Supporting Professionals to Prevent Sexual Abuse

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Editorial - Helen Masson

Everyone I met who attended NOTA Conference Dublin in September felt as I had, that our three days there had been an energising and informative experience in terms of programme content, the quality of the conference facilities and the most enjoyable Irish-themed social events arranged for delegates. It was gratifying too that conference was much better attended than last year partly due to the welcome return of probation colleagues. The editorial team hopes that this issue of NOTA News adequately captures some of the conference experience both for those who were there and for those unable to attend.

As in previous years’ coverage of annual conference, we have included summaries of all the keynote presentations; two-minute interviews with five keynoters, the reflections of a range of delegates and the minutes of the AGM. In addition this year, we have included a report by Kieran McCartan and Jon Brown on the first public engagement event held at NOTA annual conference, an overview by Mary Tallon, Chair of the Republic of Ireland NOTA Branch, on their and the NI Branch’s involvement in organising and delivering conference, and a summary of the media coverage of conference kindly provided by Jane Curtin, Communications Manager at Temple Street Children’s University Hospital, Dublin.

Issue 77 of NOTA News also offers readers our regular reports from the (new) Chair, Simon Hackett, and General Manager, Malcolm Musket, Branch news and a round-up of recent press reports, as well as four articles on a variety of topical subjects relating to practice. Firstly, Chris Wilson, Beccy Scott and Sarah West report on an interesting development on the now well-established Circles model - Forums of community volunteers around victims of domestic violence and sexual assault in order to provide practical help and support to access other services as necessary. Secondly, Sarah Weldon and Liz Gilchrist pick up the important issue of the relationship between intimate partner violence and sexual violence in their paper which relates to Liz’s keynote presentation at the NOTA Scotland conference back in March. Thirdly, Natasha Sabin, a forensic psychologist based in Birmingham, describes the development of partnership arrangements between her team, which offers treatment to young people with harmful sexual behaviours, and two other local services providing help to victims of harmful sexual behaviour and those vulnerable to child sexual exploitation. This more integrated approach to responding to referrals and providing more holistic responses to assessed needs has now elicited interest nationally and would seem to provide a useful model. Finally, Stuart Allardice provides a very useful summary of a recent Barnardo’s report on the particular risk young people with learning disabilities face in relation to child sexual exploitation and the need for all professionals to be alert to such vulnerability.

As well as introducing the contents of Issue 77, I can also report on a decision made at NEC in September 2015 to leave the Conference issue of NN freely available on the NOTA website but to make the other two issues per year available online only to NOTA members, who will also continue to receive hard copies of all three issues, to reflect the newsletter’s status as an important member benefit.

Finally, I am sorry to report that we have been notified of the deaths of two North American colleagues in the field, colleagues whose names and work may be familiar to many of the NOTA readership:

Mark Chaffin - whose obituary can be found at www.legacy.com/obituaries/oklahoman/obituary.aspx?pid=175799914


Helen Masson, Editor, NOTA News
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Chair’s Welcome

It is a very great pleasure to write as the new Chair of NOTA following my election at the AGM held recently in Dublin.

I feel privileged to be the 7th Chair in the history of the organisation. I have worked in some capacity with all of the previous Chairs in roles as diverse as Branch NEC Representative, Chair of the Membership Services as well as Policy and Practice Sub Committees, as Editor of the Journal of Sexual Aggression and, most recently, as Vice Chair.

I know from my first-hand experience how fortunate we have been to have had such dedicated and skilled past Chairs who have worked hard for the benefit of NOTA. I hope to build on their example to help us move on to the next stage of our evolution as an organisation. In particular, I’d like to thank Gail McGregor for all the many and varied contributions she made in her time as Chair. When working alongside Gail as Vice Chair, I always appreciated her careful, balanced and reflective approach to the challenges of the role. I am also delighted that Professor Sarah Brown of Coventry University has been elected to succeed me as Vice Chair and I look forward very much to working together with her and the whole of the NEC.

NOTA’s mission is one which is personally and professionally very important to me and, I know, to our membership as a whole. I shall work as hard as I possibly can to help NOTA realise this mission. NOTA has been a critical part of my experience as a professional working in the field of sexual aggression for more than 20 years. I have benefited hugely from the support and generosity of fellow NOTA members who have shared their experiences and knowledge. It is the sense of a supportive and committed community that I would like to build on in my time as Chair.

We have a range of significant challenges for the organisation, not least the difficult financial climate that we find ourselves in which is still having serious adverse implications for the services in which our members are employed, as well as for charities like NOTA. I’ll be working with the NEC over the coming months on a strategic plan for the organisation which will set out our core actions over the next few years. However, I already have a series of priorities in my mind which include:

• Working to stabilise the organisation financially, including extending membership and diversifying sources of income;
• Making our mark more effectively outside the organisation and professionalising our communications and media efforts;
• Offering all the support I can to Branches, given their vital role in our organisation;
• Articulating and promoting our organisational values; and
• Nurturing and drawing on the massive amount of talent that exists within the organisation.

With your help, I hope that we can ensure that the next few years are ones of optimism, energy and excitement for NOTA. Please do get in touch with me and/or with the other members of the NEC and play whatever part you can in helping us to achieve these goals.

Professor Simon Hackett
NOTA Chair, September 2015

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Important Developments in NOTA’s organisational strategy

Since writing my Chair’s welcome in September, the National Executive Committee met on November 11th 2015 to discuss organisational strategy and ways forward for NOTA.

We acknowledged the loyal and committed core membership of the organisation as one of our strengths, but at the same time noted that this remains a challenging time for charities like NOTA, as well as for members working across varied public services. As a Board, we are very committed to doing whatever we can to develop NOTA onto the next level and to ensure its future health and viability. Our mission remains the same:

NOTA is a charity committed to the prevention of all forms of sexual violence and abuse. Its mission is to reduce victimisation through the development of policy and practice with children and adults with harmful sexual behaviours, their families and communities. NOTA provides education, training and research to professionals in the UK and Ireland. NOTA influences public policy by offering advice and by promoting change in government, professional agencies, the media and wider society.

At the same time, we identified three core and simple aspirations to be an organisation which offers:

• Outstanding member services;
• Outstanding contributions to the field; and
• Outstanding external presence.

These will guide us in developing our strategic plan for the next five years to help us achieve these goals.

In addition, there are some important changes we are making now to how we organise our committee meetings from 2016 onwards. In short, the organisation will be governed and managed through five main committees:

• A NOTA Board which will be responsible for agreeing strategy and planning, monitoring, governance and assurance;
• A Branch Chairs Group which will be chaired by me and which will focus on Branch operations, ensuring support and the sharing of good practice between branches;
Dublin
Conference Report

Tony Morrison
Memorial Lecture
Assessment and Management of Online Sex Offenders – Michael Seto

Introduction

In this keynote, I tried to provide a succinct overview of what we know about online sexual offenders, beginning first with the recognition that most of what we know is about online Child Pornography (CP) offenders conducted over the past 15 years, with more recent work on online solicitation (sometimes called online luring or grooming) offenders. I discussed explanations for online offending, characteristics of online offenders, risk assessment, and intervention (see also Seto, 2013).

My interest in online sexual offending was initiated by questions from law enforcement and clinicians about the characteristics and especially the potential risk posed by online offenders as more such cases were being seen with the advent of the Internet. Like so many other aspects of our everyday lives, the Internet began playing a bigger and more common role in certain forms of sexual offending. For both CP and solicitation offending, Internet technologies like email, instant messaging, chat rooms and social network sites provide greater and more affordable access to opportunities to offend. This can be contrasted with pre-Internet

NOTA General Manager

After a summer period occupied with a range of Accountancy, Companies House, Charity Commission and other administrative reports. We focussed upon the delivery of the NOTA international Conference in Dublin. It was by any measure a success and a great team effort from all involved.

We are already in the early stages of organising the 2016 Conference which will be held at the Hilton Hotel in Brighton 28-30 September 2016. Another date for your diary is a one day Prevention Conference which is in the planning stage but is scheduled to be held on 13 July 2016 at UCL in London.

During the coming year we expect that NOTA will continue to offer excellent training events whilst proving support to an increased membership. As always do get in contact with any questions or comments.

Malcolm Muskett, General Manager, generalmanager@nota.co.uk

With these tweaks to our systems and structures, as well as renewing our mission and goals, I am confident that we can do much to help develop NOTA to the next level. I hope very much to have your support as members of NOTA in achieving these goals and in the hard work that their achievement will entail.

Simon Hackett
NOTA Chair
access to CP, for example, which involved physical objects such as photographs, film/video, magazines or books. CP then was difficult to find, expensive, and fraught with the risk of being detected.

Explanations

Self-report and phallometric studies support the idea that many, but by no means all, CP offenders are likely to have pedophilia (defined as a recurrent, intense sexual interest in prepubescent children). This evidence is sufficiently good to suggest CP offending is a valuable indicator of pedophilia, alongside certain sexual offending patterns such as offending against boys or offending against unrelated children.

However, other explanations have been offered: particularly sexual addiction or compulsivity involving pornography, often described in terms of escalation of use; indiscriminate sexual interests; and curiosity. Knowing more about the nature of the offender’s pornography (both child and adult) and about the presence of other child-related content would help us ascertain the most apt explanations. For example, someone whose pornography collection involved 90% CP would be unconvincing in claiming pornography compulsivity or indiscriminate interests. I also noted that there was some evidence that a minority of CP offenders have other pornography that is suggestive of additional paraphilic interests, based on number, organization and engagement with this content.

Characteristics

Recent meta-analyses by Kelly Babchishin and her colleagues have been very helpful in summarizing what we know about the characteristics of online offenders, where most of the online offenders who have been studied have committed CP offenses (Babchishin, Hanson, & VanZuylen, 2015). Of particular interest are studies that compare online and offline offenders. Online offenders are almost exclusively male, even more so than offenders who have sexual contact with children; they are disproportionately Caucasian; slightly higher in IQ and education (likely an artifact of using computers to commit their crimes); and lower in criminal history and apparent antisociality (e.g. psychopathy score).

Understanding how online and offline offenders differ is important in guiding our thinking about intervention. Finding few if any differences would suggest that online offenders might benefit from the same treatment or supervision regimens as offline offenders. In contrast, finding differences might highlight areas where interventions need to be modified. Indeed, studies of psychological characteristics suggest that online offenders are particularly distinguished by their interpersonal deficits and by having more problems with sexual self-regulation.

Risk Assessment

Seto, Hanson and Babchishin (2011) found that one in eight online offenders have a criminal record for contact sexual offending, suggesting a need for online offender specific risk assessment (because so-called dual offenders, with both online and contact sexual offenses, could be assessed using existing measures such as the Static-99R or Risk Matrix 2000). In response, we developed the Child Pornography Offender Risk Tool (CPORT, pronounced ‘seaport’) from a sample of 266 adult men convicted of child pornography offenses (Seto & Eke, 2015). The CPORT contains 7 items, scored yes/no, with a point for each yes; scores therefore can range from 0 to 7. The items are: offender age 35 or younger at time of index investigation; prior criminal history of any kind; prior or concurrent contact sexual offending; prior or concurrent failure on conditional release, such as bail or probation; admission of sexual interest in prepubescent or pubescent children; having more boy than girl CP; and having more boy than girl other child content. CPORT scores are significantly predictive of any sexual recidivism, defined as any new contact or noncontact sexual offense. In this sample, there was a 3% contact and 9% CP recidivism rate.

Conclusion

In sum, there have been substantial advances in our understanding of online sexual offending in the past decade. Much more work clearly needs to be done, but accumulating evidence suggests that CP offenders are an overlapping but distinct population of individuals from those who commit contact sexual offenses against children or who sexually solicit young people online.

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References


KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Pesky gNATs! Using Technology to Adapt Cognitive Behaviour Therapy for Young People

- Gary O’Reilly

Introduction
My NOTA Dublin presentation to delegates introduced a technology based programme called Pesky gNATs that delivers Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) to young people (O’Reilly & Coyle, 2015). Pesky gNATs aims to combine the highest quality evidence-based psychological content for mental health difficulties experienced by young people, with the highest quality technology and gaming designed intervention delivery, on a sustainable not-for-profit basis. There are three components to Pesky gNATs:

(a) A computer game that young people play with a therapist that delivers, level by level, a CBT intervention;

(b) A smart-phone App that supports young people as they transfer what they learn in-session to their home, school and community life; and

(c) the www.peskygnats.com website that allows mental health professionals to register their qualifications and watch videos providing on-line training on how to get the most from the programme.

The value of CBT in sexual offending treatment work
In my keynote I argued that CBT has a very effective and helpful role to play in many different aspects of intervention with people of all ages who commit sexual offences. The introduction of CBT into the field of sexual offender intervention was a transforming moment (Marshall & Hollin, 2015). It heralded the development of a range of different programmes in North America and in the United Kingdom that offered effective intervention. CBT combined with Relapse Prevention approaches equipped professionals with a framework that allowed offenders to use a psychological model to understand the thought-feeling-behaviour cycle of their specific offending behaviour. It allowed them insight into the origins and maintaining factors that supported the thoughts-feelings and behaviours of their offences. It opened up an understanding of the distorted thinking that supported their offences and created real, effective avenues for change.

Recently a more holistic approach to offender intervention is advocated through the Good Lives Model (Ward & Brown, 2004). It prompts clinicians to not simply be offence focused but to appreciate the value of helping people who commit sexual offences have broadly healthy and fulfilling lives achieving, in pro-social ways, personal needs common to all that previously they were fulfilling maladaptively through their offending. CBT has a role in equipping people who offend to attain many aspects of their Good-Life needs, especially good mental health.

