

Institution: Durham University
Unit of Assessment: Social Work and Social Policy (UoA22)
Title of case study: Improving policy, professional practice and services in relation to young people who have sexually abused.
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Between 25% and 33% of all perpetrators of sexual abuse in the UK are children or young people. Policy and practice in relation to this group has been under-developed. The research detailed in this case study constitutes a body of work that has identified gaps in service delivery and has significantly advanced policy, training, treatment services, and assessment and intervention practices for this group of children and their families. The research findings have led to a shift across key service providers, including Barnardo's and NSPCC, away from adult sex offender approaches towards more child-centred and holistic interventions.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Durham University's Centre for Research into Violence and Abuse (formerly the Crime, Violence and Abuse Research Group) has undertaken a programme of research into young people who have sexually abused. From the 1990s and throughout the 2000s there was growing professional concern about the existence of young sexual abusers, but a lack of empirical research to inform policy and practice. The Durham research has identified significant gaps in assessment and treatment services and has challenged the applicability of research on adult sex offenders to young people, leading to the development of new services and a paradigm shift towards focusing on young people holistically, including their offence specific and broader developmental needs. This research has comprised:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. The first research into national and local policy relating to adolescent sexual offending across the UK and the Republic of Ireland in order to establish the adequacy of official guidance in the management of young sexual abusers within multi-agency systems. We found that 76% of 143 local areas had established inter-agency policies. However, tremendous variations were found in the length and quality of policy and procedural guidance and substantial differences uncovered in how young sexual abusers are managed across localities and regions (section 3, ref. 6). B. The most comprehensive survey of the state of service provision across five nations including the nature of services provided, their capacity, theoretical orientation, the nature of referrals received and gaps in services. We found widespread concern about the availability and quality of assessment, intervention and residential provision locally. We also highlighted the need to integrate better youth justice and child welfare responses to this user group (section 3, ref. 5 and 6). C. A review of the nature of assessment and treatment models and approaches in the UK and Ireland and the development of practice principles and best practice approaches undertaken through Delphi studies of 78 experienced practitioners and 65 managers of services for young sexual abusers highlighting the need for a shift away from 'abuse specific' approaches to developmentally sensitive, resilience based models (section 3, ref. 3). D. The first published study of the experiences and views of 23 young sexual offenders and parents about the professional responses to their families and their experiences of the child welfare and criminal justice systems. This research highlighted the importance of supportive interventions, including whole-family approaches (section 3, ref. 4). E. The largest British demographic study of the individual, family and abuse characteristics of 700 young sexual abusers. Particularly high rates of sexual and non-sexual victimisation were present in the backgrounds of the children and young people referred, emphasising the need for holistic interventions (section 3, ref. 1). F. The first long-term outcome study of 86 young sexual abusers between 10 and 20 years following the end of professional interventions in childhood, identifying risk and protective factors associated with developmental and lifecourse outcomes. We found that a small proportion (6%) had sexually reoffended, but long-term outcomes varied substantially. The

study provided the first international empirical data on desistance in this group into adulthood, with findings highlighting the importance of long-term professional support, stable partner relationships, educational success and employment as factors most positively influencing the lifecourse of this group (section 3, ref. 2).

The above studies were led by Professor Simon Hackett (Lecturer then Senior Lecturer in Applied Social Sciences 1999-2005; Reader then Professor in Applied Social Sciences 2006-date). Sarah Phillips (Research Associate 2003-2008) assisted in above projects A to D. Josie Phillips (Research Associate 2008-2013) assisted in above projects E and F. Hackett collaborated with Professor Helen Masson and Dr Myles Balfe of the University of Huddersfield on the grants listed below, with Hackett as Principal Investigator.

