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To cite this article: Jennifer van Krieken Robson (07 May 2025): The intersection of counter terrorism with early childhood education and care policy in England – the power of the panoptic schema, *Early Years*, DOI: [10.1080/09575146.2025.2499870](https://doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2025.2499870)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2025.2499870>



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Published online: 07 May 2025.



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The intersection of counter terrorism with early childhood education and care policy in England – the power of the panoptic schema

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ABSTRACT

In 2015, the Counter Terrorism and Security Act placed a duty on registered early years childcare provision in England to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. This paper reports a small-scale qualitative study that applies Panopticism to explore the policy architecture of the *Prevent Duty* and practitioners' experiences as they work within its panoptic schema. The study found that the *Prevent Duty* is embedded in nurseries through a triple lock of government policies. Practitioners are deputized into the functions of state security. The positioning of practitioners within the schema is complex; while they are subject to surveillance by inspectors, they also exercise power through acts of self-regulation and surveillance. However, some practitioners adopted a critically reflexive stance; they questioned the purpose of the *Prevent Duty* and evidenced a critical knowledge of the way in which their work is governed by its schema.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 22 August 2024

Accepted 23 April 2025

KEYWORDS

Counterterrorism;
Panopticism; policy; *Prevent Duty*; early childhood education and care

Introduction

In England, a surprising policy turn occurred when the S.26 Counter Terrorism and Security Act (CTSA) (HM Government 2015a) required registered early years providers to consider the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. Hereafter, S26 is referred to as the *Prevent Duty*. In this study, the term counterterrorism refers to the actions mandated by the government to prevent radicalization of its population (Renard 2021). In this way, England became the first country globally to align its statutory policy frameworks for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) and national security. In this context, ECEC policy can be considered as a 'social cultural mirror' (New 2009, 309) whereby it reflects the socio-cultural context in which it is situated. A significant issue, in England, is an increased concern by the government for national security in response to terrorist attacks and loss of human life, including, for example, a bomb at the Manchester Arena in 2017 and the Finsbury Park Mosque attacks in London. McKendrick and Finch (2017) argue that policy for children and families, in England, risks being dominated by

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government policies linked to national security and are positioned as responses to a global context of a war on terror. Accordingly, the *Prevent Duty* is critiqued for the way in which 'it subordinates their [children's] welfare to national security priorities' (Child Rights International Network 2022, 5).

Critical perspectives on the alignment or misalignment of ECEC policy in the English public policy are not new, for example; Lloyd (2015) found a disconnect between early years and other social welfare policy approaches. Governments often look to ECEC provision to address social issues using policy to embed broader policy agendas into ECEC policy; this is often seen as a cost-effective intervention (Wood and Hedges 2016). The intersection of these two areas of public policy, now conjoined for 9 years, is the focus for this small-scale qualitative study. The study aims to generate a wider conversation about the appropriation of the ECEC sector for purposes of national security and the complex ways in which ECEC practitioners are positioned by this development. To facilitate this, the study problematizes the policy architecture that aligns ECEC and counterterrorism policy. Further, it explores how ECEC practitioners experience the *Prevent Duty* as it is implemented and inspected. A post-structural approach of Panopticism provides a framework for analysing the *Prevent Duty* policy as it exercises power and acts on individuals within the complex ECEC system in England. The study is guided by the following research questions:

- How do ECEC policy structures and inspection processes shape the implementation of the *Prevent Duty* in nurseries in England?
- What is the experience of practitioners in this context?

The term Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is used in this paper to describe the function of education and care of children aged birth to three, whereas the term nursery is used to describe the provision in England where children aged between birth and five receive early education and care away from home. Such provisions are registered with, and inspected by, the government's Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) in England. The term practitioner is applied to refer to people who work in ECEC settings regardless of their role. Participant is used to refer to ECEC practitioners who participated in this study.