Young people who offend generally have very high levels of mental health difficulty and often have higher levels of morbidity when compared to both young people without offending behaviour who attend mental health services and young people in the community (Hayes & O’Reilly, 2013). Young people who sexually offend have similarly high levels of suicidality and depression compared to general non-sexual offenders and have higher levels of general anxiety, social anxiety, and lower levels of self-esteem (Seto & Lalumière, 2010). CBT is an effective intervention that assists young people manage their mental health difficulties. As such, the role of CBT in sexual offender intervention is long-standing, effective, and varied.

Pesky gNATs
In the design of Pesky gNATs we used our understanding of developmental and clinical psychology, and computer science to make the abstract concepts of CBT more accessible to younger people. To do this we use a concrete metaphor that unfolds during the course of the game to explain CBT ideas. We use social stories, and a social learning model, to make these ideas more meaningful. We combine increased self-awareness of an individual’s cognitions with relaxation and mindfulness skills all in the context of a computer game that the young person plays with a therapist over the course of seven different appointments. The young person then transfers his or her learning in-session to everyday life with an easy-to-use Pesky gNATs App that rewards the user for completing between session tasks by unlocking fun games the more it is used.

My keynote ended by inviting people to sample one of our Apps called ‘Mindful Gnats’ that is available for free on the iTunes and Google Play Stores. It contains 8 different mindfulness or relaxation exercises. If any reader would like to learn more about our programme please visit our website www.PeskyGnats.com or follow us on twitter @peskygnats

Dr Gary O’Reilly, Senior Lecturer and Director of the Doctoral Training Programme in Clinical Psychology, University College Dublin

References:


The role of ‘grooming’ in child sexual exploitation and abuse - Anne-Marie McAlinden

Grooming has been described as a ‘ubiquitous feature of child sexual abuse’ (Thornton, 2003: 144). However, there are difficulties in distinguishing between potentially harmful and innocent motivations towards children, particularly at the early stages of the offending process. ‘Grooming’, which may occur not just with the child but also with the environment or significant others (Craven et al., 2006), is about ‘setting up’ opportunities to abuse and subsequently avoiding discovery or disclosure (McAlinden, 2006, 2012).

I have adopted a wider definition that encompasses the complexity of grooming and its myriad forms – between children and young people (‘peer-to-peer grooming’); of protective adults or communities (‘familial’ or ‘societal grooming’); on the internet (‘on-line grooming’); within the context of organised child sexual exploitation (CSE) (‘on street’ or ‘localised grooming’); and within institutions or between offenders and professionals (‘institutional grooming’). Thus grooming is:

1. the use of a variety of manipulative and controlling techniques
2. with a vulnerable subject
3. in a range of inter-personal and social settings
4. in order to establish trust or normalise sexually harmful behaviour
5. with the overall aim of facilitating exploitation and/or prohibiting exposure (McAlinden, 2012: 11).

Recent research, emerging themes

While previous work has examined grooming on-line (e.g O’Connell, 2003) or in face-to-face contexts (e.g Elliott et al., 1995), a number of innovative themes have emerged from my recent research based on over 50 interviews with professionals across the UK and Ireland (see McAlinden, 2012). First, while victims have sometimes been utilised by offenders to ‘recruit’ other victims (McAlinden, 2006), instances of peer-based harm have manifested as forms of CSE via ‘sexting’ and ‘cyberbullying’. These are augmented and made more challenging for practitioners by the ubiquitous use of the internet and smart phones as well as popular culture which normalises the premature sexualisation of children.

Second, as there are ‘multiple pathways’ into offending (Ward and Hudson, 1998), the term ‘grooming’ may be more apt to describe ‘preferential’ or predatory sex offenders who deliberately target children rather than ‘opportunistic’ or ‘situational offenders’ (Wortley and Smallbone, 2006). Grooming may also fit with subsequent, rather than first-time offending since, for many offenders, the conscious act of setting up an opportunity to abuse may not arise before the first offence.

Third, ‘grooming’ and the inherent betrayal of trust emerge as ‘emotional harm’ which has a long-lasting impact on victims, beyond the actual abuse. Grooming may prevent victims from realising that they have been victimised. Normalisation may result in ‘learned’ harmful behaviour wherein victims can become offenders as part of the ‘victim-offender continuum’ (McAlinden, 2014). This can also make the work of criminal justice or support agencies extremely difficult in engaging victims in justice or therapeutic processes particularly in the case of CSE.

Fourth, many of the interviewed professionals described instances of ‘professional’ or ‘institutional grooming’ as ‘an occupational hazard’ (McAlinden, 2012: ch 5). For some, ‘manipulation styles’ (Sullivan and Quayle, 2012) were augmented with offenders who had been through treatment and had learned ‘the language of change’. Highlighting this notion reinforces the importance of a multi-agency approach to risk assessment, treatment and management. However, it also underlines the tension between the human and professional side of working with sex offenders and the need to guard against the further ‘othering’ of sex offenders.

Conclusion

The complexities of CSE and abuse underline the limitations of legal and policy frameworks in capturing the totality of grooming, particularly before the occurrence of actual harm. There is a need, therefore, to develop a more wide-ranging social approach aimed at early intervention and prevention. This involves developing a tapestry of services to engage victims, offenders, families and the wider community, including children and young people more broadly.

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References


KEYNOTE ADDRESS

The ARMS Project: Standardising Police Risk Assessment and Management of Sexual Offenders across England and Wales
- Mark Blandford and Duncan Sheppard

Introduction

For the Police, ARMS (Active Risk Management System) has become the standard means to identify the required work for the management of male sexual offenders aged 18 years and over in England and Wales. Following implementation by the Police, early indications from three pilot studies and since show that the application of ARMS has significantly altered the way sex offenders are managed by introducing a more balanced approach between risk and protective factors. This has allowed practitioners to step away from what was potentially an over defensive and intensive approach, to one that targets our resources more effectively.

Justifiably sexual offending continues to evoke strong public emotion and media interest, particularly those offences committed by known sexual offenders. Society’s continuing concerns with sexual offending have led to new governmental legislation, policies and guidance that ensure our criminal justice agencies work together more effectively to risk assess and risk manage registered sexual offenders. These arrangements assist in protecting the public and maintaining their confidence in agencies, including the police, with accountability met through the active supervision, assessment and management of the risk posed by all registered sexual offenders within our communities.

The ARMS system

The development of ARMS has to be set in a context of continuing financial constraints, increases in the recording of sexual crimes and an increase in the number of registered sexual offenders, the implications for the resources required to maintain these arrangements being significant. The increased demand has brought about the need for a fresh perspective to be taken by the Police to ensure resources are focused on those offenders requiring intervention and less so for those that do not. The Police, historically, have tended to be deficit or risk focused, which has brought about a rather dogged enforcement approach to managing risk, with offenders often finding themselves subject to a range of sanctions, concentrating on what they should be prevented from doing, rather what can be allowed and encouraged. Latterly, though, our understanding has shifted towards recognising the role played by so called protective factors or strengths in offenders. The identification of these positive factors opens up a more balanced perspective on offenders, one where professionals are encouraged to take them into account when identifying the actions that are required to manage the person in the community.

This has led to work to identify relevant evidenced and measurable recidivism and protective factors that can be organised to guide practitioners, using their police investigative skills, in arriving at a balanced perspective on the risk posed by the individual. In the ARMS system 7 risk factors and 5 protective factors are identified. These are:

**Risk factors:**
- Opportunity to offend
- Offence related sexual interests
- Sexual pre-occupation
- Emotional congruence to children
- Hostile orientation
- Poor self-management
- Anti-social Influences

**Protective factors:**
- Pro-social Network
- A commitment to desist
- An intimate relationship
- Employment/Positive Routine
- Social investment - ‘Giving Something Back’

However, rather than arriving at a categorisation of risk alone, the framework is action-focused, guiding practitioners into being able to make a realistic prediction of how a case is likely to progress up to the next review with the resultant risk management strategy and priorities structured to effectively target this evidence based risk scenario.

Future steps

The next challenges for the Police are to evaluate ARMS, to continue to support the roll out in the National Probation Service and to ensure that the ARMS framework becomes embedded into normal business. Initial feedback from practitioners about the ARMS system is extremely encouraging, both in its ease of use and effectiveness. This is a very positive start which needs to be built on by, for example, the development of ARMS for use with those under 18 and for female sex offenders.

Mark Blandford, National College of Policing;
KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Restorative Justice and Adult Sex Offenders
- Marie Keenan and Ailbhe

The use of restorative justice (RJ) for sexual violence has been the subject of on-going debate among RJ advocates, the victim rights movement and feminist activists, for some time. This keynote examined the appropriateness of restorative justice for sexual violence. The presentation began with the personal testimony of Ailbhe, (a victim of stranger sexual assault) regarding her journey towards restorative justice and her subsequent meeting with the man who assaulted her. Ailbhe told of her need to ‘change the memory card’ and ‘move on with her life’, processes which could not be achieved no matter how many hours of therapy she had engaged, or how many ‘empty chairs’ she had spoken to in place of the offender. These outcomes have been achieved since Ailbhe’s restorative meeting with the man who sexually assaulted her. She asked conference participants to listen to victims of sexual violence when they say they have a need and interest in meeting their offender and she argued on the basis of her experience that the process of meeting with the victim can have a positive impact on the lives of offenders too. Addressing the desire of professionals to protect victims from re-victimization by RJ, Ailbhe argued that, by not allowing victims to have the ultimate say in decisions that affect their lives, professionals are unintentionally further disempowering victims of sexual crime, albeit with the best of intentions. She argued that by preparing victims and offenders very well for restorative justice meetings the risk of re-victimization was significantly reduced.

Picking up themes from Ailbhe’s story Marie Keenan, who was Ailbhe’s support person during the restorative meeting with the man who assaulted her. Ailbhe, (a victim of stranger sexual assault) regarding her journey towards restorative justice and her subsequent meeting with the man who assaulted her. Ailbhe told of her need to ‘change the memory card’ and ‘move on with her life’, processes which could not be achieved no matter how many hours of therapy she had engaged, or how many ‘empty chairs’ she had spoken to in place of the offender. These outcomes have been achieved since Ailbhe’s restorative meeting with the man who sexually assaulted her. She asked conference participants to listen to victims of sexual violence when they say they have a need and interest in meeting their offender and she argued on the basis of her experience that the process of meeting with the victim can have a positive impact on the lives of offenders too. Addressing the desire of professionals to protect victims from re-victimization by RJ, Ailbhe argued that, by not allowing victims to have the ultimate say in decisions that affect their lives, professionals are unintentionally further disempowering victims of sexual crime, albeit with the best of intentions. She argued that by preparing victims and offenders very well for restorative justice meetings the risk of re-victimization was significantly reduced.

Picking up themes from Ailbhe’s story Marie Keenan, who was Ailbhe’s support person during the

RJ, discussed findings from two studies on RJ in sexual violence cases in which she was involved: An Irish study in collaboration with Facing Forward on Sexual Trauma and Abuse: Restorative and Transformative Possibilities accessible at:

http://researchrepository.ucd.ie/bitstream/handle/10197/6247/Sexual_Trauma_and_Abuse%3B_Restorative_and_Transformative_Possibilities.pdf?sequence=1

and a Daphne funded project with Dr Estelle Zinsstag and supervised by Prof Ivo Aersten, both of KU Leuven, on Developing Integrated Responses for Sexual Violence: the Role for Restorative Justice accessible at:


In outlining the key features of RJ Dr Keenan suggested that RJ is a victim-led approach to justice, participation is voluntary, the offender must take responsibility for the offence in order to be eligible for participation, the safety of all is of paramount importance and preparation for the ‘meeting’ or conference or restorative circle is essential. The research studies found that in cases in which victims of sexual crime wanted to engage in RJ they wanted to do so for a number of reasons: to face their fears, to face the offender with statements, to face the offender with questions, for healing for all, to help victims to move on with their lives and for forgiveness if possible. Offenders believed that RJ would fill many gaps in the criminal justice system.

To conclude the presentation Ailbhe and Marie were clear that RJ in sexual violence cases must not be presented as an alternative justice mechanism for victims of sexual crime but as an additional justice mechanism for victims and offenders with the aim of repairing the harm in the aftermath of sexual crime. In advocating this additional justice approach the presentation addressed the challenges and responses to them involved in undertaking such an endeavour.

Dr. Marie Keenan, Lecturer, University College Dublin

Ailbhe, Adult Survivor of Sexual Assault
Under the radar… or over the rainbow…
the application of restorative approaches in cases of Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB)

- Vince Mercer

Introduction

This brief account will pick up on some issues raised in the keynote address I delivered at the 2015 NOTA International Conference in Dublin, Ireland. My title reflects a general sense for those of us who have practice experience in the field of Restorative Justice (RJ) and Harmful Sexual behaviour (HSB) that, for many years, RJ was discreet, low volume, not especially of interest to research and therefore not widely talked about. In many ways it was characterized as the RJ practice that ‘dare not speaketh its name’.

