

## **EVALUATION OF CURRENT APPROACHES TO SEXUAL OFFENDER MANAGEMENT AND REINTEGRATION**

What follows is the transcript of the third online debate which occurred as part of The Leverhulme Trust funded “How to develop good public understanding of child sexual abuse and its management”. The Community Engagement and Partnership Working with Sexual Offenders International Network is a collaboration of seven academics from six universities across five countries. We also have a number of national and international partners. It is an international partnership, designed to engage practitioners, academics and policy makers on issues of sexual offender risk management and public protection. The network is also committed to public and societal education on issues of sexual offender etiology, offending, management and reintegration.

This represents the third of six discussions scheduled to take place throughout 2014 - 16 to examine the Community engagement and partnership working with sexual offenders. The debates are a series of discussions between invited practitioners, academics and relevant parties on a variety of issues relating to sexual offender management and reintegration. All of the debates will be published in the ATSA Forum as well as on the international networks website:

<http://www1.Participant9.ac.uk/hls/research/offenderengagement/online debates.aspx>

The aim of the current debate is to discuss current approaches to the evaluation of current approaches to sexual offender management and reintegration. The debate included below occurred over a two -week period in March 2015, through an online social networking site. 16 participants from 6 countries (UK, USA, Holland, Australia, Canada, and Australia) agreed to participate in the debate. They were invited to take part because of their interest and expertise in this area. The participants were selected from academic backgrounds and practitioner groups. All participants are identified below only via the institutions or organisations with which they are affiliated. Comments made by participants do not necessarily represent the views or policies of those institutions or organisations:

- Participant 1 – from University of Massachusetts – Lowell, USA
- Participant 2 – from Vermont Department of Corrections, USA
- Participant 3 – from University of Vermont, USA
- Participant 4 – from St. Joseph's Healthcare, Hamilton, Canada
- Participant 5 – from a sex offender prison based in the UK
- Participant 6 – Independent consultant and therapist from Northern Ireland
- Participant 7 – from McMaster University, Canada
- Participant 8 – from Deakin University, Australia
- Participant 9 – from McMaster University, Canada
- Participant 10 – from University of Hull, UK
- Participant 11 - from the University of the West of England, UK.
- Participant 12 – from Stop it Now!, Netherlands
- Participant 13 - from Queensland University of Technology, Australia

- Participant 15 - from De Montfort University, UK
- Participant 16 - from Griffith University, Australia
- Participant 17 – from Carlton University, Canada

The debate below is a faithful representation of what was said, nothing has been otherwise altered (except in a very few places where minor adjustments were made for clarity and the removal of identifying features/comments —Editor). The format includes an opening statement, in this case by the representative from CoSA Canada, followed by an open discussion including all participants and the debate is then summarized. Readers are reminded that this was originally an online discussion, and that grammar, etc. were of lesser importance in favor of free expression of thought and opinion.

Participant 1 &	Greetings everyone. Thanks for joining our online forum.
Participant 2	<p>The challenges of providing for the effective re-entry and reintegration of offenders into the community have achieved increasing policy traction over recent decades. Concurrently, we have witnessed an expansion of laws and practices aimed at expanding community-based monitoring and restrictions on those with histories of committing sexual offenses.</p> <p>While the transition from prison to the community presents challenges to almost all offenders, those who have been convicted of sexual offenses encounter a compounded set of reintegration obstacles, including those related to housing, employment, and access to treatment and systems of social support. Although some specialized approaches to community-based sex offender management attempt to address these types of challenges, goals related to societal integration and reintegration may easily be superseded by those focused on monitoring, restrictions, and surveillance.</p> <p>This online dialogue provides us with an opportunity to explore the current state of sex offender reintegration policy and practice; to identify and articulate some of the inherent challenges; to explore promising models of practice; and to critically examine the state of existing research evidence surrounding what works.</p> <p>The participants in our dialogue include those engaged in offender supervision and treatment, community justice, policy formulation, and research. Over the next two weeks, we aim to generate a constructive dialogue involving how existing policies and practices may promote or impede effective community reintegration of those who have sexually offended, and in turn how policies can be re-oriented to generate smarter and more effective public safety strategies.</p> <p>To get our dialogue started, we begin with a couple of “big picture” questions surrounding some of the inherent tensions involved in developing effective sex offender management and reintegration strategies.</p> <p>Are “monitoring and control” policies (e.g. registration and notification, intensive supervision and electronic monitoring, restrictions on housing, employment, and online activities) entirely antithetical to strategies aimed at promoting reintegration? Or, alternatively, can these two types of policies be employed in a complementary fashion?</p> <p>What is the state of our current empirical knowledge surrounding the linkage between investing in strategies that promote sex offender re-integrative goals and the achievement of community safety benefits? What are some of the ways that this body of knowledge can be advanced?</p> <p>Please weigh in with your thoughts on these questions. While “long form” ideas are fine and welcome, we also encourage brevity in your comments as a means of stimulating dialogue and</p>

