

Criminal Justice Platform Europe

International Criminal Justice Summer Course Responses to Sexual Violence

Barcelona, 5-8 July 2022

WORKSHOP REPORT

Workshop Title: Better understanding of sexual abuse to create effective policy and practice

Moderator: John Stafford, CEP

Leader 1: Professor Kieran McCartan (via video-link)

Leader 2: Dr. Maggie Brennan

Participants: There were 14 participants from 8 countries: a mixture of managers, practitioners and policy advisers

Note taker: John Stafford

Impression:

The all-female group of fourteen were highly committed, willing to learn and engaged fully. This was exemplified by their 100 % attendance, punctuality and their contribution and engagement in small groups to the exercises.

The participants were supportive of each other and networks were set up for the future, crossing national boundaries. Members shared some sensitive material in a professionally appropriate manner.

Professor Kieran McCartan was unable to attend the sessions in person owing to a family bereavement, but was able to present his sessions via Zoom, which worked successfully. He and Dr. Maggie Brennan worked extremely well together. Both are experts in their respective fields and excellent communicators.

A professionally satisfying workshop which was a pleasure to be a part of. The Workshop was highly participative and 100% practice orientated. The sessions involved many group exercises with participants sharing their own experiences and perspectives, which allowed for mutual learning and a deepening of professional knowledge. The workshop members developed a trusting and safe working environment and many expressed that they were very happy with the group and the contents.



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1. Introduction

Sexual abuse being a complex and multifaceted issues means that there is not always a simple or straightforward solution to it. The workshop focused on the research and practice evidence base related to people who commit sexual offences and allowed participants to consider the causes, consequences and responses to sexual abuse in a rounded, multidisciplinary fashion. The workshop considered the psychology of Sexual Offending behaviour across a range of offences and populations, considering what that means for prevention, treatment and re-interpretation at a practice as well as a policy level. In addition, the workshop asked participants to consider the real world challenges of responding to sexual offending from a public protection and community engagement angle so that they could develop appropriate responses in their home jurisdictions.

2. Summary of Presentations

Session 1 - Setting the scene: Sexual abuse as a life course issue, causes and consequences (McCartan)

Kieran outlined understanding sexual behaviour (normal sexuality; sexual deviance, sexual disorder and sexual crime).

- The importance of language and labels and its impact on rehabilitation and policy.
- The prevalence of sexual abuse and the characteristics of people who commit sexual abuse – common traits:
 - Sexual abuse as a community issue.
 - The aetiology of offending behaviour.
 - The importance of adverse childhood experience, adverse community environments and trauma.
- Assessing the risk of criminal behaviour.
- The importance of taking a public health approach for both offenders and victims.
- Treatment: Appropriate interventions and engagement with the person according to risk level and using a strengths based approach.

Session 2 - Challenges of developing realistic policy and practice (McCartan)

The challenges of the above were addressed by Kieran, notably the fragmentation of policy; the issue of so many undisclosed victims and the necessity of having research evidence for a clarity of what we want to achieve.

A group exercise outlined the challenges and opportunities in the participants' countries: the role of the media; adverse public opinion and lack of public information regarding the prevalence of sexual offending.

The need for a multifaceted approach to innovation in prevention was stressed. Primary prevention (broad based public messages); secondary (targeting those at risk of committing a sexual offence – Project Dunkelfeld); tertiary (programmes for offenders) and quaternary (post probation support).

The variation in practice, was illustrated by the differences in sex offender registers across the globe.

The Council of Europe recommendations were examined in some detail, with an exercise in understanding what needs to be done in participants' countries to be compliant.

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Session 3 - Vulnerable groups who commit sexual harm: understanding and responses (Brennan)

Maggie addressed each vulnerable group in detail, notably gender status (female); developmental status (the young); health based (mental illness); intellectual disability and traumatic histories.

A group exercise looked at the experience of working with the various categories. Maggie then outlined the importance of trauma informed care: principles, aetiology, risk of sexual harm and individual circumstances.

CAFIRA (Case Formulation Incorporating Risk Assessment) – the gold standard in working with people, especially vulnerable populations.

The 5 Ps method for case formulation: predisposing factors; precipitating factors; presenting problems; perpetuating factors and protective/positive factors.

