



COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT OF SEXUAL OFFENDERS IN AUSTERE TIMES
 Online Debate 3

The debate included here occurred over a three-week period in October 2012 through an online social networking site. It is important to note that during the debate two high profile cases were reported in the media, which influenced the discussion that follows. The first was the abduction of a five-year-old girl, April Jones, from Machynlleth in Wales. The scale of local and national support in the search for April is discussed in the following debate. At the time of writing, while April had still not been found, a local man had been arrested on suspicion of her murder. The second news story relates to the former BBC presenter and DJ, Jimmy Saville, who died in October 2011. It involves accusations of wide scale sexual abuse over a forty year period; a ‘paedophile ring’, which Saville was said to be at the heart of; as well as a possible ‘cover up’, or at the very least compliance by the BBC with regard to the abuse that was taking place, sometimes on BBC premises. At the time of writing, the Metropolitan Police had launched a criminal inquiry into the allegations against the former BBC presenter.

Community Management of Sexual Offenders in Austere Times	
De Montfort University DMU	<p>The effective and safe management of sex offenders in the community has always been challenging, but never more so in a time of shrinking resource and sharp accountability. This climate of austerity poses a number of questions for practitioners and policy makers alike. I would like the online discussion to focus on at least 3 questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can public disclosure schemes and public awareness of sexual offenders add to the effectiveness of sex offender community management? • How can multi agency work add greater value to the safe and effective management of sexual offenders in the community? • What can methods of intervention other than CBT programmes potentially offer? <p>I will start by offering some initial thoughts on each of the questions.</p> <p>1) How can public disclosure schemes and public awareness of sexual offenders add to the effectiveness of sex offender community management?</p> <p>Disclosure can potentially uncover information and intelligence about grooming behaviours of offenders, their targeting strategies, and in some instances alert supervising agencies to further risk factors and escalating risk. It may assist with the reformulation of risk management plans to provide greater safety to children and potential victims. This latter is a real benefit as long as persons disclosed to are not left in a position where they feel responsible for managing the risk to themselves; or where they see the agencies abrogating their statutory responsibilities to protect the public. Where the ‘disclosed to’ are left holding the ‘risk baby’ considerable anxiety can ensue and agencies and disclosure schemes can lose credibility</p>

	<p>(Kemshall and Weaver 2012; Kemshall et al 2012). I would be interested in others' views of this, including practical experience and research evaluations.</p> <p>2) How can multi agency work add greater value to the safe and effective management of sexual offenders in the community?</p> <p>Multi agency work with high-risk offenders has progressed considerably since its inception in the 1990s. However, I am concerned about some recent trends, primarily 'mission creep'; whereby the range of offenders covered by these arrangements is growing resources do not necessarily follow this expansion of remit. A further issue of 'mission creep' is where agencies begin to adopt the tasks, roles and responsibilities of other agencies. For example, increasingly permeable boundaries between police and probation has led to both agencies carrying out considerable offender management tasks with the same categories of offender. Are we 'adding value' or are we duplicating?</p> <p>3) What can methods of intervention other than CBT programmes potentially offer?</p> <p>What can other methods of intervention methods and strategies (other than CBT) offer to the effective community management of sexual offenders? Desistance bases approaches have particularly caught the imagination at the present time, but how robust is the evidence to support a broadly desistance/GLM based approach to high-risk sexual and violent offenders? What level and type of evidence should we insist on before scarce resources are committed to different intervention modes? I invite comments and contributions under 1 or all of my 3 questions.</p>
<p>Portsmouth University PU</p>	<p>I am interested in DMU's point 2 in particular. Perhaps in the 'age of austerity' (which hasn't really kicked in yet), agencies will be examining their priorities ever more closely and there may be a serious issue about resourcing non 'core' work for those such as housing, health or employment services. At the same time it is perhaps opportune to revisit the 'multi agency working is default best practice' idea. Implicit in this for me is the value of the cooperation, over and above information exchange, in other words are there good examples of multi agency decision-making involving a number of partners. Work I carried out a few years ago (Nash and Walker, 2009) suggested a growing dominance of the public protection agenda by two of the responsible authorities (police and probation) with increasingly less attention paid to the views and expertise of others in the MA context? I have also certainly found examples of the mission creep identified by DMU (Nash, 1999). So I guess my question is whether MA working is sustainable in a time of financial cut backs - not least if some of the cooperating agencies find their contributions under-valued by those who assume greatest expertise in this field. Furthermore, if we are having to make very hard decisions about cost and effectiveness, should not more effort go towards dispelling some of the stranger, predator myths that dominate resource allocation and think instead how we might save lives, further victimisation and indeed money, by thinking outside of this media constructed box?</p>
<p>One in 4</p>	<p>I am very interested in the statement, Community Management of Sexual Offenders in Austere times, or in deed at any time, as I would suggest it is a community and not individuals that need to manage offenders. The reason for my suggesting this, at this time, is based on the information we have gathered from</p>

	<p>beginning our work with victims of sexual violence who began to ask the questions of why me, why my family? And if the offender did it once will they do it again? Did anyone know what was occurring? And how do we recognise offending behaviour in the future if we are to begin to break this cycle. To begin to develop a community based treatment Programme for offenders we had some challenging questions to gather answers for, from the victims and indeed their families'. A starting point was to begin to look at how we could break this cycle and indeed this silence. The research and the training in the field of sexual offending made the task of developing an offender programme less daunting. What we were not prepared for was some of the voices of those supporting an offender who totally blamed the victim and minimised the behaviour, thus enabling the offender and the cycle to continue. This is where public awareness and management through educative and emotional support is needed. This is where Multi agency work became invaluable, as no one agency had the resources to manage their offending behaviour. For most families where offending has occurred, the fear of the community 'finding out' can be more of an issue for the family than the impact on the victim and indeed the lack of support for the offender in getting the support they too need. Finally looking at other methods of intervention other than CBT such as Family Systems approaches, Attachment based theories approaches, and educating the public that offenders or not individuals who come from another planet, they are members of our families and community.</p>
<p>DMU</p>	<p>I am very taken with PU's point about dominance in multi agency work, and that agencies on the 'periphery' will increasingly question their role in it, and the costs to themselves of being so engaged. Also evaluating the value added of multi agency is difficult, what is actually delivered above and beyond as it were and how do we evidence and measure this? I think we will increasingly have to answer those questions as resources shrink.</p> <p>One in 4 outlines a more challenging and broader perspective- how to properly and effectively engage the community in the appropriate management of offenders, and within this how do we listen and act on the voices of victims and relatives of sexual offenders who all have a view on what has happened and what should happen. Management of harm and the process of healing without adding to victim stigmatisation and exclusion by and from local communities is critical, but how well do we actually do this? I suspect not well at all. Some community management responses 'out' victims as well as offenders.</p>
<p>Circles of Support and Accountability COSA</p>	<p>DMU's pertinent questions as to multi-agency work adding greater value, picked up by One in 4 resonates for Circles of Support and Accountability (COSA), as a service 'on the edge'. The edge being two-fold in that anyone working with this most demonized group of offenders have always perhaps felt a little removed from the less controversial areas of criminal justice interest, and as voluntary sector, we're not even technically a 'duty to cooperate' partner. Although we act as if we are and would want to be seen as such. But our experience is certainly that multi-agency work has been hugely beneficial to creating an environment in which this community-based service of Circles can develop. Feed-back in Projects from statutory partners is frequently affirmative of the Circles contribution to their risk management of a 'Core Member' (our term for someone in a Circle, with a conviction for a serious sexual offence). But thereby hangs another question, as this</p>