	discussion.
Participant 2	Looking forward to engaging with our international learning community as we consider the interplay between these dynamics.
Participant 3	I keep thinking of the research by Willis & Grace (2009) that speaks to the impediments to successful reintegration for sex offenders, and the main one is lack of housing. Thus, the restrictions on housing, which are often nonsensical anyway (e.g., offender who commits offenses against adult victims is prohibited from living near children), seem counterproductive if housing itself can serve as a stabilizing force. That is just one example of the ways that fearful policies have to be offset by intense efforts toward reintegration--an intensity that might be unnecessary if there weren't regressive policies in place.
Participant 4	It is my experience that stakeholders-such as, the courts, review boards, and parole boards-are usually looking for 2-3 key pieces of information from a risk evaluation: 1. the offence/charge (ie. how serious is it), 2. risk estimate, and 3. management strategies (ie. registration, intensive supervision etc.). They are not typically asking about how to best promote re-integration--which would then speak to the needs of the individual--housing, employment, etc. I have started including the role of protective factors in my evaluations and will include recommendations regarding the same, but in the end, I think decision makers key into the more conservative and controlled methods of managing risk in the community and are less interested in the other rehabilitation needs of an individual. Certainly in Canada, the government is moving away from re-integration to more restrictive approaches to manage risk (Bill C54), which complicates attempts to balance risk and recovery/rehabilitation.
Participant 1	David D'Amora hasn't weighed in yet - but this brief report from CSG Justice Center and CSOM is hot off the press, and seems to connect to our discussion.
Participant 5	There is also the recent article by Abracen, Gallo & Looman in the 2015 march edition of the Journal of Interpersonal Violence
Participant 6	<p>I was the coordinator of public protection in Northern Ireland, known as PPANI, and I believe it is about balance between the restrictions and the integration. Monitoring has its place but its the fear of 'what if' which affects professionals enabling the offender to begin that journey into reintegration, however there is also the deficit in real investment in resources to assist the offender to reintegrate, e.g. such as real support for voluntary and church groups who are prepared to include the offender but who require professional support to help them educate their community, to manage the risks etc.</p> <p>Effective supervision should be a learning process through education, role modelling, support and mentoring for the offender about themselves and why they offended but often it is not actually supervision but 'keeping an eye on them' with minimal proactive engagement to enable the beginning process of reintegration.</p> <p>In Belfast we have several 24 hour staffed hostels which are the focus of attacks such as fire bombs, yet these hostels are equipped to assist in education, social and practical skills training, I worked for 3 years at building up the media awareness of the role these hostels play in both supervision and preventing reoffending, this engagement was very effective with less irresponsible media reporting such as 'pervert hostel' being used in print media. Media , within N. Ireland hold a strategic position in how possible reintegration could take place by their decision in how to report the release and accommodation of an offender</p>
Participant 7	<p>Participant 3 makes reference to Gwen Willis and highlights housing...</p> <p>Both Gwen and Doug Boer have noted (I'm paraphrasing here) that the safest offenders are</p>

	<p>those who:</p> <p>Have a place to live</p> <p>Are connected to support people to whom they accountable (for the high risk/need guys...think CoSA)</p> <p>Have work</p> <p>Have everything to lose by assaulting again</p> <p>Clearly, that's not everything, but it's a good start. These would certainly be in line with what Mini is talking about when she raises the need to focus as much on protective factors as we do on risk factors. On that note, for those who are unaware, the current issue of Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment is a special issue on Protective Factors, guest edited by Jim Worling and Calvin Langton.</p>
Participant 6	<p>The new risk assessment tool ARMS designed by police and national offender management (NOMS) has included desistance factors as well as risk factors and this ensures assessors do not only focus on risk.</p>
Participant 7	<p>Focusing on the first of the two bullet points made in the introductory piece by participants 1 and 2, I typically have more problems with the implementation of "monitoring and control" policies than I do with the policies themselves (at least most of the time).</p> <p>I certainly wouldn't say that each and every one of those policies is inappropriate all the time. Clearly, some offenders need special attention, using specialized tools and risk management options. However, the biggest problem -- implementation-wise -- is that we consistently fail to apply risk and need considerations when implementing risk management measures.</p> <p>If we just do everything to everyone, then we essentially wash out any potential gains. Indeed, given the positive skew in risk for sexual offenders, the chances are great that we'll spend more time running ourselves around in circles, over-supervising the low risk majority, while leaving inadequate time and focus for the guys who really need our best attentions.</p>
Participant 8	<p>Thanks participants 1 and 2. In response to your first question, we have recently completed a series of interviews and focus group with community corrections officers, police, non-government support workers, and treatment providers who work with registered sex offenders in Australia. We were particularly interested in their views about notification (which has only recently been introduced in Australia, and is pretty limited in scope). We were surprised at the level of support that exists for pretty much all of these policies - people felt registration was not an issue, had some concerns about community notification (but nothing substantive), and were strongly supportive of electronic monitoring. I think this reflects what seems to have become an established shared focus on community safety and interest in partnership working across justice (in principle, if not in practice just yet!). I think what stood out for me was there seemed to be so little tension in their minds between increased surveillance and broader rehabilitation and reintegration goals. In fact the only concern expressed was about vigilantism, which hasn't been a particular issue thus far in this part of the world. Rather, the focus on boundaries and accountability was generally welcomed and if anything seen as helpful to their reintegration efforts. Of course, there were some differences within groups (and the police were more punitive than the client-centred support workers), but they all subscribed to a similar case management model framed around supervision. I understand that these policies have been more intrusive in the US and so I am interested in whether this is the path that we will follow, or if it is really the way in which these policies are implemented, as Robin posted, that is the issue rather than the policies themselves. Andrew</p> <p>Whilst I am writing, I thought I'd mention some work we are doing that relates to the second question about reintegration strategies and community safety. We have become interested in the idea of social support, which is commonly talked about as a dynamic risk factor (both acute</p>

	<p>and stable) despite it being poorly defined and even more difficult to operationalize in any meaningful way (e.g., intimacy deficits are measured through a combination of lack of lover/intimate partner; emotional over-identification with children; hostile attitudes toward children; general social isolation/rejection, loneliness; and lack of concern for others; socio-affective problems include emotional over-identification with children; low self-esteem; emotional loneliness ; under-assertiveness; inability to handle negative emotions; and external locus of control; and socio-affective functioning is made up of inadequacy (low self-esteem, external locus of control, passive victim stance, suspiciousness); distorted intimacy balance (emotional intimacy easier with children than adults); aggressive thinking (paranoia, grievance, anger, rumination, suspiciousness, active victim stance) and callous/unemotional traits; and emotional loneliness (lack of intimate relationships, difficulty or unwillingness to create intimate relationships).</p> <p>The area seems to lack coherence to us and we think that this has inhibited the developed of effective strategies and interventions. We would be very interested to hear any views on this topic as we suspect it is a neglected aspect of treatment in particular. This is despite the wide implementation of evidence based approaches like family consultation strategies in mental health. We are interested in COSA as well and how this might be best positioned in relation to this.</p>
Participant 1	<p>Participant 8 -- we have been engaged in a similar project here in the US -- last spring, we interviewed 105 law enforcement professionals in 25+ communities across the country. Our focus was primarily on their views of registration &amp; notification, but as seems to be the case with your interviews as well, this discussion led into all sorts of directions, touching on issues related to housing instability, ideas about risk, and unintended consequences of some of our policies. We're about to go live with a national law enforcement survey based on these interviews, and have more focus groups w/ probation &amp; parole officials set for later this year.</p> <p>Along the lines of what you describe, we were particularly struck by the ambivalent (and sometimes contradictory) sentiments expressed by many of those who are charged with monitoring and enforcement functions within local police departments.....in one of our most colourful interviews, a deputy sheriff who handles a fairly large caseload of high-risk offenders (and interacts daily with them) continually referred to them (almost endearingly) as "my predators." She clearly had a rapport and connection with these guys, and a measure of sensitivity and empathy for their social integration challenges - but at the same time was not cutting them any slack. That's just one example -- while many we spoke with were fairly "black and white" in their thinking, we had a lot of indications from those who work on the front lines of monitoring that they had more awareness of the complexities than one might typically assume.</p>
Participant 2	<p>Hi participant 4. You surface a key value-based distinction here which leads to significantly different policy and strategy trajectories. I appreciate the "leaning in" represented by including the role of protective factors, especially when they are not sought. Proactively dimensionalizing the narrative and inputs by which release decisions are made at least requires the gatekeepers to hold an expanded picture, even if-- in the short run-- it does not lead to an immediate behavioral shift within the institutional default. Sounds like the ARMS risk assessment that participant 6 references intentionally incorporate these integration-promoting factors. From a Correctional operations perspective, there is no question that the questions asked (and not asked) on the diagnostic tools we adopt provide a particular frame.</p>
Participant 9	<p>When I consider the first point about balancing monitoring/control versus reintegration, it seems that they have inadvertently been pinned against one another, as though one comes at the expense of the other, rather than being complementary. I think participant 7's point about thinking of these issues not as contradictory but dialectical is bang-on, and that interpretation</p>

