, paperwork/documents, lead officer, training, internal meetings, tools or aides etc)</li> </ul> <p>How confident would you and your colleagues feel about applying policies on radicalisation in your everyday work?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Resources and skills to respond to policy?</li> <li>- Time to consider how the policies affect your practice?</li> <li>- Problems in the policy re: your practice?</li> </ul> <p>What sort of role do you think you and colleagues have in preventing radicalisation of children?</p>
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	- Personal view or one that is communicated to you?
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**Interview aims:**

**Inquire into practitioner decision making processes to identify and assess risk, and gain insight into how knowledge is gathered/created.**

<b>Identification of vulnerability to risk (stage before making an assessment)</b>	<p>How would you or your colleagues feel about making decisions on whether you feel a child is vulnerable to radicalisation?</p> <p>What in your experience, would vulnerabilities or risks look like?</p> <p>Do you see these different to risks of other issues (sexual exploitation e.g.)?</p> <p>How confident would you feel to predict the risk of vulnerability to radicalisation? Why?</p> <p>Who would you go to for advice on identifying risks of radicalisation?</p> <p>What considerations would you make before seeking advice?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- What are the benefits of gaining advice?</li><li>- Are there any drawbacks?</li></ul> <p>What information sources would you use to identify risks of radicalisation for children?</p> <p>Which colleagues would you approach for further information on a child? Internal, or in other organisations/multi-agency setting?</p>
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	<p>Do you think that children would have a role in identifying risk? Why?</p> <p>Do you have any anxieties about raising concerns?</p> <p>What do you think the benefits would be of intervention/taking action in a situation where you felt a child was at risk?</p> <p>What do you think the disadvantages are of intervention?</p> <p>Do you feel that you have the skills to intervene?</p> <p>Have you been supported to develop these skills?</p>
<p><b>Assessment of vulnerability to risk (process)</b></p> <p><b>(Use Channel Guidance &amp; VAF)</b></p>	<p>What does your organisation provide you and your colleagues with to help you undertake an assessment of risk in relation to safeguarding?</p> <p>Does this include radicalisation?</p> <p><i>Explore extracts from Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF) indicators &amp; Channel Guidance:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How do you/would you work with these documents?</li> <li>- In what ways would they be helpful to your assessment?</li> <li>- In what ways could they be problematic?</li> <li>- How would children's rights be a consideration in an assessment?</li> <li>- What sources of information would you draw upon to make an assessment?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What information would you seek in order to distinguish between behaviour related to age/development or other factors, and signs of radicalisation?</li> <li>- Is the local community a consideration? Why/in what way?</li> <li>- How much would you feel you can bring your understanding of the child or their family into the assessment?</li> <li>- Would you feel confident to use your judgment or discretion in this assessment?</li> </ul> <p>How would the type of ‘extremism’ impact on your assessment of risk level (e.g. animal rights, far right, religious, violent or non-violent)?</p> <p>How would you record your assessment in your organisation?</p> <p>How would you re-assess risk?</p>
<b>External Referral – decision making process</b>	<p>What level of safeguarding behaviour/risk would you need to see to make you feel that you need to refer a child to another agency?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Who would you consider making a referral to and why?</li> <li>- Would there be other reasons/considerations for making a referral?</li> </ul> <p>After assessing a child to be at risk in relation to any safeguarding issues, how would the referral process work in your organisation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In one or more ways? Would it depend on the issue?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How would information be collated for the referral? By who?</li> <li>- What level of information would be shared?</li> </ul> <p>Have you ever had to assess a child's vulnerability to risk of radicalisation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- If yes, how would you describe your experience?</li> <li>- What did you learn from the process?</li> <li>- Did you have to defend decisions about the absence or presence of risk, or the level of risk you perceived to be present?</li> </ul> <p>What do you think would be the consequences of identifying children at risk of vulnerability to radicalisation? Positives and negatives?</p> <p>What do you think the benefits are of referring children at risk of radicalisation on to an external agency e.g. Channel? Any disadvantages?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What do you know about Channel? How?</li> <li>- Have you ever made a referral? What were the circumstances?</li> </ul> <p>What was the learning from that experience?</p>
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**Interview aims:**

