

# ‘A Critical Evaluation of the Sex Offender Treatment Programmes used in Prisons’

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## *Abstract*

*The purpose of this dissertation was to evaluate the effectiveness of Sex Offender Treatment Programmes (SOTPs) used in prisons. It aimed to achieve this by looking at the historical context, theoretical underpinnings, the aims and (unintended) consequences and the effectiveness of the SOTPs at fulfilling their aims. Secondary research was used in order to answer the research aims, allowing for a wide ranging analysis of the subject area. This research has found that the SOTPs were introduced as a result of the media attention, moral entrepreneurs and public anxiety surrounding sexual offenders. Due to this attention theories attempted to explain sexual offending. Research into rehabilitative approaches suggested that a cognitive-behavioural approach such as the SOTP was the most successful treatment measure for treating sex offenders. By looking into the programmes in more depth this research found that the effectiveness of the programmes was not as straight forward as had been originally perceived. By analysing the aims and (unintended) consequences of the SOTPs as well as the effectiveness of the programmes at fulfilling their aims, this research has shown that within the programmes there is evidence of positive professional practice as well as a reduction in reoffending of those who had completed the SOTP compared with offenders who had not. However, it has also found that there were many weaknesses within the measures used to assess the programmes effectiveness. Therefore, this dissertation has shown that there is a need for methods other than reconviction data to measure the programmes effectiveness. It has also shown that more research is needed into whether the SOTP is more successful at treating certain types of sex offenders as well as research into whether targeting areas such as distorted thinking and victim empathy is effective at reducing sexual reoffending or that any other approach would be just as effective.*

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<sup>1</sup> This Dissertation is submitted in part-fulfilment of the degree of Bachelor of Arts (Honours) Criminology, Nottingham Trent University

## Chapter 1 - Introduction

This dissertation will aim to critically evaluate the Sex Offender Treatment Programmes (SOTPs) used within prisons. It looks at why we have them, how they work and are administered and whether they are effective at treating sex offenders. By looking at these areas this dissertation will evaluate the effectiveness of the Sex Offender Treatment Programmes used in prisons. The reason for choosing this topic as a research area was because of a great interest in whether sex offenders can be successfully treated and a fascination with work carried out by forensic psychologists.

### Background

A sex offence is the ‘...commission of acts of a sexual nature against a person without that persons consent’ (Hale, et al, 2005: 574). There are many different types of sex offenders such as those offending against children, against adults and sexual murderers (Beckett, 2005: 24). The sex offending itself takes many forms, from the man who indecently exposes himself ...the man who possesses illegal pornography... to the man who offends against his children...’ (Thomas, 2000: 1). The majority of sex offenders are males; for example, the number of male sex offenders sentenced for immediate custody in 2003 was 4,272 compared with 60 females (Home Office, 2005: 39). Sexual offences are seen to be ‘...among the most disturbing of crimes, and the public has considerable concern about the risk posed by sexual offenders in the community’ (Hanson, 2006: 17). The fight against sex offending is high on the governments’ agenda as they argue ‘...sexual crime and the fear of sexual crime has a profound and damaging effect on the social fabric of communities...’ (Home Office, 2002: 7).

The SOTP was introduced in the prison system in 1991 (Hudson, 2005:29) and was part of a new strategy for the integrated assessment and treatment of sex offenders (Thornton, 1991; Grubin & Thornton, 1994, cited in Beech, Fisher and Beckett, 1998: 9). The SOTPs are based on a psychological tradition of cognitive behavioural therapy (Beech, et al, 2003: 2). ‘Behavioural treatment is aimed at teaching offenders to control or modify their deviant sexual arousal and fantasies and to develop appropriate fantasies as a substitute. Cognitive therapy tackles the distorted thinking commonly found with sex offenders’ (Beech, Fisher, Beckett, 1998: 13). We have this approach because it was seen to be the most successful method to rehabilitate sex offenders from a range of intervention methods included in the ‘What Works?’ literature (McGuire, 1995:16).

The SOTP is made up of seven components: the Enhanced thinking skills programme, the Core Programme, the Adapted Programme, the Extended Programme, the Rolling Programme, the Better Lives Booster Programme and Healthy Sexual Functioning. Their main aims are to rehabilitate sex offenders and reduce reoffending (Falshaw, et al, 2003: 1), it attempts to do this by changing ‘...an individuals internal cognitive and emotive functioning as well as their overt behaviour’ (Hudson, 2005:34) and so enhancing self control. Because theories such as Finkelhor's Precondition Model (1984) and Marshall and Barbarees's Integrated Theory (1990) suggest factors such as poor social skills and a lack of empathy are

factors which can lead to sexual offending (Ward, 2003: 5-6) the programmes involve problem solving, creative thinking, social perspective taking, moral reasoning, social skills and critical thinking in order to help the offenders control their criminogenic needs (Debidin and Lovbakke, cited in Harper and Chitty, 2005: 32). The SOTP is '...currently running in 28 prisons in England and Wales...with around 1,000 men completing treatment every year (Beech, et al, 2005: 23).

The effectiveness of sex offender treatment programmes is a fiercely debated topic (Brown, 2005: 15). The public are fearful of this type of crime even though it constitutes such a small percentage of all crimes '...only 5% of violent crimes and 0.77% of all crimes recorded by England and Wales 2001' (Simmons, et al, 2002, cited in McGuire, 2004:96). It could be argued that the public's fear of sex offenders is a 'moral panic' caused by the media's portrayal of this offence (Thomas, 2000:1). Because there is a small percentage of sex offenders coming through criminal justice system, and the large amount of resources needed to treat these offenders there is a need to assess the effectiveness of the programmes (Brown, 2005:41-42). It's important to assess whether sex offenders can actually be treated and reduce sex offending as if they are seen to be effective then it is likely that those sex offenders who have completed the programmes will be released back into the community as they are seen as posing a lower risk to society (Brown, 2005: 151). It is therefore important to see whether the risk of the offender is in fact reduced by the programmes.

According to Brooks-Gordon, et al, (2004) it is in the best interests of the government to make the programmes appear to be a success. This may subsequently lead to a lack of data and research which shows the negative sides of the programmes. Therefore, it is important to critically analyse the research that has been made in this area. By critically evaluating the programmes this dissertation may find that measures could be improved and be more successful at treating sex offenders.