	<p>very affirmation would not necessarily be welcomed by those who see Circes in the UK as already too closely aligned to statutory risk assessment and management targets, to the detriment of a wider, more holistic community ownership and engagement.</p> <p>So what precisely are the aims and objectives of multi-agency working, how broadly defined? To what degree might one partner, say Circes, arguably the closest to the community taking back in the ex-offender, be allowed to exert an influence in suggesting that a more nuanced approach to safer reintegration might be tried? We find, on the whole an openness and appreciation from MAPPA partners but we also have to wonder to what degree we are allowing the original restorative principles of Circes here to be compromised by our engagement in multi-agency working.</p> <p>On the matter of ‘mission-creep’, for hard-pressed charities of course it all too often means simply allowing oneself to go where the next seam of funding may be mined. Circes UK is often asked why Circes are not made available for other offending groups, such as lifers or those with offences for domestic violence. This might lead to other funding sources and a reasonable assumption, if Good Lives and desistance theory are to be given the benefit of the doubt, and Circes’ ethical connectedness with them, that benefits would be seen. But Circes have no research evidence on which to make any claim of effectiveness for the model as yet beyond working with those with convictions for sexual offences, and to divert energy to other groups one suspects would quickly leave our most often alienated group, once again at the bottom of the pile for society’s ever-dwindling public resources.</p> <p>One in 4’s powerful statement that it is the community not individuals need to manage offenders also brings to mind an oft repeated appeal of one of the UK founding fathers. We need to help communities to get beyond the never-ending ‘branding’ of anyone with convictions for sexual offences as a ‘sex offender’ for their rest of their life. Short-hand may be inevitable at times, but where we can, just to refer to those ‘with convictions for sexual offences’ might slowly help shift the collective mind-set as individuals with more than their offending history.</p>
<p>PU</p>	<p>What ‘we’ decide is suitable for public involvement and engagement is an interesting topic. Undoubtedly a process of public education about the real nature of the risks posed by sex offenders is very desirable. Yet we collectively continue to frame sexual offending within the narrow stereotypes of stranger and predator. As we continue to do so the hope of better community engagement and offender reintegration will recede into the background as fear, suspicion and even baser instincts dominate the public agenda. It remains the case, despite some professional efforts to address the issue, that sex offender risk is framed as above rather than the far more common familial and acquaintance form it commonly takes. Even though the victim consequences are as harmful as in stranger attacks, ‘we’ continue to underplay the seriousness of so-called domestic events. This is an area where we really could engage and educate the public, not only with a view to better managing sex offender risk but also better protecting the public. As long as we go with the predator myth those who know their perpetrator will continue to be assaulted as we resource the rare and more or less ignores the common.</p>
<p>University of the West of</p>	<p>I agree that the management of offenders, any offender, in the community is a community issue; not just an agency one. This is particularly challenging in the</p>

<p>England UWE</p>	<p>current financial climate with cuts to the criminal justice sector and the realisation that the same or more will have to be done will less. The real question for me is what do we mean by “community management” of sex offenders? Is it simply being aware of the reality of sex offenders, their existence in communities and accepting that something is being done with the ones that we know about? If so, this is a public health issue, child protection and education issue, especially given that some sex offenders will be known to some parts of communities (i.e., if stranger danger is the extreme then known danger is the reality). Therefore by making communities more aware of what is done with sex offenders they can be better able to respond. However, if community management means that communities play an active role in the monitoring, reporting and reintegration of sex offenders this has the potential to be something else entirely. Are we discussing a (potential) de-professionalization of relevant practitioners, a professionalization of the public around sex offender management and/or a full engagement with the big society agenda? I think this raises the question of, have we really thought through what the reality of public engagement around sex offender management is, and how it will be effective, not counterintuitive?</p>
<p>National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children / National Offender Treatment Association NSPCC/NOTA</p>	<p>That’s a helpful distinction you draw UWE, but whatever we might mean, or desire, in relation to “community management” there are few indications of any general public appetite for widespread public engagement. <i>Circles of Support & Accountability</i> is an excellent example of how a significant minority who are probably already predisposed to engage with the issue constructively can be mobilised. However, it’s difficult to envisage how in practice a broader based engagement that would result in whole communities playing an active role in the monitoring, reporting and reintegration of sex offenders. Surely that would require a far greater level of understanding about offenders, sexual abuse & the realities of risk than the rather homogenous view of paedophiles prevalent now. The road to arrive there may however be the public health approach.</p>
<p>DMU</p>	<p>This is an interesting debate about the nature and process of community engagement. I find at times that I have quite conflicting views about this. For some time I believed that increased education and information giving would be helpful, and that the public isn’t necessarily irrational in its response to sexual offenders (using the term public quite loosely), and that this was a professional myth fuelled by a very few extreme cases. I think many communities actually know a lot of the time <i>and act</i> in the way that PU outlines. However, I found in the evaluation of the public disclosure scheme that public appetite to know had been overestimated, and I do wonder at times whether the public does really want to know? And in fact whether they do want to be responsible for community 'vigilance' and management of sex offenders? Or are they actually glad that it is taken care of 'somewhere else'? Whilst NSPCC/NOTA is right that COSA is a good example of a community response, it actually relies on self-selecting volunteers who reflect a very small section of society, and who often have backgrounds in relevant professions, or are training to enter one. Therefore COSA cannot be an indication of potential community responses as it is so particular in character.</p>
<p>COSA</p>	<p>It may not be surprising if I respond to DMU understandable caution in reading too much hope into CoSA, as indicating a major potential for shifting wider public attitudes to those with sex convictions in our communities. Indeed it would be dangerous, it's too early to make too much for this still relatively new model re</p>

	<p>changing deeply held- collective fears and angers. Especially this week! But, at the risk of a sweeping generalisation, changes in public attitudes don't happen through a collective road to Damascus insight, but come about by a few pioneers promoting an unpopular cause; anti-slavery; attitudes to homosexuality etc. Indeed a number of people have made the point to me that Samaritans struggled in early days with some vested professional interests saying that issues around suicide were too difficult to leave to volunteers. I've never looked into the research but wouldn't mind betting that the work of Samaritans has had some significant impact on the way the offence of taking your own life is now viewed more widely. It's also increasingly common, for Circle volunteers to contribute to the phone-in programmes with their inevitable and indeed understandable elements of vitriol with a different perspective. 'Ordinary' people as opposed to professionals coming on and saying they are part of another way of ensuring those presenting the highest risk of reoffending are supported and monitored in not doing so. I'd love to see some research on measuring shifts in public perceptions etc, but suggest for the time being we give the awareness-raising and deepening of understanding across a significant proportion of society, through CoSA and other programmes like Stop it Now the benefit of the doubt. Otherwise there's a risk of a counsel of despair as public sector resources dwindle.</p>
<p>Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers ATSA</p>	<p>COsa is quite right about it being too early to place the burden of "saving us all from sexual victimization" on the back of CoSA. The reality is that we have two Canadian studies with small samples and short follow-up, one published study from the UK with no control sample (although a controlled study is soon forthcoming), and an RCT study from the US with--again--short follow-up and small samples. Not a lot of research on this exciting innovation, indeed. However, because all the studies so far have demonstrated very encouraging results, agencies like the US Department of Justice's SMART Office (sex offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehension, Registration, and Tracking) have taken the ball and run with it. CoSA adherents are happy for the larger scale recognition of the good work they have done, but I remain hesitant to state definitely that this is the be all and end all that we've all been searching for. The other potential downside to widespread buy-in to CoSA is a possible transfer of too much of the responsibility for public safety to the community. I'm all for average citizens taking a greater stake in their own safety, but I don't want the statutory agencies to stop trying to do sensible things to increase re-entry potential for offenders, increase public safety, and increase dialogue and cooperation with the greater community.</p>
<p>Cardiff University CU</p>	<p>I find the debate about public knowledge/ awareness particularly interesting at this present time given the events that are unfolding in mid Wales surrounding the abduction of April Jones. I wonder how many parents this week, following the extensive national media coverage, have been warning their children about the dangers of getting into an adult's car without their parents' permission? I have certainly found myself doing this. The 'availability' of this news story and the severity of such events clearly distorts our understanding of the actual risk (severity of the event x probability of the event occurring) that this may happen to 'us'. While the Guardian reports figures on the number of estimated child abductions in a year as approximately 500 (of which half are considered to be family related abductions), it is still the case that a child is ten times more likely to be killed or seriously harmed in a road traffic accident than be abducted by a non-family member. So despite both of these having similarly severe consequences for those</p>