The AIM Project experience of using RJ in HSB Cases

AIM’s history of using restorative approaches in cases of adolescent HSB dates back to the period following the implementation of the pioneering 1997 Crime and Disorder Act in England and Wales. It was clear that the initial implementation of RJ on a statutory basis was primarily targeted at straightforward property crime or at least cases where there would not be the complexities and sensitivities that would inevitably arise from involvement in cases of criminal harm associated with sexual offending. Indeed, although never made explicit in the legislative framework, strong messages came via central government that RJ should not be applied to areas of gendered violence, such as in cases of domestic violence or sexual violence. This despite the fact that the introduction of the Referral Order as the UK’s first explicit restorative approach on the legislative books, had inevitably ‘netted’ a small number of adolescents who had sexually harmed.

We took a conscious decision at the AIM Project to ‘reframe’ the statement ‘RJ doesn’t do sexual offending’ into a more positive question of ‘what would be necessary to enable restorative approaches to be applied safely and appropriately in cases of sexual harm?’ To answer this we decided to run a small demonstration caseload of referrals received from our local Youth Offending Teams and attempt to explore what benefits the approach offered, what ‘modifications’ would be necessary to ‘standard’ RJ practice to enable it to be safe, appropriate and beneficial, and what the wider practice implications of this approach were.

Our starting point was a local piece of research which gave us limited but essential information about the ‘victim profile’ of 75 adolescents who had sexually offended against a total of 109 victims. In summary the most striking characteristic of the victims was that whilst 43% were the subject of ‘child abuse’ (where there was 4 years+ age difference), a similar percentage were defined victims of ‘peer abuse’ (where there was less than 4 years’ age difference) and, most significantly, nearly 80% had an existing relationship with the abuser (31% being intrafamilial cases). It was clear that the ‘relational’ context was going to be the most powerful ‘driver’ for consideration of restorative work. And so it turned out to be.

Much more detail of the work we undertook is available elsewhere (Calder, 2007) but, in essence, the AIM RJ work was characterised by the following:

• All offenders were assessed using a criminogenic HSB specific assessment tool such as AIM2;
• They were then subject to a specific Restorative Assessment framework to determine suitability and applicability;
• All those deemed suitable had to be post-conviction and engaged in a programme to address the factors that contributed to their HSB;
• All had an existing relationship with the victim that might be resumed in the future;
• AIM employed a multi methodological approach, using either Mediation, Family Group Conferencing or indirect methods of facilitating dialogue;
• All cases were closely evaluated to capture the experience of core participants in the process and to capture their feedback.

Ultimately this approach led to the creation of the AIM Restorative Framework for HSB, which operates as a complementary assessment framework to the AIM2 Offender Assessment; the development of Best Restorative Practice in cases of HSB and, finally, a drive to pass this practice knowledge on via tailored practice training programmes.

Recent developments in RJ

Since 2005 the RJ landscape has changed considerably; we now have well researched practice standards, a framework for professional development and accountability and in the Youth Justice system a growing focus upon cases that are deemed to be ‘Sensitive and Complex’. All sexual abuse cases are by definition both sensitive and complex. Within the RJ community there has been a parallel growth in interest and confidence around the application of restorative approaches in cases of sexual
violence. Demand for training in the AIM approach has been far greater this year than any time previously.

However the restorative challenges remain: how do we determine suitability and appropriateness? How do we deliver high quality and safe practice which engages with both the victims’ and offenders’ needs as well as the wider familial or community context? Finally, how do we encourage our colleagues in the therapeutic community working directly with both offenders and victims that these are not two separate silos, or irreconcilable positions with no common needs or interests?

The day given over to RJ and HSB at this year’s NOTA conference has marked another chapter in the consideration of these and similar concerns; these are not conversations that will cease but will continue to be demanding of time and attention for those who work in the field of prevention or reduction of future sexual violence. Moreover we are fortunate now in not only having insights drawn from UK practice, but from a wide international study too. The European Forum for Restorative Justice (www.euroforumrj.org) is shortly to make public the findings of the DAPHNE funded two year study into RJ and Sexual Violence, a study in which the AIM Project was a key partner. I encourage all those in the field of HSB to make the time to seek this study out and consider how restorative approaches could enhance the quality of work they deliver to victims, offenders and families. In the meantime the Best Practice guide produced by this project is available from www.law.kuleuven.be/linc/english/research/RJ_sexual_violence_practice_guide_Sep2015.pdf

Vince Mercer – AIM Project, Manchester

References


A ‘two-minute’ interview with Michael Seto

I got into this area of academic/professional work because I was always interested in understanding human behaviour. Having studied psychology at college, I was first interested in pursuing a career in general clinical psychology, but I moved into forensic psychology when I went to Queen’s University, Kingston, Ontario where I met well known researchers such as Howard Barbaree, Bill Marshall and Vern Quinsey – it was like a light bulb turning on.

What I most enjoy about what I do professionally is pursuing my love for discovery. I worked as a clinical psychologist in a hospital for a while, but I became more and more interested in research because I wanted to experience that wonderful feeling of finding out things that were previously unknown.

The hardest aspect of my work is being careful about what I tell people when I’m asked what I do. A lot of people may admire the work, but they don’t necessarily understand what I do and, if they did, they may not be comfortable with it. I often find myself being vague about my job, which I don’t like.

My desk is very sparse now and has on it a computer monitor, a telephone, a lamp and a few family photos. I’ve had a couple of office moves to rooms with much less storage space. I used these opportunities to get rid of all paper journals and articles and my desk has been transformed from the standard academic variety – which often holds stacks of papers and books – to the uncluttered one I have now. It feels good – it’s freeing to the mind.

I attend to my welfare and well-being by doing yoga, fresh-water fishing in the many lakes in Canada and reading fiction and popular non-fiction. I recently enjoyed reading ‘H is for Hawk’ by Helen Macdonald – it’s three books in one – about a journey through personal bereavement, a mini-biography of the author T.H. White, and a history of falconry.

My advice to anyone thinking of pursuing a similar career is to be open to opportunities; there is no set path to becoming a forensic psychologist or researcher, such as having to go to a particular grad school. Follow opportunities if they are interesting, if they fit for you in terms of timing, etc.

If I could have had a second career I would also like to have been a book author – of popular non-fiction books - or a science writer, writing in a newspaper or writing a magazine column, exploring and explaining to my audience aspects of scientific discovery such as in genetics.

When I’m not working I most like to read, fish and spend time with my family.

I wish I was really good at remembering people’s names and faces. Sometimes people come up to me and introduce themselves as having met me at a conference three years ago or more – I really admire their capacity to recall names and faces and put them together!

It may not be obvious from looking at me that I was an indifferent student until I went to grad school. I used to skip classes, not do the required reading and just got by in written work and tests etc. It wasn’t until graduate school that my interest in psychology was awakened.

What is really important about life is to find your own personal meaning and live life according to that. Don’t necessarily do the obvious things that are set in front of us – university, marriage, parenthood. There’s no one path in life.

If I had a magic wand I would eliminate sexual abuse and exploitation.
A ‘two-minute’ interview with Anne-Marie McAlinden

I got into this area of academic/professional work because I was always interested in criminal histories and the psychology of criminal offending even as a child.

What I most enjoy about what I do professionally is sitting at the computer and writing.

The hardest aspect of my work is dealing with people who don’t stick to deadlines.

My desk is fairly tidy, with a pile of things to do on one side.

I attend to my welfare and well-being by spending time with my kids. At the weekend, I chill with a glass of wine and an old movie.

My advice to anyone thinking of pursuing a similar career is go to as many conferences as you can early on. Get out there and make links.

If I could have had a second career, I would also like to have been an interior designer.

When I’m not working I most like to shop for clothes.

I wish I was really good at painting - painting pictures for the wall.

It may not be obvious from looking at me that I am very shy person.

The public figure I most admire in the world is Hillary Clinton. She has put up with a lot. I’d like to see her as the first female US President.

The public figure I most dislike in the world is Russell Brand.

What is really important about life is to have enough time for your family.

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A ‘two-minute’ interview with Ailbhe

Prior to being violently attacked my life had been such that I never knew the immense impact that crime can have on anybody's life at any time. I had lived a simple enough life and never considered the tremendous effect that one moment of violence can have on a person’s existence. Violence is unfortunately part of our society and we are all exposed to it and susceptible to being a victim of it but RJ, in my view, is a tool available to victims for counteracting or healing the harm this violence can cause.

Since being involved in the RJ process and finding closure my life has been really my own life again, in its fullest sense! At some level, part of me was still sitting in the past with the impact of the crime because of an inability to fully let go. Now I feel free to fully move on, which is liberating and means I can focus more on enjoying my life and building a future for myself and my daughter that I choose and deserve...

I would say to someone in a similar position thinking of going through a RJ process to go for it with all your might and determination. I honestly think if someone feels it may benefit them and that something is driving them to seek it, then it is certainly a tool for healing the hurt they have experienced. Obviously RJ works best only when sufficient preparation work has taken place in advance of a victim and offender mediation and that is a given. However, my feeling was always that even the act of seeking a meeting and taking things as far as I was able to was helping me, because it was empowering. My view is that, even if a face-to-face meeting is not the end result (as there is always the possibility an offender would not agree to participate), seeking to help yourself by empowering yourself can take you a lot further down the path of healing the hurt than you would imagine. Ultimately, I think it is a process that can really help victims even if the end result they had envisaged is not necessarily accomplished, so I would have nothing but encouragement for anyone else considering engaging in a process.

Presenting at NOTA Conference, Dublin was honestly a bit nerve-wrecking, but definitely rewarding. Obviously as I am not an academic or practitioner, standing up and speaking in front of so many is not something I’m very used to. However, because I believe so much in the power of RJ from my own experience, I was delighted to be there and to be able to share with others who work in areas where RJ may potentially be used; it was very rewarding as I feel I can give something back to the process by sharing this information. I truly hope that by speaking about my story it helps to highlight the benefits of RJ to participate, seeking to help yourself by empowering yourself can take you a lot further down the path of healing the hurt than you would imagine. Ultimately, I think it is a process that can really help victims even if the end result they had envisaged is not necessarily accomplished, so I would have nothing but encouragement for anyone else considering engaging in a process.
those who work in fields with victims or offenders and who ultimately might be slightly more inclined now to believe that a victim may want and benefit from the process.

I attend to my welfare and well-being now by focusing on enjoying the simple things in my life as much as possible. Going to the cinema or park with my young daughter, dinner out with friends or a family gathering. I think the ability to enjoy these moments has helped me to have a much more positive view of things.

(Aside from being a survivor of violent assault) it may not be obvious from looking at me that I was a singer in a band and we made a CD recently. I really enjoy writing lyrics for songs and found that creative side of myself only in more recent years. I found the experience of creating music from scratch really fulfilling as I absolutely love music and couldn’t be without it!

I wish I was really good at playing any musical instrument at all! I wish my mother had forced me to go to those piano lessons that I didn’t want to go to. I think it’s a real gift to be talented at playing an instrument.

What is really important about life is being able to enjoy the present moment. I would say this is the hardest thing to do but the most valuable. Getting stuck in the past or obsessing about the future, I have found, can often diminish my ability to enjoy my life, but being able to let go of the past and not worrying too much about the future (however difficult that sometimes is) seems like the key to me to get the most out of life! Apart from this one ability, most definitely my relationship with my daughter.

If I had a magic wand I would in one instant create a dedicated service for victims of crime where they could go to initiate an RJ process with the person who harmed them if this is something they would seek. This would facilitate mediation between victims and offenders at any stage, and not just post-conviction. I often think that there must be many people out there who are right now suffering as a result of being a victim of a particular crime and who may have a better quality of life in the long run if they were given the option to engage in an RJ process. However, they do not know that it exists or how to seek it and to me that seems like a great pity. If this service was available for victims of any type of crime, I think it could really benefit many people.

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A ‘two-minute’ interview with Marie Keenan

I got into this area of academic/professional work because I could see the justice gaps that existed in the criminal justice system for victims of sexual crime, the accountability gaps for offenders and the healing gaps for both and for their families and communities. I have spent much of my 39 year career working in the area of sexual crime and have been engaged with therapeutic processes for victims and for the offenders and with support groups for families. Now some victims are telling us that they want to meet with the offender in dialogue, some offenders are telling us they are willing to meet the person they have harmed and we must respond.

What I most enjoy about what I do professionally is seeing the miracle of healing take place in a room when a restorative dialogue occurs and I also enjoy the research that keeps the evidence for such approaches tested and refined.

The hardest aspects of my work are trying to create social support for innovative as well as conventional approaches to justice, persuading policy makers that we must put victims at the heart of our responses to sexual violence and persuading public opinion that we must take care of both victims and offenders if we are to have a safer society.

My desk is in University College Dublin, in my home and in my practice rooms and my varied professional life takes me to all sorts of places with and without desks, working for social justice for victims of sexual crime and for healing for all.

I attend to my welfare and well-being by being a dancer, by going to events, show-jumping and dressage with my daughter and her horses and by hanging out at rugby matches as much as possible with my son who works in professional rugby. I dance the quickstep, jive, waltz, slow foxtrot as well as Irish set dancing and the world always looks a brighter place after a great dance with a good dancer. The same applies to horse events and rugby matches.

My advice to anyone thinking of pursuing a similar career is to go for it. It is incredible. I trained as a social worker in the seventies but quickly changed to a forensic and systemic psychotherapist in the eighties and incorporated an academic career in 2000. The world of forensic psychotherapy and research is simply amazing. There but for the grace of God go any of us or our family members…..

If I could have had a second career I would also like to have been a professional musician or a dancer.