Research into the effectiveness of the programmes include qualitative research such as Step projects 3 (1998) and 4 (2005) which were commissioned by the Home Office to evaluate the efficacy of the SOTPs used in prisons (Beech, et al, 2005:23). These projects look at offenders and facilitators feedback from the programmes in order to look at their effectiveness. Hudson (2005) also looks at sex offenders perspectives of their treatment and management. Alongside this there has been quantitative research using experimental control groups to examine the programmes effectiveness. These include Friendship et al's (2003) evaluation of SOTPs used in prisons and Falshaw et al's (2003) study on searching for 'What Works'. These studies examine reconviction rates of offenders after treatment compared with offenders who have not been treated. The problems with the research studies are that they tend to look at reconviction rates which may not give a true picture of the programmes effectiveness as many sex offences go undetected (Walker, et al, 2006: 70) because sex offenders are able to reoffend but not be detected, the reoffending rates may be a lot higher than the reconviction rates. Therefore, it is important to look at other indices of effectiveness such as offender accounts (Hudson, 2005).

The real test of the programmes effectiveness is when the offenders are released and so it is important to assess what there is following SOTPs and the measures in place to protect the public, as 'public protection' is high on the governments agenda (Eagle, 2007). Although it is worth thinking about the point of SOTPs as if they aim to treat and reduce the risk of sex offenders then there should not be a need for measures in the community to protect the public such as Multi Agency Public Protection Agencies (MAPPAs) or The Violent and Sex Offender Register (ViSORs). Therefore, it could be argued that the programmes may not be as effective as the government says they are and that they are just another measure to keep the public happy. It's important to see whether it is ever possible for sex offenders to be reintegrated into society and lead a normal life, as if they can't then there seems little justification for attempting to rehabilitate sex offenders through SOTPs (Brown, Spencer, and Deakin, 2007:32, 41).

### **Research Questions and Objectives**

In order to evaluate the programmes the dissertation will address the following questions:

- a). What is sex offending? Within this area the dissertation will define sex offending, examine the different types of sex offences and look at the rates and issues of sex offending in order to see why society feels the need to treat them.
- b). Where do the SOTPs come from? This question will look into the development and history of SOTPs, why we have them and why they are used rather than other programmes.
- c). What are the Sex offender Treatment programmes used in prisons? This will examine what Sex Offender Treatment Programmes are and what they consist of.
- d). How do they work? This will look at how the programmes are administered and how people qualify for the programmes in order assess whether they are working effectively.
- e). What are the aims of the programmes and are they successful at fulfilling their aims? This will examine what the programmes aim to achieve, such as whether the programmes focus on self control or cure. By looking at research reports on the effectiveness of the programmes it will assess whether they are successful at fulfilling their aims.
- f). What is there following SOTPs? This will look at measures of protecting the public such as risk management.

The chapters of the dissertation will address the research aims and objectives discussed above in order to critically evaluate the SOTPs used in prison. The chapters of the dissertation will be set out in the following way;

### **Chapter 1 – Introduction**

The introduction will aim to address the broader context of the research area. It will address the central ideas, issues, concerns, debates and controversies. It will achieve this by providing an overview of relevant published research and statistics in this area and define the key terms used within this research.

**Chapter 2 – Methodology**

This chapter will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the research method chosen for this dissertation in order to ensure the research is as valid as possible.

**Chapter 3 – SOTPs in Prison: Theoretical Underpinnings and Historical Context**

This chapter will look at the theories of sex offending and provide a historical context into the reasons why we have SOTPs, where they have come from and why these programmes are used treat sex offenders.

**Chapter 4 – The Aims and (Unintended) Consequences of SOTPs**

This chapter will look at the different types of SOTPs used in prison, what they aim to achieve and how they work and are administered and their strengths and weaknesses.

**Chapter 5 – The Effectiveness of the SOTPs at Fulfilling their Aims**

By looking at research reports this chapter will assess whether the SOTPs are effective at fulfilling their aims or whether measures could be improved. It will also assess whether the aims are enough to release offenders back into the community.

**Chapter 6 – Conclusions and Recommendations**

This section will summarise and conclude the research from the previous chapters. It will also provide any recommendations of how the SOTPs could be improved or whether other measures would be more appropriate.

## Chapter 2 - Methodology

This dissertation will use secondary data which is that collected by other researchers and can include both qualitative and quantitative data (Bryman, 2004:201). Examples of secondary data used include research reports, official statistics, journals and criminological literature. The majority of sources will be available from the library although certain articles or journals may have to be accessed through e-search. There will also be a large proportion of data collected from the internet; however, it is important to make sure the data collected is taken from reputable sources such as the Home Office, NOMS and the Ministry of Justice websites to ensure that the data is valid. Although it is also important to understand that some research may be agenda led.

Advantages of using secondary data include being able to access a wide range of data, making the research more generalisable and representative (Sarantakos, 2005:99). Given the time constraints of this dissertation it was more appropriate to use secondary data as it is less time consuming than primary research allowing more time for analysis (Punch, 2005:103). It has been argued that a lot of primary data is under analysed due to researchers purely focusing on the data relating to their central research questions or due to a loss of interest, therefore, there is a great need for secondary data analysis as it ‘...enhances the possibility that fuller use will be made of the data’ (Bryman, 2004: 205). It would have been unethical to carry out primary research for this area because the research would have had to take place within this setting. Problems with carrying out research within the prison setting include the fact that the researcher may be given information that could impinge upon the security of the prison and so will be faced with whether to keep the confidentiality of the prisoner or give security information to the staff (Martin, 2000: 223). Other issues include the safety of the researcher as because sex offenders are detained in high security prisons ‘theoretically the higher the security classification, the more dangerous the prisoner’ (Martin, 2000: 224).

There is a need to be wary about the reliability of sex offending behaviour statistics. For example, because crimes such as rape are underreported to the police (Myhill, and Allen, 2002: 6) statistics may fail to show this ‘dark figure of crime’ (Coleman and Moynihan 1996, cited in Bryman, 2004). Some information may not be recorded due to organisational policies and practices (Riedel, 2000: 8). Therefore, crime statistics may not give a realistic picture sex offending rates. A weakness of using secondary data is that the data is likely to be less up to date than primary research; however, by using the internet the research was more likely to contain more up-to-date research than other literature. Secondary data allows access to information that would not be able to be collected through primary research such as crime figures or historical data. Another weakness of secondary data is that because the data will not have been made for the purposes of this study, the information may not be relevant and so may not directly answer the research questions (Riedel, 2000: 7). Because it is likely that there will be an element of unfamiliarity with the information, there is a need to be wary about making false interpretations of other people’s research (Neuman, 2003:322).

It is important that the values or the intentions of the author are taken into consideration when using theories or thoughts, as different people may have different perspectives, bias's or agendas surrounding the issue of sexual offending (Silverman, 2001: 233). As for example, people's views of sexual abuse will differ depending whether they are looking at the issues from a positivist, radical, social or psychological domain (Riedel, 2000: 11). A way of combating this would be to compare research with other research findings in order for the data to be more reliable. Secondary data collection can be time consuming, however, it is not usually as time consuming as primary data due to issues with obtaining data such as access and response rates (Neuman, 2003: 322).