Session 4 - Treatments and Interventions with people convicted of sexual offences (Brennan)

Brennan gave a detailed explanation of the Risk-Need-Responsivity model (RNR) and its applicability.

- The management of risk – risk management tools, gut reaction and professional judgement.
- Treatment – need for targeting. Ethics.

This was followed by a group exercise in identifying the challenges of the RNR model. The four levels of prevention were then presented by Maggie, including the Dunkelfeld project which aims to enhance behavioural control and to reduce associated dynamic risk factors and What Works in treatment.

Session 5 - Individuals who commit sexual abuse on-line. (Brennan)

Maggie outlined:

- The range of on-line activities from revenge porn to on-line grooming, to commercial sexual exploitation, the scale which is difficult to evidence, but everything points to increases.
- The motivation – facilitation model.
- The role of the internet environment in offending and victimisation – on-line solicitation; CSAM offending in Peer to Peer networks.
- The importance of knowing what people have actually been doing on the internet.
- The global analysis of Child Sexual Abuse by Interpol (one million plus files) key finding 43% of files depicted identified children, 57% unidentified. Research on Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Material (CSAEM) 800 files.
- Factors associated with risk indicators for crossover from the internet to contact sex offences (access to internet, more access to children, a predisposition to a sexual interest in children and antisocial traits).
- Treatment considerations.

A group exercise based on identifying good practice from the participants own experience.

Session 6 - Working with communities to understand, prevent and integrate people who have sexually harmed (McCartan)

Kieran explained the origins of COSA (Circles of Support and Accountability) and presented a documentary film on COSA.

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The evidence base and examination of the considerable research studies were given, including cost benefit analysis which all show positive benefits. In summary, Circles were shown to challenge, to engage with communities, to promote inclusion and to encourage.

There followed discussion in small groups, to share practice, participants finding the session useful, particularly those who were party to setting up schemes in their own communities.

Session 7 - Becoming a scientist practitioner, working with what works and how to know it does (Brennan)

Maggie's main points:

- Construction of crime and our response to it is informed by Government policy; professional knowledge and practice; public attitudes and understandings; media reporting debate and analysis.
- Empirical evidence is particularly important to inform government policy, public attitude and media bias and for practitioners to inform their practice and multi-agency responses.
- People who commit crimes are individuals and the causes of crime are nuanced, requiring evidence to be drawn from a multitude of strands and disciplines.
- Research approaches, methodology, design, rigour, developing research tools, data analysis and write up were all presented.
- The scientist practitioner model requires us as practitioners to be research driven in terms of assessment, conceptualisation, treatment options and evaluation.
- Important questions were raised regarding doing research in practice.

Session 8 - What's next?

Kieran and Maggie presented a detailed overview of the extensive material which had been covered in the week. Encouragement was given for participants to contact Kieran and Maggie for advice post the summer course.

The participants were asked in small groups to identify what they were taking away from this and the impact on their practice. Positive feedback was given by the participants. The session ended with the presentation of certificates.

3. Key Learning Points

- Use of language is important in understanding that the sum of the individual is not their offence – put the person first and the behaviour second.
- Sexual offenders do not recidivate more than others. Nor do the majority of youth offenders become adult sex offenders.
- There should be an evidence – based approach to working with sexual offending and sexual offenders. Interventions and treatments, however, cannot just be replicated in other jurisdictions, they have to be adapted to the context/culture.
- CAFIRA (Case Formulation Incorporating Risk Assessment) is the gold standard in working with people, especially vulnerable populations. It is particularly useful in accommodating all the competing demands and priorities on practitioners with limited resources.
- On-line sexual abuse is an increasing issue, the exact scale of which is unknown, but we do know that there are many undiscovered victims.
- Most of the usual risk assessment tools do not seem to work with on-line offenders. CPORT (The Child Pornography Offender Risk Tool) does seem to be effective.

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- On-line sexual offenders are distinct and different in terms of risk and treatment profiles to the contact sex offenders population.
- Research indicates that most on-line offenders do not progress to contact sex offenders. High risk indicators for crossover from internet to contact sex offences are a sexual interest in children and antisocial traits.
- Research into Circles of Support all points to its effectiveness.