The policy pile of the *Prevent Duty*

This section analyzes the policy architecture that aligns the functions of ECEC and national security in England. Counterterrorism already existed as an area of public policy in England prior to 2015; in 2005 a strategy of countering terrorism by preventing extremism was introduced in response to a series of terrorist incidents in London. In 2011, the United Kingdom government brought this policy direction to the foreground through the publication of the Prevent Strategy that included two strategic objectives; the first to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and the second to work within sectors of public service provision, where in the view of government there were risks of radicalization (HM Government 2011). While primary and secondary education were included as sectors of public service provision within this strategy, ECEC was omitted; it was not until the 2015 with the passing into law of S.26 of the CTSA that registered early years providers were listed as a public authority (HM Government 2015a; HM Government 2015b) with a duty

to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. The statutory *Prevent Duty* was a policy shift to a preventative approach placing an increased emphasis on countering terrorism within and through communities (Panjwani 2016). The *Prevent Duty* imposed a political agenda of securitization onto practitioners working directly with children and their families (Lander 2016). Here, securitization is understood as the process by which the law requires people working in education to incorporate and enact the function of national security into their job role (Gearon 2015). A concerning element was the way in which prevention, as a strategy to counterterrorism, created the expectation in the policy of practitioners ‘pre-empting childhood radicalisation’ (Dresser 2021, 219).

The extent of the implications arising from the *Prevent Duty* for practitioners only became visible as it was embedded in the policy structures that govern the ECEC sector in England. Cairney (2020) argues that policies start with a broad statement of intent but unfold through strategies that are detailed through a range of policy instruments. He suggests that each policy instrument adds to a ‘policy pile’ (Cairney 2020, 9). I argue that the English government created a policy pile for the implementation of the *Prevent Duty* and in this way tightened the focus on the functions of state security assigned to ECEC practitioners. The policy pile begins with the S.26 of the CTSA and the broad statement that registered early years provision (and by implication those working in them) must consider the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. The second layer of the pile is the *Prevent Duty* statutory guidance (HM Government 2015b, 2021, 2023) that clarifies the role of leaders of specified authorities, here leaders of registered early years provision, must ensure that people working in the provision can access training, resources and guidance so that they understand the risk of radicalization that results in support for terrorism or involvement in terrorism. Two specific roles are assigned to practitioners in ECEC, firstly, to identify children (and by implication their families) who may be at risk of radicalization and secondly, build resilience to radicalization by promoting Fundamental British Values (FBV). The third layer of the policy pile embeds the delivery of the *Prevent Duty* through the statutory policies that govern and regulate practice in ECEC settings; this includes the curriculum and provision framework (Department for Education DfE 2023b), the statutory guidance for safeguarding (Department for Education DfE 2018) and the statutory early years inspection framework (Ofsted 2015, 2019).

Thus, the government utilizes a range of policy instruments to turn the broad aim of the *Prevent Duty* into specific actions. Cairney (2020) suggests that a wide range of policy instruments are available to governments to achieve their aims; here they apply legislation and inspection to require those working in nurseries to enact the *Prevent Duty*. The fieldwork for this study explores practitioners’ experiences in the third layer of the policy pile.

***Prevent Duty* – a panoptic schema by design**

Analysis of the *Prevent Duty* as a panoptic schema reveals the reach of government counterterrorism measures across the ECEC system into the structures that govern and regulate practice. The purpose of a panoptic schema is to deal with and arrange ‘a multiplicity of individuals on whom a task or a particular form of behaviour is imposed’ (Foucault 1977, 205). The *Prevent Duty*, as a panoptic schema, requires the compliance of

