

Workstream 3: Securitisation/Radicalisation (PREVENT)

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2019 witnessed significant criticism of and calls for changes to the PREVENT policy, though the planned governmental review was delayed. Within B-MAG, the year's work focused on Dr. Jo Finch's continuing conceptual publications, with David McKendrick. These have led to aiming to develop a wider symposium to consider the challenges of writing about this subject. Debates tend to be polarised, on one side of the argument or other, and very few occupying the space in between.

Jo Finch also has developed an international collaboration with Mid Sweden University and involvement in policy discussions, including an invitation only consultation event on PREVENT held at St Georges House, Windsor Castle, and a report to be submitted to the PREVENT review.

Publications include:

Finch, J. and McKendrick, D. (2019) Securitising Social Work: Counter Terrorism, Extremism and Radicalisation, in Webb, S. (ed) Routledge Handbook of Critical Social Work, Routledge, London)

Research:

Jo Finch, with Mid Sweden University: joint application to Scandinavian funding stream to continue research work on 'hostile states'

Jo Finch, exploration of parents experiences of social service involvement following a PREVENT referral, Leverhulme/British Academy Small Grants Award

A seminar in the B-MAG seminar series, planned for November 12th was postponed and then held on 28th January 2020. The seminar explored the relationship between the aims of PREVENT and child safeguarding practice. The keynote speaker, Dr Tarek Younis, discussed his research on Islamophobia in the National Health Service (NHS) and how PREVENT's counter-radicalisation enters into clinical logic. PREVENT must engage in performance colour blindness, the active recognition and dismissal of racial logic which associates radicalised Muslims with the threat of terrorism. Institutional racism is introduced and operates in the NHS, why it is difficult to address racism embedded within colour blind policies, and how mental health and psychologisation are integral to the performance of colour blindness. Discussant Nick Watts responded to the paper. A feature of the discussion following was its inclusiveness, unusually perhaps as PREVENT tends to polarise; practitioners shared their dilemmas and the complexity of working with securitisation in this system

Further, there has been discussion in relation to VCF-supported cases that, for a cohort of parents opting not to engage with the PREVENT programme – presented as a voluntary undertaking for those suspected of being radicalised – extend well beyond the norms of standard safeguarding processes and timelines with no discernible changes to case law, amid increasingly discordant voices around the Home Office PREVENT policy and its links to child safeguarding under the leadership of the Department for Education.

For all families who come to the attention of the authorities, through alleged links to radicalised or extremist behaviours, there is the realisation that a national database exists, although the process by which names may be added or removed is less clear, and concerning for children who may be included within such data, regardless of safeguarding outcomes.

On 12 February 2019, the government committed to an independent review of PREVENT alongside the Counter Terrorism and Border Security Act 2019, and for that review and the government's response to be completed by 12 August 2020.

Strategic Objectives for 2020

1. Review and evaluate VCF cases, which include PREVENT processes, to examine the implications for practice
2. Continue to research, including making funding applications, to explore the impact of PREVENT on families
3. Communicate widely through seminars and online to disseminate findings from research
4. Build and maintain collaborations in UK and internationally