	and application is what really counts when it comes to monitoring. Indeed housing restrictions, applied logically, may actually equal more stability in the long term, thereby achieving both goals. This leads directly to the second point about improving our empirical understanding of reintegration and evaluating how reintegration strategies support desistance. As participant 4 points out so much evidence is placed on how restrictions and monitoring will reduce risk, but perhaps that can remind us that the decision makers need more evidence to show that reintegration be part of the plan, and perhaps makes it even better.
Participant 2	Hi participant 8. In Vermont's CoSA program we are very interested in better understanding, articulating and leveraging the role of social support. To this end, we commissioned a qualitative study which was conducted by Dr. Kathy Fox . Her findings speak to the potentially transformative resource that citizen volunteers can represent. The work also contributes to a hopefully growing body of literature. The research paper can be found at: <a href="http://www.doc.state.vt.us/about/reports/circles-of-support-account...">http://www.doc.state.vt.us/about/reports/circles-of-support-account...</a>
Participant 10	Taking the discussion back to CoSA, until recently I was volunteering with them. The main issue for the core member that I was involved with, in terms of reintegration was being on the register and the restrictions that came with that. Even though he had been convicted of an internet offence and had not spent any time in custody, the judge had still decided that he should be on the register for life - which to me felt wholly disproportionate. He was quite isolated but being in his early 30s felt there was little point trying to make friends because inevitably that person would have children or would want him to go into an environment (restaurant, café, bowling alley etc.) where there would be children and he was not able to do this. He felt that he had two choices, either tell people about his past (which he was not prepared to do) or just not bother making friends. This even extended to not going for a drink with work 'mates' after work. He has to wait five years from the date of conviction before he can have this decision (registration) reviewed and then it will be at his cost. As a Circle we were trying to come up with ideas for him but it was perhaps surprising how many activities that he was unable to do.
Participant 3	I think it can be challenging for a Circle to find ways to integrate some core members while avoiding the potential to undermine DOC conditions. In my research, I recall that when circle members helped navigate conditions rather than advocating for their elimination, they could work better with the PO. And in some cases that meant making safety plans that made certain outings possible that would not be without a circle. The value and potential of a Circle model, and the theoretical contribution it makes is the "tertiary desistance" as described by Fergus McNeill. He described tertiary desistance as one that emerges from a genuine sense of belonging. This comes from spending social time with core members, like making dinner, going for walks, fishing, whatever. And key to all of this is for DOC to loosen conditions for those who have a circle. That is a challenge.
Participant 5	It is important to develop sound relationships between service users and treatment providers/probation staff etc. so both parties can speak candidly. One prison in UK, HMP Whatton is developing a group who support men being released from custody, which sounds very innovative
Participant 7	Interestingly, because of the climate of social ostracism that surrounds sexual offenders in Florida, there are a number of small communities (trailer parks, or caravan parks for our UK friends) that have sprung up. Sometimes, there is an organization (faith group, etc.) that starts things off by buying the property or building or whatever. The bulk of the community building, however, is done by the men themselves. For many released sexually violent predators (a legal term, not mine) in Florida, they have developed social and self-help networks that support each other while also maintaining contact with men still incarcerated or committed who are preparing for release. Some of these sites have onsite counselling, will have a visiting physician or nurse practitioner, and have strong relationships with local law enforcement and probation/parole services. Given the general belief that sexual offenders living together is a bad