those working in nurseries with state directed ideology in the promotion of FBVs and surveillance for the purposes of counterterrorism. Such values are defined in statutory guidance (HM Government 2023) as democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance for those with different faiths and beliefs. Foucault (1977) conceptualized a panoptic schema as a political technology that defines not only the instrument (here the *Prevent Duty* and associated policy architecture) but also the modes of intervention of power (that brings the *Prevent Duty* to life). In this context the inspection of the *Prevent Duty* in nurseries is an exercise of power; its inclusion in the inspection framework in England emphasizes its significance in practice. Although Cairney's (2020) concept of the policy pile provides visibility of the complex architecture of the *Prevent Duty*, it does not address how this policy exercises power over individuals. Focusing policy analysis on the three elements of Foucault's panoptic schema reveals the exercise of power; the elements are disciplinary mechanisms, lateral invisibility and surveillance. As a disciplinary mechanism the *Prevent Duty* utilizes a 'faceless gaze that transform[s] the whole social body into a field of perception' (Foucault 1977, 213). The *Prevent Duty* is associated with functions of national security and as such it is distant from the policy agendas related to the development, learning and welfare of young children. Yet, despite this distance, it appears in multiple policy documents within the policy pile for ECEC which are implemented through 'a swarming of disciplinary methods' (Foucault, 211). Each of the disciplinary methods draws practitioners into the field of perception for state counterterrorism measures in England. In this panoptic schema, practitioners are subject to disciplinary measures of inspection. They are tasked by the *Prevent Duty* to conduct surveillance of young children, their families and their colleagues for signs of radicalization. Central to a panoptic schema is the concept of lateral invisibility, whereby people working across the ECEC system are not visible to each other or other parts of the education system in England (Foucault 1977). Elsewhere I have argued that the *Prevent Duty* places distinctive requirements on different phases of education with the result that each person experiences the impact of the *Prevent Duty* in their own phase but does not experience or see the whole schema (Robson and Hunt 2021). A further contribution to segmentation arises from the arrangement of for profit, public and not for profit nurseries as neoliberal structures fragment the ECEC system through marketization (Roberts-Holmes and Moss 2021). In this context practitioners may not have sight of the experience of the *Prevent Duty* in neighbouring nurseries. However, practitioners' responsibilities are clarified through the three intersecting policies in the third layer of the policy pile: the framework for early years provision in England (Department for Education (DfE) 2017, 2023b), the statutory guidance on safeguarding (Department for Education (DfE) 2018, 2023a) and the framework for inspection (Ofsted 2015, 2019). In the panoptic schema of the *Prevent Duty* practitioners experience a 'state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures an automatic functioning of power' (Foucault 1977, 201). The second element of the panoptic schema of the *Prevent Duty* is that it remains unverifiable to practitioners. The *Prevent Duty* holds central power in that it positions practitioners as both subject to and active agents of state counterterrorism. In this way, it fulfils the function of the central power of Foucault's schema: the all-seeing but unverifiable Panopticon. Through the layers of the policy pile practitioners have a consciousness of, and permanent visibility to, counterterrorism measures even in a situation where there is no threat to national security. The *Prevent Duty* is a permanent force simultaneously close and distant from

everyday practice in the ECEC setting. A third element of the panoptic schema is the operation of surveillance; the requirement within the *Prevent Duty* to identify people at risk of radicalization legitimizes surveillance of all people in the nursery. According to Foucault (1977), surveillance does not depend on the formal role of the inspector; there is an expectation of surveillance and being surveilled placed on all practitioners. By including surveillance as a measure, the *Prevent Duty*, exercises power in an efficient manner where ‘the observer may observe ... [and it] enables everyone to come and observe any of the observers’ (Foucault 1977, 207). In this way, surveillance is both an external regulatory activity, a responsibility for practitioners and an act of self-regulation to maintain the surveillance process. Practitioners’ experiences within this panoptic schema will be explored through the fieldwork of this study.

