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| Institution: University of Sheffield | | |
| Unit of Assessment: D-28 History | | |
| Title of case study: Enabling policymakers and practitioners to understand and interpret historical child sexual abuse | | |
| Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2003–2019 | | |
| 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: |
| Adrian Bingham | Professor of Modern British History | 2006–present |
| Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2013–2020 | | |
| Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N | | |
| <p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Bingham's research has directly informed the work of public inquiries, the police, lawyers, and social workers, helping them understand, and respond to, historical cases of child sexual abuse. Ever since revelations about the offences perpetrated by Jimmy Savile emerged in 2012, historical child sexual abuse has been high on the public agenda. Although policymakers and practitioners had access to extensive information about contemporary manifestations of abuse, there was much less knowledge of its presence in earlier decades, or how patterns had changed over time – a dimension that became critical when hundreds of cases dating back to the 1950s were being investigated and recommendations were being made to improve safeguarding.</p> | | |
| <p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Professor Bingham's research has demonstrated the central role of the press in shaping ideas about sex and sexuality in twentieth-century Britain. His book <i>Family Newspapers?</i> (R1) showed that popular national daily newspapers, in particular, were a hugely significant source of knowledge and imagery about sexual behaviour, personal relationships and moral codes. In that book, he charted the growing anxiety about the threat of 'paedophiles' from the mid-1970s. As the issue of historical child sexual abuse rose up the public agenda, he recognised that more focused research on the press would make a valuable contribution. In collaboration with two other historians, Lucy Delap (now University of Cambridge) and Louise Jackson (University of Edinburgh), a successful application was made to the Economic and Social Research Council to examine the changing ways in which child sexual abuse was reported in the press, tackled by practitioners (social workers, police, children's homes etc), and dealt with by the criminal justice system (G1). This was the first detailed historical investigation of its kind. Professor Bingham led the strand on the press coverage, and, working with a Research Assistant, Dr Louise Settle, produced an extensive database of reporting from the period 1918 to 1990, identifying around 1,000 articles from a representative selection of national and local newspapers. This was an unprecedentedly rich and varied database of content through which changes in the public discussion of child sexual abuse could be traced with unusual sensitivity. This press coverage not only influenced public opinion, it also informed the work of, and prompted responses from, politicians, policy-makers, the police and campaigners.</p> <p>The key finding from Professor Bingham's strand of research was that child sexual abuse was not 'invisible' before the 1970s and 1980s, as is often claimed, but was discussed in different</p> | | |

ways and with different types of language; these shifts were intimately connected to, and shaped by, wider political agendas and perceptions of social, cultural and moral change (R2, R3, R4). Across the period court reporting provided numerous instances of the prosecution of abuse, but euphemistic language often obscured the precise nature of the alleged offences. During the 1950s and 1960s, sex crimes were reported in more detail, but because child sexual abuse had not yet been clearly defined as a distinctive criminal category, it was repeatedly conflated with 'homosexuality' or with other forms of 'deviancy'. It was only in the mid-1970s, when 'child abuse' was conceptualized as a 'social problem' and the terminology of the 'paedophile' gained popular currency, that the press placed the issue firmly on the public agenda, and started to deploy it as a symbol of the moral decay brought by 'permissiveness'. Even then, the press's attention was largely focused on certain manifestations of abuse, notably that committed by strangers rather than carried out within the home, and the cultures sustaining it were not properly interrogated. These blind spots enabled offenders like Jimmy Savile to continue to hide in plain sight (R2, R4, R5).

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

- R1.** Bingham, A. (2009). *Family Newspapers?: Sex, Private Life, and the British Popular Press 1918-1978*. Oxford University Press. Available on request.
- R2.** Bingham, A. (2019). 'It Would be Better for the Newspapers to Call a Spade a Spade': the British Press and Child Sexual Abuse, c. 1918–90. *History Workshop Journal*, 88, 89–110. <https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dbz006>
- R3.** Bingham, A., Delap, L., Jackson, L., & Settle, L. (2016). Historical child sexual abuse in England and Wales: the role of historians. *History of Education*, 45(4), 411–429. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0046760x.2016.1177122>
- R4.** Bingham, A. & Settle, L. (2015). Scandals and Silences: The British press and child sexual abuse, *History and Policy*. Available at: <http://www.historyandpolicy.org/policy-papers/papers/scandals-and-silences-the-british-press-and-child-sexual-abuse>
- R5.** Bingham, A. (2014). How did he get away with so much for so long? The press and Jimmy Savile, *Open Democracy* and *History & Policy*, June 2014, <http://www.historyandpolicy.org/opinion-articles/articles/how-did-he-get-away-with-so-much-for-so-long-the-press-and-jimmy-savile>

Grants:

- G1.** Economic and Social Research Council Urgency Grant 20140715, 'Historicizing "historical child sexual abuse" cases: social, political and criminal justice contexts', PI Louise Jackson, Co-Is Adrian Bingham and Lucy Delap (2014-5)

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

Bingham's research has provided policymakers and practitioners with a deeper understanding of child sexual abuse in the recent past, enabling a better response to the hundreds of historical cases that have emerged since 2012.