	thing, these guys are showing that strength in numbers can also be risk-reducing.
Participant 10	Do you know any more about this programme?
Participant 11	Hi all, sorry for being late to the conversation – especially when so much rich material has been discussed already. I think one of the many issue is how the reintegration of sexual abusers (often the most reviled people in society – modern or not), but it seems to me that one of the issues is the deeply personal/gut reaction that society has to the offence. The offence of sexual abuse is one that most members of society cannot get past which makes the reintegration of offenders challenging from day one. The real issue is about the marriage of the criminal justice system and the community in achieving safe sex offender reintegration, the conversation about CoSA is evidence of community engagement as well as good criminal justice engagement. That is the key the system and society working together, easier said than done and with its own issues (responsibility, accountability, public protection, control, etc), I agree with participants 1 and 2 that it can seem paradoxical but I don't think that it is .... It's a challenge yes, but society as well as criminal justice working should be a synthase. This, to me, indicates that sex offender integration should highlight and reinforce community education on the reality of sexual abuse, education on current treatment, education on current sentencing and better education on the role/function of probation. If there is a clearer understanding of sexual offending this may result in better community understanding and assistance in this reintegration; this to me is the real strength of CoSA, its secondary public health function. Having talked to many volunteers, as part of my own research, and hearing the research of international colleagues the take home message is "being better educated about sexual offending, meeting a sex offender and talking with them has lead me to be more engaged in their reintegration". This is important as sex offenders come from communities and go back into them; hence communities play a key role.
Participant 8	The public health model has some clear advantages I think, although the predominant response at the moment is a justice one, which largely sets the parameters for what reintegration services can do and how they are funded. ??
Participant 2	Thank you, participant 11. I think your integrative perspective highlights the importance not only of ongoing public education, but the utter essentialness of building effective collaborative bridges between Correctional and local communities. In Vermont, this takes the form of local Community Justice Centers (CJC). These centers are arms-length non-profit and/or municipal organizations funded by the Department of Corrections to recruit, train and supervise volunteers who serve on CoSAs along with other justice oriented programs. The CJs often convene discussion/education forums, and, as such, are uniquely positioned to influence the otherwise "gut reaction" of residents by virtue of the social capital and informal authority they have garnered through a non-professional/citizen engagement model. From a public health perspective, the serve as a statewide service delivery system designed to be responsive to local concerns and leverage local relationships. In this way, they are a form of responsive regulation with regard to the social contract.
Participant 10	I agree with participant 11 that better and more education is a must - especially for some professionals who we might assume don't need to be educated. An example that HMP Whatton are facing involves some of the men who they are treating with SSRIs and anti-androgens. When they are being released into the community they are finding it incredibly difficult to find GPs who are willing to supply them with the medication, not only does this threaten release decisions but inevitably reintegration and risk. For someone who has found peace through medication it can be incredibly fearful to be told that you will have to cope in the community without these drugs.
Participant 12	In the Netherlands we don't have registration and notification. On re-entering the individual offender gets conditions for his return to society. These can be housing (not near victims and potential victims), employment (same)and intensity of supervision (risk). Probation is

	<p>responsible for guarding the conditions. In many cases the men also go in outpatient treatment. We have the possibility of COSA for isolated offenders. There are about 500 offenders re-entering every year. When they come out of prison the mayor of the town they are going to live in is informed, as is the local police. In almost all cases a reintegration plan is set up, with the probation officer and local policeman playing the main roles. In five to ten cases a year there is unrest, because the neighbourhood doesn't want the man to live there, quite often supported by vigilante groups. So on the whole, things are going quite well. The risk is in the media. Public registers and notification don't give extra safety. But also in Holland there is the risk of hysteria and a call for notification, life long sentences and mandated castration. We think the MAPPA structure can be effective and hope this will satisfy the public. But most of all we try to inform the public with rational and correct information on seks offending, paedophilia and recidivism. I think we still have time to promote a sensible reintegration policy, based on evidence. Any suggestions?</p>
Participant 1	<p>Participant 12-- if I hear you correctly, you seem to be raising the spectre that Holland is at risk of heading down the "U.S. rabbit hole" despite its history of promoting more progressive, more evidence-based and less overtly punitive strategies toward reintegration. And further that the media is fanning the flames. As others have noted, we've been seeing the same thing unfolding in Canada, the UK, and Australia. I can't help but think that this is highly connected to the dissolution of traditional media boundaries in the Web 2.0 era. Not so long ago, media markets were primarily geographically bounded, and as such reflected and responded to prevailing cultural and national norms. Social media and the web have basically blown apart this order, which may explain some of this.</p> <p>RE: how best to counter these forces and promote evidence-driven policy, I think this leads into the second question that we posed at the beginning of this forum - i.e. that concerning the state of our knowledge and what we need to do to advance that knowledge and increase its adoption within policy and practice. As I've noted in prior forums, I think that researchers sometimes fall into a trap of arrogantly assuming that evidence integration is a one-way street (i.e. we produce the "truth" and it is up to policymakers to get with the program and follow our lead), while the reality is far more complex. One key to promoting evidence-based practice is to make sure that we are asking the right questions and framing our work in a way that is practically grounded and recognizes the messy realities of the policy process.</p>
Participant 7	<p>Actually, it's quite interesting to watch the US dismantle some of the strongly law-and-order schemes in favour of those that are evidence-based and that promote community management over incarceration. The evidence is the flattening of the formerly exponential curve showing the US incarceration rate (with recognition that a good part of the flattening was initially due to a sweeping initiative in California). So, as the US regresses towards the more reasonable mean, typically less punitive countries like Canada, UK and Australia are heading in the other direction towards more punishment and less rehabilitation.</p> <p>Big Macs, Friends, Kim Kardashian, civil commitment, lifetime probation, and sex offender registries...it's hard to miss the USA's influence on the rest of the world.</p> <p>I can still hear Don Andrews (rest his soul) ringing in my ears as he railed on a podium like a hell, fire, and brimstone Baptist preacher, "There has never been a single credible study in the history of the human species that shows that punishment alone reduces crime."</p>
Participant 1	<p>I agree with this characterization, participant 7 -- and it may be worthwhile to reflect on what has driven this change. Is it an increasing appreciation of research evidence or something else (fiscal realities, for example)?</p>
Participant 13	<p>I would argue that monitoring and control strategies can work in a complementary fashion with healthy community reintegration strategies. Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) are an</p>