The *prevent duty* and ECEC in England – an uneasy alignment

The principal critique of the implementation of the *Prevent Duty* in nurseries centres on the imposition of four prescribed FBVs that are uncontextualized within ECEC practice (Robson, 2018). Although the most recent iteration of the *Prevent Duty* guidance (HM Government 2023) recognizes that practitioners should implement FBVs in an ‘age appropriate way’ (42); the critical perspectives on the inclusion of prescribed values in the curriculum as a statutory requirement are still relevant. Assumptions are made in policy that practitioners comprehend the complex concepts inherent within the FBVs, for example, democracy and tolerance (Anderson 2020). Furthermore, Farini (2019) argues that the emphasis on four FBVs in the production of future citizens risks the uncritical transmission of FBVs to children by adults in the nursery. Further risks arise from the emphasis on Britishness, and by implication nationalism, which may have implications for the nursery sustaining respectful relationships with families of diverse cultural backgrounds (Anderson 2020). However, I have argued elsewhere that practitioners’ responses to the requirement to promote FBVs were complex where they simultaneously performed and contested the notion of Britishness (Robson, 2018). My findings, from this earlier empirical study, revealed that performative visual displays of FBVs were a deliberate action by practitioners to evidence compliance with the *Prevent Duty* as part of the regulation process. Similarly, Anderson (2020) found that inspection was understood as a mechanism to ensure compliance as inspectors looked for evidence of FBVs in practice. This raised questions about the role of inspection in influencing the implementation of the *Prevent Duty* which this current study seeks to address.

A second critique within the literature on the *Prevent Duty* in ECEC relates to the securitization of safeguarding practice due to the requirement to focus on prevention of radicalization within safeguarding and welfare responsibilities (HM Government 2023). Elsewhere, I argue that the intersection of the *Prevent Duty* with safeguarding policy extends the focus of practitioners’ surveillance beyond the welfare of children to include the identification of children, families or their colleagues at risk of radicalization (Robson 2020). Data in my previous study revealed that everyday occurrences including, for example, children’s absence were potentially viewed by practitioners through the lens

of counterterrorism (Robson 2020). In this way, the *Prevent Duty* may promote a discourse that people in the nursery are potential terrorists or sympathetic to the ideas of terrorists.

Methods and ethics

As a qualitative researcher, I am interested in the multiple perspectives of practitioners as they experienced the *Prevent Duty* and its inspection in their nurseries. In this study, qualitative research has an ethical purpose (Denzin 2017) as it places the perspectives of ECEC practitioners at the centre of the inquiry. A qualitative research design fulfils the study's aim to understand how practitioners experience the *Prevent Duty*. Semi-structured interviews were adopted as the data collection method; they focused on eliciting in-depth accounts of the experiences of practitioners as it related to the *Prevent Duty* and its regulation. Here, qualitative research interviews are conceptualized as a conversation between the researcher and participants to 'unfold the meaning of their experiences, to uncover their lived world' (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015, 3).

A purposive approach to sampling was adopted; in this small-scale study, 10 participants were selected based on known attributes as they had both knowledge and experience of the *Prevent Duty* in practice and had experienced inspection (Denscombe 2017). The sample of participants was constructed from different locations in England. The recruitment method was via a general email invitation to practitioners circulated through the researchers' ECEC networks. All participants had experienced inspection since the implementation of the *Prevent Duty* in 2015 and held leadership roles in nurseries. As discussed above, the framework for inspection in the ECEC sector changed during 2019. There was experience across the sample of participants of regulation in both the pre 2019 and post 2019 inspection framework. The strategy for the analysis of qualitative interview data was shaped by Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2013) with repeated cycles of reading interview transcripts; firstly, by using codes to assign meaning and grouping codes to develop themes relating to participants experiences of the *Prevent Duty* and its inspection. In addition, a parallel strategy of analytical memos was applied as a tool (Saldana 2013) to document the researcher's thinking process about the positioning of participants within the panoptic schema of the *Prevent Duty*.