In conclusion, although research has shown that there are a number of weaknesses of using secondary data it has also shown that that it has many more strengths. Therefore, by acknowledging the weaknesses and working with them it will still be possible to meet the research aim and to provide a high quality piece of research.



### **Chapter 3 – SOTPs in prison: Theoretical Underpinnings and Historical context**

#### **Theories of sexual offending**

Because sex offending is seen to be such a serious problem within society many theorists have attempted to explain why certain people become sex offenders and others do not as ‘Understanding why child molestation or rape occurs, and how it develops...is of up most importance in helping us reduce the frequency of this serious social problem’ (Ward, et al, 2006: 3). Research such as Maisch’s (1973) study on incest claimed that men who sexually abuse children form a ‘...completely heterogeneous picture’ (Maisch, 1973, cited in Driver and Droisen, 1989: 10), therefore, the sex offender could be anyone (Thomas, 2000: 1). Because sexual offenders are hard to identify theorists have suggested that some other underlying psychological factors may account for why sex offenders become involved in sex offending.

Finkelhor’s Precondition Model (1984) argues that motivation to sexually abuse may be due to emotional congruence between the offender and the child, deviant sexual arousal to children or blockages such as marital problems or fear of intimacy. (Ward, et al, 2003: 4-5; Ward, et al, 2006: 20-21). Therefore, this theory argues that a range of factors can influence whether or not somebody becomes motivated to abuse children. Most importantly, however, it shows that this behaviour may be prevented by ‘...targeting deviant sexual arousal, strengthening emotional regulation skills, working on intimacy issues, focusing on sociocultural factors such as encouraging behaviour that is acceptable, and teaching offenders how to identify and manage high risk situations’ (Ward, 2003: 5-6).

Marshall and Barbarees’s Integrated Theory (1990) argue that sexual crimes such as rape and child molestation are the result of multiple, interacting factors that converge at a particular point in time, in a given context, to result in offending. These factors include ‘...developmental, social, biological and situational factors’ (Ward, 2006: 39). They hypothesise that ‘...vulnerability factors derived from a dysfunctional childhood, in conjunction with the social and biological processes of puberty, interact with situational disinhibitors (e.g. substance abuse, emotional states), availability of a victim and opportunity to cause a sexual offence...’ (Ward, et al, 2006: 38). Therefore, according to this theory no man is really immune from committing sexual offences ‘...it all depends on individual’s degree of vulnerability and their personal circumstances’ (Ward, et al, 2006: 38). This theory suggests that individuals who experience adverse events in their development such as poor parenting, inconsistent and harsh discipline and physical and sexual abuse are likely to exhibit distorted internal working models of relationships, particularly with respect to sex and aggression as it happened to them. It suggests that poor social skills resulting in a lack of intimacy skills can be a factor in someone becoming a sex offender which has resulted in the development of therapeutic strategies to enhance intimacy skills in offenders (Marshall, 1999, cited in Ward, et al, 2003: 12).

It could be argued that with the knowledge of these theories we are able to have a greater understanding of why some people may become involved in sexual offending and others do not. These theories have helped inform both practice and research into



treatment for sex offenders as by acknowledging what can cause people to commit sex offences, measures can be put in place to improve factors that may lead to sexual offending, such as, low self-esteem, poor social skills and distorted attitudes. Although it is worth noting that they do not tell us that by targeting these particular areas that reoffending will be prevented, they just give some explanation as to why some people may offend and so provide some guide to preventing reoffending.

The problems with these theories are that they do not appreciate that different cultures have different thoughts about what is and is not acceptable, for example, some cultures may believe that it is acceptable for fathers to have sexual relations with their children. It could be argued that the theories about sexual offending are talking about a socially created concept, for example, labelling theorists would argue that ‘...no behaviour is inherently deviant or criminal, but only comes to be considered so when others confer this label upon the act’ (Hopkins Burke, 2005: 143). For example, Garofalo (1852 – 1934) argues that society is the ‘natural body’ and that crimes are seen to be ‘unnatural’ if the majority of society recognises it as criminal (Garofalo, 1852-1934, cited in Hopkins Burke, 2005: 57). Some may argue that it is in people’s biological makeup to want to have sex and therefore any sexual behaviour is not abnormal. From this perspective it could be argued that sex offenders cannot be treated as they are not doing anything that is deviant. However, from a realist perspective and the majority of society’s perspective it could be argued that sexual offending is a serious problem and is unnatural and so should be treated as such.

### **The media and public portrayal of the sex offender**

Sex offenders are seen by many to be one of the most serious types of offenders and are ‘...the group most hated and feared by the public...’ (Soothill, 1999, cited in Easton, 2001: 72). The portrayal within the media has caused the public to become very fearful of these offenders and it could be argued that the media has caused a ‘moral panic’ about them. For example, in the 1996 British Crime Survey, Hough and Robert (1998) found that the public in England and Wales overestimated crime levels, particularly for violent crime (Hough and Robert, 1998, cited in Easton, 2001:74). Evidence also indicates that sex offences feature very highly within the media, for example, studies in the 1990s show there to be ‘...an over-representation of violent and interpersonal (especially sex) crimes’ (Chiricos, et al, 1997, Beckett and Sasson 2000, cited in Reiner, 2002: 384). In the late 1980s and early 1990s ‘...concerns about sexual abuse were connected with fears about child murders by strangers’ (Jenkins, 1992, cited in Parton, 2006: 120). Incidents such as the murdered Sarah Payne cause a fear in the public of the ‘marauding stranger who is a threat to children and at the extreme kills’ (Pritchard, 2004: 16).

It could be argued that the more serious predatory sexual abuse is being over publicised making the public perceive this type of sexual abuse is much more serious than it is. For example, research has shown that ‘... fewer than 10 per cent of children abused are abused by strangers’ (Barnado’s, 2008). A large proportion of child sexual offences occur within the family, for example, ‘...95per cent of children calling ChildLine about sexual and physical abuse know the abuser. Abusers include parents, uncles, aunts, grandparents, teachers, family friends, and brothers and sisters (Childline, 2008). This type of sex offending poses a significant problem because it occurs in private and so children are not easily protected. However, it is also

important to look at the seriousness of family abuse compared with predatory or stranger abuse as it could be argued that abuse within the family is not as serious as stranger abuse which is more likely to result in murder. There is a need to differentiate the different types of abusers and treat them according to their risk to the public as at the moment the 'paedophile' encompasses many types of sexual behaviour such as exposure to rape and any type of inappropriate sexual behaviour is stamped down upon because it is seen that this can lead to a continuum of abuse.