When I’m not working I most like to dance, hang out with my two grown up...
What is really important about life is appreciation and gratitude. My base line is that life is difficult and challenging and so everything after that is a gift to be appreciated.

If I had a magic wand I would slow down everything so that everyone had time to truly engage and appreciate each other and life in all its wonders.

A ‘two-minute’ interview with Vince Mercer

I got into this area of academic/professional work because I was working exclusively with offenders and over the first 20 years of my professional life there was the slow but irreversible realisation that a whole field of people were missing. Victims were absent - we were making presumptions about how they had been affected, and didn’t have the capacity to ask them. So that’s how restorative justice (RJ) came along, as an opportunity for me as an individual in the mid to late ‘90s to see how it applied to what I’d been doing for the previous two decades.

What I most enjoy about what I do professionally is the practice, and I feel really sad – both for me personally, as well as the AIM project professionally - that we’re out of direct practice because I think if you’re doing training and you’re doing development you should have a practice base. I enjoy working with people and seeing some potential benefit from the practice I can offer to them. That was an unending stream of satisfaction for me.

My desk is currently in a corner of a very dark small room in a cottage in Cumbria; it’s completely tidy because it’s literally two foot by two foot, because I’m squeezed into this little cottage. I’ve had work-space discipline forced on me by virtue of the fact that I work from home and don’t have space right now to do what I would normally do which is allow work to colonise the room.

I attend to my welfare and well-being by a lot of cycling and walking in the Lakes – by a string of three lakes, all within ten minutes on the bike. I’m on the edge of some of the best mountain-biking country in the world I think so riding my bike, be it on the road or off road, is just my wind-down time.

My advice to anyone thinking of pursuing a similar career is embrace it; if you come into this because you’re optimistic about people’s capacity to change - and that should be underpinning all of our work – you should have a natural optimism about ‘it doesn’t have to be as bad as this’, that people can, with support and help, find the capacity to make it better. If you’ve got that, at the heart of your practice, you won’t go far wrong.

If I could have had a second career I would also like to have been an architect; I just love buildings and space and how spaces interact with people; all sounds rather airy. I’m sure most architects are really concerned with mundane things like putting in stair cases ……

When I’m not working I most like to cycle but now I’m right in the middle of building this house, literally across the river, lots of space, big garden. My partner’s a very keen gardener so she’s delighted with that and I’m indulging myself in not ‘architectural tricks’, because it’s quite a straightforward house, but in having a good architect I can talk to and work well with, who works with us to translate what we want into a reality.

I wish I was really good at social media… Unfortunately the technology beats me.

It may not be obvious from looking at me that I am considering opening a coffee shop with my two sisters when I finish up this work. I hope it will be a special place of gathering and conversation.

The public figure I most admire in the world is Desmond Tutu. I love his intelligence, his critical eye, his heart, his wisdom and his spirituality. I love his work for Peace and Reconciliation and his work with The Forgiveness Project.

The public figure I most dislike in the world is … I wouldn’t say dislike. I would prefer to say the public figure I find most disappointing is Obama. I had great hopes for his Presidency but alas I have been disappointed. Apart from amazing powers as an orator I see little leadership on matters that really matter to me: the response to crime in the USA continues to be a scandal for the Western World, the responses to mental health continue to put me into despair, no real leadership on the gun situation and very poor innovation regarding social policies for the poor and the marginalized.
I wish I was really good at organisation; I am poorly organised both with time management and desks. I’m also poorly organised because I find that my memory is getting poorer and poorer. People come up to me at NOTA Conference and introduce themselves and it’s somebody I’ve had contact with previously, and I wish I just had the filing system to be able to remember the name – it seems incredibly impolite and I’m so frustrated with myself.

It may not be obvious from looking at me that I used to race a bicycle both on road and off road, I was absolutely rubbish but I enjoyed it as much as anybody who was good. I got started because my daughter was into riding and in fact went on to ride for a women’s pro-team in Europe and I was accompanying her and I thought well rather than just sit there, I’ll have a bash. And it was lovely and receptive and a warm welcoming atmosphere and it didn’t matter where you were and where you finished, so long as you had a dig.

The public figures I am struck with are, in England and Wales, Jeremy Corbyn for what he’s doing and others are doing with him. In the HSB field I’d want to single out Alan Jenkins, who’s a practitioner in Australia who works with a narrative-based approach with adults and adolescents who sexually harm and commit domestic violence. He talked about opportunities for restorative approaches before we knew the word restorative, so he constantly informs my practice and if I ever have the chance to sit in on one of his seminars, I’ll be there.

The public figure I most dislike in the world is I’m tempted to single out Tony Blair.

What is really important about life is knowing what to take seriously and knowing what NOT to take seriously. And Geese illustrated that so well today. You can do light and dark – it makes a better picture.

If I had a magic wand I would (apart from curing cancer and securing world peace) want to bring people from different professional perspectives together to have an honest conversation with one another about not just cases but about big areas of mutual interest. I’d want the fences to come down at least for a conversation and we can re-establish them later if we need them.


On the evening of September 17th 2015 NOTA held its first public engagement event, bringing members of the public into the annual NOTA conference to discuss how we can understand, respond and prevent sexual harm. The aim of the event was to initiate discussions of sexual harm with the community, to inform, educate and engage. The event was organised by members of the NOTA prevention sub-committee (Jon Brown and Kieran McCartan) as well as members of the Ireland (Mary Tallon) and Northern Ireland (Marcella Leonard) NOTA branches.

Our conversations about hosting the event started nearly a year ago at ATSA 2014 where a similar event was held (organised by Katie Gotch and Kieran McCartan), which members of NOTA NEC attended (Gail McGregor, Marcus Erooga and Jon Brown). The ATSA event was held the night before the conference and attracted approximately 70 members of the public from the city of San Diego and delegates to the ATSA conference. When the NOTA 2015 conference committee started to plan the finer details of our conference we approached ATSA to ask if we could run a similar event in Dublin. They agreed and we started working!

In our own planning, we firstly agreed that the event should be very much part of the conference and that the public should be invited into the NOTA event as a whole. The big questions were when to schedule the meeting and who would speak at it. We agreed that we should have a mixture of local, national and international speakers, thereby offering a range of perspectives. As regards international perspectives we approached Michael Seto and Elizabeth Letourneau, both of whom agreed immediately. We then considered whom we should ask to speak from a local and/or regional perspective. After some initial discussions Mary suggested Naill Muldoon (The Children’s Ombudsman for Ireland) from the Republic of Ireland and Marcella suggested Sharon Beattie (Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland) from Northern Ireland. Again, both readily agreed.

Now that we had our speakers we needed to decide on the format for the session. The idea was to ask each speaker to talk on one of two topics, in plain English, for a maximum of 10 minutes without use of PowerPoint. We wanted to ensure that everyone could come to the event, even those with no prior subject or area knowledge, and that they could walk away feeling...
informed, educated and empowered. We decided to group the speakers together, one academic and one professional, to speak on our two topics: ‘preventing sexual harm’ (Elizabeth and Sharon) and ‘sex offenders’ (Niall and Michael) in order to mix up the content as well their backgrounds geographically.

So how to get people through the door? Always an issue! The first question was who are the public in this context and how do we reach them? We wanted to reach out to people who reflected and represented members of the wider community or engaged with them (as community leaders and/or as people from community groups). We developed a marketing and media strategy utilising social media (twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and traditional email) via our contacts in the community (including religious groups, sports clubs, schools, charities and NGOs). After many months of advertising, dissemination and even media coverage (news of the event was in the Irish Independent a couple of weeks prior to the event) we had to close registration a week in advance as we had 90 applicants. These participants were all from the local and regional community with representation from both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland; many had no connections with criminal justice and sexual abuse services so far as we knew.

The event itself was a success with 60 plus participants showing up, which was fantastic given that it was held at six p.m. on a midweek evening on the outskirts of Dublin (with a car accident and rush hour traffic to contend with). The event was ably chaired by Mary Tallon and Marcella Leonard who introduced and concluded the event as well as holding the speakers and the Q & A sessions to time. The attendees asked numerous questions about how to implement a public health approach, what paedophilia is, what the function of treatment is, how we manage perpetrators effectively and how we are going to change the conversation about sexual abuse. All of these questions and answers were not necessarily confrontation-free (which is, simultaneously, the risk and the benefit of doing these events), with lively debate about the innate/biological nature of paedophilia and whether treatment should be offered at all. The interesting thing was that, following the event, there was a buzz in the room with discussions continuing, people networking and reaching out to each other.

So was the public engagement event worthwhile? Yes, it engaged members of communities who would not necessarily have access to the information offered and it facilitated a conversation, getting people engaged and involved. Will it have an impact on community understandings and responses? Only time will tell but it is a step in the right direction. Will NOTA do another such event? We hope so! Our intention now is to deliver three or four similar events across the UK during the next 12 months and to evaluate the success or otherwise of each of them. The planning for these events will be undertaken by the NOTA prevention sub-committee. In the meantime there will be another public engagement event at this year’s ATSA conference (ATSA Conference, 13th October, Montreal 2015) and another hosted by UWE in Bristol (at the Watershed, 5th November 2015).

Kieran McCartan, Associate Professor in Criminology, UWE Bristol
Jon Brown, Head of Strategy and Development, NSPCC
Delegate Experiences of Conference

Student Reflections on NOTA Dublin 2015
- Andrea Darling

From the moment I arrived at my conference hotel I became engaged in the friendly discussion and enthusiastic exchange of learning and experience that typified my experience of this year’s NOTA conference. Not even having checked in and fresh off the flight to Dublin I was chatting away to Wendy Steer and Sharron Wareham from Barnardo’s Taith Service about their research into girls who display harmful sexual behaviour. Being a relatively new researcher and student member attending only my second NOTA conference I felt immediately at ease when in the company of like-minded people. It was great to be with those as interested and enthusiastic about finding out more about sexually abusive behaviour and exploring opportunities to educate others about the reality of female perpetrated sexual abuse, the subject of my own PhD studies (see NOTA News No 76 July/August 2015, pages 9-10).

A key benefit of attending the conference for me was the opportunity to find out more about how fellow researchers, from student members like me through to world leading experts, go about researching in this field. How they approach research projects, the methods they use, the kinds of data they collect and analyse and how this is then presented in interesting ways to others. These insights offered a fantastic learning opportunity to develop my wider research skills.

As a member of the NOTA Prevention subcommittee the conference also provided the opportunity to meet up with my fellow committee members and put faces to the voices I’d heard from around the country (and world) in our teleconference meetings over the last few months. The conference presentations and workshops also offered numerous opportunities to find out more about and reflect on the current prevention activities of practitioners from multiple agencies and diverse backgrounds as well as the theoretical and empirical understandings of academics in the ultimate mission of NOTA’s work.

In this regard it was interesting to hear in Dr Michael Seto’s keynote about the assessment and management of online sex offenders, in particular their characteristics and the difference between fantasy-driven and contact-driven offenders. I also found Duncan Sheppard’s and Mark Blandford’s keynote on the development of the ARMS risk assessment tool very encouraging in how the police are now considering protective factors as well as dynamic risk factors in their risk assessments as well as returning to increased professional judgement in reaching decisions. From a practitioner’s point of view I also found Kieran McGrath’s breakout session on natural justice and fair procedure in evaluating allegations and risk of child sexual abuse helpful. It was great to see this really important aspect of our work reflected in the choice of breakout sessions offered.

Continuing the prevention theme a particularly interesting development at this year’s conference was the public engagement event about understanding sexual violence against children held on the second evening. The event brought together professionals, practitioners, academics, researchers and the public and encouraged open and collective discussion on ways to identify and prevent this harmful abuse. For me the staging of such an event was a real success of the conference and an important demonstration of the way that public and professionals can join together, share experience and learn from each other.

Overall, the conference was an inspiration to me personally about how my own research might develop and the event gave me the opportunity to learn more about some of the mechanisms available through NOTA for sharing research and having real impact in work with victims and perpetrators. After all that is the purpose of NOTA’s annual conferences: sharing our knowledge to make a difference.

Andrea Darling, PhD Student, Durham University
#NOTADublin 2015: A Student’s Perspective - Danielle Kettleborough

For me, NOTA’s 2015 annual conference, #NOTADublin, kicked off with the Members’ Services Sub-Committee (MSSC) meeting. This was an opportunity to finally meet other committee members I have been working with over the past year (via Skype) and to launch two exciting projects ahead of the conference. Firstly, we launched our very first membership survey, designed to find out more about you as a NOTA member, and what you need. I am thrilled to say that we have received a fantastic response from NOTA members, over and above what we anticipated! As soon as we have analysed the data we will be sharing the findings with you in NOTA News and, more importantly, we will let you know what changes NOTA plans to implement based on what you have told us.

Secondly, #NOTADublin marked the official launch of the student membership deal (only £25!) and, to our delight, we have already seen a substantial increase in the number of NOTA student members. This is a promising start in the lead up to #NOTABrighton and the hope that we will have a significant student representation at the conference next year. We also hope for a good turnout for the launch of the social event for postgraduate researchers, details of which will be announced prior to #NOTABrighton. In the run up to #NOTABrighton we hope to see the number of student member’s increase further as we continue to build a supportive network for the NOTA student membership.