	<p>concerned, do we fully comprehend the relative risk of either of these events occurring? (Am I reminding my children about the risks of walking alongside or crossing a road with the same level of emphasis and fear that I find myself giving them about getting in to an adult's, any adult's, car?). Furthermore, would we expect communities to 'respond' to the risk of road traffic accidents in the same way as we are expecting communities to 'respond' or manage the risk posed by sex offenders, and despite that a response to road fatalities would be more likely to have a positive impact on many children's lives? This also reminds me that we ought to be cautious when we criticise the media coverage of sex offences - the comparison I make above is largely a result of what psychologists term the 'availability' of such events, not necessarily how that coverage is presented. Just by covering these events (accurately or sensationally) distorts our ability to understand the 'real' risks and the most appropriate responses to them. Shifting the burden of responsibility from the state and its agencies to society and communities simply exacerbates the flaws in our intuitive responses and attitudes to such risks.</p>
<p>Strathclyde University SU</p>	<p>This is an interesting discussion and I'm not sure that what I have to add will offer any particularly startling insights - perhaps even more questions. I am thinking (out loud a bit) about DMU's third question: What can methods of intervention other than CBT programmes potentially offer? - And I suppose to answer this properly requires engaging with the running thread about what community management means, who and what it involves.</p> <p>UWE articulated the questions that this discussion raised in my mind – what exactly do we mean by community management? As he suggests, a [potential] role for the community could be conceptualized on a continuum of participation or engagement – from individualized information sharing or exchange (i.e. public education/awareness/disclosure) to full blown community, service user and CJ professional co-production of interventions or support services.</p> <p>Perhaps there is also a difference between who comprises the public / community at the more 'shallow' end of this continuum and the 'public' or 'community' at the deeper end, reflecting, for the sake of argument, a distinction between a) the 'general' public and b) people who are members of communities but who, perhaps, might also work in non-CJ public services, in voluntary, social enterprise, co-operative and community organizations – not public in this general sense then, but still members of communities and involved with communities. However, whether or not we can garner the support of those at the deep end without first engaging those at the shallow end is another question.</p> <p>Perhaps it is also about reframing what 'management' and intervention means – my role in community management can and should be different to yours – we have different assets, resources, roles, responsibilities and even interest in involvement. I don't think that being involved in supporting people's reintegration necessarily presupposes an erosion of existing roles and responsibilities – and this is where the desistance research comes in (finally). We know from the desistance research that quite often the reasons for giving up crime – and the factors that support it – transcend the practices and proclivities of the justice sector. Different people can play a role in reinforcing the work of criminal justice professionals, through a collaborative approach to reintegration, without significant changes to the</p>

	<p>operations of their own. I do think DMU is right in questioning the robustness of the desistance research in this context – particularly in view of the limited research on desistance from sex offending, often using small sample sizes and undertaken in markedly different penal policy contexts. However, I don't think it is a case of throwing our lot in with one or the other approach. We all know that sex offenders are as heterogeneous as the public themselves: they engage in a diverse range of offending behaviours, for different reasons; they offend at different rates and pose different levels of risk to different types of people and they respond in diverse ways to various approaches. Perhaps it is about pursuing a more balanced approach than we do at present – between managing offenders and supporting change.</p> <p>However, what desistance research does tell us is that the challenge for practice is to find ways of promoting and supporting people's social participation, capitalising on people's assets, building capacities, recognising and responding to the barriers people face, and creating meaningful and sustainable opportunities to live differently – as One in 4 said, I'm not sure this can be done by anyone agency and I'm not convinced it can be done without 'community' involvement. While individualised interventions are important, I think desistance research points towards a less individualistic approach than we have at present, and asks us to think how can we, professionals and public and offenders pool our collective resources and work together.</p>
<p>DMU</p>	<p>I would like to thank CU and SU for their full and most interesting posts; they have not only raised further issues for us, but have pushed the discussion on.</p> <p>CU is right to remind us of the availability bias both in terms of media coverage but also in our own intuitive perceptions and responses to risk. We do behave in exactly the way she outlines. If our capacity and competence as 'ordinary' members of a community is somewhat flawed when we are asked to consider risk issues, then is CU right to question the rationale and justification for shifting the risk burden from professionals and experts onto publics and communities? In addition, we know from Slovic's research that taboo risks are among the most resented; as are involuntary risks- I cannot think of a risk more taboo and involuntary than placing sex offenders into communities that do not want them and which are often over burdened with other risks such as poverty, and attendant social ills. So does the passing of such risks and responsibility for them also require 'society' to not only pass on the knowledge of the risk, but increase the capacity and competence of communities to manage it? Otherwise is the State merely abrogating its responsibility to its citizens?</p> <p>SU raises important issues too. The continuum idea expressed by UWE and then by SU is perhaps an important conceptual tool for thinking about communities and could well relate to the capacity and competence issues I raise above. In addition, some years ago when Jason Wood and I evaluated Stop It now public awareness campaigning we suggested that such campaigning was likely to have greater impact if it worked through existing strong community groups and networks. These groups are literally plugged into local communities, and often produce local leaders and 'opinion formers' who can carry the message, and who in a sense give the message credence and weight. I think SU mirrors this in her discussion of community groups above. Perhaps she also right to contend that these groups may have a critical part to play in desistance which is as yet largely untapped. The idea of collective resources to live a new life is certainly an appealing one.</p>