### **The implementation of laws and policies surrounding sex offences**

It has been suggested that '...the new legislation surrounding sex offenders is a political expedient measure to single out sex offenders for special treatment because of the public's anxieties fuelled by sensationalist media coverage of sex offences' (Soothill and Walby, 1991: cited in Easton, 2001: 72). Therefore, it could be argued that the strict laws surrounding sex offenders has been helped by the media frenzy surrounding sex offenders. Becker (1973) argues that moral entrepreneurs help to implement laws and tend to target acts which they believe should be unlawful when the public are the most fearful (Becker, 1973: 150). In the case of sexual offending moral entrepreneurs include charities such as the NSPCC and ChildLine (Hopkins Burke, 1996: 4 & 23). Some argue that it is in the best interest of the moral entrepreneurs to enhance public anxiety towards sex offenders as the more coverage they can get the more money they will obtain for their charity. Garland (2001) suggests that '...public opinion has now replaced the voice of research and more considered debate' (Garland 2001, cited in Thomas, 2005: 18) and that creating new legislation and rules due to the anxieties of the public can be problematic because opinion about offenders is not based on true facts (Fortney, et al, 2007: 2). For example, the 1996 British Crime Survey found that the public in England and Wales displayed widespread ignorance about crime levels, overestimating crime levels, particularly for violent crime, and underestimating the severity of the criminal justice system for dealing with crime (Hough and Robert, 1998, cited in Easton, 2001: 74). From a realist perspective it could be argued that sex offending is a real problem and so the legislation and policies surrounding it are needed, for example, there has been a 17% increase of reported sex offences from 2003/04 to 2004/05 (Nicholas, et al, 2005: 13), although the sexual offences act 2003 altered the definition and coverage of sexual offences which could explain this increase. However, overall evidence indicates that sexual offending is a real issue and one that has a very damaging effect on its victims and so from this stance the legislation and policies surrounding this offence is much needed.

### **Changes in policy and legislation of sexual offences**

The general feeling in the 1970s was that the police did not take reports of sexual assault as seriously as they should have done (Thomas, 2005: 61). However, due to the influence of pressure groups on the public and government, many improvements have been made with the way that agencies such as the police deal with sexual offences. Due to the Rape Action Plan (2002) improvements have been made with the investigation and prosecution of offenders. For example, sexual offence liaison officers were introduced to deal with suspected cases of sexual abuse with specific training for dealing with sexual offences. Sexual assault referral centres were introduced so that victims of sexual abuse could go somewhere other than the police

station for help and advice. The Sexual Offences Act 2003 re-defined many sexual offences and aimed to encourage greater confidence in the criminal justice system, which, in turn, led to increased reporting of previously under-reported crimes (Nicholas, et al, 2005:79). Because sex offenders are seen as the most dangerous types of offenders, the courts can impose indeterminate custodial sentences for those convicted of violent or sexual offenders for public protection under the Criminal Justice Act 2003 (Cobley, 2005: 222-223). These measures have helped to increase confidence of both the public and victims in the criminal justice agencies. Because of this greater confidence in the way that the police deal with sexual offences more people are reporting sexual abuse. Because the police are the initial 'gateway' for all offenders coming into the criminal justice system there have been more prosecutions of sexual offenders (Thomas, 2005: 60). A consequence of this is that sexual offending appears to have significantly increased. It also means that more sex offenders are entering the prison service. Due to the change in the way criminal justice agencies deal with sex offending more offenders are being detected and facing prison sentences.

### **The reintroduction of the rehabilitative approach and the introduction of SOTPs**

'The development of a treatment approach has its roots in the Lombrosian school of positivism' (Crow, 2001: 6) and attempts to reform the offender is most commonly traced back to the work of Cesare Lombroso (Crow, 2001: 33) Up until the 1970s rehabilitation was the main focus of prison. However, the treatment model became under attack by research carried out by Martinson (1974) who argued that 'nothing works' in treating offenders. Consequently, treatment was replaced by more traditional correctional remedies such as deterrence and incapacitation (McGuire, 1995: 167). It could be argued that due to the high costs of rehabilitation the government were very happy to believe that nothing worked in rehabilitating offenders, however, due to the high public attention of sexual offenders it was acknowledged that the public would not be happy about sex offenders being released back into the community untreated.

Following the prison riots across England and Wales in 1990, Lord Justice Woolf conducted an inquiry which found that;

...the abuse that sex offenders suffer, together with the restricted regimes that they endure, produce in sex offenders a sense that they are somehow victims themselves, rather than perpetrators of crime...if a reduction in reoffending is the aim, their attention needs to be focused on what they themselves have done, rather than what they are having to suffer (Sampson, 1994: 197).

After the Woolf report it was recognised that '...the prison system has a wider responsibility to society outside prison to ensure that while sex offenders are in prison, everything possible is done to reduce the risk that they will reoffend after their release' (Sampson, 1994: 196) Further research into treatment programmes effectiveness found that 'something works' in reducing reoffending (Brody, 1976, cited in Crow, 2001: 41). This led to further investigations into finding out 'what works'. From these investigations the treatment programmes that offered the most promising outcomes were based on the cognitive-behavioural approach (McGuire,

1995: 16). Due to the incidences within the prisons and the public anxiety surrounding sex offenders, the government decided to take on board the most effective rehabilitative programme from the 'what works' literature and introduced the Sex Offender Treatment Programme within the prison service in 1991 (Hanson, et al, 2002, cited in Marshall and Moulden, 2006:199). Therefore, penal policy went back to focusing on the minds and soul of the prisoners and reform.

### **Attitudes towards SOTPs**

As sex offenders are seen to be so serious many people think that sex offenders should be treated much more harshly within the criminal justice system, for example, 'The view that sex offenders are unlikely to change and therefore an emphasis should be on surveillance and tracking rather than curative treatment is widely held by the police, probation service managers and the public' (Easton, 2001:91). 'The notion of treatment for sex offenders, unless it is by castration, is unacceptable to many people, since it suggests evasion of just deserts' (West, 1996, cited in Crow, 2001: 124). Easton (2001) suggests that there is now '...less public tolerance of sex offenders in the UK, less sympathy for medical models of individual pathology, and greater willingness to see sex offenders as bad rather than mad, to be removed from the community rather than being changed or cured through treatment' (Easton, 2001: 90) Therefore, there is a need to critically analyse the programmes in order to see whether they are effective or whether other measures would be more appropriate. The SOTP is seen as the most humane way of rehabilitating sex offenders, but because the public are so wary and fearful of this offender its effectiveness is of great importance as if it is not seen to be effective then the public will not be happy. If this is the case, the government is likely to drop the SOTPs and resort to other measures such as castration in all cases of sexual offending which is a rather extreme measure.