	example of this in action - they seek to both monitor and reintegrate an (ex-)offender. This raises an even bigger question - should (ex-) offenders who genuinely seek reintegration actually embrace some form of monitoring? (I am thinking here about offenders being "accountable" to victims and communities).
Participant 3	In my experience with CoSA, I would say that to the extent possible, minimizing the monitoring function is desirable. I say this because of the fact that accountability, in any relationship, emerged naturally out of a healthy sense of mutual obligation. So CoSAs that are long on support early on create the conditions under which people feel accountable, at least to the group. Perhaps from there, a more general sense of "moral education" can occur. But the monitoring function, if it is explicit and overt, tends to undermine the more important sense of belonging that the group should try to create. I found core members were so grateful and moved by the experience of being genuinely welcomed by the group that the sense of obligation and desire to do the right thing evolved naturally.
Participant 6	One of the significant issues regarding re integration is the public's perception that every person who has been convicted for a sexual offence is a paedophile, has just committed the offences and is a risk today. The positive interaction I developed with media in Northern Ireland as Public Protection Coordinator was around the education of these key issues, highlighting the different types of offender hence why not every sex offender needs to be living away from schools etc, the increasing number of historical convictions, sometimes 30 - 40 years post the offence and the fact therefore the majority of the historical offenders probably no longer presents a current risk. Education must target key myths which fuel community reaction to reintegration.
Participant 3	I personally feel pessimistic about the ability to educate the general public. I hope I am wrong!
Participant 7	It comes through patience, persistence, hard work, and a willingness to be thought of as a crackpot. My father-in-law is a dyed in the wool retired cop. When I first met him, he and I would argue strenuously regarding our respective theories as to why people do what they do criminally. His theories were typical of LEOs (black and white, yobs and hooligans) and mine was typical of the born in the 60s Canadian lefty that I am (adverse childhood experiences, social ostracism, no access to fundamentals). However, there was a difference -- which I knew but he didn't. I was actually right, and I had data to prove it. The key to maintaining a healthy father-in-law/son-in-law relationship was not in ramming the data down his throat, but in being subtle in slowly shifting his perspective. I did this by not belittling him or his beliefs and taking every opportunity possible to share the data in a common sense and nonthreatening way. Over time, we came to an understanding. I've had this same experience with other hardliners, with similar responses. It took a long time (I've known my father-in-law for 20+ years), but it was worth it in the end.
Participant 6	Agree general public is difficult but I think it's about challenging the media who inform the public with myths and misinformation, perhaps it's starting with being more assertive with media and their responsibility for responsible reporting. At least through that we may enable some people to come forward to support Circles or at least assist in small ways with reintegration. Hopeful!
Participant 13	And also perhaps supporting media and popular culture portrayals that highlight the context of sexual offending against children. I'm thinking, for example, of Wally Lamb's novel We Are Water, in which the reader is able to develop sympathy for a man who has offended sexually against his young niece, because the context in which his offending developed is portrayed in detail.
Participant 5	It would be useful to see if the idea of using chaperones could be extended to the UK
Participant 11	I agree that public education can and is difficult. I wonder what ways that treatment providers, probation and police think that we could "chat" to the public about these issues. We have the knowledge, but we may not have the skills to communicate them in the best fashion. So

	<p>integrating them into media, programmes, magazines that communities already engage with is one set. What are others? Are there skills that we can learn from other fields (mental health, social care, prison reform), rather than trying to reinvent the wheel ourselves.</p> <p>Also, how do we talk about the positive news stories.. the majority of offenders who are managed in the community and do not re-offend, how do we get these out there? Marcella could you talk a bit about the documentary you did with PBNI and BBC NI on sex offenders in the community.</p>
Participant 1	<p>Whether we are talking about shifting the media narrative or educating the general public, at least part of the answer depends in who we enlist as intermediaries for our messages and information. In turn, it is about building coalitions of support to include those who the public is most likely to listen to. In the U.S. (and I suspect elsewhere, albeit perhaps to a lesser degree), University social science researchers are viewed by a large portion of the public as a liberal elite that has no idea how the real world works (it's my belief that some of that is our own doing -- but that's something for another day). A trusted local police chief, a prominent community leader, and even a credible legislator are more likely to exert influence over the common narrative.</p>
Participant 10	<p>I agree, but I also wonder in today's world whether we need to get a 'celebrity' on board. It wouldn't be my ideal choice but they are who our children listen and follow these days!</p>
Participant 13	<p>I agree Andy. The 'ivory tower' image is not at all helpful when it comes to matters of crime and justice. Perhaps we need to tap into those professionals - eg senior police, psychologists etc - who are already engaged in COSA and other progressive initiatives, to get their voices heard in the media.</p>
Participant 12	<p>I agree that the word of a community leader can be of great importance. In Holland a mayor of a middle large city stated that he would resign if the offender who was living in his city would reoffend in the next year. People respected that. Problem is that the media (and there are so many media nowadays looking for 'news') prefer emotions over reason. It's very interesting that we got a lot of support for the Stop it Now! helpline here and financial support from the government and members of parliament and we did not get ANY negative publicity; still on the radio and on television the people who cry 'castrate or emigrate them' etc. are remembered better than my 'nuanced' and better informed viewpoint.</p>
Participant 9	<p>The points about how we speak about individuals who commit sexual aggression are really critical to public education - how can we expect the public to be accepting and tolerant of community reintegration when even we continue to use words such as "molester", "predator", etc.? There has been increasing attention within our own work to challenge our language and how we communicate about the work we do. Think of ATSA's "Prevention" branding, and a recent article in the ATSA Forum spoke to this issue precisely. I can speak for myself that I am generally wary of speaking with the media, and could benefit from learning skills about how to do this effectively both for interviews and written articles for magazines/newspapers. I know Liam Marshall will be speaking about this issue at our upcoming Leverhulme conference in April. The other issue is that sometimes the media are not interested in the "positive stories" or more nuanced language, and either decline to run the story, promote the event, or skew soundbites. How do we tackle this issue?</p>
Participant 1	<p>In terms of tackling the issue, I think we need to recognize that there will always be certain things out of our control. It is unrealistic to expect that we will be able to prevent the tabloids from doing what they do. Selling advertising and beefing up ratings is always going to be a fixture of the media landscape. What we can do is work with reputable and trustworthy news outlets to more effectively get our messages out, and hopefully begin to shift the dialogue and a gradual and incremental way. Personally, I have begun to develop a radar for which journalists who contact me are interested in getting things right and which ones are just digging for a story. For one thing, I think we can be selective in who we decide to talk to.</p>