Study of the implementation of the *Prevent Duty* in education in England is a sensitive topic; Busher, Tufyal and Paul (2020) discuss the way in which its implementation resulted in a chilling effect on discussion about terrorism in schools and colleges. This added a further ethical dimension to the fieldwork, and I was aware that people may have reservations about sharing perspectives. In the preparation of an ethical protocol for the study, I was guided by Brinkmann and Kvale's (2018) focus on research interviews as a 'moral enterprise' (28) that involves a consideration of informed consent, confidentiality and consequences for all people. The study was approved by the university research ethics committee and was classed as high risk due to the sensitivity of the topic. Transparency was key at all stages with participants in relation to the study's purpose as was ensuring confidentiality and protection of their personal and interview data. Therefore, data was pseudonymized, and localities were de-identified in the data. As part of the recruitment process, participants were given written information about the study, offered opportunities for clarification and invited to give written informed consent. Ten practitioners were originally recruited as participants for the study and semi-

structured interviews of 1 hour were conducted with all participants. However, before the analysis of data, two participants withdrew from the study because they felt their participation in the study may impact them or their families personally. As part of upholding an ethical practice, I respected the privacy of the two participants and did not seek further explanation. A reflection on this occurrence was the possibility that the power of the *Prevent Duty* was silencing the sharing of perspectives on its presence in the ECEC sector.

Findings

The findings presented below are the outcome of analysis of interview data of the remaining eight participants; three themes emerged from the analysis.

Inspection readiness: a compelling process

Participants' experiences of the regulation of the implementation of the *Prevent Duty* in their nurseries were multi layered. They all spoke of the inspection and regulatory processes as being an integral part of their leadership in the ECEC nursery; in this sense inspection was ever present and created a heightened awareness of the potential implications of a negative inspection outcome for the sustainability of the nursery and this resonates with Butler's (2024) study on regulation of nurseries. Like Anderson (2020) my findings suggest that regulation was understood by participants as a mechanism that ensured compliance with the *Prevent Duty*. However, my findings reveal the practical strategies applied in the nursery. The maintenance of a state of readiness for inspection was identified as a priority by all participants, but the methods for sustaining differed between nurseries. All participants gave specific examples of how they ensured that the team of practitioners in the nursery were prepared for the inspection of the *Prevent Duty*. Such practices were embedded in the management processes of the nurseries; they included, for example, mock inspections where practitioners had opportunities to rehearse responses and managers could assess knowledge of the *Prevent Duty*. Davinder highlighted that her nursery has mock inspections twice a year, 'where staff behave like Ofsted [inspectors]' which meant robust questioning of practitioners. Similarly, most participants talked about the use of specific resources to support practitioners in recalling the *Prevent Duty*; they included posters about FBVs, the signs of radicalization and how to refer families for intervention if needed. Anna indicated that in her group of nurseries an audit is conducted that supports the preparation for inspection; this ensures that FBVs are displayed in the nursery through a poster. The auditing of safeguarding files included a section to check that practitioners were identifying signs of radicalization. Asiya and Laura indicated that in their nurseries they prepared for the inspection using practice questions; Laura stated that in talking to her colleagues 'I would question them – how do you promote the rules of law'; such findings are consistent with those from an earlier study where there was an element of performativity among practitioners in relation to FBVs (Robson 2018). Participants believed this process of rehearsal was an important task; it was embedded in the process of preparing for the inspection. However, one practitioner was critical of how ECEC policy is manipulated by the government for its own purpose. Catherine expressed concern that the government in England is

constantly extending the role of practitioners and that areas of social policy (such as the *Prevent Duty*) are then subsequently subject to inspection. Here, Catherine questions whether government policy positions ECEC practitioners as technicians; from her perspective their work was controlled and manipulated by policy changes to incorporate new tasks in line with Moss's (2006) view that policy both prescribes and regulates practitioners as technicians.

The dance of the inspection

Ensuring that people had knowledge of the *Prevent Duty* and were competent during the inspection process was seen as a significant task by all participants. All practitioners spoke about the government online training on the signs of radicalization and the emphasis that inspectors placed on this. The training's purpose was commonly stated as readiness for inspection. Derek shared that 'we print off certificates and put it in our qualifications folder and that's our evidence [for the inspection]'. Catherine critiqued the training because in practice it meant practitioners were encouraged 'look out for something absolutely dreadful' and from her perspective it was not factual in relation to incidents of terrorism. Catherine's response aligns with Osgood's (2011) finding that practitioners adopt a critically reflexive stance in relation to ECEC policy; here Catherine questions both the purpose and the basis of the training.