### **Conclusions**

This chapter has shown that there has been a change of attitudes surrounding sex offenders over the past years which has led to a change in the way criminal justice agencies deal with this type of offending. Subsequently, this has caused there to be an increase in the amount of sex offenders in prison. Due to the inquiries within the prisons in the 1990s and research into the best way of dealing with offenders it has been acknowledged that incapacitation alone is not the best way to deal with sex offending. Because sex offending is seen as such a serious problem within society some theorists have attempted to explain why some people become involved in sexual offending which has helped inform treatment approaches. This has all led to the implementation of a cognitive-behavioural approach to dealing with sex offenders, however, it is important to assess how the SOTPs work and what their aims are in order to see whether they are effective at reducing sexual offending.

## **Chapter 4 – The Aims and (Unintended) Consequences of SOTPs**

The SOTPs are based on cognitive-behavioural principles to reduce risk of reoffending. The ‘cognitive’ aspect involves recognition of the patterns of distorted thinking which allow the contemplation of illegal sexual acts and understanding the impact on the victim. The ‘behavioural’ aspect involves reducing sexual arousal to inappropriate fantasies or forced sexual activity (Cobley, 2005).

### **The aims of the programmes**

The main aim of the SOTP is to reduce reconvictions for sexual offending (HM Prison Service, 2007) by helping offenders find ways of leading a satisfying life where they do not feel the need to offend (HM Prison Service, 2008) and by doing so protect the public from future offending (Hudson, 2005: 33). It aims to do this by helping offenders control their deviant sexual thoughts and feelings. The SOTPs aim to treat sex offenders by drawing on a range of cognitive and behavioural techniques. By doing this the offenders are helped to ‘...face up to the consequences of their actions, to understand their motives, and to develop new ways of controlling their behaviour’ (McGuire, 1996: 104-105). The SOTP targets issues such as ‘...deviant sexual arousal, distorted thinking patterns, lack of empathy, denial and minimization, and patterns of offending’ in order to prevent reoffending (Beech, et al, 2005) as these are seen to have influenced deviant behaviour from theories such as Finkelhor's Precondition Model (1984) and Marshall and Barbarees's Integrated Theory (1990). By looking at the administration of the programmes this chapter will critically assess whether the measures are effective at treating sex offenders and fulfil their aims or whether improvements could be made.

### **How the offenders qualify for treatment**

The programmes are offered on a voluntary basis to all male prisoners convicted of a sexual offence or a violent offence with a sexual element, who are serving a long enough sentence to enable them to complete the programme (Cobley, 2005: 292). However, before the offenders are put on to the SOTP their risk level has to be assessed according to their static and dynamic risk. Static risk factors are unchangeable factors of the individual such as their criminal history, age or demographic factors. Dynamic risk factors are the changeable factors which can be relatively stable, such as sexual preferences or can be rapidly changing such as the emotional states of the offender (Hanson, 2006: 17). According to the Risk Matrix 2000 static factors that can increase risk include being of young age, having never been married, having a number of previous convictions, committing a previous sexual offence, their victim type (for example having a male victim is seen to be more risky), whether they have ever committed a non-contact sexual offence before (such as indecent exposure) and if they have had a stranger victim. Because the static risk factors of the offender can not be changed the SOTP focuses on the dynamic risk factors (Beech, et al, 2005: 25).

The dynamic risk of the offender is assessed by the Structured Assessment of Risk and Need (SARN) through four domains which include sexual interests, distorted attitudes, management of relationships and emotions and self-management (Thornton,



2002, cited in Beech, et al, 2005: 26) although the offender may not have all of these. Sexual interests look at whether the offender has any sexual obsessions e.g. whether they excessively masturbate, whether they have sexual preferences for children, whether they have interests in sexual violence and whether this is mood dependent. Distorted attitudes include things such as whether the sex offender feels that children enjoy sex with adults and misinterpreting child gestures or thinking that women lead men on and so can not be trusted or the view that men should dominate (HM Prison Service, 2007). Social and emotional functioning includes low self-esteem, taking a victim stance on life and so feeling sorry for themselves, feeling more comfortable with children or not being able to have a special relationship with an adult. Self-management factors include having chaotic lifestyles, being in debt, rushing into things without thinking about it, not being in control of their emotions.

Risk assessment is extremely important as evidence has shown that putting low risk offenders in with high risk offenders can make them worse. As the risk assessment is responsive to change it is able to highlight the presence or absence of risk factors pre and post treatment, therefore, it is able to see whether treatment is proving to be effective. However, risk assessment can have its weaknesses as sometimes information may be missed such as past records or the facilitators may concentrate on an issue that is not really relevant and causing a halo effect. The offender must also be assessed to find out whether or not they are psychotic as evidence has shown that the SOTP can make offenders with psychosis worse. For example, Hart and Hare (1997) found that 'it was quite possible that group therapy and insight-orientated programmes help psychopaths to develop better ways of manipulating, deceiving and using people but do little to help them to understand themselves' (Hart et al, 1997, cited in Barbaree, et al, 2006).

The SOTPs are voluntary even though research has found that seven per cent of the sex offenders felt they had no option but to do the course if they wanted to leave prison (Beech, et al, 2005: 39). In order for offenders to be accepted for treatment the offender must be motivated to change and have to accept responsibility. Some argue that offenders who agree to participate in treatment are more motivated to change their offending behaviour than those who do not (Marshall, 1993, cited in Hudson, 2005:76). However, the offenders motivation for taking part in treatment may be due to the realisation that they are more likely to be granted parole by completing the programme than those who do not participate in treatment as 'risk to the public of a further offence being committed is the primary factor in deciding whether or not to recommend early release on licence' (Hudson, 2005: 80). Also Section 32(6) of the Criminal Justice Act (1991) states that '...it is deemed necessary to determine whether the prisoner has shown, by their attitude and behaviour, in custody that they are willing to address their offending behaviour through participation in appropriate programmes' (Hudson, 2005: 80). The offenders may also chose to take part due to boredom as the treatment programmes gives them something to do with their time. Some may argue that the motivation to attend treatment is for facilitating offending (Hudson, 2005: 83) as the offenders may become aroused by what other offenders say about their offences. However, even though offenders may have the wrong motivations to start SOTPs originally it is still worthwhile for them to attend as these motivations are likely to change as they progress in the programme.

### **The different types of SOTPs**

Once the risk of the offender has been determined and they have taken the specified tests, the offender can be put onto the correct programme. The different types of SOTPs include the Enhanced thinking skills programme, the Core Programme, the Adapted Programme, the Extended Programme, the Rolling Programme, the Better Lives Booster Programme and Healthy Sexual Functioning. All of the programmes apart from the Healthy Sexual Functioning involve approximately eight group members.

The Enhanced thinking skills programme lasts for approximately fifty hours and is ideally attended before the SOTP. It aims to improve the range of skills needed for effective problem-solving and decision making. Completion of the programme enables offenders to benefit more from subsequent treatment (Beech, et al, 1998: 12).