Participant 9	That's a great point. I have also noticed which reporters are interested in presenting accurate and thoughtful pieces. Working with these individuals is a good start. I also think speaking to the community directly is important when we have the opportunity either by crafting our own articles or facilitating community events. We recently hosted a community screening of a documentary "Out of Mind, Out of Sight" to facilitate discussion and challenge misperceptions about mentally disordered offenders. Both the public and media response was positive.
Participant 2	From a media relations and culture-shift perspective, a deep benefit of CoSA and other citizen-engagement strategies is that they allow the mouthpiece to pivot away from the Enlightened Professional with whom most information consumers unfortunately cannot identify (reintegration-favoring SO treatment provider/policy maker/law enforcement) to the credible local community member. The press on Vermont CoSA has not only been positive, but more importantly, has primarily featured the voices of the volunteers by design. Institutions in general are regarded with a healthy dose of mistrust, none more so than Corrections possibly, so credibility needs to come from the people who have it- neighbours. Through Democratic Professionalism (Dzur), VT Dept. of Corrections' strategy is to resource and support community-based sites that, over time, develop diverse cadres of local residents who can hold the simultaneity of reintegration and acute risk-awareness while actively promoting the broader humanizing of the core member through the informal authority that these community members carry with their peers.
Participant 14	<p>I recognise participants 9's cautions and plea for skill. I found the following of assistance:</p> <p>In terms of communicating O'Neil and Morgan (2010) advocate a number of helpful strategies: Avoid inadvertently activating or reinforcing individual responsibility frames. Much media and professional discussion of sexual offending does this by the use of individual case studies, and a focus on blame and responsibility for offending. Provide models about perpetrators besides the predatory model, and replace the discourse of the "monstrous". Establish broad conceptions of consent and harm—and embed in thinking that the notions of consent is paramount. Be cautious in using a health frame. Discussions of sexual health do not necessarily link to sexual violence in the minds of the audience. Also this discourse can quickly revert back to an individualising framework of individual health choices. Activate the role of communities by telling stores of child development. Contextualise the roots of sexual violence beyond the "family bubble".</p> <p>(O'Neil, M., &amp; Morgan, P. (2010). American perceptions of sexual violence: A frameworks report. Retrieved <a href="http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/assets/files/PDF_sexualviolence/AmericanPerceptionsofSexualViolence.pdf">http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/assets/files/PDF_sexualviolence/AmericanPerceptionsofSexualViolence.pdf</a>).</p> <p>We also found in a UK evaluation of Stop It Now messages to the public that working through local 'opinion formers', well respected local persons or people in position of respect in a community was more likely to be persuasive than outsiders or professionals. This I think links very well with the earlier comments on CoSA, but also the recent work in Northern Ireland, see: Sile McLean and Jeff Maxwell (2015) Sex offender re-integration into the community: realities and challenges. <i>Journal of Sexual Aggression</i>, 21 (1) 16-27. They used local leaders to assist with community discussion of sexual offenders, and to achieve local community re-integration of sexual offenders.</p>
Participant 2	Coincidentally, Vermont Public Radio just aired a piece on CoSA this past Monday. It runs about 12 minutes long and is a good example of the community members primarily telling the story. It was the second of two topics on a daily lunch time program (the first topic was ending cyclical poverty for women). You can listen to the piece starting at the 33:30 time mark here:

	<a href="http://digital.vpr.net/post/ending-cyclical-poverty-women-vermont">http://digital.vpr.net/post/ending-cyclical-poverty-women-vermont</a>
Participant 15	<p>I am a bit late to contribute but have enjoyed reading the debate thus far. I agree that CoSA is a great strategy that can balance the need to monitor/control and reintegrate. I also think there may be lessons to learn from other successful strategies aimed at managing and reintegrating high risk offenders (not necessarily sex offenders) through addressing individual needs and providing intensive support (e.g. Amsterdam's Top 600 approach)? My biggest concern with the monitoring-reintegration balance lies in the use of GPS monitoring. Whilst it aims to assist offenders to re-enter the community, research suggests that the day-to-day realities of wearing an electronic monitoring device can be 'imprisoning.' Employment for these offenders is one of the most difficult obstacles. Finding suitable employment in the first place can be difficult, but offenders also need an understanding employer who supports reporting requirements and tolerates problems such as the bracelet losing reception (which may require the offender to leave the workplace several times a day).</p> <p>In my own experience as a participant in an Australian jurisdiction's week long trial of various monitoring devices (mine being an ankle bracelet) I experienced stigma on the very first day when I went to a yoga class (and avoided exercise classes for the remainder of the trial). I experienced embarrassment as the bracelet alarmed whenever the bus went at snail's pace in peak hour traffic past a high school. Even going to the cinema set off the alarm and resulted in a follow-up call as it lost reception. Doing the grocery shopping resulted in a monitoring phone call as the shops were next to a park. As touched on by participant 10, it would be very difficult to develop any meaningful relationships under such circumstances. The 'big brother is watching' mentality took a few days to shake after the bracelet came off. Whilst GPS monitoring can be effective in increasing many community members' feelings of safety, the embarrassment and shame that comes with the bracelet can lead to social exclusion and self-exclusion, and may ultimately hinder integration efforts.</p>
Participant 10	Hi Dominique, that's really interesting reading about your own experiences. Where were the results disseminated to - practitioners? policymakers?
Participant 15	In 2011 Queensland introduced electronic monitoring of high risk sex offenders. The trial was conducted to select the most reliable and easy-to-use monitoring device whilst allowing the monitoring centre to gain a better understanding of the monitoring logistics. Results were provided to government policymakers. An evaluation was conducted at around the one year mark but has remained confidential.
Participant 10	And that's a big problem too: if research discovers something which doesn't support populist punitiveness it can be hard to get it heard.
Participant 7	Funny how that happens, eh? I remember that a certain important (seminal, really) research article was removed from a government's website (it was done for them and with their money), seemingly because it supported an agenda radically different from the one that government was trying to establish. When you went to the webpage, it was surreal ... articles were listed by their publication number, which read C-1, C-2, C-3, C-5, C-6 .., as if C-4 just somehow exploded into thin air. After several public 'highlightings' of the article's 'missingness', it miraculously reappeared. I'd like to think that they put it back after realizing an oversight, but I'm getting old and cynical...
Participant 4	I was taken away by other commitments for a few days, but have had a chance to catch up on the discussion. Just as a comment on the discussion: I am so glad that I was asked to participate and have the opportunity to hear/read other's perspectives and experiences on these very important issues. I really found participant 15's experience with the GPS monitoring really important. I think we sometimes forget how such mechanisms impact re-integration and an individual's sense of self. If only some media folks or policy makers would be willing to wear one for a week to understand the experience. In the desire to balance risk and rehabilitation, I wonder what the solution is: to get rid of electronic monitoring all together or do we need a

