



NOTA POLICY PRINCIPLES

NOTA recognises the importance of responding to consultations in the field of sexual offending and public/community safety and it is important that NOTA is recognised as a significant organisation in relation to consultation. However, devolution has meant that legislation and procedures may differ across the UK. It is important, therefore, that NOTA identifies and endorses a number of national **POLICY PRINCIPLES** that should underpin any response to consultation or communication with the media.

NOTA's **'mission'** is to work towards a safer society by developing work with people who have committed sexual abuse and their families and raising public awareness, thereby preventing sexual abuse.

NOTA's **Charitable Objectives** are to advance education for the benefit of the public, amongst members of the profession or persons working with or providing services for people who have committed sexual abuse or others having a legitimate professional interest in the field, and to promote or assist in promoting research into the skills associated with the professions who work with or provide services for people who have committed sexual abuse and into the efficiency of existing skills and practices, and to disseminate the useful results of such research for the benefit of the public.

Community safety and disclosure

- Providing quality assessment, intervention and management to individuals at risk to sexually abuse increases their ability to live healthy, non-abusive lives with the ultimate goal of making communities safer.
- NOTA supports the considered use of disclosure that is embedded in local public protection structures, police procedures and child protection/vulnerable adult procedures.
- Community safety is best achieved through public education in relation to sexual offending, based on recognised research and good practice.

Assessment of/intervention with adult offenders

- Practice, policy and management strategies need to be tailored to the assessed needs and risk of the individual; taking into account factors such as age, gender, culture, mental health functioning, developmental and intellectual level.
- Research, assessment, intervention, management and policies directed to address harmful sexual behaviours should take into consideration, respect and honour victims/survivors of sexual abuse and others impacted by harmful sexual behaviours.

- Pharmacological treatment for people who have committed sexual abuse should not be seen as a cure. Medication is most effective when it is an adjunct to psychological treatment, not a substitute for it.
- Assessment and intervention should focus on strengths and be holistic. Professionals should therefore also focus on the strengths, abilities, and competencies that a person has alongside risks they present. Intervention should be individualised.
- Good outcomes for intervention programmes of people who have committed sexual abuse and for community safety are best achieved through collaborative working across all relevant agencies.

Assessment of/intervention with young people displaying harmful sexual behaviours

- Children and young people under the age of 18 should not be equated with adult offenders. Children and young people with sexual behaviour problems and young people who have committed sexual abuse must be understood, assessed, and provided with intervention programmes in ways consistent with their age and level of development.
- The assessment of harmful sexual behaviour in young people is a specialist task that requires training and clinical oversight in order to be done competently. Best practice suggests that assessments should include a preliminary examination of trauma symptoms and contextual neuro-psychological functioning.
- Work with young people who display harmful sexual behaviours should be seen in a child protection/safeguarding context and should address any issues of victimhood as well as addressing the offending behaviour.
- Young people are best understood within the context of their families and social environments. Young people are by definition more dependant on the world around them than adults are. Support by families can be critical in managing and reducing risk.
- Labels can be particularly problematic and potentially damaging for children and young people .Given the potential impact of labelling and stigmatisation on vulnerable children and young people who are still in the process of developing a coherent sense of identity, it is likely that risk management strategies such as registration and notification may be harmful to the young person and possibly counterproductive in promoting public protection. Children and young people who display harmful sexual behaviours along with their parents or caregivers need to be treated with respect and dignity.

Prevention

- All adults are responsible for protecting the most vulnerable in society. Children can be protected from sexual abuse if adults are aware of how abusers operate, including those who abuse via the internet. Adults also need to feel confident about what to do if they are worried that abuse might be occurring.

Policy sub-committee

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