Participants stated that they could anticipate inspectors' questions about the *Prevent Duty* and the focus was on preparing practitioners to respond to those questions. In some ways, this can be interpreted as analogous to a dance with a series of complex moves that both the practitioner and the inspector can anticipate and enact. All participants stated that during inspections of their nurseries, at least one practitioner had been asked about the signs of radicalization. Derek was simultaneously compliant and critical in his approach to the role of the inspection in the *Prevent Duty*; this aligns with Robson's (2018) finding that practitioners simultaneously performed and contested this duty. Derek focused on evidence of compliance, but he expressed a critical view that for such a serious issue (radicalization of young children and their families) he found the inspector's approach was tokenistic. He stated that 'I think they [Ofsted] can tick boxes' indicating from his perspective that for the regulator there may also be a performative element. Similarly, Catherine shared her observation that inspectors 'were not overly interested' in the way the nursery implemented the *Prevent Duty* beyond checking the level of knowledge of the staff.

Participants observed that the way in which they experienced the inspection of the implementation of the FBVs had changed when the new inspection framework was introduced in 2019. Jasmine and Laura indicated that in inspections prior to 2019, they found that inspectors were looking for explicit evidence of the four FBVs being promoted in the nursery. As Laura states

In 2015 there was an emphasis, and particularly in the organisation that I worked for, on British values and how they are promoted within the nursery. You could use [displays] as documentation for Ofsted. I think the shift now is that the Ofsted inspectors do not want to see as much paperwork they really want to see how they (FBVs) are embedded within the nursery, while before in 2015 we used a lot of displays to show off our practice. The shift now is the general focus on [FBVs] values across the nursery. (Laura)

Participants stated that prior to 2019 they met this expectation through a visual display of the four FBVs in a prominent position in the nursery; in this way, specific values were performed for regulation. Farini (2019) problematizes this approach; she suggests an emphasis on FBVs risks practitioners uncritically transmitting a narrow set of FBVs to children. However, following the introduction of the revised inspection framework of 2019, Laura and Jasmine's experience has been that inspectors were looking for both evidence of how the FBVs were embedded within the nursery practice and the wider role of values across the nursery. Jasmine shared that in her conversation with the inspector she asked why the inspector had not asked anything about FBVs; Jasmine said 'She [the inspector] said I can see it [FBVs] in everything you guys do'. Although Jasmine and Laura welcomed this shift in inspection practice in relation to the *Prevent Duty*, neither questioned how the inspection process led to a focus on the four FBVs in the nursery.

A moral purpose and critical voices on the *Prevent Duty*

Perspectives on the inclusion of the *Prevent Duty* in the inspection framework varied across the participants. Some participants expressed the view that nurseries should play their part in preventing radicalization and that it was right that this work should be inspected. Anna posed the question 'Why wouldn't it apply to you?'. Anna, Davinder and Jasmine also shared the view that the *Prevent Duty* was central to their wider role of early intervention with children and families. They believed that practitioners were well placed to identify the signs of radicalization because of their proximity to and knowledge of the children and the families. However, Derek suggested that its inclusion was important because 'within the early years children are an open book', here, Derek positioned practitioners as monitors of children because 'they are more open to talking candidly about what is going on home'. Elsewhere, I found (Robson 2020) that practitioners accepted the extension of their duty of care and welfare of children and families to include functions of counterterrorism. Participants also expressed the view that its inclusion focused attention; for example, Jasmine posed the question 'Would every nursery be thinking about all that stuff if it wasn't there?' implying its importance. In this way participants assigned a moral purpose to the implementation of the *Prevent Duty*; from their perspective it was beneficial to children and families. Part of the moral purpose was also to do a good job in this area; for Derek, Jasmine, Anna and Davinder it was important that practitioners evidenced they performed this task well.

