

Institution: University of the West of England, Bristol		
Unit of Assessment: 20		
Title of case study: Improving the risk management of people who have been convicted of a sexual offence and their integration back into the community		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2009 – 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:
Professor Kieran McCartan	Professor of Criminology	2008 - present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2016 - 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>Preventing sexual offending, and reintegrating people with a sexual offence conviction, are challenges with serious implications for community safety. Professor McCartan's multi-disciplinary research has changed the policy and practice of governmental and charitable organisations in the management of people convicted of sexual offences; both nationally and internationally. Impacts include: providing evidence and impacting policy and practice on the part of Circles UK which supports community-based interventions for integration on a national scale; influencing improvement in the staff training, offender management and risk management frameworks of UK and Latvian probation services, and the New Zealand police; shifting agendas and shaping new recommendations on sexual abuse in the Confederation of European Probation and the Council of Europe.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>It is widely recognised that sexual offending is widespread, with between one in four and one in eight people experiencing sexual abuse at some point in their lives. There are approximately 58,000 individuals currently on the sexual offences register in England and Wales, not including those in prison, and this number is growing annually. The integration of people who have committed sexual offences back into the community and preventing repeat offending is therefore a growing problem. The problem is compounded by existing community attitudes, criminal justice policies and safeguarding issues. In a climate of austerity, increasing public protection and reducing reoffending is very difficult. Professor McCartan is a multi-disciplinary researcher who researches people who commit sexual offences and their risk management, with the aim of changing government and organizational policy and practice by highlighting the importance of a developmental approach to understanding patterns of offending.</p> <p>Professor McCartan has conducted a series of interlinked research projects that have examined and evaluated different models of risk management used by police, probation and related organisations. These have focussed on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community engagement with the management of people who have committed sexual offences, particularly the Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) programme (G1, G2) (R1, R3); • sex offender registration, risk management and the community (G3, G4) (R4, R5); 		

- the role of life course development in the lives of people who commit sexual offences (**G1, G2**) (**R3, R4, R6**);
- the importance of systems and processes in the integration of offenders (**G1 - G4**), (**R3, R4, R6**);
- ways of reframing the existing societal narrative around sexual offences to be more preventative and proactive rather than simply punitive and reactive (**G2, G3, G4**) (**R3, R4, R6**).

This research has demonstrated that communities can play an important role in the successful prevention, integration and management of people who have committed sexual abuse, by supporting multi-agency professional working and offering offenders a supportive environment in which to successfully desist (**R1, R2, R3, R4, R6**).



The UK CoSA research (**R1, R3**) was the first government-funded, independent evaluation of CoSA. It demonstrated tangible outcomes for CoSA (including increased core member engagement; reduction in reoffending; good partnership working; value for money; and positive volunteer participation), which resulted in direct changes to policy and practice (**R4, R5**). The CoSA research also fed into broader research on the risk management of people who have been convicted of a sexual offence, the sex

offenders' register and disclosure system (the largest survey of its kind in the UK), and on the framing of sexual abuse as a health issue. All these topics have implications for reducing reoffending and preventing first time offending because they allow us to see the role of community engagement, effective partnership working, harm reduction and the impact of a rounded view of offender management (**R2, R3, R6**).

The research (**R1 – R6**) has demonstrated that by reframing the risk management of people who have committed sexual offences as a developmental, social and mental wellbeing issue, we can alter public perceptions of offenders in a way that contributes to a reduction in reoffending, and shape offenders' risk management plans to be fit for purpose.

