

Institution: University of Kent		
Unit of Assessment: 4 – Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience		
Title of case study: The Psychology of Sexual Offending: Shaping International Policy, Practice and Public Debate		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2005-present		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Prof. Theresa Gannon	Professor	2005 to date
Prof. Jane Wood	Professor	2000 to date
Dr Afroditi Pina	Senior Lecturer	2004 to date
Dr Eduardo Vazquez	Senior Lecturer	2009 to date
Dr Emma Alleyne	Senior Lecturer	2008 to date
Dr Caoilte O Ciardha	Senior Lecturer	2011 to date
Period when the claimed impact occurred: August 2013 - December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? Yes (part continuation of two REF2014 case studies: 'Female Sexual Offenders' and 'Polygraph for Sexual Offenders')		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>Sex offending research by Kent's Centre for Research and Education in Forensic Psychology (CORE-FP) has influenced practice and policy communities internationally, across neglected and controversial aspects of sex offender management. This includes: providing the evidence base for a proposed legislative change on the use of polygraph to monitor registered sex offenders in the community (2017-19); informing the police service in England and Wales' first risk assessment framework and training manual for the management of female sex offenders (2017); and shaping international debate on the effectiveness of the disputed <i>Core</i> sex offender treatment programme (2018-20). Each of the underpinning research projects was led by either Professor Theresa Gannon or Professor Jane Wood, with support from other Centre members.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>Kent's Centre for Research and Education in Forensic Psychology (CORE-FP) aims to understand the psychological processes underlying offending behaviour and has developed world-leading expertise in the psychology of sex offending. This case study is underpinned by CORE-FP research findings that address intractable problems relating to aspects of sex offender assessment, management, and treatment, as follows:</p> <p>Management of Sex Offenders in the Community with Polygraph (Wood, Gannon, O Ciardha, Alleyne, Pina, Vasquez: 2010 to date)</p> <p>This element is underpinned by findings from the team's earlier research on the use of polygraphy to prompt disclosures of risky behaviour by sex offenders [R2, R3, R6]. The initial programme, funded by the Ministry of Justice (01/02/2010-01/09/2012) [G2], showed that lie detection equipment prompts voluntary disclosure and led to a 2014 legislation change, as detailed in the REF2014 case study. The present case study is based on the outcomes of a separate, two-year national evaluation on the effectiveness of using polygraph to manage offenders and suspects in the community, funded by the police service (2017-19) [G1]. This longitudinal project involved random allocation of convicted and suspected sexual offenders to polygraph or comparison groups. Findings [R5] demonstrate that, relative to comparisons, polygraphing convicted and suspected offenders leads to more disclosures about their risk-relevant activities and more actions by police to protect the public. These actions include increasing supervision of offenders or refusing applications to come off the sex offenders' register.</p>		

The Assessment and Management of Female Sex Offenders (Gannon: 2006-9)

Research in this strand was originally funded by the ESRC [G3]. The underpinning research examined the modus operandi of female sex offenders and highlighted several new gender-specific risk factors and sub-types that are unique to female offending [R3]. A further 2014 case study detailed how individual agencies adopted and used these findings (until 31/07/2013). The current case study details how this same body of research has shaped national training and management approaches for female sex offenders since 01/08/2013.

Effective Treatments for Sex Offenders (Gannon: 2017-18)

This element is based on a meta-analysis [R1] that Gannon and collaborators conducted independently in response to a controversial Ministry of Justice (MoJ) report titled 'Impact evaluation of the prison-based Core Sex Offender Treatment Programme' (Mews, DiBella, & Purver, 2017). This report sparked international debates about the value of a leading sex-offending treatment programme (e.g. Forde, 2017).

This controversy inspired Gannon to conduct her own meta-analysis of 70 studies and 55,604 individuals undergoing offence treatment programmes [R1]. The design included the impact of staffing factors and behavioural techniques, such as arousal reconditioning. Findings supported Gannon's hypothesis that lack of trained staff and limited budgets had a part to play in the MoJ's conclusions that current treatment programmes appear to result in higher re-offending rates. Active dissemination before and after publication helped redirect this crucial debate on the future of sex offender treatment.

The wider research team also involved Centre research staff and PhD students, past and present, including Jaimee Mallon, Dr Mark James, and Prof Mark Olver.

Gannon spends one day per week in clinical practice with sex offenders at the Forensic Specialist Care Group (Kent and Medway Social Care and Partnership Trust) and received a British Psychological Society's Lifetime Achievement Award in 2019 for her work across research and clinical contexts [G4].