Some practitioners questioned the rationale for including the *Prevent Duty* within the inspection process. For Catherine, Katerina, Laura and Asiya the inclusion of the *Prevent Duty* within the scope of the inspection framework was problematic but for different reasons. In all their responses, practitioners were critically reflexive. Asiya (D) suggested that it was 'tricky and confusing'; she stated that practitioners did not understand what the process of radicalization would mean in young children. She was concerned that they had not discussed as a team. Her responses throughout the interview suggested that practitioners in her nursery relied on the knowledge acquired through the practice questions they used to prepare for an Ofsted inspection; Asiya suggested that it lacked authenticity. In adopting this position, Asiya stated she drew on knowledge from her time as a student in higher education, where she was encouraged to question the implications of all policies for children and families. Catherine and Katerina held similar views; they felt

that the *Prevent Duty* was normalized by its alignment with safeguarding; they questioned whether the inspection framework led to a greater onus on practitioners to make judgments as to whether families are vulnerable to radicalization. While Katerina recognized why the *Prevent Duty* was included in the inspection framework, she critically reflected on the implications for her practice:

I know it should be my responsibility as an educator to prevent radicalisation but you have to be very very certain that it is extreme and we need to be careful as an educator that we do not accuse someone or be suspicious because you are playing with people's lives. It is delicate.

Laura questioned the need for the *Prevent Duty* given the emphasis already in policy on safeguarding and the welfare of children. Within this range of responses, there is evidence of both an unquestioning acceptance of *Prevent Duty* and a critical awareness of the complex way it exercises power in nurseries through its inclusion in the inspection framework.

Discussion

In this section, I revisit the findings through the critical lens of a panoptic schema to show the complex way the *Prevent Duty* appropriates nurseries for work associated with national security. The schema accommodates a complex policy pile (Cairney 2020) that embeds the *Prevent Duty* within three principal areas of ECEC policy in England; the framework for early years provision in England (Department for Education [DfE] 2017, 2023b), the statutory guidance on safeguarding (Department for Education [DfE] 2018, 2023a) and the framework for inspection (Ofsted 2015, 2019). In this way, the *Prevent Duty* is secured through a triple lock of three policies that govern nurseries. Catherine, Laura and Katerina were conscious of how the *Prevent Duty* and its inspection operated to order their practice. They named the power it operated, but other participants did not evidence awareness instead they worked to implement, uphold and comply with the schema's requirements. In this sense, the *Prevent Duty*, as a schema, met its goal as it was achieving the ends of government in mobilizing practitioners into the task of counterterrorism.

According to participants' accounts the *Prevent Duty* operated through a 'swarming of disciplinary methods' (Foucault 1977, 211) that embedded the *Prevent Duty* into their work. They were subject to disciplinary measures, but they also exercised them through processes of self-regulation and the regulation of their colleagues. Participants gave multiple examples of disciplinary measures; for example, through the processes of mock inspections and audits of practice, all of which reinforced the task of preventing radicalization. Conducting mock inspections and preparing for them requires self-regulation; however, the enactment of mock inspections and the audits were disciplinary methods where colleagues policed each other's compliance with the requirements of the *Prevent Duty*. In this context, participants exercised power over themselves and colleagues that was permissible within the structures of the schema. The process of maintaining a state of readiness for inspection led to a constant focus on the *Prevent Duty*; the process of inspection was central to the schema, and it was effective in holding practitioners within the field of perception of the government counterterrorism policy.

Lateral invisibility or visibility was a significant factor in participants' accounts of their experiences and awareness of how the *Prevent Duty* was implemented in the

ECEC sector or the education sector (Foucault 1977). Some participants focused on their own practice and their subjective experiences; they were technicians (Moss 2006) whose work was proscribed and regulated by the government. There were exceptions to this positioning, Asiya's concern was that the *Prevent Duty* had not been discussed in her team, and she believed that such discussions may lead to alternative understandings. Her position arose from a critically reflexive stance on the policy and the working environment in the nursery (Osgood 2011). Participants' perspectives on the *Prevent Duty* were complex; Anna, Davinder and Jasmine perspectives were informed by their awareness of the wider ECEC system in England. They suggested that the *Prevent Duty* was integral to the role of the ECEC sector in early intervention with families. In expressing this view, they were making connections, if uncritically, between different areas of social policy that affected their work. Here, they evidenced a lateral visibility of the way the *Prevent Duty* connected and linked the ECEC sector into a wider network of provision for families; this lateral visibility did not undermine the schema but provided a moral purpose for its existence.