<p>UWE</p>	<p>Public awareness is an interesting issue. Is it that they want to know about registered sex offenders or is it that they want to know that they can know? I think that there is a large degree of cognitive dissonance that happens in society around perceptions of who sex offenders are. If you look at the Jimmy Savile case to me this is a prime example as there will be parts of society who will refute the facts of the case based on their perception of him as a celebrity/entertainer? Even though I agree that community engagement is important I think it's getting over the hurdle of who sex offenders are, if we can start to erode that stereotype then society might have a more realistic view that can inform reintegration.</p> <p>In regard to the risk management aspect of offender disclosure the real question to me is why do we disclose offender (any offender) information? Is it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To make the public better educated, more involved and better able to maintain risk? • Is it to make the state, and related agencies, more accountable to the public? • Is it to give the public what (we think or are told that) they want? • Is it a ploy by the state to farm out offender management, to the public? • Is it simply about the state reminding the public that there are known sex offenders out there and they are doing something with them? Or, • Is it simply a case that the state has told the public where the known offenders are in their areas (either upon request or independently) and therefore its now the publics' responsibility to make themselves safe and risk free? The other side of the public health message, "we warned you but you did not listen to us, so you need to take some responsibility for the outcomes" (i.e., the message you hear in respect to smoking).
<p>ATSA</p>	<p>I am here reminded of a childhood experience regarding a man named "Red" who lived down the street in my neighbourhood-a story included in Silverman and Wilson's 2002 book "Innocence Betrayed". Red was the kind of guy all us kids loved-he had chips (sorry, crisps for you UK folks) and pop (sorry, soda for you US folks) and he was the sort of guy who would help kids with projects. In fact, he helped me build my first go-kart by procuring the steel rods we used for axles (presumably from his workplace). Anyhow, we all thought he was great, BUT, our parents wouldn't let us go to his house alone. Our parents somehow figured that this man posed some degree of risk (I asked my Mom later in life what she thought the issue was, and she said that they didn't really know; they just felt uncomfortable with some aspect of his interest in kids). I've long believed that this sort of de facto community risk management rallying is ultimately going to be a key part in really increasing public safety. As a society, we've gotten lazy about looking after one another. Being active community members is, perhaps, harder to do in austere times, as we focus on keeping our own households afloat, but we cannot forget the power of community. It takes a village, eh?</p>
<p>PU</p>	<p>The public and professional debate is of course very interesting but we should not forget the third element here - the private sector. I was struck watching media coverage of the search in Wales by the extent of multi-agency collaboration; with professionals, members of the public and voluntary search groups coming together with one aim. This on a day when Chris Grayling announced he will accelerate the privatisation of probation and prison services and when we already know swathes of police work are 'up for grabs' and that state funding of major</p>

	<p>rescue groups (e.g. HM Coastguard) is under severe threat. To me that search represents the best in a tradition of blending professional skills, a public desire to help and dedicated (and skilled) volunteers. Where will this sit with a continued cut in support and increased privatisation? Cynically speaking would there be a 'budget' for a search (we know there is but in such cases we give and take). Would a private company think this way? If core probation work is up for tender will we eventually see public protection work hived off? Would a private company view engaging the public in sex offender management as a cost-cutting alternative? The stakes are extraordinarily high in public protection - for offender and victims. We need to be as right as we can and utilise as many ways of being effective possible. At the end of the day through the incursions into people's lives at the disposal of the state are enormous and I am concerned when some of this work might be reduced to a profit motive. Sorry for a bit of a rant but the Welsh search for me demonstrates the best of professionals and volunteers working together in a real public protection context. Either one could not nor should not replace the other - but neither needs replacing by a private security company!</p>
<p>UWE</p>	<p>Reiterating ATSA's previous comments, greater community engagement should not mean less professional engagement, or more worrying as PU suggests a government perception that greater community engagement can replace professional practice as a cost saving measure in challenging financial times. Big society the ultimate catch all!</p>
<p>One in 4</p>	<p>It certainly is a very interesting debate for me to follow, and the reason I have been delayed in my responses is I have been very busy since the launch of our Annual Report (ours meaning One in Four) the organisation where I am Clinical Director. So what have I been busy with you may ask? (Forgive some of the sarcasm you may feel is written between the lines but do trust your intuition), I have been busy being interviewed on radio, as after almost five years of informing the public of how we had begun to work with offenders as well as victims the public are only now beginning to hear this and have begun to ask the question 'where have these offenders come from' why offer them treatment' they are monsters 'castration is the only answer' why spend money on them and not victims. Slight feeling of attack on the way as we say the un-sayable, which is someone you may know, has offended in your community (community in this instance being your own family or extended family or friends). It is difficult to believe that in Ireland at present the wisdom of our Health Service Executive (I think this is similar to the NHS in UK) had to close down the Granada Institute which was the statutory agency that was set up to offer treatment and asses risk. While we have programmes available in some of our prisons we have no community based statutory programmes. So either we have no issue with individuals who offend or they have some major plan they are going to shock us with. The Murphy and Ryan report and the other reports into sexual abuse which highlights the voices of victims who say 'people knew and did nothing' seems to have gotten lost along the way. So forgive the rant and let us imagine the message that we are giving to individuals who have offended like the man who said to me, 'I may as well make hay while the sun shines' while thanks for the honesty, as I think of the innocent children that he considers as he enjoys his idea of sunshine.</p> <p>So to comment on some of the very interesting points made as we debate the issues I would firstly like to clarify that when I speak of a community being</p>

	<p>responsible the management of offenders what I imagine is firstly the professionals and then the community i.e. the family and extended family under the guidance of the HSE. I think educating the professionals in how to manage this group of individuals is paramount and I was delighted to hear at the recent NOTA conference from Dr David Briggs that he has been involved with developing a programme which they would offer training to those working in this area. Not that there is not training I just think the training he is suggesting is a further development.</p> <p>From my experience of working with social workers, in the beginning their fear was that they may not know how to manage the offenders and rather than ask for support they closed the door. This has certainly changed in our working and while we are working with a very small group, all of us working together is certainly taking away some of the fears and pressure at a time when there is such 'lack of resources'. The majority of the individuals on the Phoenix Programme, which is currently 28, all finance themselves. Fifteen of the individuals have offended against family members and five offended against individuals that are known to them.</p> <p>For the individuals who attend the Phoenix Programme which is the name of the programme I have been developing it is now mandatory that a support person attends the programme I am developing this programme to educate and support the individuals who, whether they like it or not are left to manage the offender in their community.</p> <p>Finally (for now) I encourage us to model a sharing of our experience about what works and what does not work rather than we know what to do in all cases, let us hear the human elements from each other also about how difficult the work can be so any support we can give each other is enormous, and look at the children we can then protect. This I imagine supports other professionals to know we are all constantly learning in this area , and are never shocked at what we hear while the content is shocking you just always have the feeling of there being more. I think being reminded that victims often say they did not speak out because the message they had gotten from the offender is if you speak out then we could lose everything and all your friends and family would not want us to live near them, 'no pressure on a child to hear this I don't think so'.</p> <p>On Friday one of the individuals from the programme who is on the final module (Positive Living in the community/Relapse prevention) phoned me and said ' I just wanted to share something that I have become aware of since April has been abducted in Wales, when Holly and Jessica went missing I actually got a HIT from that this time I did not. I can't believe I much I have changed. Do we laugh or cry at these moments?</p>
DMU	<p>I had a strong resonance with ATSA statement that we have gotten lazy about looking out for one another. I worked in South Africa for a short time a few years ago, and someone said this to me: 'In Africa a child is a village responsibility, in England a child is no-one's responsibility'. And whilst this is a little too harsh, generally the spirit of the distinction rang true. But our communities, and 'ordinary people' do have the capacity to recognise and manage harms, and I agree this should be encouraged and built on. However, ATSA is also right that this does not</p>