The Core Programme is made up of ninety sessions lasting 6-8 months with the session content being a minimum of two hour duration (Beech and Mann, 2002, cited in Beech, et al, 2005: 29). The Core programme is for medium static risk offenders and above. 'The primary purposes of the Core Programme are to increase the offender's motivation to avoid re-offending and to develop the self-management skills necessary to achieve this' (Beech, et al, 1998: 10). This programme challenges thinking patterns used by offenders to excuse and justify their behaviour, it aims to increase the offenders victim empathy, develop the offenders ability to recognise risk factors of things that may trigger future offending and to generate strategies for living successful lives without further offending (Cobley, 2005: 293). The programme is structured into four different blocks with the first being to establish group rapport, then asking offenders to recall accounts of their offences, to develop victim empathy and then to direct them to relapse prevention.(Crow, 2001: 126). This programme uses role-play where people may take up the role of their victim (HM Prison Service, 2007).

The Adapted Programme covers the same ground as the Core Programme but is for low IQ/learning disabilities (HM Prison Service, 2007) and is aimed at all types of risk. 'It is designed for those who may have difficulty keeping up with the language and literacy skills required for the core programme' (Cobley, 2005: 294), this programme consists of 85 sessions lasting 6-eight months.

The Extended Programme is made up of 74 sessions lasting six months. This programme is completed after the Core Programme for high and very high risk offenders who have been assessed as having multiple treatment needs. It helps them to consider their thoughts and feelings in much more detail. It also enables the development of the skills learnt in the core programme and focuses on managing negative emotions, and relationship and intimacy skills (Crow, 2001: 127).

The Rolling Programme is available for low risk offenders and high risk offenders (HM Prison Service, 2007). This programme allows the offender to come on and off the programme depending on their treatment needs with the average length of participation is 3-4 months.



The better lives Booster Programme is for medium and above risk offenders and is intended to 'boost' skills shortly for release. This programme is based on the 'good lives model'. This is a very positive program as it is looking towards the future rather than what they have done in the past. This programme consists of 35 sessions lasting 2-3 months.

The final programme is that of Healthy Sexual Functioning, this is a one on one session as it is very personal and aims to modify their sexual behaviour for men with offence related sexual interests.

### **The strengths of the SOTPs**

It could be argued that the SOTPs have many strengths including the fact that the majority of the programmes involve group work. Evidence has found that 'participants felt that the opportunity to take part in role-plays, and/ or to present work they had undertaken in relation to their offending behaviour, was most effective at encouraging open expression and a sense of responsibility with regard to their current offence' (Hudson, 2005: 100) and '..offenders who were not actively taking part in these techniques felt that having the opportunity to hear differing perspectives had helped them to reappraise their own thoughts, feelings and behaviours...' (Craissati, 1998, cited in Hudson, 2005: 100). It also provides the opportunity for discussion with peers, provides opportunities for increasing self-esteem and empathetic responding (Beech and Fordham, 1997, cited in Beech, et al, 2005: 32). As sex offenders are usually quite isolated individuals group work helps them to become more sociable and the use of role play enables group members to practice new skills and behaviours that will make them more successful with relationships, managing their emotions and dealing with frustration' (HM Prison Service, 2007). This shows that group work is seen to be very effective and positive with offenders, however, there are also weaknesses as offenders may not be as open and honest about their feelings or experiences in a group setting. It may also put some offenders off taking part in the programmes in the first place as some sex offenders may not want to disclose information to other inmates due to stigma by association.

Some have argued that there is a need for a pre SOTP programme in order to get more people onto the programmes as sometimes offenders may not join the programme due to hearing bad rumours about the programmes, for example, in the Step 4 programme evaluation 'One man was worried initially that the purpose of the course was to find out more information to use against him...' (Beech, et al, 2005: 39).

Gaining access to sexual offenders when ... first incarcerated and dispelling myths and concern ... about treatment should be helpful. In addition, combining these efforts with motivating sexual offenders to believe that change is needed and will be beneficial to them should enhance the effects of subsequent treatment and thereby further reducing offending (Marshall and Moulden, 2006: 201).

### **The weaknesses of the SOTPs**

The artificial setting of imprisonment is a major weakness for the programmes as even if the offender shows signs of improvement within this setting they may still go on to reoffending once in the real world. The real test of effectiveness is when the offender is released from prison, but due to ‘...growing public anxiety about the presence of certain sex offenders in the community has also made resettlement more difficult to achieve (Crow, 2001: 138). Because the offenders are likely to be isolated when leaving prison the good work of socialising the offenders may all be wasted.

Theories have had a major influence in the treatment programmes and due to the knowledge of what may cause people to become involved in criminal behaviour the SOTP targets issues such as deviant sexual arousal, distorted thinking patterns, lack of empathy, denial and patterns of offending as they are seen to be causal factors in offending. However, it is argued that ‘...there has been little work evaluating the cognitive distortion/restructuring component of treatment. Consequently, it is not possible to ascertain how effective cognitive restructuring is at changing offender’s cognitions, or how such changes are linked to recidivism...work is clearly needed to ensure that this key aspect of treatment is effective, as it is generally believed’ (Brown, 2005: 127), the same is argued with empathy and whether it actually impacts on reconviction rates, as even if it makes the offenders feel empathy they may not necessarily stop reoffending because of it (Brown, 2005: 135). In order for offenders to be put onto the programme they have to admit some responsibility for their offence, however, this may cause offenders to pretend that they were cognitively distorted in order to get onto the programme or proceed into other programmes. Because Imprisonment for Public Protection sentences will only release offenders if their risk is seen to be reduced, it is in the offenders’ best interests to admit that they were wrong even if they don’t think they were in order to get onto the programme. Therefore, they are likely to pretend that they have feelings such as victim empathy, for example, Beech et al, (2005) found that offenders often felt that the facilitators “prodded us to say certain things and if we didn’t they got frustrated” and that they were “trying to get me to say things which were not true for me” (Beech, et al, 2005: 41).

It could be argued that the length intensity of the programmes may be a bit too much for the offenders. It has also been argued that ‘these techniques ultimately participate in the ‘making up’ of the sex offender into a species entirely consumed with sex’ (Lacombe, 2008: 56) and that if they hadn’t thought about sex much before the programme they will do during and after it.

The SOTP aims to treat all types of sex offenders, whether they have committed offences against adults or children’ (Beech, et al, 2005: 23-24). However, it has been argued whether all types of sex offenders should be treated in the same way. For example, someone who offends against a pre-pubescent child is likely to have much different distorted attitudes than someone who rapes and adult. Mann and Hollin’s (2007) study found that ‘...rapists tend to see their offences as due to impulsivity or grievance thinking, and that child molesters believe that they offended for sexual pleasure, to alleviate negative emotional states or to achieve a sense of intimacy to the victim’ (Mann & Hollin, 2007: 9). Therefore, evidence shows that different types of

sex offenders abuse for different reasons and so they should not be treated as the same, it could also be argued the nature of the act needs to be treated differently as people who violently sexually abuse will have different deviant sexual arousals than those who do not use violence. Research has found that ‘Treatment with offenders who offend against adults has dubious efficacy in comparison with offenders who offend against children ...this raises doubt about the efficacy of treating all types of offenders in a single group programme’ (Brown, 2005: 127). Finkelhor’s preconditioned model (1984) proposed that different types of child molesters may be motivated by different needs and therefore display distinct patterns of offending and psychological characteristics (Ward, et al, 2006: 20), therefore, perhaps programmes for different groups of offenders would prove to be a more effective method of treatment.

