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Child Sex Abuse: Have We Learnt Anything?

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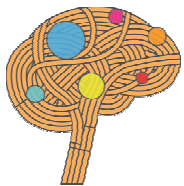
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# Institute for Research in Citizenship and Applied Human Sciences (IRCAHS)



## Child Sex Abuse: Have We Learnt Anything?

Dr Bernard Gallagher,  
University of Huddersfield



#HHSPublicLectures

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- Apr 2013: found guilty of indecent assault against 13 girls aged 9-17 years from 1967-1986
- One charge of rape to lie on file
- June: sentenced to 15mths imprisonment
- July: complaints to Attorney General's Office → Court of Appeal → 30mths
- Oct: charged with a further offences, 15 counts of rape and one of indecent assault against two girls
- To stand trial May 2014

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- Oct 2012: ITV programme *Exposure: The Other Side of Jimmy Savile*
- Jan 2013: Metropolitan Police Service and NSPCC release *Giving Victims a Voice*
- *Operation Yewtree: Savile; Savile plus others; Others*
- 450 victims, most reporting sexual abuse, 214 crimes, across 28 police services, over 50 years
- Investigations underway in 32 hospitals across the country
- BBC initiated three inquiries
- *“groomed a nation”*

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 Meddliu Police  
DYFED-POWYS Mark Leonard Bridger



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# Child Sexual Abuse: Have we Learnt Anything?

.... need to learn!

# Background



## Dr. Bernard Gallagher

- Reader in Social Work and Applied Social Sciences
- Specialise in child protection research (child victimisation & child welfare more generally)
- [b.gallagher@hud.ac.uk](mailto:b.gallagher@hud.ac.uk)

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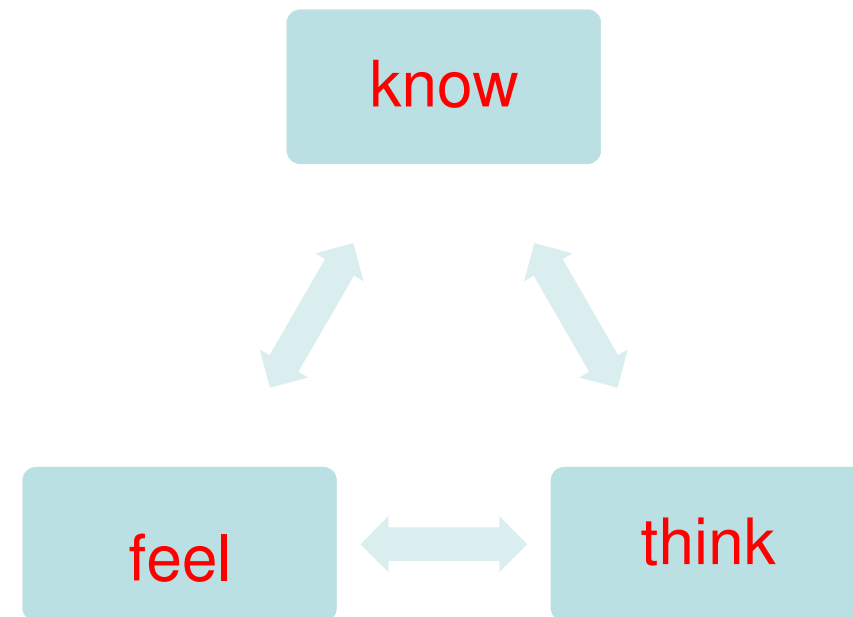
- Organised child sexual abuse (CSA) (multiple, serial, institutional, ritual) (two)
- Stranger abuse
- Attrition of cases of abuse and neglect in the criminal justice system
- International and internet CSA
- Evaluations of specialist, therapeutic children's homes

# Setting the scene

## Child Sexual Abuse – Have We Learnt Anything?

- ‘we’ ..... ?
- ‘learnt’ .....?
- learnt → response .... ?

- Facts, figures, statistics .....
- People's thoughts about CSA
- People's feelings about CSA
- My work & impressions/perceptions
- 30-45 mins
- Thought provoking
- Questions .... discussion, debate .....



# So what do 'we' know?



- Google scholar
- 'we' know a vast amount about CSA
- **Extent:** 10% of children experience contact CSA
- **Victims:** 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s girls; 0-17 years; any background
- **Nature:** indecent exposure → abduction, rape and murder



- **Offender characteristics:** 90-95% male; children to the elderly; any background
- **Offender types:** '*situational*' or '*regressed*' versus '*preferential*' or '*fixated*'
- **Modus operandi:** grooming .... but also coercion, and ignorance

- **Effects:** mild → severe

## Responses

- Therapy for victims
- Treatment for offenders



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- **Issues:** quality of research; challenging area of research; contradictory findings; absence of research; & dynamic problem
- **Overall:** ‘we’ know a vast amount about CSA
- **‘We’** = academics and practitioners who specialise in this area (and victims/survivors)
- **Other academics and practitioners** e.g. criminologists or teachers – significantly lower knowledge (& understanding/appreciation) of CSA