The first keynote of the conference saw Dr Michael Seto discuss his work with online sex offenders, the subject of my own PhD research. In particular, Dr Seto explored risk in relation to online sex offenders and introduced the development of the Child Pornography Offender Risk Tool (CPORT) (Seto & Eke, 2015), an exciting development for the field. Other notable events included Valerie Sheehan’s fascinating insight into her PhD research on producers of indecent images of children, a group that we know little about. Additionally, an open consultation session by the International Working Group on best practice in the management of online sexual offending (Hannah Merdian, Derek Perkins, Maggie Brennan) provided an update on the work they do, leading to the development of evidence-based guidelines on the management and prevention of online sexual offending. Jon Brown from the Prevention sub-committee also contributed to the session.

At #NOTADublin, I also had the opportunity to present an overview of my PhD research as part of the emerging researchers’ session. Presenting at NOTA provides an opportunity to disseminate research to an international audience, which in turn allows for your research to be critiqued by established experts in the field, which is what we need as new researchers. Following the presentation I received positive feedback from a number of delegates, leading to various networking opportunities and international contacts, which could potentially lead to rewarding future collaborations. Attending NOTA’s annual conference provides a golden opportunity for students in many ways (discussed further in NOTA News No 76 July/August 2015, page 5), and I hope that other students can see the opportunities that being a NOTA member enables and can also benefit from such a rewarding experience.

I have left #NOTADublin having had the pleasure of meeting top academics in the field, gaining advice from academics that have been down the path I’m on, and having the opportunity of meeting other students with whom we can begin to develop a supportive network for the next generation in this field. All of this has left me feeling encouraged, motivated, and eagerly awaiting next year’s conference.

So, if you’re a student – don’t forget to become a NOTA member (or if you know a student – encourage them!), and I’ll see you in Brighton!

Danielle Kettleborough, PhD Student (University of Lincoln) and member of NOTA’s MSSC

Reference

I am based in Cumbria working at a small office in a rural area. I’m 80% Offender Management and 20% N-SOGP Facilitator. I really value being able to facilitate and I have found that, since obtaining my facilitator qualification, my practice on the Offender Management side, with a caseload that is almost exclusively men who have committed offences of a sexual nature, has also improved. I was asked to go to NOTA because my treatment manager felt it would aid my development, increase my knowledge and leave me inspired and enthused - how could I refuse?

On arrival, on day one, I was immediately struck by what a big event it was and how many people from different disciplines were attending. Coming from a small team it was inspiring to see how many enthusiastic, skilled people there are working in this area and I got a real sense of being part of a wider community. It also became clear early on that the community is committed to continuous improvement and increasing understanding about the people we work with and about what is effective practice. It was fascinating to hear the various academics outline their research and cutting edge conclusions. In particular, I picked up on a couple of themes at the keynote presentations and breakouts I attended:

1. There seems to be a real drive to be able to segment our client group along a continuum of potential harmfulness. For all organisations in the field, being able to effectively prioritise our client group is going to be a key skill going forward, given the scale of the cuts we are likely to be facing. It was reassuring (although a little frustrating in that a lot of the messages were about more work being required) that work is ongoing in this area which should result in robust tools to assist in the process.

2. There seems to be lots of progress in terms of co-operation between agencies/academics both nationally and internationally, which can only lead to more effective integrated approaches, as well as more sharing of best practice.

Mark Blandford’s and Duncan Sheppard’s keynote on the ARMs Project and their subsequent breakout session seemed to bring both these themes together. Having arrived as a practitioner somewhat worried about the workload implications of ARMs being introduced, I left seeing it as a valuable tool for resource allocation and joint working.

I also left concerned about what lies ahead for society and us all following Mark Rivett’s breakout session on ‘Young people, Internet Harmful sexual Behaviour and the Family’. It is genuinely concerning about the activities young people engage in and are being exposed to.

Finally I just have to comment on the inclusiveness and friendliness of everyone I encountered. Right from the first moment people were welcoming and eager to talk and exchange views. There always seemed to be a buzz of energy and interesting conversations that you could listen to or join in with. The NOTA organisers and speakers set the tone and were approachable and generous with their time. I thought the work/social balance was just right and enjoyed the walk round Dublin as well as the last night dinner – I never saw myself saying this but I now love Ceilidhs!

So to sum up, my treatment manager was right, I arrived home enthused, informed and rejuvenated – if a little tired! Thanks to the organisers, speakers and everyone I met for making it such a wonderful experience.

Rob Worsley, Probation Officer,

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Dublin – It’s closer than you think!
A Branch’s experience of being involved in NOTA’s annual conference

- Mary Tallon

**Background and Process**

In July 2013 the NOTA Republic of Ireland Branch Chair received the first email from Malcolm Muskett, NOTA’s General Manager, saying ‘we are beginning to think about the NOTA International Conference for 2015 which is due to be Ireland’ and asking for local Branch views. Formal and informal links were then made with our colleagues in the NOTA Northern Ireland Branch, which formed the beginning of an excellent working relationship with the Conference Committee and NOTA Branch representatives. Initially a lot of the work was done by email and teleconference as possible venues were considered, international and local keynote speakers were identified and various social events options proposed and explored.

Marcus Erooga, Conference Committee Chair, joined a NOTA Republic of Ireland Branch Teleconference meeting in September 2013 and a few weeks later some the Branch members attending the NOTA International Conference in Cardiff met with Marcus and Malcolm and specific tasks were identified.

In November 2013 the Conference Committee Chair and the General Manager travelled to Dublin and along with representatives of the local NOTA Republic Ireland Branch visited a number of possible Conference venues, the visits being set up with the assistance and support of the local Tourist Board. We had dared to dream of choosing the most amazing Conference venues in the centre of Dublin but pragmatism and pricing won out and in May 2014 the Crowne Plaza Conference Centre located on the north side of Dublin was secured as the 2015 Conference Venue. Keynote speakers were also identified and secured at this time and letters of invitation to various other people were issued, for example about chairing one of the Conference Programme days. The call for workshop submissions was made in autumn 2014 and the selection process took place in January, 2015 with representatives from NOTA Republic of Ireland and NOTA Northern Ireland being involved in the process.

In March, 2015 Jon Brown, chair of NOTA’s Prevention sub-committee, contacted the Branch to explore the possibility of hosting NOTA’s first Public Engagement Event in Dublin during the Conference. This resulted in the event being co-hosted by the two Branches and involved a lot of planning and preparation particularly in advertising the event to ensure local public interest in attendance.

The summer of 2015 proved to the busiest period for the local Branch as the Conference fast approached and with many tasks having to be finalised and signed off prior to the Conference opening. In addition local Branch members, in conjunction with Simon Hackett, Chair of the Communications sub-committee, supported and developed NOTA’s Communications Strategy, under the expert guidance and assistance of a Communications Manager provided by a local service.

**Hints for other Branches involved in Conference - Preparation,**

• Previously established relationships with Branch Colleagues in Northern Ireland assisted in greater collaboration thereby ensuring the various tasks were carried out in a timely and efficient manner.

• The Conference Committee Branch representatives were in frequent contact and all ideas were explored and all suggestions followed up.

• The formal support of a Communications Manager ensured greater media coverage for the Conference which facilitated greater awareness-raising about NOTA and its objectives.

• The support of local Branch members in identifying venues, social events supports, and providing assistance with practical tasks was crucial.

**Tips**

• Maintain frequent contact with Conference Committee Chair and NOTA’s General Manager.

• Team work is essential to ensuring all aspects of the Conference are attended to.

• Do as much of the preparation as possible well in advance of the Conference as there will always be lots more to do in the lead into the Conference days.

• Use your local Branch contacts and networks to access keynote speakers, advertise the Conference and especially the Public Engagement Event, and obtain support for social events and assistance in practical tasks.
• Provide delegates with as comprehensive a package as possible, a package which includes a variety of keynote speakers, wide-ranging workshop choices to include theory, practice and research options, a ‘local experience’ provided by the hosting Branch and a package which is supported by an efficient conference administration team.

Post Conference Reflections/Learning

Every time the local Branch members saw the caption ‘Dublin – it’s closer than you think’, we went into ‘panic mode’. However, it did provide us with the adrenalin and ‘push to get to finishing line’ ensuring attention to detail in all facets of the Conference.

Hosting the Public Engagement Event as part of the annual NOTA Conference was an additional task that the local Branches had not fully anticipated. However, there was great learning from the event where members of the public were invited to respond to the messages provided by four keynote speakers on ‘Let’s Talk About… Understanding Sexual Abuse: Causes, Consequences and Prevention’. This event gave members of the audience the opportunity to freely express their views, for example about interventions targeted at sexual offending and about how the media manages reports of sexual harm and violence.

Providing Conference delegates with a comprehensive package of keynote messages, variety in workshops, social events and opportunities to network, make new contacts and friends is essential to a successful Conference. In addition, the experience was greatly enhanced by holding the Conference in a purpose built conference venue with accommodation on site.

Looking forward to the Brighton experience already!

Mary Tallon,
Chair, Republic of Ireland Branch
Developing a Communications Support Programme for NOTA Conference 2015 at Dublin - Jane Curtin

In April 2015, the Northside Interagency Project (NIAP), a community-based treatment programme for adolescents who engage in sexually harmful behaviour based in Dublin, approached me to ask for assistance in formulating and implementing a communications plan to support the annual NOTA 2015 conference. I agreed to take on this project with some support from the Temple Street Children's Hospital communications agency, Q4PR, and I then met Mary Tallon and Joan Cherry from NIAP to take a brief about the upcoming NOTA conference so that a draft communications plan could be drafted.

We agreed that the communications objectives for the NOTA conference as outlined in the plan would be as follows:

- To educate and engage the public in a discussion about sexual abuse but, as sexual abuse is often an emotionally charged subject, to find an appropriate balance in the communications that provides educational information without causing an emotional reaction;
- To educate specifically on the power of restorative justice as a means of healing for the victim and accountability for the perpetrator;
- To reiterate the obvious societal benefits of resourcing the prevention of sexual abuse and the societal benefits to be gained from funding adequate and appropriate intervention services for sexual offenders;
- To generate impactful, extensive coverage of the conference through print, broadcast and on-line media by leveraging the expertise of key speakers and contributors.

We also agreed that the following overall key messages would be communicated around the conference:

- Sexual abuse is a public health issue which impacts everyone – individuals, communities, institutions and society as a whole;
- Sexual offenders are a heterogeneous group who engage in a wide range of behaviours and present different levels of risk to the community;
- One size fits all approaches to sexual offenders are not in the best interest of public safety;
- Sexual offender management is a collaborative process which involves all professionals working in the field of sexual abuse;
- Restorative justice is a victim sensitive response to criminal offending which is underpinned by victim awareness and empathy as well as offender accountability;
- Prevention of sexual abuse requires the collaboration and involvement of everyone.

Key media spokespersons were identified as part of the plan and these included Professor Simon Hackett, NOTA Chair Elect; Mary Tallon and Joan Cherry from NIAP and six of the key speaker abstracts focused on the numbers attending the conference:

- Dr Michael Seto, Director, Forensic Research Unit, Ottawa Institute of Mental Health Research (Key topic: on-line abuse)
- Dr Anne-Marie McAlinden, Director of Research and Reader in Law, Queen’s University Belfast (Key topic: the role of grooming in CSA)
- Dr Marie Keenan, Lecturer, University College Dublin (Key topic: Restorative justice and adult sex offenders)
- Ailbhe, adult victim/survivor (Key topic: experience of restorative justice from a victim’s perspective)
- Vince Mercer, Restorative Justice Manager, AIM Project, UK (Key topic: restorative justice and harmful sexual behaviour)

In preparation for implementing the communications plan, I collected background information relating to sexual abuse in Ireland, the work of NIAP and the key speaker abstracts and learning objectives for each session. I then pitched feature proposals to national print/newspaper features writers and broadcast media outlets. Features were secured and spokespersons were briefed in advance of interview.

A press release to support the conference was then drafted which focused on the numbers attending the NOTA conference, the heterogeneous nature of sexual offenders as a group and the numbers of people subject to requirements of Sex Offenders Act 2011 in Ireland. The press release was issued on the day prior to conference and interviews were set up accordingly with nominated spokespersons, depending on the subject chosen by media outlets, over and above the news hooks in the press release.
Outcomes

As the collage of press headlines illustrates, extensive feature pieces were generated in the Irish Times, Health & Family Supplement and the Irish Examiner and news pieces were generated in the Irish Times (x two), on the Irish Times website and at Journal.ie. National radio pieces were generated on RTÉ (Ireland’s National Broadcaster) Radio One’s Sean O’Rourke Show, Newstalk’s Breakfast Show and Lunchtime Show, Today FM’s lunchtime news and regional radio pieces were generated on South East Radio and Kildare FM. The Support and Advocacy Group, One in Four, also carried the press release on their website and One in Four and Active Link.ie promoted attendance at the public engagement event.

Finally Mick Peelo, Producer for RTÉ’s ‘Would you Believe’ programme asked to meet a number of NOTA conference key speakers and ‘breakout session’ facilitators during the conference for research he is conducting for a potential programme addressing the question as to ‘whether society is failing people who sexually harm and therefore endangering itself’. No formal interviews have yet been conducted and at the time of writing this short report, we are waiting to hear if this programme will go ahead and who the official expert interviewees will be.

Conclusion

Learning from this year’s communications support programme will be taken forward by NOTA in planning for future annual conferences and other events.

Jane Curtin, Communications Manager, Temple Street Children’s University Hospital, Dublin
Key messages from NOTA’s AGM

held on Thursday September 17th 2015 Dublin - report from Anna Glinski

1. Minutes of AGM – September 2014

The minutes of the previous AGM were accepted as an accurate record.