### **The administration of SOTPs**

The programmes are administered by at least three people with a mix of males and females. Most teams are made up of psychologists and prison officers although other staff such as teachers and chaplains are also involved (HM Prison Service, 2007). ‘All tutors are subject to a careful selection procedure which takes into account personality, attitude and ability to relate and carry credibility with offenders...tutors must complete the national training course for the programme, which is a two-week intensive residential course, and are also expected to attend additional update course on specific topics’ (Cobley, 2005: 293).

### **The weaknesses of the SOTPs administration**

Because the facilitators have to deal with extremely harrowing information they are likely to become rather drained and need constant counselling, this may also lead to facilitators having to leave the job. This can lead to major disruptions in the programmes, as for example, ten per cent of the sample of the Step 4 project commented about a group being upset and disrupted when a facilitator left (Beech, et al, 2005: 39). This shows that the facilitators have a large impact on the offenders and so it is very important to recruit members who are able to handle and commit to this programme, however, this is hard because until someone has had work experience in this area they will not know if they can handle it or not. This means that the recruitment process and training has to be very thorough which as consequence is very expensive

Due to the implementation of the new custodial sentence of Imprisonment for Public Protection for dangerous offenders under the Criminal Justice Act (2003) most sex offenders are being given indeterminate rather than determinate sentences. The implications of this sentence is that sex offenders are unlikely to be released until their risk of reoffending is reduced and the only way of reducing their risk within prison is to attend rehabilitation programmes. Because these new sentences have been criticised on the grounds of the human rights of the offender their sentence decision is likely to be legally challenged if they are not given access onto the courses as they will only be released if they attend rehabilitation. This causes a big problem within the administration of the programmes as sex offenders who are on determinate sentences are being sent to the back of the queue. However, it could be argued that this is wrong as people on the determinate sentences in theory have committed less serious crimes

and therefore are more likely to be put into the community, therefore, it could be argued that money would be better spent on these prisoners. This needs to be addressed if the government want to reduce the risks posed by those sex offenders who are the most likely to be released from prison, it could be argued that there needs to be an increase in facilities to accommodate everyone.

### **Conclusions**

This research has shown that there are many strengths and weaknesses of the administration and aims of the SOTPs. It has shown that there may be a need for different types of programmes for different types of offenders rather than having a programme which covers them all. It has also shown that there is a need for further research into the areas targeted within the programmes in order to see whether they have a significant impact on reoffending. It has found that Imprisonment for Public Protection sentences are posing a significant problem with the administration of the programmes which needs to be addressed. However, overall there seems to be evidence of good practice within the programmes but it is important to look at whether the programmes are effective at fulfilling their aims and that they really can prevent reoffending.

## Chapter 5 – The effectiveness of SOTPs at fulfilling their aims

### The effectiveness of SOTPs at reducing sexual reconviction

The accreditation of the SOTPs suggests that the programmes are effective in their administration and their aims. However, there has been a lot of research into whether the SOTPs are effective in fulfilling their aim of reducing reoffending.

Friendship et al's (2003) study measured the reconviction rates of sex offenders who had received treatment against those who had not and found that the two year sexual reconviction rates of the two groups were not much different. For example, 2.6% of the treatment group reoffended compared with 2.8% of the non-treatment group. However, the treatment results were more effective on the medium to low (1.3% reconvicted in the treatment group compared with 3.4% of the non treated group) and medium to high risk offenders (2.8% reconvicted in the treatment group compared with 5.2% of those who were not treated). The low risk offenders reconvicted at a very similar rate of 1.1% of the treated group compared with 1.2% of the non-treated group. However, the high risk offenders who had been given treatment had a higher reconviction rate of 16.0% compared with the non-treatment offenders who reconvicted by 14.0% (Friendship, et al, 2003: 3). This shows that the SOTPs seem to more effective for the medium risk offenders compared with the high risk offenders. It also shows that the reconviction rates for both groups are low.

However, sex offenders usually have a low rate of offending in the first place and so even though they may not have reconvicted within a two year time span doesn't necessarily mean that they have benefited from treatment but that they would probably not have reconvicted in that time span anyway. Falshaw, et al (2003) argue that 'Because the rate of reconviction is low to begin with, any reduction would be so small it would be impossible, statistically to attribute it to the effectiveness of treatment rather than chance factors' (Falshaw, et al, 2003: 2).

There are also problems within the follow up period of the studies as it is argued that sex offenders may take up to sixteen years after release to reoffend and so the traditional two year reconviction follow up period is of very limited value of showing the effectiveness of the SOTP in reduce reoffending (Crow, 2001: 129). Therefore, there is a need to look at reconviction rates for a longer period than two years. Marshall and Barbaree (1988) followed both treated and non-treated groups for up to 11 years. However, unlike most research studies, the recidivism data was obtained not only through official sources (i.e., police records) but also through unofficial reports (i.e., self-reports). The study found that sex offenders in the cognitive-behavioural treatment program had significantly fewer sexual re-arrests than the untreated sex offenders (13.2% vs. 34.5%, respectively) (Polizzi, et al, 1999:369). Although this study followed the groups for a longer time span than most studies there is still a need for more up to date research with extended follow up periods (Falshaw, 2003: 2), however, this approach is very time-consuming. There is a need to measure the effectiveness of the programmes as soon as possible so that sex offenders are let into the community with the knowledge that the programmes will prevent the offenders from reoffending.

### **Alternative ways of measuring the programmes effectiveness**

There are many problems with measuring the programmes effectiveness by looking at reconviction data. The main problem is that many sex offences may be undetected and so reoffending rates may be a lot higher than the reconviction rate anyway. For example, Falshaw's study (2003) found that the official reconviction rates were lower than unofficial reconviction rates (the recidivism rate was 5.3 times the unofficial reconviction rate) and argue that there is a need to collect evidence indicative of a lapse into previous offence-related sexual behaviour. They argue that 'Sexual recidivism provides a better indication of success/failure of a sexual offender following treatment intervention, in terms of future sexual offending' (Falshaw, et al, 2003: 4). Therefore, there is a need for methods other than reconviction data to measure the programmes effectiveness, as if the offenders are still showing signs of offence-related behaviour such as loitering round a school then their treatment has not been successful and they are likely to go on to offending at a later date. Measurements such as Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) could provide a good opportunity for the monitoring of convicted sex offenders in the community post release as because they involve a range of agencies they are more likely to pick up on offence related behaviour than the police alone. This would provide a way of measuring the programmes effectiveness without relying on reconviction data. However, it is important to take on board the human rights of the offender as once the offender is released from prison they should theoretically be classed as free men and the constant monitoring of them will prevent this. Some may argue that asking offenders about reoffending would be a good approach, however, offender accounts of the success of the programmes are also unlikely to be the best measure as it is in the offender's best interests to say that the programmes are working.