The practice of surveillance was visible in participants' accounts of the *Prevent Duty*. Surveillance, in this context, did not depend on the formal role of the inspector but the anticipation of formal surveillance and being surveilled (Foucault 1977). The formal inspection was a permanent force that remained in the foreground for participants. However, participants also surveilled colleagues in relation to their knowledge. Such surveillance was justified through the rationale of inspection readiness; in this way, they exercised their duties as deputies for the *Prevent Duty* (Spiller, Awan and Whiting 2017). Some participants did question the practice of surveillance, for example, Catherine and Katerina were critically aware of the implication arising from alignment of the *Prevent Duty* with safeguarding policy for their work with children and families. They positioned surveillance of families as a responsibility for practitioners, although they questioned whether surveillance of families for signs of radicalization risked false judgements or assumptions about what might constitute radicalization of children.

The *Prevent Duty* operated as a panoptic schema in the ECEC sector; participants in this study exercised power made permissible through the schema to achieve its ends. They enacted disciplinary measures to ensure they could evidence compliance in any formal inspection process. This extends the finding from a previous study on the implementation of the *Prevent Duty* in nurseries where practitioners were performative in their implementation of FBVs (Robson 2018). In addition, participants in this study expressed a range of positions in relation to the *Prevent Duty* and such insights add to knowledge from previous studies on this topic; specifically, the work of Anderson (2020) and Robson (2018, 2020). Firstly, some participants assigned a moral purpose to the *Prevent Duty* in that they believed that the practitioners should play their part (if uncritically) in preventing radicalization. Secondly, some participants questioned the implications of the intersection of the counterterrorism and ECEC policy, but they did so from a position of compliance with the *Prevent Duty* due to the imperative of securing inspection judgements. Thirdly, a minority of participants questioned the design of the panoptic schema of the *Prevent Duty* in that they understood the implications of broadening the remit of ECEC to include counterterrorism. In arriving at the above positions, participants were

operating within the panoptic schema but adopted a critically reflexive stance in relation to ECEC policy (Osgood 2011).

Conclusion

The *Prevent Duty*, as it relates to the ECEC sector, is a panoptic schema by design. The schema brought counterterrorism into the foreground of ECEC practice through the triple lock across three areas of ECEC policy (framework for practice, safeguarding and inspection). It allowed practitioners to exercise power through self-regulation and peer regulation to achieve its aim; however, some participants exercised power to question the inclusion of the *Prevent Duty* in the ECEC sector. Inspection as a function played a key role in the schema by sustaining practitioners focus on the *Prevent Duty*. The findings from this small-scale qualitative study cannot be generalized. The small sample size of practitioners and the absence of the perspectives of other people who are in the scope of the panoptic schema of the *Prevent Duty*, for example, young children, inspectors and families are limitations. The study does, however, extend knowledge in relation to the complex ways in which practitioners position themselves in relation to the *Prevent Duty*, particularly the way in which they assigned a moral purpose to its implementation. Nine years after the introduction of CTSA, the *Prevent Duty* remains a contested policy for the implications arising from the deputization of a range of education practitioners into functions of national security. It remains a significant task for researchers to further understand the practical implications of the *Prevent Duty* for nurseries in England. Future research could explore the experiences of a range of people who are in the gaze of the panoptic schema of the *Prevent Duty* in the ECEC sector. In addition, the research has highlighted the importance of opportunities for practitioners to discuss the implications of the *Prevent Duty* in order that their voices can inform future policy debates on counterterrorism strategy in England.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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