3. References to the research

R1 McCartan, K. F., Kemshall, H., Westwood, S., Cattell, J., McKenzie, G., and Solle, J. (2014) *Circles of support and accountability - a qualitative analysis*. London: Ministry of Justice.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/293400/cosa-research-summary.pdf

R2 McCartan, K. F., Kemshall, H., and Tabachnick, J. (2015) The construction of community understandings of sexual violence: rethinking public, practitioner and policy discourses. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 21(1), 100 -116. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552600.2014.945976>

R3 McCartan, K. F., Harris, D. A., & Prescott, D. (2019). Seen and Not Heard: The Service User's Experience Through the Justice System of Individuals Convicted of Sexual Offences. *International Journal of Offender Therapy Comparative Criminology*.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X19851671>

R4 McCartan, K. F., Kemshall, H., & Hoggett, J. (2017). Reframing the sex offender register and disclosure: from monitoring and control to desistence and prevention. In *Contemporary Sex Offender Risk Management, Vol II Responses*.

<https://www.palgrave.com/gb/book/9783319635729>

R5 McCartan, K. F., Hoggett, J., & O'Sullivan, J. (2018). Police officer attitudes to the practicalities of the sex offenders register, ViSOR and child sexual abuse discourse scheme in England & Wales. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13552600.2017.1411641>

R6 McCartan, K. F., Merdian, H., Perkins, D., & Kettlebrough, D. (2018). Ethics and Issues of Secondary Prevention Efforts in Child Sexual Abuse. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X17723951>

Evidence of the quality of the supporting research

G1 McCartan, K. F. *Community engagement and partnership working in facilitating sex offender reintegration*, Leverhulme International Networks Grant, 2015 – 2017, £52,454.

G2 McCartan, K. F. *Circles of Support and Accountability: Volunteering and Social Action*, Cabinet office, Social Rehabilitation Fund, 2013 – 2015, £14,510.

G3 McCartan, K.F. *Circles of support and accountability - a qualitative analysis*, Ministry of Justice, 2012, £51,410.

G4 McCartan, K. F. *Sex Offender Public Disclosure - Learning from the UK pilots & international research*, ESRC, 2012, £14,800.

<http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/hls/research/sexoffenderpublicdisclosure.aspx>

R1 was independently commissioned and peer reviewed by the Ministry of Justice. **R4** was supported and enabled by the College of Policing as a research partner. **R5** was the product of a high-level professional, practitioner and policy-maker round table, supported by NSPCC, Online Protect, and International Working Group on Prevention of Online Sexual Offending.

4. Details of the impact

Professor McCartan's research has shaped policy and practice at regional, national and international levels.

Upskilling Circles UK – providing evidence, changing policy and practice

Professor McCartan's research (**R1**) has informed the policy, practice, and research direction of Circles UK (the national steering group for CoSA). CoSA is a community-based intervention supported by HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), where members of the public volunteer to support the reintegration of people convicted of sexual offences back into the community, through volunteers modelling good, proactive behaviour to the 'Core Members'. CoSA works in parallel with official, statutory risk-management programmes. 946 local 'circles' have been formed in England & Wales since its introduction to the UK in the mid-2000s, each supporting a different 'Core Member'. The CEO of Circles UK commented:

'Kieran's work has had demonstrable impact on the practice of Circles Providers and practitioners in that his research findings were used to inform the Circles UK Code of Practice (which all Circles Providers and projects are required to adhere to)' (S1).

The CEO of Circles UK also commented that *'The research has informed the development of some of the 43 standards that the Circles methodology in the UK is based on, and has also led*

to the development of new measurement tools' (S1). This is in addition to prompting a 'more focussed' use of existing evidence by the organization (S1).

The report (R1) was cited by:

- HMPPS (S2, p6), and
- JUSTICE, an all-party law reform and human rights organization (S3, pp35, 99).

R1 was used by these two organisations as evidence that CoSA is effective in the successful community reintegration of offenders and a reduction in re-offending, as the research showed that the majority of participants, 21 out of a total sample of 32, increased their pro-social integration, and that the remainder were flagged and worked with pro-actively by statutory services to reduce their likelihood of re-offending (S2, S3).