	more discreet system that is not easily identified and is more reliable in its functioning.
Participant 1	<p>Now that we had just passed the one week mark for our dialogue, I have gone back through and taken in the full scope of our discussion, and can say again that this has been a very illuminating dialogue. I am hoping that we can continue the fabulous discussion about the unintended consequences of some of our monitoring and surveillance strategies (thanks, participant 16, for sharing your experiences with electronic monitoring). At the same time, I am also hoping that we can begin to address some of the issues raised in the second question that we articulated at the beginning-namely; those related to advancing research evidence that can inform alternative policies.</p> <p>There is certainly been no shortage of studies and publications related to various sex offender policies, although my view is that much of this research has often been framed by terms established by researchers, rather than being driven by the specific challenges and demands of policymakers and practitioners (anyone here can of course feel free to disagree with that characterization). So with that, what do people think about how we can better frame our research in a way that will gain better traction within the policy arena? Are we asking the right questions and studying the right things? Where are the gaps in our understanding? are there interventions and approaches that we should be studying more fully and effectively?</p>
Participant 13	Great questions participant 1, and important ones for us all to think about, regardless of the focus of our research agendas. I would suggest that one way of getting traction might be to focus on young sexual offenders, as the notions of early intervention and prevention at least have some sway in the public and policy arenas in a way that rehabilitation and desistance do not.
Participant 6	I think there needs to be more engagement with those offenders who have , to the best of our knowledge , not reoffended, exploration of their desistance and what are the aspects of their lives both internal and external that have assisted them in desisting. this may include factors such as age, mobility, health, opportunity etc. but I think we need to provide the real evidence as to the research we know , i.e. that there is a small number of sex offenders who reoffend, why do the others not reoffend. Engagement with them more so than from professionals and file reviews.
Participant 11	I often wonder - what is the most effective way of getting to policy makers (moving aside from the community/public for the minute)? We have ran some conferences and workshops as part of a previous esrc grant as well as part of this leverhulme one (so there is one in Canada in early April, Australia in august and UK in September; then next year we have one in the Netherlands and USA), where government reps come and listen - but do not necessarily engage. How do we get them to engage, what should the take away (in terms of messages and materials???) and how should we follow them up? Also, we need to get invited to the table, which can be hard - especially if the research is challenging. The one that stuck me was the community notification scheme was spearheaded in the UK by the News of the World stating that this is what communities wanted and governments listened creating a scheme (a limited scheme albeit), they reacted to perceived problem and pressure. Is the media, blogs and other non-core academic activities the way forward????
Participant 14	I think participant 1's point about gaining more traction with policy makers (and politicians) is a good one. Here in the UK a lot of criminal justice interventions are driven and evaluated by research, often commissioned by government departments. One might think this would 'gain traction' but this isn't always the case. I think a number of UK academics would refer to policy led evidence and research in this regard- including on sexual offending. So gaining work, and income for university research becomes inextricably linked to a government agenda on research which values policy lead and impact above all else. Personally I think this has had a very distorting effect on UK criminal justice studies and have up front experience of this, as we led the research on the child sex offender disclosure scheme participant 11 referred to- and were

	<p>confronted with a Home Secretary announcement of the scheme's national adoption half way through data collection. Perhaps one of the worst examples of its type. I am not sure what the answer is, but the space for truly independent research that gains impact seems to me to be very limited at present. what do others experience in their countries?</p>
Participant 1	<p>Participant 14- I do agree that we are often constrained by the policy agenda of the day - establishment of government research funding priorities is inherently a political process. A notable example here in the U.S. is the dismantling of the National Science Foundation's funding for political science research by the U.S. Congress over the past few years: <a href="http://www.nature.com/news/nsf-cancels-political-science-grant-cycl...">http://www.nature.com/news/nsf-cancels-political-science-grant-cycl...</a></p> <p>With that said, I do think that there are ways for us to operate within political constraints and still move things forward in a positive direction. What's needed is recognition that paradigm change is a gradual rather than a radical process. We will get much further through gentle and gradual reframing than by trying to completely upend that status quo.</p>
Participant 16	<p>Really interesting discussion. Nice to hear points from such diverse expertise and experience! Some of the comments made me think of Daniel Kahneman's book, "Thinking, Fast and Slow": <a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thinking,_Fast_and_Slow">http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thinking,_Fast_and_Slow</a> For those who aren't familiar with the book or his work summarized in the book, I think most relevant for this discussion are Kahneman's explanations for why most of us jump to the wrong conclusions when statistical facts (e.g., low base rate events, unreliable information, regression to the mean) are inconsistent with intuition (e.g., heuristics). He also proposes some strategies to mitigate this. Although he doesn't focus on sexual offenders, I think his ideas could be really helpful with more effectively communicating with the public and policy-makers, and also with improving critical thinking among clinicians and researchers working with sexual offenders.</p> <p>In addition to what Andy, Robin, and others have said about the need for more effective communication, engagement, and collaboration between the experts and the public and correctional/forensic agencies, I think it's also really important to also invest energies further upstream to promote and raise the standard of more fundamental research in this area, even if its immediate implications for applied work are limited. More basic research (e.g., testing hypotheses about the causes of sexual offending, refining measurement of potentially relevant constructs, etc.) can provide information for more applied researchers to run with, which in turn can be disseminated by those who are good at and focused on translating research evidence to the public. I think that, like an assembly line, we'll get closer to achieving our shared ultimate goal if we have people working hard at all the stations on the line.</p>
Participant 2	<p>Very timely and highly recommended piece here about CoSA that features several of our colleagues and highlights the dynamic tension between restrictive and reintegrate approaches: <a href="http://www.psmag.com/health-and-behavior/after-a-child-molester-has...">http://www.psmag.com/health-and-behavior/after-a-child-molester-has...</a></p>
Participant 10	<p>The desistance of sex offenders is definitely one area that I think we need to explore more. I know a couple of PhDs looking at this at the moment (one which I'm supervising) and there is a conference on this at Queen's University, Belfast this week (which I'm really sorry to be missing) but I wonder whether we need to pool what we do know and perhaps look toward attempting to fill some of the gaps?</p>
Participant 7	<p>Let me go out on a limb for a moment...he says, precariously...</p> <p>What level of reoffending would we look for in order to state with some strength that we've gotten community-based risk management of released offenders in hand? Of course, the community would say 0%, but I think most of us will recognize that that's neither realistic nor likely. So, what about 5%, 10%, or some other figure? How many offenders will reoffend due to factors we can't identify in advance and likely wouldn't be able to control for anyhow?</p>