Research into the effectiveness of the SOTPs has shown that this approach does have some impact on reoffending rates even though there are problems with the research in this area. However, it is important to question whether this small change and improvement is enough to warrant the cost of the treatment and whether it is effective enough. Optimistic accounts suggest that approximately one out of 10 sexual offenders will reoffend even after participating in the SOTP...considering the cost to innocent women and children, this finding suggests that further improvements to treatment for sexual offenders could and should be made (Marshall and Moulden, 2006: 199).

### **The cost effectiveness of the SOTPs**

Even though research may show that the programmes are not one hundred per cent effective research carried out by the Matrix Knowledge Group (2007) showed that even the prevention of a few offences is beneficial in the long term. It showed that although this intervention costs £29,646 per offender per year... it saves the tax payer £35,213 and that the savings to the tax payer plus the saving from fewer victim costs is £130, 578 (Matrix Knowledge Group, 2007: 7). This shows that even though interventions are expensive they are very cost-effective in the long term. It could be argued that it is not very cost effective for the most serious and high risk sex offenders who are unlikely to be released from prison which raises the question as to

why treat these offenders. However, it could and would be argued that it would be against these offenders' human rights if they were not given the option to try and be rehabilitated.

### **Conclusions**

This research has shown that the SOTPs are more effective at reducing reoffending than prison sentences without any interventions, however, the results show that there is not a great difference between those who have and those who have not attended treatment. This raises the question as to whether this little difference in reoffending is really worth it, whether in the long term these offenders may still go on to offending anyway or that if they do not that this is not due to the programmes being effective but that they wouldn't have reoffended anyway. However, it has highlighted that there is a great need for research which follows the offenders for a longer time period. There is also a need to use unofficial methods of measuring the programmes effectiveness as it is unlikely that all sex offences carried out by the treated sex offender will be picked up by the police.



## Chapter 6 – Conclusions/Recommendations

This dissertation has found that sex offending is a very contentious issue within society. Sex offenders are seen to be the most dangerous types of offenders and so are feared by the public, however, it has also shown that despite sex offending being a real problem it is also somewhat of a 'moral panic' as the fear of this type of offending is disproportionate to the amount of these crimes compared with other violent crimes. It has shown that the public's perception of the sex offender has been fuelled by the media over reporting the more serious sex offences and stranger sexual offences. Because of the media the public tend to make overestimations of the occurrence of sexual crimes and false beliefs them. Therefore, it has been suggested that to implement new legislation and policy surrounding sex offenders based purely on the public's anxieties is unjustifiable. However, due to the serious psychological and physical damage sex offenders can cause their victims it could be argued that the strict laws and legislation surrounding these offenders is necessary.

Due to new legislation and policies such as, the Sexual Offences Act (2003) and improvements in the way that the police deal with sex offences there has been an increase in the amount of sex offenders entering the criminal justice system and the prison service. Following the prison riots in the 1990s there was seen a need to rehabilitate sex offenders rather than simply locking them up. Due to the knowledge about sex offending from psychological theories and evidence of positive rehabilitative approaches from the 'what works' literature, SOTPs were introduced despite many people feeling that these offenders should be treated more harshly.

By analysing the aims and (unintended) consequences of the SOTPs, this research has shown that within the programmes there is evidence of positive professional practice. For example, there are constant reports, reviews and monitoring of the programmes and their administration and due to the accreditation of the SOTPs the programmes are administered at a consistently high standard. It has also suggested that there may be a need for a pre SOTP programme in order to get more people into treatment. It has found that further research is needed into whether the restructuring of offenders' cognitions is effective at reducing reoffending or whether any other type of rehabilitative approach would provide the same results. It has highlighted that there may be a need for programmes to address different types of offenders needs as it has been found that the thought processes of certain sex offenders are very different. Therefore, there is a need for more research into which offenders the SOTP is more successful at treating as if they are more effective for child offenders than adult offenders then there is a need to modify the programmes.

Studies on reconviction rates have shown that the SOTPs are effective to some extent as they are seen to reduce reconvictions compared with untreated sex offenders. They are also seen to reduce the risk of future violence within the Structured Assessment of Risk and Need (SARN). However, research has shown that the difference between those who have taken treatment and those who have not is minor. Even though the SOTPs are accredited and are seen to be the most effective method from the 'what works' literature, research shows that they may not be as effective as had been

originally thought. It has found many weaknesses in the studies measuring the programmes effectiveness, such as the time scale used and the fact that they use reconviction data.

Therefore, this dissertation has shown that there is a need for methods other than reconviction data. This is due to the fact that many sex offences are undetected or not recorded and so the programmes may not be effective as they appear. At the moment the low follow up rate of the reconviction studies are not showing whether the impact of the programme in reducing reoffending is effective in the long term. Therefore, there is a need for longitudinal studies of reconviction, as it could be argued that over time the programmes impact on the offender is likely to reduce. There is also a need for non-official methods such surveillance which look at signs of offence-related behaviour, which could be managed with the help of MAPPAs. It could be argued that reconviction data is too little too late and that it is too risky to class offenders as being successfully treated until they go on to reoffend.

However, the human rights of the offender need to be taken into consideration as theoretically once the offender has finished their sentence they should be classed as free men, but with measures to protect the public such as sex offender registers and MAPPAs sex offenders are being constantly monitored. If the offender is ever going to have a chance to lead a normal crime free life then following the offender for signs of offence-related behaviours needs to be done carefully.

In conclusion, this research has shown that the effectiveness of the SOTPs is not as straight forward as one may have believed. Research has shown that these programmes are more successful in reducing reoffending than not using any intervention measures; however, it has also shown that they may not be as successful as we are led to believe. By improving methods of testing the programmes effectiveness and by doing more research into the different components of the SOTPs they could be improved. Although the implementation of these recommendations may be problematic, it is imperative that the government gives them careful consideration if public protection is high on their agenda.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to offer my sincerest thanks for the help and support of my two supervisors Roger Moore and Roger Hopkins Burke.

I would also like to thank my friends who have provided support and encouragement throughout my studies. However, my deepest thanks are to my parents as without their support and help with my degree this work would not have been possible.

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