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

[R1] Gannon, T. A., Olver, M. E., Mallion, J. S., & James, M. (2019). Does specialized psychological treatment for offending reduce recidivism? A meta-analysis examining staff and program variables as predictors of treatment effectiveness. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 73, 101752. doi: 10.1016/j.cpr.2019.101752

<https://kar.kent.ac.uk/75619/>

[R2] Gannon, T. A., Wood, J. L., Pina, A., Tyler, N. F., Barnoux, M. L., & Vasquez, E. A. (2014). An evaluation of mandatory polygraph testing for sexual offenders in the United Kingdom. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 26(2), 178-203. doi: 10.1177/1079063213486836

<https://kar.kent.ac.uk/53579/>

[R3] Gannon, T. A., Rose, M. R., & Ward, T. (2008). A descriptive model of the offence process for female sexual offenders. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 20(3), 352-374. doi: 10.1177/1079063208322495

<https://kar.kent.ac.uk/15172/>

[R4] Gannon, T. A., Wood, J. L., Pina, A., Vasquez, E., & Fraser, I. (2012). *The Evaluation of the Mandatory Polygraph Pilot with Sexual Offenders*. London, UK: Ministry of Justice. doi: 10.1177/0886260505282887

<https://kar.kent.ac.uk/45656/>

[R5] Wood, J., Gannon, T. A., Ó Ciardha, C., & Alleyne, E. K. A. (2020). Evaluating polygraph use for managing sexual offenders and suspects in five police areas.

https://www.kent.ac.uk/school-of-psychology/downloads/kent_polygraph_report.pdf

[R6] Gannon, T. A., & Alleyne, E. K. A. (2013). Female sexual abusers' cognition. *Trauma, Violence, and Abuse*, 14, 67-79. doi: 10.1177/1524838012462245
<https://kar.kent.ac.uk/35092/>

Grants and Awards

[G1] Wood, J. (PI), Gannon, T. A. (Co-I), Ó Ciardha, C. (Co-I), & Alleyne, E. K. A. (Co-I). The Police and Crime Commissioner for Cumbria. *Evaluating polygraph use for managing sexual offenders and suspects in five police areas*; 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2019: Award made: £331,260

[G2] Gannon, T. A., Co-Is: Wood, J., Pina, A., & Vasquez, E., by Ministry of Justice. *Evaluation of the Mandatory Polygraph Pilot* (SRG/09/015); 01/02/2010-01/09/2012; Award made: £324,417.

[G3] Gannon, T. A. ESRC; *What were they thinking: The cognition of women sex offenders*. (ES/E0048221/1); 01/12/ 2006-31/07/2008; Award made: £83,000.

[G4] Gannon, T. A. 2019 Lifetime Contribution to Forensic Psychology Award, British Psychological Society.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

In the UK, research by Gannon and colleagues in CORE-FP has motivated a proposed change to the Offender Management Act 2007 and informed the National Police Chief's Council's (NPCC) recommendations for the management of female sex offenders. Internationally, it has also guided best practice in sex offender treatment protocols, in the face of controversy that left effective programmes under threat from closure.

Providing Evidence for NPCC's Proposed Amendment to Offender Management Act 2007

In 2017, Professor Jane Wood and CORE-FP colleagues evaluated how the police monitor the fast-growing number of registered sex offenders who are under notification request, in a study commissioned by the National Police Chief's Council lead for the management of sexual and violent offenders. The project report in 2019 [R5] recommended the introduction of mandatory polygraph testing for registered sex offenders in England and Wales, as a means of prompting risk-related disclosures. As a direct result, the Police Lead for Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) immediately started the process of seeking an amendment to the Offender Management Act 2007 via the Home Office [c]. This was confirmed in a BBC Radio Cumbria interview with the Chief Constable of Cumbria Police, Michelle Skeer QPM, on 19/10/2020, who discussed the success of the Kent research project and confirmed that plans are underway to amend legislation. As Mrs Skeer states in this interview:

'As National Lead, I am working with the Home Office and the College of Policing because what I would like to do is to make it (polygraphy of sex offenders) mandatory [...]. I believe we've got the evidence base.' [i]

Both the legislative process and the implementation of the new protocol are subject to serious delay during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Informing NPCC Guidance for the Management of Female Sexual Offenders

In October 2017, the National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) published the first-ever proposal for the assessment and management of female sexual offenders. The *Female Sexual Offender Active Risk Management System* (ARMS-F) [a] draws extensively on Gannon's research in its use of sub-types of female sex offender and cites seven of her academic publications between 2008 and 2010 (including [R3]). Recommendations include highlighting the role that male perpetrators can play in coercing female sex offenders. On publication, ARMS-F was introduced into police training to help monitor the ~600 female sexual offenders within the criminal justice system and on the Sex Offenders' Register. A statement from an Associate at the *National College of Policing* confirms this:

'A number of police forces (about 100 officers across 6 forces including the Metropolitan Police) are now trained in the framework and a recent national evaluation has now described the framework as showing promise for a national roll out [...]. In my view an excellent example of how academia can pro-actively shape and steer professional practice in the field' [b].