	<p>Several recent reviews suggest that some jurisdictions are looking at about 10% reoffending over 10 years; others are showing numbers closer to 5%! Is that low enough to state that we have community risk management relatively in hand?</p> <p>I guess we should also ask ourselves how much of that reoffending is being perpetrated by people at the higher end of the risk continuum? These are likely the 10% of sexual offenders (according to the Static-99R distribution of scores) who we believe -- at least for the most part -- are committing the bulk of the reoffenses (read Hanson et al.'s recent paper on whether or not high risk offenders are high risk forever -- it's fascinating). And, if the majority of the reoffenses are being committed by the smaller group of higher risk offenders, can we say that community risk management for the majority of sexual offenders (the low or moderate risk folks) is a "solved" problem?</p> <p>Then, if any of this is true, it speaks to two necessary processes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We need to stop aiming draconian and socially crippling policies at lower risk offenders. They don't likely need them and will probably desist on their own, provided we give them an opportunity to build some semblance of a normal life. Using all risk management measures with all offenders potentially leads to two negative outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the lower risk folks will be destabilized because they can't find or maintain adequate housing, employment, or support; potentially leading to adverse outcomes that lower reintegration potential (this may or not include some amount of sexual reoffending, but it's likely that the problems will be nonsexual)</li> <li>we'll be spending so much time and energy oversupervising and overtreating these lower risk folks that we won't have enough resources to appropriately manage the higher risk folks</li> </ul> Both of these issues represent a breach of either the risk or need principle, or both. </li> <li>2. We need to get real about implementing policies for higher risk offenders that make sense according to what the research has told us. The important elements would appear to (or should) include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wraparound care</li> <li>Social inclusion</li> <li>Sensible, meaningful, and realistic opportunities for accountability</li> <li>Availability of affordable aftercare, employment, and housing</li> <li>Specialized options for clients demonstrating specialized needs</li> </ul> If we empower the lower risk folks to take back their lives, and they actually do so, then we have a better chance of using our valuable resources for a purpose more reasonably likely to further our prevention agenda. That is, we get to more precisely intervene with the clients most in need of intervention. </li> </ol> <p>How's my logic?</p>
Participant 8	<p>The logic is good - and very welcome. My thoughts turned to dangerousness rather than risk - and the management of low risk but serious harm offenders. It seems sensible to me to offer greater supervision/support to this group even when risk is low. The problems arise when generic responses are applied, even if matched on the basis of risk.</p>
Participant 10	<p>I agree the logic is good. In theory that's what we do with MAPPA and the different levels of supervision but as I said with my Circle member a relatively low risk individual had high risk level restrictions. I also agree there is a difference when it comes to risk and dangerousness. For me it comes back to how reliable risk assessment tools are and how confident we (and by that I mean</p>

	the public, government, criminal justice etc.) are in the supervising methods.
Participant 2	<p>This has been a rich and textured discussion owing to the experience, insight and thoughtfulness of our participants. Andy and I both thank you deeply for devoting your time, energy, and valuable perspective to advancing this critical conversation.</p> <p>As we considered the relationship between "monitoring and control" policies and strategies aimed at promoting reintegration, a number of key points surfaced. While at first glance these may appear to be opposing approaches, a more nuanced look suggests that they have "...been pinned against one another, as though one comes at the expense of the other, rather than being complementary...thinking of these issues not as contradictory but dialectical is bang-on, and that interpretation and application is what really counts when it comes to monitoring. Indeed housing restrictions, applied logically, may actually equal more stability in the long term, thereby achieving both goals."</p> <p>This intentionally dualistic framework invites a vital cognitive, policy and practice space in which the sexual offender debate no longer need be a partisan one, but rather a shared cross-disciplinary optimizing of the risk-reducing and (re)integrative factors most closely correlated with the best short and long-term public safety outcomes. Such an expanded canvas holds the greatest potential to diminish the often media-whetted public appetite for polarity in favor of gleaning what works from all points on the continuum and crafting those dots into a cohesive picture.</p> <p>As with any developing technology, a pointillistic orientation to sex offender practice and policy necessitates new and improved tools of the craft. Emerging risk assessment instruments such as ARMS better dimensionalize the individual by including desistance factors along with the standard predictive measures. Expanding the metrics through which we make actuarial risk determinations represents a significant step forward in our collective analytic capacity. It may turn out that the conventional bases for supervision level decisions, policies and practice models are not necessarily inaccurate, just incomplete and, as such, uncatalyzed. If so, then advancement of the field does not require an abandoning of previously held precepts, but a detailed contouring and recontextualizing of them in order to attach new schema as seamlessly as possible.</p> <p>Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) clearly resonate for forum participants as being illustrative of this artful blending. CoSA facilitates the intrinsic accountability of the core member through local citizens' investments of personal time and support, resulting in a durable and often transformative informal authority that both complements and transcends the avoidance motives generally at the disposal of Corrections and Law Enforcement.</p> <p>Enhanced assessment resources and replicable programs then till the soil for a forward-leaning research agenda that seeks to answer a post-binary set of integrated questions from which new policy and practices can take root. As noted, this will be an iterative and evolutionary process. There will continue to be forces staunchly devoted the maintenance and maximizing of mutually exclusive positions. However, the open exchange of ideas, perspectives, practices, successes, failures, research and personal narratives as evidenced in this discussion forum will undoubtedly serve as the cultural fertilizer for a more verdant international public safety landscape.</p>
Participant 1	<p>Although I can't match participant 2 in terms of artful written expression, I do want to echo his sentiments in thanking all of you who participated in this stimulating discussion. Although we covered a lot of territory, we never strayed far from the core of what we were trying to achieve, namely to take stock of some of the challenges related to social reintegration of those who have sexually offended, and to chart a path forward. What emerged for me is that strategies</p>

	<p>stressing monitoring/accountability can sometimes undermine effective reintegration, but can also complement it. As Robin so effectively stated in his post earlier this week, it seems that ensuring that our policies and practices are effectively aligned with the concept of relative risk seems to be one of the core principles that we should be using as part of our communications and messaging with the public and with policymakers.</p>
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Thank you all once again for participating.