3. References to the research

1. **Hackett, S.**, Masson, H., Balfe, M. and **Phillips, J.** (2013) Individual, family and abuse characteristics of 700 British child and adolescent sexual abusers. *Child Abuse Review* 22 (4): 232-245. DOI: 10.1002/car.2246. <http://tinyurl.com/q4rp89l> Wiley peer reviewed journal, impact factor 0.556, ranked 24/41 social work journals. The output was underpinned by competitive grant award *Recidivism, desistance and life course trajectories of young sexual abusers. An in-depth follow-up study, 10 years on*. Funded by ESRC (2008-2011, £341,667.98). End of award grade- excellent.
2. **Hackett, S.**, Balfe, M., Masson, H. and **Phillips, J.** (2012) Family responses to young people who have sexually abused: anger, ambivalence and acceptance. *Children and Society*. Article first published online 03 Sep 2012. DOI:10.1111/j.1099-0860.2012.00471.x. <http://tinyurl.com/pp3gghz>. Wiley peer reviewed journal, impact factor 0.73, ranked 18/41 social work journals. Underpinned by the ESRC grant above.
3. **Hackett, S.**, Masson, H. & **Phillips, S.** (2006) Exploring Consensus in Practice with Youth Who Are Sexually Abusive: Findings from a Delphi Study of Practitioner Views in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. *Child Maltreatment* 11(2): 146-156. DOI: 10.1177/1077559505285744. <http://tinyurl.com/oq2vdf9> Sage peer reviewed journal, impact factor 2.77, ranked 2/41 social work journals. 19 citations. The output was underpinned by competitive grant award *Mapping and Exploring Services for Young People who have abused others*. Funded by Youth Justice Board (YJB) for England and Wales, NSPCC and the National Organisation for the Treatment of Abusers (NOTA). (2001-2003, £100,000)
4. **Hackett, S.** & Masson, H. (2006) Young people who have sexually abused: what do they (and their parents) want from professionals? *Children & Society* 20(3): 183-195. DOI: 10.1002/CHI.873. <http://tinyurl.com/puj4vte> Wiley peer reviewed journal, impact factor 0.73, ranked 18/41 social work journals. 7 citations. Underpinned by the YJB grant above.
5. **Hackett, S.** (2004) *What works for children and young people with harmful sexual behaviours?* Barkingside, Barnardo's. Peer reviewed monograph. 25 citations. Underpinned by YJB grant above. Summary available at: <http://tinyurl.com/o7drmrw>
6. Masson, H. and **Hackett, S.** (2003) A decade on from the NCH report (1992): adolescent sexual aggression, policy and service delivery across the UK and Republic of Ireland, *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 9(2): 109-124. DOI: 10.1080/1355260031000163208. <http://tinyurl.com/ou8l7dh> Taylor and Francis peer reviewed journal. 18 citations. Underpinned by the YJB grant above.

4. Details of the impact

The research detailed above has resulted in significant changes to government, local area and organisational policy relating to young people who have sexually abused others. It has shaped the development of services in the statutory, voluntary and private sector throughout the UK over the REF period and has changed the way in which professionals work with children, young people and their families, as follows:

Impact on policy, guidance and service development

Evidence from the research studies A and B (refs. 4 and 6) on the importance of holistic, interagency approaches underpinned the publication of the interdepartmental government document (2006) *The needs and effective treatment of young people who sexually abuse: current evidence*. Here the research was cited 19 times with the research directly shaping government

policy on: improving responses to young people with learning disabilities who sexually offend; improving collaboration between criminal justice and child protection agencies in cases of sexual abuse by young people; improving services for parents; recommended types of therapy; and, the development of a tiered service delivery model. This in turn led to Hackett's appointment by the Department of Health as one of three experts to develop a proposed national strategy on young people who sexually abuse in the DH document (2009) *Young people who display sexually harmful behaviour. A Framework for Service Development*.

Findings on the need for more integrated practice between criminal justice and child protection agencies (projects B and C, refs. 3 and 6) were also used in the development and evaluation of the AIM Assessment Framework (2004) and AIM2 (2007) adopted by many Local Safeguarding Children Boards throughout England and Wales (from 2008). Findings on integrated practice were also incorporated into the recommendations of key policy documents such as the joint thematic inspection report (2013) *Examining Multi-Agency Responses to Children and Young People who sexually offend* conducted by HMI Probation, Care Quality Commission, HMI Constabulary, HMI Prisons and Ofsted (source 5). The findings on the state of policy and practice with young sexual abusers and the need for integrated child protection and criminal justice practices (projects A and B, refs. 5 and 6) have led to the development of a coordinated programme of NSPCC services, policy and strategy with regard to sexual abuse including (2009) *Sexual Abuse and Therapeutic Services for Young People: The gap between provision and need* and (2012) *Therapeutic Services for Sexually Abused Children and Young People: Scoping the Evidence Base* (sources 1 and 7) and underpin the NSPCC's current national practice manual for young people with harmful sexual behaviours, the 'Change for Good' programme (source 1).

The findings on policy problems, and a lack of progress in implementing the proposed national strategy (above) in the context of governmental change and public service cuts, started a wider public discussion through high profile dissemination of findings through the media: in May 2010, Hackett appeared on Newsnight, BBC 6 O'Clock and 9 O'Clock News and Radio 4 'File On Four'. BBC reports (source 9) directly quoted Durham research findings (projects A and B, refs. 4 and 6) resulting in a more accurate and informed picture of the current gaps in assessment and treatment services across the UK and raising public awareness of the perspectives of parents of children who have sexually abused. The failings of the child protection system for families where sexual abuse is perpetrated by young people was debated publically for the first time.