4. Key Practice Issues for the Future

- Probation needs to shift to a health focus in its work, thinking about how the community can help people and their prosocial integration.
- 10% of sex offenders are high risk. This group needs to be targeted for intensive treatment and management and accommodation made for people's different learning styles.
- Researchers and practitioners need to ask people who have stopped offending why they did so. This is an under researched area and should be the focus of future research.
- Practitioners should aim to reduce the risk factors and increase protective factors to reduce the likelihood of reoffending.
- There needs to be more staff training on the impact of trauma and on trauma informed care, not just in regard of offenders, but their families and victims and for staff who working with them. The risk of desensitisation and compassion fatigue is high amongst practitioners and needs to be addressed.
- Training is also required for staff on on-line sexual offending.
- Partnerships need to be forged with community organisations by Probation to provide support to ex-offenders including Circles of Support, particularly as the demands upon practitioners' increase.
- Organisations need to assess themselves against the Council of Europe recommendations on the prevention of sexual abuse and use them to change their policy and practice.

5. Annex

References (provided by workshop leaders for further reading)

Special issue: International approaches to sex offender risk assessment and management <http://www.sexual-offender-treatment.org/sot-1-2-2018.html>

Brennan, M., Perkins, D., Merdian, H., Tyrrell, E., Babchishin, K., McCartan, K., & Kelly, R. (2019). Best practice in the management of online sex offending. <https://uwe-repository.worktribe.com/output/1492535/best-practice-in-the-management-of-online-sex-offending>

McCartan, K. F., & Kemshall, H. (2017). Contemporary Sex Offender Risk Management Vol 1: Perceptions (Edited Collection). London: Palgrave Macmillan. <https://www.palgrave.com/gp/book/9783319635668>

Kemshall, H., & McCartan, K. F. (2017). Contemporary Sex Offender Risk Management Vol 2: Responses (Edited Collection). London: Palgrave Macmillan. <http://www.bookmetrix.com/detail/book/efc61d3d-a6f1-47f7-ab42-070fef81a215>

Berkeley Media Studies Group (2018). Moving toward prevention: A guide for reframing sexual violence. <http://www.bmsg.org/resources/publications/moving-toward-prevention-guide-reframing-sexual-violence/>

Berkeley Media Studies Group (2018). Where we're going and where we've been: Making the case for preventing sexual violence.

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<http://www.bmsg.org/resources/publications/sexual-violence-prevention-messaging-guide/>

Hanson, K. (2018). Long-Term Recidivism Studies Show That Desistance Is the Norm. *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 45(9):1340-1346
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327015367_Long-Term_Recidivism_Studies_Show_That_Desistance_Is_the_Norm/citations

McCartan, K. (2022). Refining processes in policy and practice in working with people accused or convicted of a sexual offence. HM Inspectorate of Probation.

Uzieblo, K., Smid, W. J., & McCartan, K. (Eds.). (2022). Challenges in the Management of People Convicted of a Sexual Offence: A Way Forward. Palgrave Macmillan.

Recommendation regarding the assessment, management and reintegration of persons accused or convicted of a sexual offence. Council of Europe.

McCartan, K., & Kemshall, H. (2022). Incorporating quaternary prevention: Understanding the full scope of public health practices in sexual abuse prevention. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*,

Richards, K., Death, J., & McCartan, K. (2020). Community-based approaches to sexual offender reintegration. NSW, Australia: Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS).

McCartan, K.F., Richards, K. (2021). The Integration of People Convicted of a Sexual Offence Into the Community and Their (Risk) Management. *Curr Psychiatry Rep* 23, 52.

Lussier P, Beauregard E. (2018). Sexual offending: a criminological perspective. 1st ed. Routledge: New York; 2018.

Proulx, J., Cortoni, F., Craig, L. A., & Latourneau, E. (2020). The Wiley handbook of what works with sexual offenders: contemporary perspectives in theory, assessment, treatment, and prevention. Wiley: London.

Harris, D. (2017). Desistance from sexual offending: Narratives of retirement, regulation, and recovery. Palgrave Macmillan.

McAlinden A-M, Farmer M, Maruna S. Desistance from sexual offending: do the mainstream theories apply? *Criminol Crim Just.* 2017;17(3):266–83.