	<p>mean professionals can abrogate their responsibility 'to do sensible things'- perhaps the key question is how can these two things be brought closer together and complement each other more? I think One in 4 captures some of this well in her post where she talks of sharing knowledge and experience, especially with those left to manage offenders in their own community. UWE and I have had the privilege of seeing and hearing about two community programmes in Northern Ireland where 'ordinary' local people were assisted by professionals to manage difficult offenders and difficult situations in their midst. That these people did so is to their great credit, and because they did so serious vigilante action was avoided, and further sexual harm to children was avoided. When I see and hear things like that, I am heartened that people and communities can actually do so much, and turn out to have capacity, competence, and resilience far beyond what could reasonably be expected. The trick is to distil what it is about such situations and contexts that enabled them to do so, and whilst I don't have a researcher hat on when I say this, it does seem to be about consistent, committed professionals who engage with local people with trust and integrity, who provide information and support, who guide but don't impose, and who are prepared to work alongside those who have to accept risk back into their community. Honesty seems critical, and I am struck by One in 4 point that often people knew but chose silence about the offending, and how and why people choose silence is an important question but so is understanding what tips people into speaking. When does 'don't ask don't tell' become 'we must do something about this problem in our midst?'</p>
<p>COSA</p>	<p>The phase which keeps coming back to me, as I think on the contributions, is 'the management of sex offenders in the community.' I think it's because 'management' of itself has such a narrow frame of responsibility implied. If it's the one the professionals involved uniquely use there may always be a message to the public via the media that sex offenders are to be 'managed' solely by those so tasked. Is there a link and indeed a challenge here for those who research and write chapters on sexual offending and the evidence for the most effective means for reducing it? Willis et al (2010) raise the game for us all including academics, writing "<i>our first recommendation is to encourage academics and other suitably qualified professionals to actively engage with the media.</i>" They suggest articles in newspapers, magazines etc. to dispel common misconceptions. , "<i>or even better volunteering for media interviews</i>" (p 553)</p> <p>We're sometimes approached by BBC local and national radio to comment on.... But it had never struck me to suggest to a Radio 5 producer to approach XXXXX from the University of XXXX. Is this a trick we're missing (or just me?) Would a directory held by agencies as to researchers prepared and keen to contribute on specific areas of interest and expertise be of use? Perhaps academics are already doing more with the media than I recognise, in which case please excuse a superfluous blog. But still Willis et al (2010) are suggesting a more proactive approach</p>
<p>Lucy Faithful Foundation LFF</p>	<p>We continue to deliver "Parents Protect" public education seminars to parents across England, Wales and Scotland (and I believe some police colleagues are engaged in this same endeavour in Northern Ireland) as a continued activity from the Home Office Child Sex Offender Review. Feedback is consistent in stating that parents - members of the public - want sound, straight-talking information about sex offenders, who they are, how they do it, what are the signs, and what to do.</p>

	<p>They are least interested (by the end) about what police, probation and other agencies do with known offenders, once the penny has dropped that most who have ever offended or who pose a risk are not on any police register or probation caseload. Yes, they want these agencies to be accountable for doing a good job; but they start to recognise that they all have an essential role to play. So a dialogue, then, that is less about the range of punitive, containing or therapeutic things that can be done with those convicted and rather more about preventing harm to children in the future from whatever source.</p> <p>Of course a major culture change about this, in the midst of any media frenzy on the topic, is a challenge. But I would say there is a more informed public and media debate now in UK than was evident 10 years ago when Roy Whiting abducted and murdered Sarah Payne and the News of the World embarked on its "name and shame" campaign.</p> <p>But are children any more safe now than 10 years ago? Actually, I'm not sure they are. And that fundamental safety must surely be the goal of both professionals and public alike. We probably need to keep reminding media and politicians of this fact! In the world of sex offender rehabilitation and re-integration, can I also acknowledge the crucial role that family, friends and wider "knowing" community can play. Yet all-too-often agencies responsible for sex offender management pay scant regard to these folk. We run education and support programmes for family members of internet sex offenders, and they are so grateful not only to have their own needs met, but also be assisted in supporting their "loved one" to manage their future behaviour. The Stop it Now! Helpline supports other family members, faith communities and similar to undertake such an informed, supportive role. I think these community resources are an essential component, too often overlooked by agencies tasked with risk management. I hope their true value is eventually recognised and utilised. To the benefit of all.</p>
<p>One in 4</p>	<p>I am in total agreement with LFF regarding the family. As I have written in some earlier blogs as I began to develop the Phoenix Programme in One in Four (a treatment programme for offenders) it became apparent very quickly that the wives and support individuals needed a similar programme. In fact I have on occasion heard my-self inform this support group that they in fact need to understand the factors and motivations of offending behaviour more than I do. Ultimately they are left with managing the offender in their community whether and need all the support they can get. For many of them they begin to realise that they too have been groomed by the offender this is very evident in the first module as they begin to look at their own relationship and intimacy deficits from their early life maps. Hence they are key in child protection in their community (family).</p>
<p>DMU</p>	<p>The current UK case of Jimmy Savile I think makes my question at the last posting pertinent:</p> <p>When does 'don't ask don't tell' become 'we must do something about this problem in our midst?'</p> <p>The culture of silence, of tolerance and acceptability, of disbelieving, and looking away all seem to have played a part in this. I wonder how others explain how these factors come to play such a key part in allowing abuse to continue for so long. I</p>

	<p>know One in 4 pointed to some factors in her post, but in this Savile case, we are not talking about one child, or the silence of families and intimate relationships, we are talking about a silence, tolerance and 'look away' far beyond that. I would be very interested in other views.</p>
CU	<p>I think the Savile case highlights two significant issues - one positive and one negative. First, it perhaps illustrates a major (positive) cultural shift in the way society regards such sexual offences - remember many of the reported cases date back to the 1970s. In turn, victims of his apparent abuse and those that were 'bystanders' to such offences are also from a generation that has meant they have felt uncomfortable in reporting or discussing such crimes right up to the present day. But as soon as these possible offences began to be raised there has been an almost tidal wave of out-pouring (for victims and bystanders) that clearly was not possible back then. Similarly, whilst organisations (e.g. the BBC) might have turned a blind eye to these offences several decades ago it has also been widely acknowledged how these organisations have moved on since then and no longer would accept such actions.</p> <p>However, the case also highlights a continued struggle with the status of celebrity. It seems clear that during the 1970s this was not made 'public' because of Savile's celebrity status. But what seems most disturbing to me is that this has only now been 'revealed' after his death. I don't think for a minute that the cultural shift that I mentioned above has only happened in the last few months. Clearly that has been going on for some time. So why did these accusations really only emerge recently (and since his death). Does celebrity (or charity-giving) still make you untouchable?</p>
One in 4	<p>To comment on CU point regarding Jimmy Savile and how he was protected in his community (work) by people knowing and doing nothing because of his status as a celebrity. In Ireland all you needed as a protection was a white collar. Today we are still discovering that the most senior members of the church community turned the other way. This is just not good enough, as what value are we placing on our children?</p>
SU	<p>The Jimmy Savile story must be located, as CU observes, in its cultural context, but, as CU equally notes, given the changing cultural landscape of the past few decades, equally the maintenance of a culture of silence, reminiscent of that within religious institutions raises further questions. From the 60s until relatively recently, there existed a pervasive attitude that unwanted sexual advances were an irritant rather than a disciplinary matter or a crime. A culture of tolerance was perhaps particularly extended by those 'in the know' where the perpetrator was, as in this case, a person in a position of relative power and influence and fame. Indeed, Savile represented someone who hosted a successful show, who systematically engaged in seemingly altruistic acts and who was a public personality - and for all these reasons he was a money earner and there may have been some who wanted to protect their investment. Moreover, until recently, many nostalgically look back on this as a time of great innocence, and characters like Savile were kings of it. The very different story emerging is distressing to say the least.</p> <p>But why the silence and, as DMU asks, why break it? Does fear play a part when dealing with the rich, the famous and the powerful? Fear of litigation? Fear that</p>