2. Chair’s Report: Gail McGregor

• Finances have continued to be tight over the last 12 months; however NOTA made a strategic decision to spend more than was being received in order to develop the new initiatives that NOTA sees as important.
• A task group has been convened to think of other ways to increase income by, for example:
  o Potential changes to Conference (though not in the short term)
  o Online training
  o Increasing training
  o Applications for trust funding.
• Gail apologised to Republic of Ireland branch members who were disadvantaged by some pricing anomalies – this has now been resolved.
• Gail has reached her end of term as Chair and thanked Malcolm Muskett, Andi Wightman and Michelle Roe, Jenny Watson (Scotland), the NEC and branch members for their support.

3. Finance Report: Gavin Williams (NOTA accountant)

• Income remains similar to last year although, as expenditure has increased, there has been an overall loss of £26,500.
• Austerity has resulted in lots of charities suffering. While there has been a loss this year, if one re-winds one can see that the loss was the same last year so, while it has been tough, the finances have been managed well.

4. General Manager’s Report: Malcolm Muskett

• Despite very tough economic conditions NOTA’s position is holding steady.
• NOTA’s job is to support professionals who are responsible for reducing the incidence of child sexual abuse and exploitation. The plan to do this is as follows:
  o Further develop the NOTA website;
  o Continue to host training events;
  o Support research and policy initiatives.
• NOTA will continue to rely on volunteers and trustees to achieve these aims.

5. Communications Sub-Committee Report: Simon Hackett

• Last year the sub-committee announced they were working on a communications protocol for communicating with the media and this has now been achieved. The protocol has helped NOTA to respond to policy and legislative consultations and proposals this year.
• The sub-committee and NOTA have continued to engage with the media where this is in the interest of the organisation.
• There has been significant media interest in this year’s Conference; Simon sent particular thanks to Jane Curtin, Communications Manager, Temple Street Children’s University Hospital, who has worked hard to engage the media in the event.

6. Conference Sub-Committee: Marcus Erooga

• Many people have worked hard to enable this year’s Conference; Marcus thanked, in particular, the Northern Ireland Representative, Marcella Leonard, and Mary Tallon and Joan Cherry from the Republic of Ireland branch. Many thanks also to Malcolm Muskett, Andi Wightman and Michelle Roe.
• The aim has been to keep prices low and delegate numbers are gratifying which is positive as the biggest threat to the Conference is low attendance.
• Keynote speakers for next year’s Conference have not yet been identified and so if anyone has suggestions for interesting speakers, please approach Marcus directly.

7. Journal of Sexual Aggression: Stephen Smallbone

• The Journal has some way to go in establishing its academic credentials and impact, something that continues to be worked on.
• This year we are on track to have 38,000 downloads of articles from the Journal, which is a great measure of professional impact.
• Look out for themed issues on (1) Internet facilitated offending (2016) and (2) Prevention (2017).
• Thank you to our administrator and associate editors, in particular, Aphrodit Pi and Nadine McKillop.

8. NOTA News: Helen Masson

• The newsletter’s mission to produce timely, topical and interesting issues remains the same.
• In future the November/December (Conference) issue will be free to all online while the other two issues will be online for NOTA members only, who will also be sent hard copies of all three issues.
• The editorial team welcomes feedback for suggestions for future copy.
• Helen has 2 further years as Editor so if anyone is interested in becoming the new editor please contact her.

9. Research Sub-Committee: Mitch Waterman
• Our mission is to promote research and facilitate research involving practitioners.
• We have a research grant scheme with a substantial sum of money to allocate; we will make awards of up to £6000. The closing date for applications is 31st December 2015; interested people can discuss with the Research team.
• The Sub-Committee has approved a number of changes to how the scheme works:
  o There must be a named practitioner on the research application;
  o Those students who are successful in gaining a Student Award will be invited to be the student representative on the Sub-Committee;
  o Although the process is open to non-members, in order to receive a grant, an applicant would have to become a NOTA member.

10. Policy Sub-Committee: Paddy Doyle

• The sub-committee have continued to meet through tele-conferences throughout the year, so this has been at minimal cost.
• We have representatives from England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales and are hoping to find a representative from Northern Ireland too.
• The sub-committee began the year looking at policy papers that we have produced in the past and deciding whether they require updating. If the membership has any ideas for further papers, or would like to write one, then please get in touch.
• We have worked with the Northern Ireland branch in their production of information papers and setting up peer reviews; hopefully this has been helpful.

11. Practice Sub-Committee: David Briggs

• There continue to be two main work streams:
  o Individual treatment resource – David Briggs, Stephanie Hill, Elizabeth Hayes, Roger Kennington and Marcus Erooga have continued to work hard on this and it has finally been handed to Simon Hackett and Gail McGregor for review. It is hoped that it will be ready in the New Year and that a training events programme will follow.
  o Sexual thoughts project.

12. Marketing Sub-Committee: Roger Kennington

• Prachi Porecha, an MSc student from Leeds University, has helped with our marketing strategy.
• In terms of corporate membership, there have been positive negotiations with Linda Marginson and Colin Allars, National Probation Service, to secure a comprehensive deal on membership and Conference places. All specialist Probation Officers will now have membership.
• If NOTA members are based in an organisation that might benefit from corporate membership then please let the sub-committee know.

13. Training Sub-Committee: Roger Kennington

• The sub-committee have continued to monitor feedback from all training events.
• A pricing guidance paper has been sent out to local branches so they do not undersell their events; there has not been a down-turn in attendance as a result.
• Kevin Creedon delivered national training days in Wales and Scotland.
• The sub-committee plan to target Children’s Services next year.

14. Membership Services Sub-Committee: Tamara Turner-Moore

• There are new developments in membership services:
  o Introduction of student membership rate of £25 per year (please pass this on to any students NOTA members know);
  o Danielle Kettleborough is the new student representative on the sub-committee;
  o The sub-committee are continuing to review membership packages and introduced online access to archives for members only.

15. Prevention Sub-Committee: Jon Brown

• The sub-committee have continued to meet monthly by tele-conference.
• The sub-committee includes representatives from ATSA.
• The sub-committee have four nations coverage although no one from Wales; the sub-committee would welcome representation from Wales.
• The sub-committee’s work plan includes:
  o Work on defining prevention;
  o Conducting a literature search of prevention articles;
  o Creating a blog on various aspects of prevention;
  o Running a 1-day conference planned to be delivered in London in June 2016.

16. Elections

• The transfer of Chair from Gail McGregor to Simon Hackett was confirmed. Simon gave NOTA’s collective thanks to Gail for her term as Chair, saying she has been ‘a fantastic Chair to work with and I’m really grateful for the state she’s left the organisation in’.

Vice Chair Sarah Brown (first term)
Treasurer Malcolm Dick (second term)
Secretary Stephanie Hill (first term)
Conference Committee Vice Chair Gail McGregor (first term)

• Other officers are serving their remaining 2 years of their appointments.
• Constitutional amendments have been endorsed this year.
Forums for Support and Reconciliation for Victims and Survivors of Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence

- Chris Wilson, Beccy Scott and Sarah West

The concept of Forums for Support and Reconciliation (Forums) is rooted in the success of Circles of Support and Accountability (Circles) in work with perpetrators of sexual violence. As Circles became more widely established, so did understanding about the capacity and ability of communities to engage with and directly address the issue of harmful sexual behaviour and domestic violence. Consequently it was realised that a model of support and reconciliation based on the Circles approach might also be developed for victims/survivors.

A victim’s recovery from a serious sexual assault is not a linear process but a personal one. Such an experience can lead to many negative consequences, post traumatic stress, an inability to cope both practically and emotionally, feelings of emotional loneliness and isolation, and generalised and/or specific fear(s) to name but a few. It is for these reasons that the process of therapeutic engagement can often be problematic and at times lead to an abrupt disengagement. The recognition of the individual nature of recovery and the realisation that the immediate need so often requires practical support combined with emotional kindness and care led to the question, how best can a therapeutic service respond to the individual needs of the victim? The ‘Circle’ model offers an ideal way of creating a network of support for someone in this situation while providing a safe and supportive environment to enable the victim to consider their therapeutic options and to facilitate the possibility of a restorative process.

Funded by the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioners Office in 2014, Forums were conceptualised and developed by the charity Circles South East to provide a safe environment in which the victim/survivor of sexual assault or domestic violence could engage in all of the key components of the restorative process, while being afforded the opportunity to receive both practical and emotional support. It was essential that Forums were robust in ensuring that both the support and any protective strategies they offered were more than just a superficial response. Supported by a co-ordinator who has both an awareness of victim/survivor issues and a working knowledge of restorative processes, the Forum consists of one victim/survivor and three or four carefully selected members of the community who may or may not be survivors themselves. The intention therefore is to facilitate those individual members of the community for whom the issue has resonance, to give of their time, energy and enthusiasm in offering the emotional and practical support needed. These volunteers aim to create the support network required in order to facilitate a space where the victim’s/survivor’s voice can be heard. Based upon the principles that underpin the restorative process, the Forum is designed to deliver five identifiable restorative processes:

- Community Support
- Validation
- Truth Telling
- Surrogate Conferencing
- Restorative Justice Conferencing.

The first of these relates to the importance of individuals taking collective responsibility to engage directly in addressing the issue of harmful sexual behaviour. The process of validating the experience, so that victims / survivors know that they are being believed, is also an essential component in the process of recovery. The experience of an adversarial criminal justice system can often militate against validation and being believed, whereas the Forum allows for both. The issue of using restorative conferencing for those who have experienced serious sexual assault remains contentious and has previously been regarded as inappropriate. However recent practice developments have begun to challenge such beliefs with a number of victims requesting to engage in such a process. Often it is neither possible nor desirable for face-to-face conferencing between victim and offender but, for some, the use of surrogate conferencing allows the victim / survivor to meet with someone who has committed a similar offence and address the
specific issues that can be beneficial to both parties. Conferencing of any sort is not a pre-requisite for engagement with Forums, whereas the initial three principles of the restorative process are always met through the Forum. However should a beneficiary of a Forum wish to engage in the process of surrogate or direct conferencing a protocol has been agreed between Circles South East and Thames Valley Restorative Justice (RJ) Service whereby a fully trained and experienced RJ practitioner would facilitate such conferences, building upon and using the safety and support created by the Forum.

The initial funding received from the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioners Office was for the delivery of two Forums. The response, despite limited advertising, was overwhelming and Circles South East accepted six initial referrals of which four wished to be part of a Forum and further funding was obtained from the Commissioner Office to meet this need. Translating the Forum concept into practice and setting up the infrastructure for the delivery of Forums, including the recruitment of volunteers, rigorous screening and appropriate training have all taken time however, at the time of writing, the initial Forums have been established and, below, one service user, Jane, provides insight into how such a support network can have a positive impact.

A service user experience of the Forum

Jane has longstanding mental and physical health issues and is wheelchair bound following a serious assault carried out by a family member. She is estranged from her family and, following the attack, was housed away from her support network of friends in a rural location leaving her isolated, housebound and reliant on carers for her emotional and practical needs. Jane struggles to trust others following a number of negative experiences with professionals, friends and family members including a family member who moved into her home and built up significant debts under her name. She has engaged with a number of support services over the years and has expressed an interest in both trauma counselling and restorative justice but currently lacks the confidence and independence to be able to access such services.

Jane represents a group of people who, due to their experiences, are struggling to cope with day-to-day living let alone going through the process of identifying sources of help and all that is required emotionally, physically and financially to access such help. In the current climate of scarce resources and high need, those that miss more than a given number of appointments are often told to return when they are ready. It was realised that, without the right support, some people may never be ready to access recovery pathways. The staff at Circles South East feel strongly that this group of people should not be allowed to 'fall by the wayside' but are aware that patience, persistence and gentle support are needed in the face of missed appointments, hostility, suspicion and unreliability. Of course all professionals have limits but in a Forum those limits are set purposefully wide to allow forum users the time and space to gradually build the emotional resources to make tiny steps on their journey to recovery and to learn that they can trust their forum volunteers to walk that path with them thus giving them the confidence to face challenges along the way.

Jane was particularly interested in the Forum concept because of the longer-term support offered and the robust and flexible nature of the support afforded by this model. Because of her issues related to trust and her concerns about being overwhelmed it took time for Jane to build a relationship with the Forum coordinator before she was introduced to the first of her Forum volunteers. The introduction of volunteers was incremental, giving time and ensuring she was not overwhelmed.

Jane has now identified a number of practical tasks the Forum volunteers can help including advocacy, letter writing and administrative tasks but, above all, they are providing emotional support as consistent and reliable individuals. With time it is hoped that that the Forum will provide the stability and confidence for Jane to move forward and access the further interventions that she has identified which will be instrumental in her coping and recovery.