**Gain practitioner insights on feedback/criticism of policy and improvements for practice.**

<b>Feedback – community, partners, media</b>  <b>(Use headlines, articles &amp; reports)</b>	<b>Community/Media (Share headlines/articles/reports):</b>  How have these concerns impacted on your work? Do you feel they have affected practitioners in how they identify risk?  What are your views about the concerns raised about ‘surveillance’ of children?  What are your feelings on the anxieties that Muslim and Black and minority ethnic children are being referred more often?  What do you think organisations can do to allay these fears?  Do you or your organisation get opportunities to involve or talk to wider communities? What has been the impact?  <b>Partner organisations:</b>  How much information/communication do you get about the consequences of interventions/referrals in your local area?  If you or your organisation has made a referral to Channel, what feedback did you get?
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	Do you get the opportunity to discuss cases with other practitioners?
<b>Improvement</b>	<p>How do you think work can be improved in this area;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- For policy?</li> <li>- For practice?</li> </ul> <p>How do you see your role in contributing to this improvement?</p> <p>In an ideal world, where you have all the resources that you need (time, finance etc.) how would this issue be best handled?</p>

ANNEX C

## The Vulnerability Assessment Framework

This annex provides a description of the vulnerability assessment framework used by Channel to guide decisions about whether an individual needs support to address their vulnerability to being drawn into terrorism as a consequence of radicalisation and the kind of support that they need.

It should not be assumed that the characteristics set out below necessarily indicate that a person is either committed to terrorism or may become a terrorist. The assessment framework involves three dimensions: engagement, intent and capability, which are considered separately.

### 1. Engagement with a group, cause or ideology

Engagement factors are sometimes referred to as "psychological hooks". They include needs, susceptibilities, motivations and contextual influences and together map the individual pathway into terrorism. They can include:

- Feelings of grievance and injustice
- Feeling under threat
- A need for identity, meaning and belonging
- A desire for status
- A desire for excitement and adventure
- A need to dominate and control others
- Susceptibility to indoctrination
- A desire for political or moral change
- Oppportunistic involvement
- Family or friends involvement in extremism
- Being at a transitional time of life
- Being influenced or controlled by a group
- Relevant mental health issues

### 2. Intent to cause harm

Not all those who become engaged by a group, cause or ideology go on to develop an intention to cause harm, so this dimension is considered separately. Intent factors describe the mindset that is associated with a readiness to use violence and address what the individual would do and to what end. They can include:

- Over-identification with a group or ideology
- Them and Us' thinking
- Dehumanisation of the enemy
- Attitudes that justify offending
- Harmful means to an end
- Harmful objectives

### 3. Capability to cause harm

Not all those who have a wish to cause harm on behalf of a group, cause or ideology are capable of doing so, and plots to cause widespread damage take a high level of personal capability, resources and networking to be successful. What the individual is capable of is therefore a key consideration when assessing risk of harm to the public. Factors can include:

- Individual knowledge, skills and competencies
- Access to networks, funding or equipment
- Criminal Capability

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On Saturday

*The essential weekend briefing*

FROM  
The INDEPENDENT

SATURDAY  
21 FEBRUARY 2015  
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P44



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# Three British schoolgirls head to Syria in half-term

» Police fear that London teenagers plan to join Isis  
» Straight-A students inspired by classmate who met jihadists  
» Concerns grow over number of young British women travelling to conflict



P4



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P5

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EastEnders



STAR TURN: Actor Elliot

TV Bobby to make killing

EASTENDERS' "killer" Bobby Brinkley, played by Elliot Carrington, is being tipped for Hollywood stardom after his showstopping entry in the soap.

Full story: Pages 4-5

# 3 GIRLS ON HALF-TERM FLEE UK TO JOIN ISIS



THIS is the moment three young British schoolgirls on half-term holiday slipped through airport security on their way to become Islamic State jihad brides in war-torn Syria, police revealed last night.

Full story: Page 7



Charles... the prince

## Charles: Climate change link to IS

By EMILY ANDREWS

PRINCE Charles has blamed the rise of IS and the migrant crisis on climate change.

The 70-year-old prince claimed on Sky News that there were strong links between a lack of action on green issues, religion and terrorism.

He said climate change had "made a huge impact" on the spread of conflict and terror across the globe.

And it was one of the "major reasons" for the conflict between rebels, IS and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

The prince, 40, said of the migrant crisis: "One

Continued on Page Six



## EXCLUSIVE: SHOCK POLL

# 1 in 5 Brit Muslims' sympathy for jihadis

## 'WAKE-UP CALL' AFTER PARIS BLITZ

By TOM NEWTON DUNN  
FOREIGN EDITOR

NEARLY one in five British Muslims has shown sympathy with those who have fled the UK to fight for IS in Syria.