	<p>you might not be believed or taken seriously and fear of the ensuing recriminations? Fear of being wrong and the consequences for the accused? Where, as in this case, if it was widely known and unsaid, does this contribute to peoples fear and reticence to disclose, not wanting to be the one that 'makes waves'.</p> <p>So why break it? In this case when the perpetrator can no longer cause harm, or wield the perceived power they previously exercised, perhaps it becomes easier to break the silence.</p> <p>What does this suggest? Certainly drawing on the experience of the disclosure pilots in Scotland and in E&W, understanding the impact and effects on those sharing or seeking information is an important dynamic in encouraging a culture of information exchange. Would a level of anonymity or protection from recrimination encourage people to speak out? I know DMU and colleagues have explored experiences of people sharing or seeking information and - while distinct - perhaps understanding the dynamics of a decision to disclose (or not) is relevant to this discussion.</p>
UWE	<p>I was talking about the Savile case with a colleague and their attitude was "what does it matter he's dead, he's not going to be punished!!" Upon reflecting about this I think this story is really about, apart from justice to the victims, institutional accountability. The BBC, NHS and other organisations have a due of care which was not upheld. The more this story goes on, the more it seems to have spanned decades and included multiple perpetrators. Was the money created by the alleged worth more than protection?</p> <p>I agree with CU and SU that there has been a shift in public attitudes from the 70's and 80's, but I really do wonder if there is not a bit further to go. The media coverage of this shows that the reactionary tabloid debate is still fresh, and that celebrity is fleeting given their 180 degree shift and the language used in such a short period.</p> <p>Linking this into public disclosure makes me wonder about the spotlight on sex offender management, treatment and associated organisations (i.e., CoSA) that will arise and what opportunity will be created for good news stories. Also, the impact that the story will have on sex offenders in the community, will it push some to the edges again?</p>
One in 4	<p>It is an interesting question DMU asks as to 'why break the silence?' Whether the perpetrator is living or not, as for most individuals who have experienced sexual abuse the impact continues regardless. Indeed for most individuals who disclose that they have been abused the fear of not being believed or being forced to confront the perpetrator is enormous. So whilst Jimmy Savile may be deceased what is certainly still alive is the 'cover up' and this needs to be challenged. The cycle just continues and the message to offenders is we know what you're doing but we are not going to say anything. For all of us who have sat opposite an individual who has offended how many times have we heard them say 'well people had an idea what I was doing but said nothing so I thought it was no big deal'. When we speak of the fear of victims to speak out, what about the 'bystanders' are they afraid of being the informer especially if the individual is</p>

	<p>known to them or can they move beyond this fear to being the protector of vulnerable children in our society. I was saddened (not shocked) to hear Esther Rantzen who I considered as advocate of 'speaking out' was quoted saying 'I had heard rumours about Jimmy'. How many others heard those rumours and are still alive today? Hopefully they will be made accountable for their 'turning a blind eye'.</p>
DMU	<p>I think a number of people have talked about why victims break their silence, and I would like to understand rather more so that we can act responsibly to enable those disclosures and ensure faster help and resolution of problems. What are societal and psychological barriers to disclosing? Do we know what the critical factors are that lead to a disclosure or complaint?</p>
NSPCC/ NOTA	<p>The Jimmy Savile case does indeed raise some interesting issues, both about his apparent ability to abuse for so long and also the media and public response.</p> <p>What I'm finding quite challenging in the coverage is that whilst his level of public profile is unusual, many of the elements of the case are strikingly similar to others who offend in organisational settings. In the literature review and qualitative research with offenders I undertook (with colleagues), summarised in two chapters of a recently published book (Creating Safer Organisations, Wiley, 2012) one of the main categories of offender were the charismatic authority figure whose position both provided them with opportunity to abuse and protection from discovery. Savile may be the most recent high profile case but far from unique.</p> <p>The 'open secret' aspect of the case is also relatively typical. In many of the cases we considered which involved staff groups there were concerns by colleagues, but no substantive proof. In most cases the extent of the behaviour was not known by anyone, but 'discomfort' or concerns about their colleague were described. Therein lies the problem. As any manager knows, to initiate enquires into a member of staff without a substantive basis for doing so is to invite what is often a spirited and self-righteous defence with little prospect of doing more than setting the bar even higher for possible future investigation.</p> <p>The conclusion that the research (and many others) came to was that in the absence of any reliable screening methods situational prevention measures were most likely to keep children safe by creating safer organisations.</p> <p>To apply that to the substantive focus of this forum a 'healthier' public response to the Savile affair would be in contrast to the usual external fault finding and blame attribution that we are seeing now. The process by which this abuse career was able to persist undoubtedly need to be understood and lessons learned, but as importantly would be to consider what change in attitude and understanding is needed to help prevent something similar in future.</p> <p>That would involve facing the reality that a far greater proportion of the population than we have previously acknowledged has some level of sexual interest in children or young people (how else to explain the extraordinary amount of access to abuse images) and that they are unlikely to stand out in most respects from the rest of the population, so situational measures are needed. Combined with a genuine openness to hearing from victims or those concerned they are at risk that would provide some basis from which to engage communities in how best to manage</p>

	<p>those identified as having abused.</p> <p>I have no idea how we attain that but the Savile case provides some opportunity to chip away at the stereotypical responses & build on the good public education work already begun.</p>
DMU	<p>The role of families, broader networks and community should not be underestimated, as stated there are always those who are 'in the know', and I agree with LFF, that on receipt of information the public can and does react positively and behave responsibly. SU I think raises the point about anonymity, and this is interesting, because a number of us have referred to instances where someone could have blown the whistle but did not- and yet there are examples of open secrets which remain unspoken for far too long. Would anonymity, and encouragement to whistle blow help such organisational secrets of abuse to be stated?</p>
UWE	<p>Just a quick thought about "whistle blowing" I do wonder how much guilt and blame is involved for the whistle blower. That is guilt about (possibly) not doing more at the time and/or afterwards, as well as blame from the victims/community that they (possibly) did not do more at the time and/or afterwards. So could these real or perceived issues be what is stopping people from coming forward? Therefore raising the question of whether social/cultural/personal/community shifts need to happen first (i.e., offenders die, offenders are already ousted, society becomes more accepting/realistic, the state listens more) to reduce feelings around this and allow the whistle blower to step forward. Just a thought.</p>
CU	<p>Leaving the Savile case for one moment and returning to the notion of reintegration and community engagement, how much community engagement do those convicted of a sexual offence actually want? In my research they would do anything to remain 'invisible'. Was this because they already had their 'circle of support' from the relevant agencies - could the 'community' really offer them more? Or, and to play devil's advocate, is community engagement a form of punishment?</p>
One in 4	<p>Picking up this point, if we are to look at the relationship and intimacy deficits of many of the offenders the support they receive from the community can at times be too much for them. Sometimes staying in the place of I don't deserve anything from anyone after what I have done could be a risk factor in them isolating themselves and the risk that may pose. So can we truly begin to break a cycle if we do not have all parts of the cycle working together? Most of the victims that engage with the service of one in four want to find their voice and still remain in relationship with the non-offending aspects of the offender.</p>
LFF	<p>On the issue of rehabilitation - it has often seemed to me that those who have sexually offended are given very mixed messages and, indeed, are often treated in conflicting ways by agencies. By this I mean that those professionals involved in delivering treatment programmes and supervising offenders in the community typically promote a "good lives" message and assist those they are supervising to aspire to such a good life. But the MAPPA task and personnel often only speak in terms of risk, and treat offenders accordingly. As a consequence, in my involvement in faith communities (and their endeavours to respond to those who have offended), whilst the "good lives" philosophy and approach makes sense, anxiety</p>