# Knowledge among other academics and practitioners



- Barbara Hewson, barrister, Hardwicke Chambers, London

- 'low level misdemeanours'
- Rolf Harris, Jim Davidson, Max Clifford & Dave Lee Travis:  
*'post-Savile witch-hunting of ageing celebs echoes the Soviet Union'*
- NSPCC & NAPAC:  
*'moral crusaders' and 'do-gooders'*

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- Neil Wilson charged with one count of sexual activity with a child & two counts of making extreme pornographic images
- 8 month suspended sentence & comments
- Judge Nigel Peters QC:  
'On these facts (that were put before the court), the girl [13 years] was predatory and was egging you on.'
- Prosecuting barrister Robert Colover:  
'The girl is predatory in all her actions and she is sexually experienced .... There was sexual activity but it was not of Mr Wilson's doing. You might say it was forced upon him despite being older and stronger than her.'



# Knowledge among the general public

- Extent: not uncommon & possibly increasing
- Victims: girls more than boys; any age; any background
- Victims: severe effects .... including 'cycle of abuse'
- Offenders: male; older males; & mentally ill or innate psychological defect
- Offenders: treatment - can't be & shouldn't be
- Overall: limited → no knowledge

- Case one: 'a 14 year old tart'
- Case two: 'you've really fucked up my Christmas'
- Case three: survivor forced out of the family home by his partner who thought he might abuse his own children

# Explanation

- Society not open about discussing sex
- Children + sex } subconscious reticence
- Children + sexual abuse } „
  - Deny/denial
  - Minimisation
  - Suspect defending & victim blaming

# 'Decline' in knowledge

1. Child sex offenders as 'beasts', 'monsters', 'paedos' ....
2. Earlier exaggeration re. 'stranger danger' replaced by exaggeration of extrafamilial CSA (vs. intrafamilial CSA)

- Media, especially tabloid press
- Academic and practitioner experts

- Stranger CSA
- Organised CSA (including ritual CSA)
- Internet CSA
- Trafficking of children for child sexual exploitation
- Child sexual exploitation
- Gang-related child sexual exploitation

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- Berelowitz et al., (2012) *“I thought I was the only one. The only one in the world”*. The Office of the Children’s Commissioner’s Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation In Gangs and Groups. Interim Report.
- 2,409 children were confirmed as victims of sexual exploitation in gangs and groups - 14-month period August 2010 – October 2011.
- 16,500 children identified at risk of child sexual exploitation in one year .... three or more risk factors →

## CSEGGs – Indicators

1. Missing from home/care
2. Victim of sexual offence
3. Engagement in offending
4. Lacking friends from same age group
5. Repeat STIs, pregnancy or termination OR Poor mental health
6. Recruiting others into exploitative situations
7. Living in chaotic or dysfunctional households OR history of sexual abuse OR children in care
8. Absent from school
9. Excluded from school
10. Self-harm OR Thoughts of or attempts at suicide
11. Drugs or alcohol misuse

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- **Berelowitz et al., (2013) “If only someone had listened” Office of the Children’s Commissioner’s Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups. Final Report**
- Sue Berelowitz (Deputy Children's Commissioner): interviewed by Sky News:

*'I have worked with many children who have been victims of sexual violence, but I have never before encountered the levels of sadism and cruelty that I have during this inquiry.'*

- Two-year study by Jenny Pearce, University of Bedfordshire, released alongside above report:

'Rape was used by gang members as "a form of weaponry" .... "Thirty four per cent said multiple rape was commonplace among gangs. Initiation to a gang might be through raping a girl. A young man might have his girlfriend raped as a form of punishment. Someone might be raped for failing to perform a task."

- Internet-related CSA (grooming, use of child abuse images/child pornography; incitement and conspiracy)\*

Cases of Internet-initiated grooming of children for sexual abuse, identified through searches of searches of CSA-related reports to Computer Examination Units in 3 police services from 1999-2002

Police	Type of internet CSA					
	Grooming		Other		Total	
Met 1	7	2.3	304	97.7	311	100
Shire 1	5**	3.8	125	96.2	130	100
Shire 2	0	0	130	100.0	130	100

\*\*984 CSA offences recorded over same four year period (5 grooming cases = 0.5% all reported offences)

\*Gallagher, B., Fraser, C., Christmann, K. and Hodgson, B. (2006) International and Internet Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation. Research Report. Huddersfield: University of Huddersfield.