Examples of impact on practice within service providers

The research has influenced practice across a wide range of service providers in both the voluntary and independent sectors, leading to direct benefit to users. Barnardo's and NSPCC are the two main UK providers of community based therapeutic services for young sexual abusers and this section uses examples from these as reflective of broader changes across the sector. Barnardo's Lighthouse Project (Edinburgh) has used findings on families' experiences and the importance of engaging with families of young abusers since 2008 (refs. 4 and 5, source 2) in training events and in its staff induction pack. Similarly, the research (ref. 6, source 3) is used as part of the training for new workers and according to the Deputy Children's Services Manager "generally all staff know the publication and it is part of the work" at Barnardo's Chilston Project (2012) (Tunbridge Wells).

1. Holistic interventions

The research has informed the development of holistic, systemic and whole family approaches to young sexual abusers and victims of sexual abuse. For example, the Head of Strategy and Development at NSPCC said that the research informs the organisation's approach to work with victims as well as young abusers as the organisation builds on "the knowledge from [Hackett's research] work, for instance about taking a holistic approach". At Glebe House (Cambridge), a residential therapeutic community that supports young men with harmful sexual behaviour, findings (project C, ref. 3) have resulted in the development of a new family service (2010) as part of the agency's relapse prevention approach and has "had an impact on the work done...in reinforcing how to talk about the children and young people displaying sexual harmful behaviour" (source 4). At Barnardo's Chilston the research (projects C and F, refs. 2 and 5, source 3) has contributed to the development of an increased focus on work with parents and carers. At Barnardo's Bridgeway

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(Middlesbrough) the research (project C, ref. 3) has led to the development of a new approach to assessment involving families, entitled the 'Family Day Assessment' that supports practitioners to conduct initial assessments of safeguarding and safe care plans using a whole family approach. At the Barnardo's Lighthouse project, the findings on families of young abusers (project D, ref. 4) "provided the grounding for developing family group work for families with children who displayed harmful sexual behaviour" (source 2).

2. A shift from 'abuse specific' to 'resilience based' and 'developmental' approaches

Branas Isaf (North Wales), a specialist resource comprising five residential units, has implemented a new intervention approach (2012) focusing on protective factors as a result of the research (project F, ref. 3, source 8). Barnardo's Taith service has moved from a focus on problems and deficits towards an emphasis on strengths-based therapy (from 2008) (ref. 3, source 3). Similarly, Glebe House has developed a resilience-based approach as a result of the research (project C, source 4) and has increased its face-to-face contact between professionals and young people based on findings from users (ref. 4, source 4). According to the Director of Glebe House, the research has "influenced service provision across the therapeutic community, for instance by focusing on building resilience in the young person and taking a holistic approach to the work. Before, the models used in work with adult sexual offenders were transferred to the work with children and young people...which was inappropriate". Findings on desistance and long-term developmental outcomes (project F, refs. 1 and 2), have further influenced the field in refocusing treatment responses from short-term recidivism outcomes to a renewed focus on long-term developmental outcomes. At Branas Isaf and Glebe House, for example, this has included new employment schemes and an increased emphasis on the provision of ongoing support after young people have left residential care (sources 4 and 8). Specifically, Glebe House has created a new post of Aftercare Support Worker (2013) as a direct result of the findings (project F, refs. 1 and 2, source 4).

3. Research informed risk assessment

The research has helped to develop practice in relation to risk assessment and risk management across agencies including at Glebe House where "Another important factor highlighted by the research is the long-term risk of convictions. The work highlights the need to continue to focus on long-term outcomes... and focus on the human factor in the work with the YP" (source 4). At Branas Isaf this includes the implementation of a whole organisation approach to risk management as well as changes in practice relating to sharing of assessment reports with referring agencies (project B, ref. 1).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

Source 1: Head of Strategy and Development, NSPCC. Telephone interview, 18.06.12
 Source 2: Youth National Development Team, Scottish Government and Manager Barnardo's Lighthouse Project. Telephone interview, 18.06.12
 Source 3: Deputy Children's Services Manager, Barnardo's Chilston Project. Telephone interview 21.06.12 and email interview 25.07.12
 Source 4: Director, Glebe House, Cambridge. Telephone interview, 22.06.12
 Source 5: Joint thematic inspection report (2013). Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/nlboxnjn>
 Source 6: NSPCC strategy and practice manuals. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/npg527a> and <http://tinyurl.com/nm7nub4>
 Source 7: Branas Isaf procedures manual. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/ngg9qbt> (direct references paras. 2.5 and 3.1 and wider impact discussed in section 4)
 Source 8: BBC Newsnight report: Hidden problem of children sexually abusing children, 17th March 2010. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/newsnight/8569219.stm>