	<p>about risk and the advice received from Risk Management Officers leans them towards restrictive practices, contracts and conditions that are the opposite of "welcome" and "how can we support you to lead a good life?"</p> <p>On a totally different subject - as we know, one of the strongest predictors of re-conviction is deviant sexual arousal. Our treatment response to such arousal is all too often very poor. And engagement with as well as support of offenders to conduct a healthy and appropriate online life can be lacking. Which is odd, given the volumes of sexual material, both legal and illegal, that is available and accessed by many. In Lucy Faithfully Foundation we have been developing use of online monitoring technologies to assist known offenders to better manage their online behaviour. This also has the benefit of reassuring family members and child protection professionals of their good behaviour. One increasing area of discussion with offenders concerns their use of legal sexual materials, and the impact that has on relationships, affect and social activities. These conversations are made all the more meaningful as they are informed by evidence of amount of time, time of day etc when pornography is being used. Which I guess brings me back to "good lives" and how we engage with offenders in developing and living them. And how we also have the means to notice when they are not! The online lives of those we work with need to be as much an area of interest and concern as their lives offline. And technology can really assist if we allow it to.</p>
<p>ATSA</p>	<p>In response to LFF would suggest that it's not just about how we define community management; it's also how we define community engagement. What do we actually want the public to do about this? I have to admit that I continue to have (probably) unrealistic dreams that ordinary citizens will somehow stop reading the sensationalist media and that they'll truly get that the majority of sexual offenders are relatively ordinary guys who made catastrophically poor decisions about appropriate intimacy boundaries in family and friendly circumstances, leading to great potential harm for the victims and serious familial, other interpersonal, and societal upset. In those same dreams, the public then pays better attention to issues really associated with risk to the community and engages sensible management of that risk. (Yes, I am an eternal optimist, but I am not without a good grasp of the realism required to be an effective participant in the risk management arena—just in case you were starting to question my grip on reality.) While I certainly don't want to downplay the effects on victims, the literature remains unclear on what the effects for victims actually are, or how widespread they may be—or, for that matter, what they actually want the community to do with their offender. However, it is clear that, no matter how the victim(s) of any one offending situation may respond, the public universally buys into the idea that this is the worst thing that could ever possibly have happened. This perspective, in turn, is fed by a media machine that takes the most inflammatory of situations and makes them seem as if they are the norm.</p> <p>The two most pertinent examples of late are the Jerry Sandusky/Penn State scandal in the US and the currently hot topic of Jimmy Savile and the BBC in the UK. To gather how the public feels about sexual offending in the wake of these situations, just have a look at the reader comments that many online news sites collect at the end of an article. Clearly, both the Sandusky and Savile cases are very upsetting examples of what can happen when systems break down and fail to address preventable situations; however, these cases are by no means representative of</p>

	<p>sexual offending as a social or public health phenomenon. The public's ire is understandably inflamed, and the almost universal response is one tinged with anger, disgust, and hatred. Unfortunately, it continues to include the ubiquitous element of a failure to understand or appreciate that these cases are the outliers. Can anyone imagine the media spending this much time with the case of a father fondling his daughter (perhaps the most common form of contact/hands-on sexual offending)?</p> <p>It is, perhaps, fortuitous that this debate is ongoing during the week of the 31st annual conference of the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers in Denver, Colorado. This conference has attracted some 1400 delegates from the far-flung corners of the world--all of whom are grappling with similar issues. We know what the risk factors are, yet we continue to develop risk management strategies that miss the mark. We know what some of the situations are that give rise to sexual offending, yet we continue to fail to implement realistic prevention strategies or agendas. The literature is becoming exceedingly clear about how we should treat, monitor, support, and hold accountable identified perpetrators, yet we continue to default to harsh, often draconian measures that hold little promise of actually dealing with this very troubling aspect of dysfunctional interpersonal relations.</p> <p>In the preceding paragraph, I included the "31st" in my naming of the ATSA conference so that we don't forget that the field has been addressing these issues for at least three decades. In a session I attended yesterday, the question was raised as to why professionals and experts don't do more to combat the widespread public ignorance of what we have learned as a field regarding treatment and risk management. Using myself as an example, I've been doing what I do for nearly 30 years, but it was only this year that I decided to make a conscious effort to address or confront misunderstanding or misinformation about sexual offending. At potentially great personal peril, my answer to the question, "What do you do for a living?" is now always, "I work with sexual offenders."</p>
CU	<p>LFF last post questioning how we define community engagement seems to be a recurring theme that underlies most of what this debate has looked at. How involved should, do 'communities' want to be in the management of those convicted of sexual offences? How much do communities actually want to know about the realities of sexual offenders and sexual offending? As a researcher I am not immune to the sensitive issues that I have heard during my research. I have therefore found myself questioning perfectly normal close family relationships based on the fact that I knew the real risks involved. So how do you inform the public that the real threats are from those they know and love, without making them suspicious of everyone? Our irrational fear of stranger danger is in every medium there is and not just in news reporting.</p> <p>These are extremely difficult questions to answer, which perhaps explains why we still haven't got all the answers after three decades.</p>
PU	<p>This may not naturally flow from the immediate preceding comments, but I thought I might tell you about a meeting with two (MAPP) police officers I had last week. In a broad ranging discussion they said (one of them a detective inspector) that they had no idea what they were doing during home visits to registered sex offenders</p>

	<p>they felt that police officers nearing retirement took on the role as it seemed to be easier than policing the streets. They had observed that police officers tended to 'get alongside' the offender and often failed to 'confront' on basic. They like looking in the bathroom, checking bedrooms and phone messages etc. they felt that probation officers were not interested in these visits and, as a result of what they perceived to be a changed police role, that active policing of the register was absent. Clearly the register is sold to the public as an important weapon in the sex offender armoury but, at least according to these officers, was nowhere near to fulfilling this brief. Do others have similar experiences? Here are clearly basic policing tasks to be carried out in this situation but are they? Equally there is a 'befriending issue' (for want of a better term) so who should do this?</p>
CU	<p>In the research that I have conducted, which has involved interviewing men subject to the registration requirement, some not surprisingly regard the requirements as merely a 'public relations exercise' and that the home visits are just that. Of course these men back this up by stating that they have nothing to hide. But PU definitely raises an important question with regard to who should be tasked with this job. I am particularly interested in the befriending aspect that PU raises.</p> <p>Generally, how someone with a conviction of a sex offence is <i>perceived</i> is dependent upon their/ the public's (mis)perceptions of a 'sex offender'. These offenders therefore have enormous pressure to deny, distort, minimise, justify and/or distort their sexually abusive behaviour, not just to others but also to themselves. While professionals need to be aware of their need to 'befriend' they also need to recognise that this is not that surprising.</p> <p>Murana and Mann's (2006) article discusses just this, highlighting how most of us faced with something we don't like about ourselves, or something we have done that we know is wrong, reinterpret our actions in ways that diminish our culpability and makes us more 'likeable'.</p> <p>There is therefore the danger that any form of 'befriending' behaviour is always seen as a signal of deception or a type of grooming.</p>
ATSA	<p>Way back at the beginning of the debate, PU asked whether we should be revisiting the Multi-Agency collaboration issue, especially as greater responsibility for risk management is placed on statutory agencies (like police and probation--I found the term "probation officer" interesting). I've generally seen this as "going in the wrong direction", in that I'm a promoter of greater involvement by non-statutory groups. I'm often caused to reflect on Peel's famous quote, "The people are the police and the police are the people" (please excuse whatever literary license my memory has inflicted). Some years back, I did a quick and dirty study in which I compared four groups of released high risk sexual offenders in Canada: 1. those whose risk was managed solely by police via a post-sentence peace bond, 2. those whose risk management was assisted via a CoSA alone, 3. those who had the benefit of both police peace bond management and a CoSA, and 4. those who had neither. The rates of sexual reoffending were not particularly different among the four groups, but two really interesting outcomes did emerge: 1. as a group, the sex offenders who had neither a peace bond nor a CoSA incurred more than double the number of post-release charges for any reoffending than any other group (even though they had a significantly lower average Static-99 risk score); and 2. Those who were</p>