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# 'Unlearning'

## Myth

- Child sex offenders should not live near schools or parks
- **Anxious about helping children**
- Anxieties about photographing children

## Reality

- Most perpetrators offend in and around where children live
- **Offenders are much more furtive**
- Offenders very rarely use routine images of children for self-gratification – while the internet is awash with millions of horrendous images

# Responding to CSA



- Learning is important
- Research & teaching → students (practitioners) & society more generally
- Research: which interventions to implement and how to implement
- Responding to CSA

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- Detection e.g. ChildLine
- Reporting
- **Investigation/enquiry/assessment**
- Therapy for victims
- **Punishment of offenders**
- Treatment for offenders
- Prevention

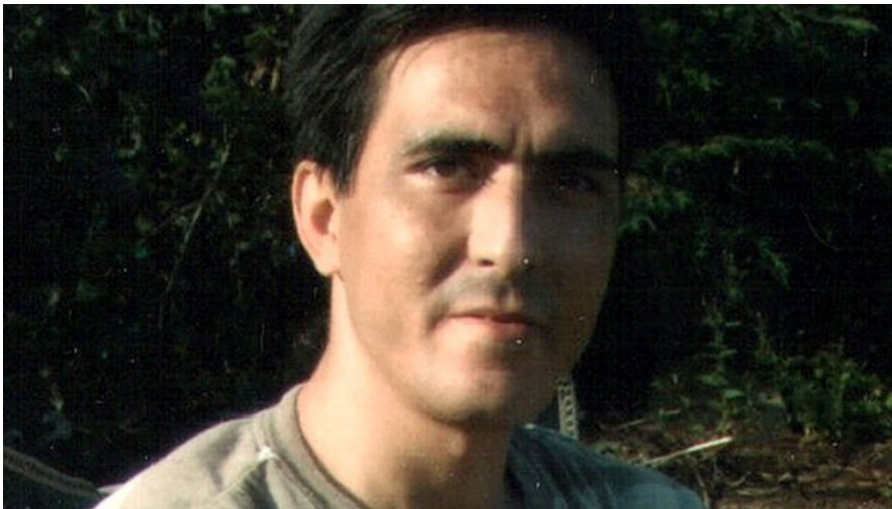
# Retribution approach/model of child protection



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Bijan Ebrahimi



Stephen Norley & Lee James

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- Anger is understandable .... but achieves little
- 5% of CSA cases reported to agencies
- ‘Prevention is better then cure’
- Prevention is paramount and ‘cure’ is very secondary

# Public health approach to CSA



## Prevention

- Tackle male socialisation and attitudes to females
- Society needs to develop an open attitude to discussing sex
- Public education/campaigns around CSA
- Sex and relationship education in schools

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# Reticence and hostility

## BNP threatens protest at headteacher's home over sex education proposals (the guardian, 24<sup>th</sup> Nov 2011)

‘British National party activists have warned a primary school's headteacher and chair of governors that they will face demonstrations outside their homes if they do not drop plans to extend sex education lessons to children aged four. A delegation from the far-right party picketed Grenoside Community primary school in Sheffield over proposals that would see children aged between four and six being taught about reproduction in mammals. Older children would be taught about the human body, including naming the sex organs, as well as receiving guidance on "good and bad touching".

BNP activists, who arrived as the school was preparing to close on Tuesday, demonstrated outside and handed in a letter warning the head: "We believe that your evil plans to introduce these children to sex at such a young age borders on paedophilia and that it is not acceptable."

The letter was copied to the school's chair of governors and Sheffield city council's executive director for children, young people and families. It warns: "We hope that you will see sense and we hope that no further action is needed, although we are ready to involve ourselves further on behalf of the silent majority if you insist on going further down your present road." The BNP's leader, Nick Griffin, tweeted: "Small BNP team went to Grenoside Primary School, Sheffield today. Leaflets v plans for sex ... lessons from age 4. Mental paedophiles behind sick plan must drop it or face demos at home too ....."

## Sex education and BNP ignorance (letters, the guardian, 28<sup>th</sup> Nov 2011)

‘When I read your report of the demonstration by the British National party outside Grenoside community primary school in Sheffield, in protest at plans to give [sex education](#) lessons to pupils ([Report](#), 25 November), I didn’t know whether to laugh or scream. I have been involved in child protection research for the past 25 years. In this time, I have become a fervent believer in sex education lessons for all schoolchildren, of whatever age. Such education is crucial in its own right – if children are to grow up as properly informed and well-adjusted individuals – but also essential if we are to prevent child sexual abuse (CSA). How, after all, are children expected to protect themselves from abnormal sex, if they do not know about normal sex? On one level, the [BNP](#) action (and its threats of further protests at the homes of the headteacher and chair of governors) does, unfortunately, reflect not only an ignorance of how we should address CSA, but also a fear of sex and sex education, within society more generally. On another level, though, the BNP action represents a deranged and insidious attempt to intimidate individuals who are only trying to help children, and enhance their development and safety. The headteacher and chair of governors, with the full support of the teaching staff and parents of Grenoside, plus the local authority and wider community, must face down the threat from the BNP.’ (... And force the BNP back into the hole they came out of)

# Summary



- Academics, practitioners, officials/policy makers – ‘experts’ on CSA
- Rest of society knows little about CSA: more aware it exists, more prepared to accept it exists, something of the nature .....
- Knowledge declining: media portrayals; political (and policy) reinforcement & public reticence - even hostility
- Society moving forward .... nowhere near enough – impeding response & prevention
- Can be – and has to be – overcome, in large part, by a public health approach to CSA

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