Changing the nature of staff training, offender management and the risk management frameworks of UK and Latvian probation services, and the New Zealand police

Professor McCartan's research has demonstrably changed current approaches to community risk management of probation services in the UK, Latvia, and New Zealand. In the UK the research has fed into the training of HMPPS staff in the assessment, management and integration of people who have committed a sexual offence. The Head of Practice Development in the Effective Probation Practice Team at the National Probation Service commented that research by Professor McCartan (R1-R6) had '*contributed materially*' to staff development and effective frontline practice in HMPPS, through Professor McCartan's engagement with the Effective Probation Practice Team and National Probation Service practitioners (S4).

In Latvia, Professor McCartan's research has directly influenced probation policy and practice relating to the prevention of child sexual abuse. The Head of the Latvian Probation Services observed that McCartan's presentation of his research on the prevention of abuse (R2, R3) to the inter-agency working group of the Ministry of Justice Latvia:

'... provided invaluable insights into crime prevention... and had influenced significantly development of our [Latvian] national policy.' (S5)

He offered the specific example of the draft Latvian National Plan to protect children from sexual offences, which was '*reviewed and restructured*' in the light of McCartan's research. The new plan has an increased focus on a public health, wellbeing and prevention oriented approach. He explained:

'before [the seminar with the working group] this plan was focused on work with potential sexual offenders, but after - it was restructured according to prevention levels (primary, secondary and tertiary) and upgraded with new prevention activities focused on children (primary and secondary prevention)' (S5).

In New Zealand, Professor McCartan's research (R2, R4, R5) contributed directly to the development, implementation and evaluation of the sexual offenders' register and disclosure scheme. Introduced in 2016, the development of the register was informed by McCartan's research on sex offender registries and on best practice in offender management. The Manager of the Child Sex Offender register at New Zealand Police confirmed that:

'the research undertaken and provided by Professor Kieran McCartan... has been invaluable in the ongoing development of our practice and policy with regards to achieving our goals, specifically by, but not limited to, staff training, offender management, and our risk management framework' (S6).

Shifting agendas and shaping new recommendations relating to sexual abuse in the Confederation of European Probation and the Council of Europe

Professor McCartan's research (**R1, R2, R3, R4**) has reshaped the policy and recommendations to practitioners of the Confederation of European Probation (CEP) sub-group on sexual offending, especially relating to the management of people convicted of sexual offending in the community. The Secretary General of the CEP highlighted the significance of the contributions of McCartan's research to the CEP expert group on Sex Offender Management (**S7**).

The impact of McCartan's research at the CEP led to an invitation from the Council of Europe to lead the production of the Council's first set of recommendations on the assessment, management and integration of people who have committed sexual offences (**S8**). The minutes from the European Committee on Crime Problems Working Group Meeting 4-6 February 2019 noted that a presentation of research on the management of sex offenders in the community by McCartan (**R1, R3, R5, R6**), led to the council's decision to create and implement recommendations to be implemented across the Council of Europe area in late 2020 (**S9**).

Professor McCartan's research has also influenced international bodies such as the International Working Group for the Prevention of Online Sex Offending (IWG_OSO). The IWG_OSO cited **R6** in their recent best practice guidelines, highlighting McCartan's research on the role of public health and preventive approaches (**S10**, p24).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

S1 Testimonial from the CEO of Circles UK

S2 HM Prison and Probation Service Analytical Summary 2018 - *An exploratory study of the experience of a small sample of men*

S3 JUSTICE *Prosecuting sexual offences* report 2019

S4 Testimonial from the Head of Practice Development for Public Protection from National Offender Management Service

S5 Testimonial from the Head of State Probation, Latvia

S6 Testimonial from the Manager of the Child Sex Offender Register, New Zealand Police

S7 Testimonial from the CEO of the Confederation of European Probation

S8 Contract from the Council for Penological Co-operation engaging McCartan to draft the Committee of Ministers Recommendation for the Council of Europe on the management of sex offenders in prison and under probation

S9 Report of European Committee on Crime Problems Working Group Meeting 4-6 Feb 2019

S10 International Working Group for the Prevention of Online Sex Offending (IWG_OSO) *Best practice in the management of online sex offending* 2019