	<p>managed by police alone and who got into trouble were returned to custody faster than any other group. The groups involving CoSA as a risk management adjunct remained in the community longer than the police-only group. This suggests that involvement of community partners "softened" the approach of police to problematic behaviours – short of reoffending – that they may have been inclined to deal with swiftly, without the addition of other risk management assistance. Generally, I have viewed these results of being strongly encouraging of the collaboration of "the police" and "the people" in the public safety endeavour.</p>
DMU	<p>To respond to PU - I am not totally surprised by this, and have come across other examples of police Offender Managers selecting the work because it is 'shift friendly', and for example is better for young female police officers who have children, but this presents us with the possibility that staff are not in positions because of competence but for other reasons. In addition, we know that many sexual offenders are social isolates, in one of our evaluations the only people to visit the sex offenders at home were police officers, and this contact, so long as discreetly done was welcomed. How well practitioners use these visits is a moot point. However, we did find some very good practice, with staff able to elicit important disclosures about risky thoughts and behaviours from offenders, (see paper on the ESRC public disclosure website, http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/hls/research/sexoffenderpublicdisclosure.aspx)</p>
One in 4	<p>As we begin to come nearer the close of this debate it is wonderful to know that we are all doing what we can to address the many issues that are emerging in the area of sexual abuse, especially in a time of little resources. The fact that we (especially in Ireland) are beginning to discuss the management of offenders in the community is dare I say it 'a miracle'. The fact that individuals and families are seeking support to manage the offending behaviour that has occurred is a step in the right direction. While I am under no illusion that we moving five steps forward and possibly three steps backwards the message to individuals who have been victims of abuse is 'speak out and we will support you' is filtering through. The fact that we believe their disclosures can only encourage people to speak out.</p> <p>So as I have said in previous blogs it is a community that needs to manage the offending behaviour and this community needs to begin with the professionals. As LFF so rightly said the role that the family plays is too often forgotten and let's face it, it is not a conversation we have over coffee to disclose oh! By the way did I tell you my husband has been sexually abusing our child however we are going to get professional help and all live happy ever after and I will be and I am sure we will still be able to stay friends'? I am not so sure, however the need to be supported for these individuals is paramount (I feel) especially regarding the protection of children</p> <p>To reiterate, it has been a great experience for me being part of this debate. I have been very isolated in a lot of my work, it is my belief that offenders are not individuals who come down from space but part of our community. We talk about victims of abuse and the impacts on them ,having worked in this area for the last eight years it is their voices that said we need to understand offending behaviour because if we don't we stay victims forever. We want to know why they offend and most of all in relation to intra familial most victims want to have some relationship with the offender. For any of you who attended the NOTA conference in Brighton and attended the workshop presented by the victims of sexual abuse I think it was</p>

	<p>a Barnardos group and had available the DVD broken silences this certainly supports us in understanding the voice of victims. I use this video as part of the treatment programme we deliver and most to the offenders and their families are shocked when they hear the victim’s desire for treatment for the offenders. One of the offenders in the current group was in court on Wednesday where he received a suspended sentence and many provisions put in place one being continuing in treatment. However I got a call from him this evening after his house was being surrounded by locals who read the print media's description of him and told him he would not live another night in his house so his choice was get out or else! His daughter and family have been told to leave the area they live in before midnight. The police say they don't have the resources to support him he says what is the point in living. As I said earlier five steps forward three steps back. However we must forge through and speak up and inform the public on what you all know. I began in this work having read most of the research you have all written so without that I would not have a programme that has currently 30 offenders and 30 family members so keep up the great work and watch this space.</p>
<p>DMU</p>	<p>FINAL SUMMARY POST</p> <p>Firstly I would like to thank you all for a very interesting and comprehensive discussion. The contributions have been thoughtful, well informed, and in many instances they have pushed my thoughts and views in new directions. We have certainly come a long way from my three questions. I think we have partially answered these questions, but also begun to explore broader issues. I will attempt an overview summary.</p> <p>1) How can public disclosure and public awareness of sexual offenders add to the effectiveness of sex offender community management? I think we have concluded that public disclosure and public awareness can and does contribute to the effective management of sexual offenders. However, I was struck by how quickly we began to discuss public awareness rather than disclosure schemes, and in particular, the ‘knowing’ of family members, and local communities. Engaging communities became our focus, with helpful specific examples from One in 4 and LFF, and that community management of sexual offenders can be a community responsibility especially if communities are well informed and well supported. However, I think we realised that there is also a component of individual and community silence, and a ‘not knowing’ that does play a part. Communities can turn away as well as being supportive of victims, and the ‘whistle’ isn’t always blown on sex offenders when it should be. I am not sure we fully understand the role of silence, or indeed what are the social and psychological factors that ‘tip’ individuals and communities into stating and facing abuse (although we did begin to identify some).</p> <p>2) On the contribution of multi agency work we identified a number of flaws and challenges. Not least falling resources, inappropriate ‘mission creep’, and the tension between largely restrictive approaches and the ‘good lives’ response of communities and community groups. The largely statutory multi agency responses do not have a record of effective engagement with local community groups, although some local initiatives around faith groups, and Circles for example to offer a glimpse of another way. The ‘professional-community’ divide remains quite wide, and it’s often framed by professionals and policy makers in terms of trust (lack of)</p>

	<p>in communities to respond well, and policy makers certainly fear 'irrational' community and public reactions. However, what public awareness work tells us thus far is that actually good information giving does not have to result in vigilante action and ostracism of sex offenders.</p> <p>3) What can methods of intervention other than CBT programmes potentially offer? Interestingly we seem to be at a point with the community management of sex offenders where they are largely managed in the community but not by that community, indeed they are mostly managed by professionals who are distant from and not necessarily part of those communities. This raises the interesting question as to what community management does and can mean (a question importantly raised by UWE).</p> <p>SU talked about a continuum and I found this concept helpful. There is of course a difference between general community awareness of sexual offending and specific groups in a community providing support, mentoring and inclusion. In terms of evidence, it is clear that 'Good Lives' and general restorative justice approaches suffer from lack of evidence, and difficulties in evaluation studies meeting the gold standard of random controlled trial. Responses to sex offenders are also often presented as either or, and perhaps when used without reflection or partnership they can result in the kinds of tensions and conflicts outlined by LFF, with MAPPa focused on restrictive measures, and these translating into similar restrictive and less than 'welcoming' measures in the community in the way LFF describes. Perhaps we need to think through more carefully about a 'blended protection' approach (Kemshall 2008), in which restrictive and reintegrative strategies are combined and delivered in partnership between statutory agencies and concerned community groups. COSA for example at its best is an example of this. The combination would be different in different cases, depending on the level of risk and the motivation to change and self regulate. Our problem may well be in breaking a mind set dichotomy between controlling approaches and reintegrative ones, and replacing this with a multi modal approach that has its roots in two distinct perspectives on sex offenders and community management. Perhaps it isn't a question of either or, but how much of each and in what combinations?</p> <p>Finally, this has been an important and useful discussion that I hope can be built on. Thank you everyone.</p>
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Partner Organisations

