

SHAPING THE FUTURE

2019 ATSA Conference | Friday November 8 | 1:30 PM – 3:00 PM

F-25

Institutional Climate of Treatment

The Transition from Prison to the Community: The Experiences of People Convicted of Sexual Offenses

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The reoffending rates of people with a sexual conviction are low compared with other types of offence (MoJ, 2014), however, the extensive range of restrictions in place in a number of jurisdictions when people return to the community from a prison sentence (McAlinden, 2006), often results in a range of practical and emotional challenges for the individual, (Tewkesbury and Jennings 2010, Levenson and Cotter, 2005, Prescott and Rockoff, 2011). Criminal Justice professionals need to provide support, encouragement practical skills and opportunities to their clients inside prisons, during the transition, and upon their return to the community. Helping people to develop their self-worth, to shape their own future, in order to lead meaningful and responsible lives as active members of the community (Edgar et al, 2011).

The presentation reports on the findings of PhD research into the transition of people leaving a large prison for people with sexual convictions in the UK and their plans preparing for release. It provides an insight into the actual experiences of this transition. Offender Managers (parole officers) were interviewed as part of this research. The presentation will document the ethical issues surrounding the research and the key themes and issues for people returning to the community. It will also present an analysis of the prisoner's experiences of prison life in a prison focussed on therapeutic treatment and their experiences and challenges of the transition back to the community. It will explore how their licence conditions impact on their access to employment, accommodation and their general well-being. Six key themes emerged from the research: Perspectives on prison life and institutionalisation: Family relationships: Employment and purposeful activities; Stigma and challenges: Accommodation and home: Hope and future planning. The presentation will conclude by outlining recommendations for both policy makers and practitioners to consider in the light of the research findings

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Learning Goals:

- To introduce the background to the research and its objectives.
- To review the experiences of research participants before and after release from prison and to discuss the experiences of the Offender Managers (Parole officers) in their management process
- To consider the implications of the research for developing future policy and practice.

Lynn Saunders OBE is a qualified social worker and prison Governor with over thirty years' experience working with people with sexual convictions in both prisons and in the community. For the past eleven years she has managed an 841 place specialist prison (HMP Whatton) in the UK providing a range of CBT based programme exclusively for people with sexual convictions. She has a master's degree in Criminology, two honorary doctorates from two UK Universities and is about to complete a PhD in socio-legal studies from a third.

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SHAPING THE FUTURE

2019 ATSA Conference | Friday November 8 | 1:30 PM – 3:00 PM

"We're All the Same Here" A Multi-Site and Qualitative Longitudinal Study into Rehabilitative Prison Climates for Men with Sexual Convictions

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There has been a plethora of research focusing on the static and dynamic risk factors of individuals with sexual convictions and the specific treatment targets offenders need to address to reduce recidivism (Mann, Hanson & Thornton, 2010; Hanson et al, 2009). However, there is much less examining the context or environment within which treatment takes place (Ware et al, 2011). The prison climate (whether therapeutic or not) and the attitudes of staff in that prison play a pivotal role in successful treatment and rehabilitation of offenders, but it is relatively under researched. Birgen (2004) has argued that such issues constitute an aspect of responsivity, which is both under-developed and seldom researched. Indeed, there are growing concerns that rehabilitative programs and practices are being compromised by ineffective correctional environments (Day, Casey, Vess, & Huisy, 2012; Smith, Cullen, & Latessa, 2009). Given that research has found that treatment for individuals with sexual convictions in prison is not effective (see e.g. Schmucker & Losel, 2015), or at least contested, it is important that we understand the environment where treatment takes place.

The talk will unpack two interrelated research studies. The first study will focus on a multi-site research study investigating the rehabilitative climate across four prisons in England and Wales for men with sexual convictions. The results will focus specifically on the importance of meaningful relationships, purposeful activity and will emphasize how encouraging prisoners to “own their own rehabilitation” is important and how rehabilitation extends beyond programs. The study will also focus on the importance of ‘experienced safety’ and how this can promote the ‘headspace’ to contemplate change. This is important as research has found that prisoners who feel safe are more likely to secure meaningful roles throughout incarceration and more likely to engage in treatment and other pro-social activity (Blagden & Perrin, 2016; Perrin & Blagden, 2014). The second study will focus on the only qualitative longitudinal study to examine the changes in prison environment of a newly re-rolled prison for individuals with sexual convictions (i.e. a previously general prison that changed population to be exclusively for men with sexual convictions) and revisiting that prison a year later. The study will unpack themes relating to the importance of ‘constructive, meaningful and reciprocal relationships’, whether co-locating individuals with sexual convictions together creates a ‘deviancy culture’ and what is important for ‘facilitating ‘space’ to change’. The talk will also unpack the main benefits and challenges of locating individuals with sexual convictions in a prison site.

The talk concludes by emphasizing the importance of taking the environment in which treatment is done more seriously and highlighting the types of environment that are most

SHAPING THE FUTURE

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conductive to the rehabilitation of men with sexual convictions. It will make links to the importance of promoting desistance factors in prison, providing opportunities to change and peer support. It is argued that environments such as the prisons in these studies, where individuals with sexual convictions are co-located together, are the most conducive to bolstering treatment gains (see Ward et al., 2004; Ware et al., 2010), though further research is needed to investigate this assertion.

Learning Goals:

- To understand the importance that prison climate can have on facilitating change in individuals with sexual convictions.
- To examine the relationships and activities outside of programs that can assist with maintaining and reinforcing treatment gains.
- To explore the types of prison environment most conducive to personal change and how to operationalise those environments.

Dr Nicholas Blagden is the Associate Head Sexual Offences, Crime and Misconduct Research Unit (SOCAMRU) and Associate Professor in Forensic Psychology. He is a co-founder and trustee of the multi-award winning charity the Safer Living Foundation He is a Chartered Psychologist and has worked and researched within the criminal justice system and HM Prison Service for over 10 years. He has taught undergraduate and postgraduate courses in psychology, forensic psychology and criminology. He has also trained police officers. His work has been funded by the HMPPS and he is currently engaged in numerous collaborative forensic projects with NTU, HMPPS, Institute for Mental Health, Ontario, Canada and Correctional Services Australia. He has published widely in international journals and disseminated research at international conferences.

Dr Belinda Winder is a Professor in Forensic Psychology and Heads the Sexual Offences, Crime and Misconduct Research Unit (SOCAMRU) in the Department of Psychology at Nottingham Trent University. She set SOCAMRU up in 2007 to build upon the collaborative relationship between ongoing research within the Department of Psychology at NTU and HMP Whatton (one of the largest prisons in Europe, holding approximately 830 convicted adult men who have been convicted of a sexual offence). The unit's primary aim is to conduct and facilitate applied research in the area of sexual offending and sexual crime. The unit works with the HMPPS, Ministry of Justice and the NHS and conducts research at a number of prisons (including HMP Whatton and HMP Stafford) and other secure forensic establishments. She has disseminated her work in a range of ways (presentations, professional reports, peer reviewed papers, articles for prisoners' newspapers, medical journals and so on) both internationally and nationally. Belinda specialises in mixed-method research with a strong service-user voice and an applied focus.

Belinda is a co-founder, trustee, Vice Chair and Head of Research and Evaluation for the Safer Living Foundation, a charity set up in 2014 to conduct (and evaluate) initiatives that help to prevent further victims of sexual crime.