The number among young Muslims aged 18-34 is even higher at one in four.

The figures emerged in our exclusive poll conducted after the Paris atrocities led by French and Belgian jihadis returning from the war zone.

Former Muslim said the poll was a wake-up call.

Labour London Mayor hopeful Sadiq Khan tells The Sun

Continued on Page Five

KEVIN MCKENZIE:

'TIME FOR BRITAIN TO SHUT DOOR'

PAGE 13

Support... Brit jihadis join who want to Syria

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The Sun

## Wirral parents' shock over school 'terrorism' grilling after eight-year-old child's comment



Dad Mark Atkinson with son Rhys, aged eight, whose comment that he 'wanted to fight terrorists' sparked social services probe

3 Mar 2016 / Catherine Murphy

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**UK security and counter-terrorism**

## UK anti-radicalisation Prevent strategy a 'toxic brand'

Former senior police officer Dal Babu says many Muslims see scheme as spying and many of those involved in it do not understand the communities they serve

Josh Halliday and Vikram Dodd

Monday 9 March 2015 06.37 GMT



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Former chief superintendent Dal Babu, photographed in 2013. Photograph: Martin Godwin

The British government's flagship anti-radicalisation strategy, Prevent, has become a toxic brand and is widely mistrusted, a former senior Muslim police officer has said.

Dal Babu, who was a chief superintendent with the Metropolitan police before he retired two years ago, said most Muslims were suspicious of the scheme and see it as a tool for spying on them.

Babu told the BBC that the £40m Prevent programme started off as a good idea but had become less and less trusted.

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## We'll only stop terrorist ideologies if we teach young people to think for themselves

The views which drove Mohammed Emwazi or Anders Brevik will never respond to censorship and suppression. We must all reject them for ourselves

498 0 2 500 Email



Kadiza Sultana, Amira Abase and Shamima Begum are said to have left Britain to join Isis fighters in Syria Photo: Metropolitan Police

By Jamie Bartlett  
12:39PM GMT 03 Mar 2015

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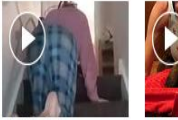
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## How UK anti-terror guidance could violate children's human rights

July 22, 2015 12:29pm BST



Combating youth extremism is a priority for the UK government. But at what cost? *Paul Ellis/PA Wire*

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There are enormous dangers in the way child protection legislation in the UK intersects with Channel, the government's [anti-radicalisation programme](#). There are only a few legal steps between the suggested interventions set out in the [Channel guidance](#) and the possibility of a child being removed from their home because their family's political views are unacceptable and don't adhere to "British values".

News > World

## Boy in ISIS terror video 'is a victim of child abuse'

Mayor of London Boris Johnson says there is "no question" the video is child abuse

NICHOLAS CECIL, JOHN DUNNE | Tuesday 5 January 2016 | [2 comments](#)



**A young boy from London featured in an Islamic State execution video is the victim of child abuse and must be taken away from his jihadi bride mother, Boris Johnson said today.**

The Mayor of London called for Isa Dare's family to be arrested if they try to return to Britain from Syria.

### PROMOTED STORIES



How Innovative



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# Government scheme to de-radicalise children is ‘turning them TOWARDS Islamic extremism’

THE Government's bid to de-radicalise Muslim children in schools is pushing them towards extremism, parents have warned.

By JAKE BURMAN

PUBLISHED: 12:12, Mon, Dec 14, 2015 | UPDATED: 12:49, Mon, Dec 14, 2015

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Parents and teachers have claimed the Government scheme could push children towards extremism

The 'Prevent' strategy - which imposes a legal duty on schools across the UK to halt radicalisation - is reportedly singling out and demonising vulnerable Muslim children by targeting them with inappropriate messages

## News

### Half of all radicalisation referrals now come from schools, exclusive figures reveal

John Dickens | 9:00, Nov 7, 2015



Teachers are making “knee-jerk” referrals of pupils they feel may be at risk of radicalisation because they are afraid of falling foul of new terrorism reporting laws, experts say.

# Schools refer five children a day to steer them from terror



In schools 1,041 children were referred last year to Channel, the deradicalisation programme. In this picture comedian Arshad talks to the Whitefield School in North London about the dangers of radicalisation

TOM PILSTON/THE TIMES