Conclusion

Support networks being used in such a way are not uncommon, however it is believed that this is the first example of creating a system rooted in the victim’s own community that can offer substantial emotional and practical support as well as facilitating interventions if and when needed. The possibility of the victim engaging in a restorative process within a supportive network would also appear innovative. However, the authors would be most interested to hear from anyone who is engaged in offering a similar service. Further information on the Forums for Support and Reconciliation can be found on the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioners Office website, www.thamesvalley-pcc.gov.uk or alternatively please contact Beccy Scott / Sarah West at Circles South East, Tel: 01235 816050

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Intimate Partner Violence, Risk Assessment and Sexual Violence - Sarah Weldon and Liz Gilchrist

When considering implications of intimate partner violence (IPV), we know that 45% of all female homicide victims are killed by a present or former male partner (compared to 8% of male victims) and that a further two women are killed per week by a partner or ex-partner (Home Office Criminal Statistics, available from https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/crime-statistics). Moreover, repeated victimisation is likely, with half of all victims of IPV being subject to violent incidents more than once. When considering characteristics of IPV males, individual deficits are not the usual factor in IPV but they can contribute to the patterns of abuse and are related to the typology of abuser. IPV offenders are a heterogeneous group who hold various implicit theories in relation to their perception of themselves, the world and others. The current article considers this in relation to male perpetrators of IPV only. However, there are implications for same-sex and female perpetrators of IPV, specifically when considering gender-roles adopted in relationships.

The identification of implicit theories (ITs) in certain offender groups, that is, offence-related schemas of their view of the world which support their offending behaviour (Ward, 2000), has led to the development and implementation of successful offence specific interventions. In recent years, the cognitive characteristics of intimate partner violence (IPV) perpetrators have received considerable attention, however, empirical research regarding implicit theories among these individuals is an area which has only recently begun to be explored (Gilchrist, 2009; Weldon & Gilchrist, 2012). Moreover, as of yet, the cognitions of IPV offenders who also sexually offend (SO) against their partners have received little empirical investigation. This is surprising given that IPV risk assessment and screening tools, in addition to intervention strategies, are aimed at addressing attitudinal differences thought to be present in the IPV offender (Morgan & Gilchrist, 2010).

When specifically considering lethality in IPV, the escalation of violence and the role of sexual abuse and sexual jealousy are prominent risk markers. Therefore, the tools we use to assess risk are imperative in devising a comprehensive formulation and in developing effective risk management plans.

Currently, the most widely utilised risk tool in assessment of IPV is the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment Guide (SARA). The SARA is a 20 item checklist designed to screen for risk factors of intimate partner or family-related assault. When considering the risk of sex offending in intimate partner relationships, it is advantageous for practitioners to include a tool which incorporates the risk of sexual violence such as the Risk for Sexual Violence Protocol (RSVP) (Hart et al., 2003). This is a systematic and structured guide utilising 22 individual risk factors known to relate to future risk of sexual violence. What is evident is that, while these tools go some way in effectively capturing risk in IPV sex offenders, they do not capture the dynamic nature of risk nor particular patterns of offending behaviour. Moreover, they do not consider the typology of IPV offender nor the implicit theories present in the individual. This is relevant clinically given that recent empirical literature (Weldon & Gilchrist, 2012; Weldon 2015) has increasingly demonstrated that the implicit theories held by IPV offenders and IPV sex offenders have implications, not only for developing a comprehensive formulation and risk management plan, but informing intervention. Beech, Fisher & Ward (2005) investigated the presence of implicit theories in sexual murders. They concluded that a schema approach would be beneficial as it would allow the presence of distinct implicit theories, and therefore maladaptive cognitions, to be challenged clinically.

Future empirical research would benefit from the development of a risk assessment tool that fully captures the risk of intimate partner violence, sexual violence and considers the link to family violence, of which there is a growing evidence base (Hester et al., 2007). In the mean time, it is essential for professionals in this field to be aware of the limitations of the current tools and consider the typology of the offender to develop a formulation and risk management strategy. Furthermore, in order to evidence effective risk scenarios, the patterns of offending behaviour need to be considered in order to capture the link between IPV, sex offending and the potential for lethality.

Dr Sarah Weldon, Principal Clinical Psychologist, Glasgow Forensic Mental Health and Learning Disability Service

Professor Liz Gilchrist, Professor of Forensic Psychology Director of Forensic Psychology Postgraduate Programmes, Glasgow Caledonian University

References


New Developments in Birmingham in Partnership Working with Children and Young People with Sexually Harmful Behaviours

- Natasha Sabin

Birmingham’s Sexually Harmful Behaviour (SHB) Team was established in 2004 as a citywide service to work with children and young people who display sexualised behaviour that is harmful. The SHB team is part of the Youth Offending Service and receives approximately 130 referrals a year from a range of sources including local schools and education providers, Children’s Services and Criminal Justice agencies. Given that multi-agency working is central to the ethos of the Youth Offending Service, the SHB team has consistently worked in partnership with other such agencies.

Whilst the team only work with young people who engage in behaviour that is harmful, the reality is that a lot of young people who are referred are also vulnerable and may have experienced abuse themselves. As such, it is not uncommon for the same young person to be referred to the SHB team and to other agencies who work with victims of sexual abuse and those who are involved in, or vulnerable to, Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). Within Birmingham, Barnardo’s have individual projects that are specifically designed to work with young people who have experienced sexual abuse and young people who are involved in CSE. The Amazon Project began in 1991 and is a counselling service for children and young people who have been sexually abused. Birmingham SPACE (formerly ‘Girlspace’) was established in 1998 and provides support for children and young people who are in vulnerable situations which may lead to abuse and sexual exploitation.

Prior to 2013 communication between the SHB team and Amazon and Birmingham SPACE was somewhat sporadic, occurring predominantly when one service wished to refer a young person to one of the other services. However, it was recognised that there was merit in adopting a more proactive and structured approach to partnership working. Furthermore, it was apparent that there was a clear gender split in relation to referrals into the services, with the SHB team receiving a high proportion of referrals for males (86% in 2014-2015) and Amazon and Birmingham SPACE receiving a high number of referrals for girls (Amazon = 80% in 2015, SPACE = 96% in 2014-2015). It seemed boys were more often being viewed solely as perpetrators regardless of any background vulnerability; in contrast girls, who might be displaying similarly harmful behaviours towards others, were typically being perceived as vulnerable only, this resulting in the referral disparities across the three services. Such stereotypes are concerning, not least because they risk young people not receiving the most appropriate support or not having all their needs met.

The development of partnership working between the SHB Team, Amazon and Birmingham SPACE was formalised in 2013 by introducing bi-monthly meetings between designated team members from each service. These partnership meetings provide a forum to identify those referrals that would benefit from partnership working or those where the young person meets the criteria for more than one service. At this point the partnership will discuss which aspect is having the most detrimental effect on the young person’s life and the relevant agency will take the lead, with the others providing consultation. On occasions where referrals are received that do not initially appear to meet the criteria for any of the agencies, the partnership works together to identify other relevant agencies and/or provide advice to the referrer. Another significant benefit to the development of the partnership working project has been the presence of a forum in which professionals are able to seek advice and guidance from, and share good working practice with, other professionals working in a similar field. Ultimately, partnership working aims to ensure an efficient process for the young person, their families and the referring agencies.

Developments in this partnership working are ongoing and have recently resulted in the delivery of a joint presentation to the National Working Group (NWG) Practitioners’ Forum. The NWG is a charitable organisation formed as a UK network of practitioners who disseminate information down through services to professionals working on the issue of child sexual exploitation (CSE) and trafficking within the UK. The presentation was delivered by the
partnership to practitioners working in this field and was aimed at informing them about the new developments in partnership working between the SHB team, Amazon and Birmingham SPACE. Feedback from attending professionals was extremely positive and there are plans to deliver joint training programmes in the near future. It is anticipated that such programmes will increase awareness of available services and of the benefits of partnership working. Future plans also include the development of a programme to meet the needs of young people who may be at risk of recruiting others into CSE.

Whilst the partnership working in Birmingham is still in its relative infancy, it is the view of the services involved that such links are essential in ensuring young people are able to access appropriate services without unnecessary delay.

If you would like to find out more about partnership working in Birmingham please contact SCHYOTBirminghamISB@birmingham.gov.uk or telephone 0121 464 0600

Dr Natasha Sabin, Forensic Psychologist and SHB Clinical Supervisor, Sexually Harmful Behaviour Team, Kingsmere

Young People with Learning Disabilities at Risk of Child Sexual Exploitation - Stuart Allardyce

"Young people with learning disabilities are a perpetrator’s dream. If you were a perpetrator, why would you not target children and young people with learning disabilities? They’re often lonely and isolated. Many of them have not had a boyfriend or a girlfriend but would like one. Many spend a lot of time online. They are less likely to understand that sexual exploitation is wrong and are so easy to groom".

This sobering statement was made by a practitioner in a recent Comic Relief-commissioned UK study looking at the sexual exploitation of children and young people with learning disabilities. The study ‘Unprotected, Overprotected: meeting the needs of young people with learning disabilities who experience, or are at risk of, sexual exploitation’ (2015) - published by Barnardo’s and authored by Anita Franklin, Phil Raws and Emilie Smeaton – should be essential reading for any practitioner, researcher or policy maker with an interest in sexual abuse prevention.

The over-representation of children with disabilities in statistics about abuse has been known for some time. One meta-analysis (Jones et al., 2012) has suggested that children with disabilities are between 3 and 4 times more likely to experience violence than non-disabled children, while a significant sexual abuse prevalence study that looked at 50,000 case files in the US (Sullivan and Knutson, 2000) found that children with disabilities were twice as likely to be sexually abused as other children.

However many recent reports and studies looking at the specific subject of children sexual exploitation (CSE) say little or nothing about disability. The Jay report into sexual abuse of 1,400 children in Rotherham between 1997 and 2013 makes no reference to disability (Jay, 2014). Neither does the 2013 CELCIS report estimating rates of sexual exploitation of accommodated children in Scotland (Lerpiniere et al., 2013).

The Barnardo’s study

The authors of the Barnardo’s research study set about rectifying this situation by following a range of lines of inquiry. In their study they undertook an overview of the current literature, a UK policy analysis and surveyed local authorities/health and social care trusts (HSCCs) about known current practice across the UK. They undertook face-to-face interviews with young people with learning disabilities who have experienced, or are at risk of, sexual exploitation and organised regional consultation events and telephone interviews with key stakeholders. Of critical importance in researching a disempowered service user group whose voice is often lost in our systems, the authors consulted with young people with learning disabilities to support the development of a set of recommendations to improve practice in this area.

The study concludes that CSE is over-represented amongst children
with learning disabilities. The reasons for this over-representation are multi-factorial, but according to the practitioners’ survey they include:

• Impairment-related factors, including a lack of capacity to consent to sexual activity, difficulties associated with being able to recognise exploitation or risk, impulsive behaviours and needs associated with a different understanding of social cues, interaction and communication;

• Societal treatment of young people with learning disabilities, including infantilisation, overprotection, disempowerment, isolation and not seeing them as sexual beings, leading to little attention being given to informing them about healthy sexual relationships;

• A lack of knowledge, understanding and awareness of the sexual exploitation of young people with learning disabilities among professionals, parents and carers, and the wider community;

• A lack of identification of learning disabilities, and focus being placed on behavioural issues at the expense of identifying exploitation or learning needs;

• A lack of understanding of capacity to consent and of the abilities of professionals to assess this;

• The lack of training received by professionals concerning CSE and learning disabilities;

• The low priority generally given to young people with learning disabilities by service providers and policymakers.

Other factors such as the reliance of young people with learning disabilities on the adults around them and the increasing use of social networking by young people with disabilities to overcome social isolation and build friendships and relationships are also noted. The study also found that, if ADHD and autistic spectrum disorders are included, a gender dimension to this issue starts to emerge: 35% of boys referred to Barnardo’s CSE services had a learning disability or learning difficulty in comparison to only 13% of girls.

Conclusion

Unsurprisingly the authors found that policy and practice is currently inadequate in relation to the scale and nature of this problem. There is no quick fix here, and the reader is recommended to consult the report where specific recommendations are made with respect to policy and practice in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. However this is an issue that also crosscuts the work of many NOTA members. Even for those who do not work with children and young people directly and only work with adults, your service users are members of families and communities that involve children, potentially including children with learning disabilities. So it may be worthwhile considering the following points:

• How equipped am I in responding to young people with learning disabilities who experience, or are at risk of, CSE. What about the colleagues I work with? What about my agency? What can I / we do about this?

• How good are the local multi-agency partnerships I work with at protecting children and young people with learning disabilities from the risk of sexual exploitation? And what could improve our work in this area?

Stuart Allardyce, Deputy Children’s Service Manager, Barnardo’s Skylight / Lighthouse and Chair of NOTA Scotland

References


Recent Press Releases and Reports: keeping up in 2015 - Helen Masson

**Child Sexual Exploitation: Making a Difference - Maggie Blyth**

**Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board, 2015**

This report pulls together collaborative work by Oxfordshire agencies to tackle the perpetrators of child sexual exploitation (CSE) and protect children. It highlights the progress that has been made since 2011, when Operation Bullfinch commenced, in the identification and analysis of CSE and in the provision of clear pathways for children at risk through the Kingfisher team and the work of the CSE sub-group of the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board.

The 45 page report can be accessed at:


**Confronting Child Sexual Exploitation in London, London Assembly, 2015**

This report examines London’s approach to safeguarding children in the light of the lessons that can be learned from failures in tackling child sexual exploitation (CSE) in Rotherham. It focuses on the relationship between the Metropolitan Police and other professionals, particularly those in the local authority.

To access the 37 page report, go to:


**Barnardo’s Cymru bilingual guidance on CSE**

Barnardo’s Cymru in conjunction with the Welsh Government has launched a bilingual guide for young people about keeping themselves safe from child sexual exploitation.

