

Ten years of the Swedish telephone help-line project PrevenTell – Lessons learned and future directions

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Background: In 2012, PrevenTell, targeting individuals at risk of committing sexual offences, was launched by the ANOVA clinic, Karolinska University hospital. Previously published data on the help-line users (n = 1573) showed that 92% were men and the median age was 36 years. Almost 70% of the users reported a pattern of compulsive sexual behavior and more than half of the sample reported at least one paraphilic interest. The incidence of life-time self-reported mental health problems was 54%, and 25% reported ongoing suicidal thoughts (Adebahr et al., 2021).

Aim: To identify future directions for PrevenTell.

Methods: Interviews with helpline users were analyzed to identify areas of development.

Results: Identified priority work for PrevenTell was to reach younger individuals and raise awareness about risk factors for sexual violence among health care professionals.

Conclusion: A chat function has been developed in order to reach younger individuals. In addition, a web-based training program has been developed for healthcare professionals to help them identify and make an initial assessment of patients with conditions associated with sexual violence or illegal sexual behavior. Yet, these interventions will have to be evaluated.

Exploring attachment, adverse experiences and trauma in adolescents in custody for a sexual offence

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A mixed methods study will be presented which explores the characteristics, life experiences, and behaviours of adolescent males serving sentences for sexual offences in two UK youth custody establishments.

It has been identified that the ‘voice of the child’ is rarely captured within research into adolescent harmful sexual behaviour (HSB). To address this gap in the literature, insight into the lived experience of a small number of the adolescents will be provided. This qualitative data will be presented alongside statistical dataset analysis.

The aim of the study was to explore the background characteristics of these young people along with analysis of the interplay between adverse life experiences, trauma, attachment relationships, and their harmful sexual behaviour.

The findings of the study will be presented with discussion of implications for clinical practice.

Technology-assisted harmful sexual behaviour among children and adolescents – Understanding and intervening

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Children and young people are growing up in a digital world which brings many benefits but is also an area in which they can harm and be harmed. This interactive workshop will explore types of technology-assisted harmful sexual behaviour (TA HSB) displayed by children and adolescents, with both vulnerability and risk considered. A summary of the research base will be presented, with space for discussion on recognising and responding to TA HSB.

Prevention of TA HSB will be considered with reference to cyber-safety and safety planning. The focus will then move to assessment and intervention when TA HSB has taken place.

Do the sexual fantasies of minor-attracted people differ depending on the target?

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Minor-attracted people (MAPs) have been found to sexually fantasise about children. However, a Target x Behaviour interaction may be at play, wherein different behaviours are fantasised about depending on the imagined target. This was examined in the present study. Fifty-seven MAPs and 29 non-MAPS recruited online completed a sexual fantasy questionnaire twice; one in relation to adult targets and one in relation to child targets. Both questionnaires comprised a romantic, impersonal, sexualised aggression, and sexualised submission subscale. Age-related interests, emotional congruence with children, and child abuse-supportive beliefs were also assessed. A 2(Group) x 4(Fantasy Theme) x 2(Fantasy Target) mixed ANOVA revealed a significant 3-way interaction. MAPs scored higher on all child-related fantasies compared to non-MAPS. Within MAPs, romantic child-related fantasies were greater than the other three child-related fantasies. Also, romantic and impersonal fantasies involving children did not differ from those involving adults. However, sexually aggressive and submissive fantasies involving adults were greater than those involving children. In addition, sexual fantasies involving children were positively associated with emotional congruence and abuse-supportive beliefs, while adult-related fantasies were not. These findings support the idea of a Target x Behaviour interaction, indicating that the specific behaviours should be determined when assessing child-related sexual fantasies.

An overview of the development and therapeutic approach of Stand Strong, Walk Tall and Det Finnes Hjelp

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Stand Strong, Walk Tall (SSWT) is a New Zealand-led research collaboration and pilot secondary therapeutic preventive intervention for individuals who experience sexual attraction to children, available on a self-referral basis with options for face-to-face or virtual delivery. The SSWT approach is also operating across Norway under the name Det Finnes Hjelp (Help is Here; DFH). In this first talk of the symposium, the development of the service model and the approach taken in both countries will be overviewed, including site-specific differences where applicable. Attendees will be introduced to the dual overarching aims of the intervention approach, underlying theoretical basis, intervention philosophy, and key therapeutic targets. The focus on reducing barriers, and the importance of research to the SSWT/DFH model will also be discussed.

The Danish Sexual Offender Treatment and Research Program (DASOP): Possible effects on criminal reoffending?

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To reduce recidivism for individuals who sexually offended (ISOs), the Danish Parliament voted to implement DASOP; a targeted multisystem ISO management model across Denmark in 1997.

We conducted an ecological, prospective, national matched cohort study and compared reoffending during a 10-year fixed follow-up of 541 ISOs referred to pre-treatment assessment in DASOP 2006-09 and individually matched (1:1; age, sex, index sexual offence and sentence) with ISOs convicted before DASOP was implemented.

DASOP assessment – variably followed by psychological and pharmacological treatment for eligible (based on risk and offence severity) and consenting ISOs – was associated with less sexual reoffending (12% vs. 16%; adjusted Hazard Ratio (aHR)=0.70, $p<0.05$), severe sexual reoffending (5% vs. 9%; aHR=0.56, $p<0.05$), and any crime (41% vs. 53%; aHR=0.72, $p<0.001$).

Specifically, 109/541 (20%) of DASOP examinees had 4+ months of consecutive, individualized psychiatric outpatient treatment. Although intentionally selected because of higher sexual reoffending risk, treated ISOs reoffended less than comparison subjects on most outcomes, albeit not significantly so.

The still operational national DASOP initiative and outpatient psychiatric treatment appeared linked to reduced sexual and general reoffending in convicted ISOs compared to matched historical controls. Further research is needed to validate integrated multimodal models for ISO management.

Protective and desistance factors among individuals who have committed a sexual offense (ICSO): Need for a clarified articulation

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Forensic literature has witnessed a plethora of assessment tools emphasizing risk factors (Singh et al., 2014). Assessment and care practices have gradually evolved when professionals no longer ask what does not work but What works (Farrall & Maruna, 2004). Moreover, literature suggests professionals would be better prepared to treat offenders if they were allowed to listen to what offenders think is best for them rather than insisting professionals' solutions are best (Maruna, 2016). Principle of What works is therefore complemented by Why works and How works approach to rehabilitation. From this positivist perspective, inclusion of so-called „positive“ factors as protective or desistance factors is an important issue. The current paper aims to articulate two studies regarding protective and desistance factors among individuals who have committed a sexual offense (ICSO): the first study consists of a systematized literature review focusing on protective factors identified among ICSO and the SAPROF validity measure; the second study investigates desistance factors identified through the discourses of six male ICSO on probation or conditional release. Results of these two complementary studies will be discussed in light of the literature, laying the foundations for future research required for the conceptual and operational clarification of protective and desistance factors.