Impact on inquiries

Several official inquiries into historical child sexual abuse were established after the Savile revelations. In May 2013, Bingham was one of eight historians invited to brief the inquiries into Jimmy Savile's offences on NHS properties, overseen by Kate Lampard QC and involving investigators from Broadmoor, Leeds General Infirmary and Stoke Mandeville hospitals. Bingham was asked why journalists did not expose Savile's actions until after his death, and how he used his celebrity to evade scrutiny. Bingham explained that gendered attitudes in the newsrooms, journalistic reluctance to challenge high-profile figures, and stringent libel laws all discouraged newspapers from spotlighting alleged sexual offences (S1).

Kate Lampard QC noted that the evidence from Bingham and the other historians 'helped all three organisations [Stoke Mandeville Hospital, Leeds General and Broadmoor] avoid hindsight bias and added significantly to the rigour, thoroughness and fairness of their investigation reports' (S1). Bingham's research was summarised across more than 300 words in Lampard's 2015 *Lessons Learnt* report (p.37), which was written for the Health Secretary to make recommendations for changes in NHS practices, and which received extensive media coverage (S2). It was also used (c.100 words) in the 2014 Broadmoor Hospital report (p.13) and the 2015 Stoke Mandeville hospital report (p.190) (S3, S4). Bingham's evidence was thus central to ensuring that policymakers and practitioners had a historically accurate understanding of Savile's activities, and could therefore learn the right lessons to improve safeguarding for the future.

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At both sessions, Bingham circulated his 4,000-word History and Policy briefing paper. This resource had a wider impact, with 5128 unique page views between August 2015 and October 2020 (S6).

Impact on practitioners

Having generated a reputation in the field, Bingham, Delap, and Jackson were invited to present at several events for practitioners. The Independent Police Complaints Commission's Director of Operations requested a presentation because of the IPCC's involvement in 'high profile investigations where potential failings in the police response to child abuse... have been identified' (S7). In February 2016, Bingham and Delap presented at the IPCC Development Day on Child Abuse to around 60 IPCC staff involved in relevant investigations.

Bingham was invited to present at the St Mary's Sexual Assault Referral Centre's annual conference in February 2017. The event attracted c.200 practitioners (including senior police officers, barristers, social workers, and clinicians) and was designed to share 'knowledge and experience in order that we can improve services and standards both in the UK and internationally' (S8). Bingham's talk generated positive feedback, with 55% of respondents saying that it was 'very good', and another 42% 'good' (S8).

In June 2018 Bingham, Jackson and Delap were invited to present at a four-hour seminar organised by the law firm Farrer & Co for organisations working with children. David Smellie, Head of Farrer's Safeguarding Unit said: *"I have no doubt that the important work of these academics in contextualising past failings will significantly assist organisations to put in place more robust systems today."* Numerous respondents, including delegates from St Paul's School, Cognita Schools, the London Borough of Islington, the Caledon Trust and Ealing Abbey, said that they 'definitely' learnt something that would be useful for their work from Bingham's talk. Hannah Jenner, the Safeguarding Children Training Facilitator at the Scout Association, said Bingham's talk was *"clear and incisive at exposing the prevailing narratives and assumptions that we are working with as individuals in society and in the organisations we work for"* (S9).

Bingham's research has therefore directly informed the work of public inquiries, the police, lawyers and social workers, helping them understand, and respond to, historical cases of child sexual abuse. In January 2018, Bingham was awarded, with Delap and Jackson, the Royal Historical Society's inaugural Public History Prize for Public Debate and Policy. The citation noted that the winners 'have been notably successful, the judges feel, in ensuring that the policy-making implications of this research reaches key audiences' (S10).

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

- S1. History & Policy: Jimmy Savile Investigations (<http://www.historyandpolicy.org/consultations/consultations/jimmy-savile-investigations>).
- S2. Kate Lampard and Ed Marsden, 'Themes and lessons learnt from NHS investigations into matters relating to Jimmy Savile' [Lampard Lessons Learnt Report], February 2015 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/jimmy-savile-nhs-investigations-lessons-learned>).
- S3. Androulla Johnstone and Christine Dent, 'Investigation in the Association of Jimmy Savile with Stoke Mandeville Hospital' [Stoke Mandeville Report], February 2015 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/nhs-and-department-of-health-investigations-into-jimmy-savile>).
- S4. Bill Kirkup and Paul Marshall, 'Jimmy Savile Investigation: Broadmoor Hospital' [Broadmoor Report], June 2014 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/jimmy-savile-investigation-broadmoor-hospital>).
- S5. [Text removed for publication].
- S6. History & Policy website analytics [October 2020].
- S7. IPCC invitation [Director of Operations, IPCC 18 December 2015].
- S8. St Mary's Conference email of invitation [Aug 2016] and evaluations.
- S9. Farrer & Co event evaluation.
- S10. RHS Public History Prize citation [27 November 2019].