The 12 page booklet can be accessed at: [www.barnardos.org.uk/eng_new_cse_booklet_cc126b-v2-barnardos-fft-englishversion_web_.pdf](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/eng_new_cse_booklet_cc126b-v2-barnardos-fft-englishversion_web_.pdf)

**Northern Ireland – new guidance**

The Northern Ireland Executive has launched new guidance for schools on relationship, sexuality and drugs education. The guidance produced by the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations & Assessment (CCEA) has been updated to reflect new legislation, technological advances and societal changes which affect how schools deal with these sensitive issues.


**University of Bedfordshire – Researching Child Sexual Exploitation**

The International Centre: Researching Child Sexual Exploitation, Violence and Trafficking at the University of Bedfordshire has produced 12 short films for anyone who wants to access key learning about child sexual exploitation from their latest research.

Details about the 12 films can be accessed at: [www.beds.ac.uk/ic/films?utm_content=buffer1e83d&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer](http://www.beds.ac.uk/ic/films?utm_content=buffer1e83d&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer)

**The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health – update guidance on CSA signs**

The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) has updated ‘Physical Signs of Child Sexual Abuse’, otherwise known as the Purple Book. The first update since 2008, it includes three new chapters: anogenital signs of accidental injuries in girls and boys; genital bleeding in pre-pubertal girls; and healing in anogenital injuries. The Purple book is free to all named and designated doctors but costs £49 plus p&p for anyone else.


**Ofsted guidance for children’s social care providers**

Ofsted has published new guidance for children’s social care providers explaining how it will evaluate their use of Disclosure and Barring Service checks.


‘Concerns about Children’ – new guidance for Ofsted staff (2015)

Ofsted regularly receives information that suggests that children are suffering or are at risk of harm. Typically, this comes to their attention in one of two ways: inspectors identify a concern during an inspection or information is received from members of the public, professionals or providers.

Such information may identify specific children or alleged perpetrators or may be more general. For example, it may indicate that an organisation’s practices present a potential risk to any or all children who the organisation comes into contact with.

This guidance applies to those cases brought to Ofsted’s attention where a child or children may be suffering or likely to suffer physical, emotional or sexual harm or neglect.

The guidance sets out how to
there has been an 18.9% increase
Wales for 2014/15. Findings include:
and girls (VAWG) in England and
The Crown Prosecution Service
management/

in the number of child sexual abuse convictions from 3,344 in 2013/14 to
73.8%.

The 110 page report can be accessed at:
www.cps.gov.uk/publications/
docs/cps_vawg_report_2015.pdf

The six page guidance can be
accessed at:
www.careknowledge.com/uploaded
Files/Redbox/Pavilion_Content/Our
Content/Social_Care_and_Health/webwatch_for_CK_only/2015/20150
6/Concerns_about_children_guidance_for_all_Ofsted_staff.pdf

Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of
Constabulary (HMIC) – three
reports on child protection issues
In July 2015 HMIC published three
reports related to child protection. The
first is a summary of findings from
21 inspections of police responses
to child protection; the second
looks at findings of an inspection
into how police deal with children
being exploited online; and the third
examines how successfully police
share information in order to build
a picture of criminality. Findings include:
over half of police investigations into
online child abuse are judged as
inadequate or needing improvement.

The three reports can be accessed at:
www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/
hmic/publications/in-harms-way-
the-role-of-the-police-in-keeping-
children-safe/

www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/
hmic/publications/online-and-on-
the-edge-real-risks-in-a-virtual-
world/

www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/
hmic/publications/building-picture-
an-inspection-of-police-information-
management/

Crown Prosecution Service
annual report on violence
against women and girls
The Crown Prosecution Service
(CPS) has published its annual
report on violence against women
and girls (VAWG) in England and
Wales for 2014/15. Findings include:
there has been an 18.9% increase

The 48 page report can be accessed at:
www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/
documents/research-reports/how-

NSPCC Annual Report
How safe are our children? The
most comprehensive overview of
child protection in the UK (2015),
Sonja Jutte, Holly Bentley, Dan
Tallis, Julia Mayes, Natasha Jetha,
Orla O’Hagan, Helen Brookes,
Nicola McConnell, London,
NSPCC
This report compiles and analyses
the most robust and up-to-date child
protection data that exists across the
4 nations in the UK for 2015.
The report sets out 20 different
indicators. Each indicator looks at
the question of “how safe are our
children?” from a different perspective.
They also include historic data, to help
track progress over time.

The 88 page report can be accessed at:
www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/
documents/research-reports/how-

NSPCC report on preventing
child sexual abuse
In late May the NSPCC published
a report about child sexual abuse
prevention. Key points include:
sexual abuse is a public health issue,
prevention programmes need to be
grounded in theory and evidence, and
there are still gaps in knowledge about
sexual abuse. Calls to action include:
a government funded 24/7 helpline for
people concerned they may sexually
abused children or young people
and a National Child Sexual Abuse
Prevention Resource Centre.

The 48 page report can be accessed at:
www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/
documents/research-reports/
preventing-child-sexual-abuse-
towards-a-national-strategy.pdf

Cochrane review – an NSPCC
summary
The NSPCC information service has
written a summary of key findings
and recommendations from the
recent Cochrane review of school-
based education programmes
for the prevention of child sexual abuse.

To access the summary go to:
www.nspcc.org.uk/fighting-for-
childhood/news-opinion/school-
based-education-programmes-
prevention-child-sexual-abuse/

Young People and e-safety
National Foundation for
Educational Research, 2015 –
Karen Wespieser
In 2013, the London Grid for Learning
(LGfL) which provides infrastructure,
content and support to London
schools, undertook an information
gathering exercise designed to inform
future developments. This became
known as the LGfL e-safety survey.
It was targeted at pupils in Years 3 to
9, to provide useful and credible data
to support understanding of the ways
in which young people in schools
access and use the Internet at home
and at school.

LGfL wanted to build on the 2013
survey and conduct a similar data
collection exercise in 2015. In order
to do this, LGfL commissioned NFER
to support them to further develop
the instrument, administer the survey
and provide independent analysis and
reporting.

To access the full 44 page document
go to: www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/
LLGR01/LLGR01.pdf

The Lucy Faithfull Foundation –
new guidance launched
At the end of May 2015 the Lucy
Faithfull Foundation launched a
guide to support parents of children
who have been in trouble for viewing
or sharing sexually explicit images
online.

To access the 32 page guide go to:
www.parentsprotect.co.uk/files/
Parents%20Pack_Whats%20the%20
problem_11Mar2015.pdf
Northern Ireland (NI) Branch

Pam Hunter, NOTA member and CEO of Nexus NI, a charity which offers counselling to victims of sexual abuse and rape, has reported to NOTA NI Branch that the charity has recently been awarded funding from *Children in Need* to provide counselling for 11-16 year olds who have been the victim of sexual abuse and rape. The NSPCC are key partners with Nexus in this programme, sharing their ‘Letting The Future In’ model, the training for its use and their valuable experience. The charity, which covers the whole of Northern Ireland, will now be able to provide this new counselling service across three Trust areas in Northern Ireland – the Northern, South Eastern and Belfast trusts.

While the award has been welcomed by the NI Government and by the NI Commissioner for Children and Young People, the charity has warned that government must do more to ensure that sexual violence and abuse against children and young people is tackled as a government priority. One in 4 people in NI has been a victim of sexual abuse or rape and 43% of Nexus clients were abused between the ages of 6 and 10 years old.

**Nexus CPCAB Level 5 Diploma - Counselling Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse and Sexual Violence**

Drawing on over 30 years of expertise, Nexus NI has also developed the first accredited course in the UK to enhance the theoretical understanding and skills of counsellors working with survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse (CSA) and sexual violence. The Diploma is aimed at professional counsellors qualified to Diploma Level 4 or above with a minimum of 150 hours of supervised practice. The course is accredited by the Counselling and Psychotherapy Central Awarding Body (CPCAB).

The course aims to provide counsellors with understanding of the long term impact that CSA, or sexual violence can have, and to equip them with a variety of tools and techniques to utilise when working with clients affected by these issues. Candidates will learn about the impact that trauma can have on clients, emotionally, mentally and physically. They will also examine the emotional impact of this work on the counsellor through a thorough exploration of vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue, and the self-care strategies necessary to minimise and counteract these risks.

The objective of the course is to empower counsellors to work safely with those impacted by CSA and sexual violence by introducing them to a range of theoretical models that will assist them to support clients presenting with the wide range of issues arising from this type of traumatisation.

The first course begins in January 2016. Information on admission criteria, fees and course dates is available on the Training section of the Nexus NI website at [www.nexusni.org](http://www.nexusni.org), along with other daily workshops available. Please direct queries to: training@nexusni.org

**Libby Ashurst, Chair, NOTA NI Branch**

Scotland Branch News

Over the last 3 months we have hosted a couple of events that have proven to be highly popular.

In June we invited Professor Simon Hackett to speak at the regular Sex Offender Practitioner Forums that we co-host with the Forensic Mental Health Network. Simon presented to 60 delegates on the subject of ‘Recidivism, desistance and life course trajectories of young people with harmful sexual behaviours’. His presentation drew on the work he completed with Helen Masson looking at the experiences of adults who had themselves displayed harmful or problematic sexual behaviours in childhood. Many readers will already be aware of Simon and Helen’s study, but the principal findings of the study are worth repeating.

Their was a retrospective study of 700 case files representing all referrals over a 9 year period across 9 sites in the UK. From this data set, 69 former service users (now adults) were identified who agreed to participate in in-depth narrative interviews between 10 and 20 years after the end of their treatment. Their carers and professionals who had worked with them as children and adolescents were also interviewed if available.
South West Branch News

The last training event hosted by the South West branch was the well-attended ‘Autistic spectrum disorders and sexual offending’ session, delivered by forensic psychologist Andrew Bates. Since that event the South West executive has sought new membership and taken time to begin to plan for the future.

New members include Zoey Yabsley and Sylvie Alder, both of whom are local social workers. Diane Wills, who is well known to NOTA and sits as a trustee on the board of Circles South West, has also expressed interest in being a member of the South West executive, having recently moved to Plymouth. Jacinta Guilhermino has now taken on the lead role for branch training and development while Andrew Conroy remains the branch treasurer and Chris Wilson continues as branch chair.

The next confirmed training event, which will take place in Bristol, will be delivered by NOTA’s very own Roger Kennington who is presenting on ‘Current models of assessment’. Future plans for training include an event focussing upon work with young people and Martin Calder has also agreed to deliver training for the branch next year.

Chris Wilson
Branch Chair

Although sexual recidivism – as expected – was uncommon amongst this group, outcomes for many were poor when aspects of their lives such as intimate, peer and family relationships, employment and health were considered. Many of these individuals had simply not been sufficiently ‘socially anchored’ in the move from childhood to adulthood through support from families and communities. The day provided a wonderful opportunity for us to explore in detail what these findings mean for us as practitioners and for our services. Long term proactive aftercare, support for individuals at key points of transition into young adulthood after they have completed treatment, and restorative work with families were all noted as important initiatives we need to develop.

In August we invited Sherry Irvine and Rob Tucker to present, as part of our AGM event, a training day in relation to work with female sexual offenders. The day itself challenged us to think about how gender-responsive our work is before exploring victim impact, integration considerations and assessment and intervention challenges. Formulation was presented as an essential component of assessment and treatment planning.

Work with female offenders generally has come under a great deal of scrutiny over the last couple of years in Scotland. The Scottish Government’s decision to close Corton Vale, the only female-only prison in Scotland, led to considerable debate up here about how female offenders can be most effectively supported. We are starting to see some very exciting community based initiatives working both effectively and imaginatively with female offenders which, in particular, recognise trauma, addiction and mental health issues in many female offenders. Staff who are based at some of these initiatives are also reporting that they are starting to see the first female sexual offenders referred to them. This training seemed like a good starting point in helping build a network of expertise in Scotland around an issue that brings its own unique challenges.

Both of these excellent events brought in many non-NOTA members. One of our key challenges is how we translate these popular events into increased membership in the months ahead!

Stuart Allardyce – Branch Chair
Woodlands Residential Therapeutic Services
We provide outcome focussed therapeutic residential care for adolescent boys. Our in-house salaried therapists and our own registered school are vital components of a genuine therapeutic milieu, which benefits from our own Family and Systemic Psychotherapist, offering a service for all the young people and their families.

Therapeutically we offer:
• A person centred approach to continued development
• High care staffing ratios
• In-house team of therapists
• External expert clinical consultancy

Our education team offers:
• Registered School with ESTYN “Best Practice” Award Approval
• One-to-one or small group educational support
• Partnership with the Prince’s Trust

“In the summer of 2015, 7 of our students received a total of 17 GCSE’s and 9 Entry Levels a fantastic result of which we are immensely proud.”

CATS (Community Assessment and Treatment Service)
is an integrated family and individual community assessment and intervention programme which provides services focused on trauma, attachment issues and sexual abuse to the Family Courts, Child Safeguarding Agencies and the Criminal Justice System including:
• Individually tailored assessment and intervention for children, young people and families
• Therapeutic work with children, young people and adults
• Consultancy on individual cases to professionals, including teams
• Training to multi agency professionals on trauma, sexual abuse and attachment, awareness raising, assessment, intervention and creating a safe environment
• Expert witness reports to court proceedings

Woodlands Fostering Services
A newly opened service building on our reputation and expertise in the field of sexualised histories. We offer therapeutically supported specialist placements for young people of either gender from age 7–17.

For further information on all the above services contact:

WOODLANDS
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www.woodlandslimited.com

Woodlands is registered as a children’s home organisation with the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) Company No: 4197547