

+ 2nd North East Conference on Sexual Violence

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Balancing Needs and Risks in Work with Children and Young People who are Sexually Violent

+ Crossing lines...

- A social worker was concerned about where to place Stephen, a 7 year boy who had been sexually abused by his older brother. After the older brother, aged 14, had been removed from the home, Stephen began in turn to behave in a sexually aggressive way to his younger 4 year old brother.
- This behaviour continued for several months until the 4 year old was able to communicate his experience to his mother.
- The social worker sought consultation on his plan to place Stephen in the same foster placement as his older brother (his original abuser), as Stephen had now...
"crossed over the line" between victim and perpetrator.

+ Approaches to children drawn from adult sex offender treatment

- "The denial systems of these offenders must be penetrated during the early phases of treatment or no real progress can be made. The levels of confrontation necessary to accomplish this are greater than any used by most traditional therapists" (Ryan et al, 1990, p269)

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+ Consensus research

- Hackett, S., Masson, H. and 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

+ Developmental diversity (Hackett, Masson and Phillips, 2006)

- "Children who display sexually harmful behaviours are first and foremost children and should not be regarded as mini adult sex offenders."

(99% of the sample highly agreeing, interquartile range of 1.00, median 10)

- "Work with children and young people should be developmentally appropriate. We cannot assume that research, models and methods designed for adults can be applied to adolescents."

(99%, 0.00, 10)

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+ Key message 1- developmental status

- Children and young people who harm others as a result of their sexual behaviour are first and foremost children in need. They are 'abusers' second
- Younger pre-adolescent children who display harmful sexual behaviours often have extensive abuse histories and need a qualitatively different approach than adolescents who sexually abuse. The welfare of these children and the resolution of their own abuse experiences are primary concerns.

+ Almond et al. (2006)

- Analysis indicated that youths who sexually harmed could be classified in terms of three psychologically distinct themes:
- 71% (215 out of 300 cases) could be classified as exhibiting a dominantly **Abused, Impaired or Delinquent** background

+ Key message 2- diversity

- Considerable diversity exists among both children and young people with harmful sexual behaviours. This diversity applies to their own backgrounds, experiences, competencies, disability status, the motivations for and meanings of their behaviours and their needs.
- Young people with harmful sexual behaviours share many of the characteristics of other young people with problems.

+ Risk and recidivism

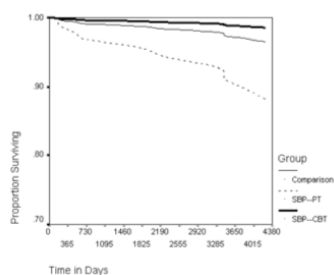
“It is now widely accepted that sexually aggressive behaviour in children and young people are unlike other anti-social behaviours in that they do not cease as the participants get older. On the contrary, research indicates sexual behaviour problems will escalate in terms of seriousness and incidences if left untreated”

- *Extract from local child protection committee procedures*

+ Carpentier, Silovsky and Chaffin (2006)

- Tracked this sample of children with SBP (n= 135) prospectively for 10 years through adolescence and into young adulthood
- Across three service systems; child welfare, youth justice and adult criminal justice
- Compared them to a group of same aged children (n=156) with common nonsexual behavioural problems (e.g. ADHD)

+ Carpentier, Silovsky and Chaffin (2006)



+ Recidivism and young people

- Worling and Curwen (2000) collected recidivism data on 148 aso's assessed at a specialised community programme.
- Follow-up period averaging 6 years, mean age at follow-up= 21.5 yrs
- Compared 'treated' adolescents against non-treated

+ Risk and recidivism

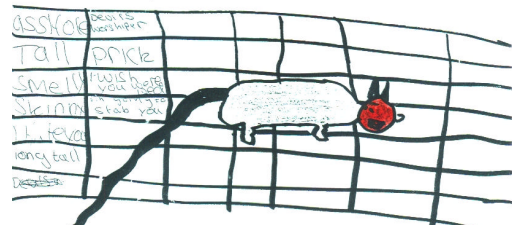
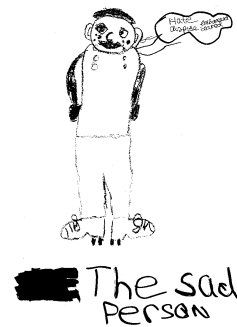
	Comparison group	Treated group
■ Any criminal off.	54%	35%
■ Sexual assault	18%	5%
■ Violent non-sex off.	32%	19%
■ Nonviolent off	50%	21%

+ Risk and recidivism

- Prentky et al. (2000) in a review of studies suggest that the average sexual recidivism rates are between 3–14 per cent
- Chaffin et al. (2002) practitioners persistently over-estimate the level of risk presented by young people

+ Key message 3- Risk

- It is not inevitable, or even highly likely, that most children and young people with harmful sexual behaviours will go on to perpetrate sexual abuse in adulthood.
- As non-sexual reoffence is more common than sexual recidivism in this group, intervention should focus on broad-based behavioural and developmental goals, not just on preventing further sexual abuse.



+ Sexual Behaviour Problem Focused Treatment Components

- Identifying, recognizing the inappropriateness of rule violating sexual behaviours that have occurred
- Learning about and practising basic, simple rules about sexual behaviour and physical boundaries
- Age-appropriate sex education
- Coping and self control strategies
- Basic sexual abuse prevention/ safety skills
- Social skills
 - (National Taskforce, 2006)

+ Key message 4: Addressing needs and risks is not contradictory...

- u Address risk factors comprehensively across the social ecology
- u Build protective factors across the social ecology
- u Do this on an individualized basis

+ Key message 5- families

- Intervention with families is at least as important as individual work with the child.
- Approaches to families should not allow the abuse to go unchallenged, but blaming and deficit approaches are not effective.
- Helping to raise parents' self-esteem and their sense of self-efficacy is often the key to positive family change and good outcomes for children.

+ What can parents tell us about their experiences of our systems?

- Hackett, S. and Masson, H. (2006) Young People who have Sexually Abused: What do they (and their parents) want from Professionals? *Children and Society* 20, 183-195

+ (Hackett and Masson, 2006)

- "As a parent you feel very ashamed and I would like to see more support given to parents."
- "I would say that the least helpful has been a change of worker. Fortunately it was not the worker my child had engaged with. We as a family are now on to our fourth social worker. This is not helpful."

+ Barriers for young people

- Delays in the professional response
- Conversely, sometimes yp said that professionals seemed to rush into action rather than take time to understand what they were telling them

+ Summary points 1

- Children and young people who harm others as a result of their sexual behaviour are first and foremost children in need. They are 'abusers' second.
- Considerable diversity exists among both children and young people with harmful sexual behaviours. This diversity applies to their own backgrounds and experiences, the motivations for and meanings of their behaviours and their needs. But, evidence of distinct sub groups is emerging and this has implications upon diversity of responses.

+ Summary points 2

- Young people with harmful sexual behaviours share many of the characteristics of other young people with problems.
- It is not inevitable, or even highly likely, that most young people with harmful sexual behaviours will go on to perpetrate sexual abuse in adulthood.
- As non-sexual reoffence is more common than sexual recidivism in this group, intervention should focus on broad-based behavioural and developmental goals, not just on preventing further sexual abuse.

+ Summary points 3

- Intervention with families is at least as important as individual work with the child. Approaches to families should not allow the abuse to go unchallenged, but blaming and deficit approaches are not effective.
- We have much to learn from users about their experiences of our systems and our interventions. For the most part, users want supportive opportunities to address their problems, though the system at times mitigates against this.
- Balanced approach