Office for National Statistics (2018). Sexual offending: victimisation and the path through the criminal justice system. Office for National Statistics. Accessed on 28-08-2020 via <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/sexualoffendingvictimisationandthepaththroughthecriminaljusticesystem/2018-12-13>

Gannon TA, Olver ME, Mallion JS, James M (2019). Does specialized psychological treatment for offending reduce recidivism? A meta-analysis examining staff and program variables as predictors of treatment effectiveness, *Clinical Psychology Review*, 73. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2019.101752>.

Additional reading

The journal "*Current Psychiatry reports*" does several research overviews on topics within the arena of sexual abuse, some ones that maybe of interest are

Community risk management <https://rdcu.be/cUH6K>

Desistance From Sexual Offending <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11920-020-01219-3>

Healthy Sexuality for Sex Offenders <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11920-020-01180-1>

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Men with Sexual Convictions and Denial <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11920-020-01174-z>

Sex Doll Ownership: An Agenda for Research
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11920-020-01177-w>

Men With Intellectual Disabilities Who Have Offended Sexually
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11920-020-01151-6>

Evaluating Change in Men Who Have Sexually Offended: Linkages to Risk Assessment and Management <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11920-020-01146-3>

Child Pornography and Online Sexual Solicitation
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11920-020-1132-y>

Assessing Paraphilic Interests Among Women Who Sexually Offend
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11920-019-1112-2>

The Application of the Good Lives Model to Women Who Commit Sexual Offenses
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11920-019-1115-z>

A Brief History of Psychological Theory, Research, and Treatment With Adult Male Sex Offenders <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11920-018-0920-0>

Sex Offender Risk Assessment: Where Are We and Where Are We Going?
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11920-018-0909-8>

An Etiological Approach to Sexual Offender Assessment: Case Formulation Incorporating Risk Assessment (CAFIRA) <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11920-018-0904-0>

Major Mental Illness in Those Who Sexually Abuse
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11920-017-0863-x>

Sexual Behavior Among Persons With Cognitive Impairments
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11920-017-0777-7>

Understanding Online Child Sexual Exploitation Offenses
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11920-016-0707-0>

Juvenile Sex Offenders <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11920-016-0706-1>

Elderly Sexual Offenders <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11920-016-0678-1>

Special edition of journals

Sex offender treatment <http://www.sexual-offender-treatment.org/sot-1-2-2018.html>

Sexual Aggression

- Sexual violence and abuse in organisations: new developments and innovative responses <https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/tjsa20/26/1?nav=tocList>
- The prevention of sexual abuse and violence – What have we learned and where should we be heading? <https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/tjsa20/25/1?nav=tocList>
- Online sex offending – approaches to assessment and intervention <https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/tjsa20/23/1?nav=tocList>
- Community reintegration of sexual offenders <https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/tjsa20/21/1?nav=tocList>

Sexual abuse

- International Developmental/Life-Course Perspectives and Research on Sexual Offending and Offenders <https://journals.sagepub.com/toc/saxb/32/4>
- Child Sexual Abuse in Organizational Settings <https://journals.sagepub.com/toc/saxb/31/6>

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- Female Sexual Offenders <https://journals.sagepub.com/toc/saxb/27/3>
- Protective Factors <https://journals.sagepub.com/toc/saxb/27/1>

Child abuse and neglect

- 30 Years of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: Evolving Progress and Prospects for Child Protection <https://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/child-abuse-and-neglect/vol/110/part/P1>
- Child abuse and resilience: Understanding the differential impact of protective processes <https://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/child-abuse-and-neglect/vol/78/suppl/C>
- The Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse <https://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/child-abuse-and-neglect/vol/74/suppl/C>

Journal of interpersonal violence

- Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse <https://journals.sagepub.com/toc/jiva/34/20>

Journals that publish on sexual abuse, probation, treatment and community management

Probation journal

Irish probation journal

Sexual aggression

Sexual abuse

Child abuse and neglect

Journal of interpersonal violence

International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology

Journal of child sexual abuse

Child Abuse Review

Useful organisations/websites

ASTA <https://www.atsa.com/>

NOTA <https://www.nota.co.uk/>

IATSO <https://www.iatso.org/>

ANZATSA <https://www.anzatsa.org/>

Blogs

ASTA/SAJRT Blog <https://blog.atsa.com/>

NOTA blog <http://www.notaprevention.co.uk/>