Providing Evidence on Effectiveness of Disputed 'Core' Sex Offender Treatment for use by International Agencies

Since **2018**, Gannon's meta-analysis on sex offender treatment programmes [R1] has been used as a central piece of evidence in a heated international debate on their effectiveness, which was prompted by the publication of the Ministry of Justice's (MoJ) controversial review (Mews, DiBella, & Purver, 2017). The MoJ report argued that the UK Government's well-regarded and established 'Core' sex offender treatment programme actually served to increase in re-offending rates. Gannon's findings challenged this report and were disseminated before publication via seminars and a working paper in **2018**. Her analysis and active intervention in the debate provided evidence that the mode of treatment delivery, not its design, was the problematic element and supported the use of trained clinicians and arousal reconditioning within treatment programmes. As a result, an international range of agencies concerned with sex offending subsequently used this study to advocate, design, or implement effective intervention programmes.

Some indicative examples from the UK, US, and Europe follow:

In the United States, the State of Washington Department of Corrections used Gannon's meta-analysis 'in development of a behavioral intervention regime [... and] invested more time in clinical supervision of our clinicians and supervisors' in **2020** [d]. Meanwhile, also in **2020**, the legislative chair for the Montana Sex Offender Treatment Association used the findings to uphold 'the training and standards for specialized sex offender treatment personnel' in the face of challenge to existing programmes from the State legislature [e].

The research director of Forensic Assessment, Training, & Research LLC reports that the publication of Gannon's findings in **2019** allowed US 'agencies to insert some quality standards into their Requests for Bid' when tendering for sex offence treatment contracts. Likewise, he stated that 'when recently asked to redesign treatment services for a region of the Norwegian prison service I drew on your findings in guiding design decisions. Particular findings incorporated in the design and implementation include that every session is co-delivered by a psychologist and a prison officer with many years of experience in this work and that training was provided in how to apply behavioral techniques to target deviant arousal' [f].

In the UK, 'Prosecuting Sexual Offences', a **2019** report by JUSTICE and JUSTICE Scotland, the all-party law reform and human rights organisation, included the following recommendation: 'We recommend that the Ministry of Justice carries out a randomised-control trial of sufficient depth to assess the efficacy of a treatment programme for those who commit sexual offences, utilising the positive programme elements that Professor Gannon has outlined. If it produces positive results, we recommend that HMPPS amends the Horizon and Kaizen programmes to include these elements' [g].

Finally, STOP Sexual Offending (STOP SO) works with people in the community who experience unhealthy sexual interests, including paedophilia, with 800-1000 referrals for treatment each year [h]. As indicated in [h], the STOP SO treatment programme is 'in line with the findings of Gannon et al. (2019) of what seems to be the most effective ingredients of sex offender rehabilitation'.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

[a] Blandford, M. (2017). *Assessment and Management of Female Sexual Offenders: Female ARMS Framework Practitioner Guidance*. National Police Chief's Council. 25 references to Gannon's work and 6 papers cited (p. 35).

- [b]** Statement from National College of Policing (December 2020) detailing the importance of Gannon's research to developing the ARMS Framework.
- [c]** Emails from Police National Lead, Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements detailing the progress of the polygraph rollout and plans for legislation change.
- [d]** Statement from SOTAP Clinical Quality Assurance and Training Manager, Washington Dept. of Corrections, about changes made to the treatment programme in response to Gannon's meta-analysis **[R1]**.
- [e]** Statement from Founding Member, Montana Sex Offender Treatment Association, detailing use of Gannon's meta-analysis **[R1]** to oppose changes to treatment protocols from State legislature.
- [f]** Statement from Forensic Assessment, Training and Research LLC, on using Gannon's meta-analysis **[R1]** to design treatment protocols for a range of agencies.
- [g]** HH Peter Rook QC, *Prosecuting Sexual Offences* (2019). JUSTICE – see Recommendation 9 (p.120) on the need for RCT on treatment efficacy using results of Gannon's meta-analysis **[R1]**.
- [h]** Extract from STOP Sexual Offending flyer detailing awareness of Gannon's meta-analysis **[R1]** as indicator of best practice and email from Stop Sex Offending confirming size of client base.
- [i]** Report on BBC Radio Cumbria (19/10/2020) about Kent polygraph project (G1), including interview with Chief Constable Michelle Skeer QPM about plans to seek legislation change and make polygraphy mandatory (@ 3mins).