

“Internet-based Sex Offending” – an *onlinePROTECT* workshop

On November 20th, 2014, *onlinePROTECT* hosted a full-day workshop entitled *Internet-based Sex Offending: Case Formulation and Intervention Planning* at Hamilton House, London. *onlinePROTECT* is an international research collaboration led by Dr Hannah Merdian (University of Lincoln) and Prof Derek Perkins (Surrey University & West London Mental Health NHS Trust). *onlinePROTECT* address the safety of children and young people in online and offline environments, by targeting the offenders who engage in online sex offences against minors, specifically those who view and produce Child Sexual Exploitation Material (CSEM).

onlinePROTECT

Pathways of Risk and Offender Typologies in the Exploitation of Children through Technology



The workshop was to bring together a group of professionals working in the assessment, treatment, management, and rehabilitation of offenders who used the internet to sexually offend against children and young people, and to hear about the latest research developments on internet-based sex offending. Attendees would be trained on the Pathway Model of CSEM offending, a model developed as a result of the research *onlinePROTECT* have carried out with CSEM offenders, as well as receive a wide range of practical assessment tools for client work. The workshop also consisted of ample opportunity for attendees to discuss their own case material and issues with other professionals working in a similar field. The 21 workshop attendees represented a range of organisations, including psychologists, lawyers, and academics, as well as those working in the police, probation and not-for-profit organisations. The diverse range of attendees allowed for interesting and thought-provoking discussions throughout the day.



The balance of the day consisted of interactive small group discussions, mixed with plenary discussions and more didactic presentations. The morning sessions consisted of the research background to internet-based sex offending, exploring offender characteristics, discussing risk and need, training in the *onlinePROTECT* Case Formulation Model and a more detailed look at practical tools for assessment. The afternoon allowed for practical case work, starting with a closer look at case formulation and case management, looking at aetiology and typology of internet-based sex offending, as well as risk assessment and intervention. This was followed by an opportunity for participants to utilise the learning from throughout the day to work on case examples, including attendees' own cases. The day closed with a summary of the day's learning points and action plans.

The *onlinePROTECT* workshop received worldwide recognition, with other researchers in the field getting involved in discussions arising from the day via twitter – with the likes of Ian Elliott in Massachusetts (USA) and Michael Seto in Ontario (Canada), as well as many others (see below)!

Ian Elliott @ianaelliott
 Fascinating tweets coming out of @online_PROTECT's case formulation workshops today. Use #onlinePROTECT to view the discussion.
 1:27 AM - 21 Nov 2014

onlinePROTECT @online_PROTECT
 Do we need Circles of Support & Accountability (CoSA) for low risk offenders? #onlinePROTECT
 19h
 1 FAVORITE

onlinePROTECT @online_PROTECT
 Do we need Circles of Support & Accountability (CoSA) for low risk offenders? #onlinePROTECT
 19h

Ian Elliott @ianaelliott
 @online_PROTECT 1. IOs don't fit CoSA criteria 2. Anti-RNR 3. May divert CoSA resources away from suitable potential CMs #zerosum
 1:22 AM - 21 Nov 2014

onlinePROTECT @online_PROTECT
 Do we need Circles of Support & Accountability (CoSA) for low risk offenders? #onlinePROTECT
 19h

Ian Elliott @ianaelliott
 @online_PROTECT Misguided allocation of resources IMO. Sledgehammer/nut metaphor comes to mind in using CoSA for low-risk IO clients.
 1:21 AM - 21 Nov 2014

All in all, the *onlinePROTECT* workshop appears to have been a huge success, with much positive feedback received and many new discussions arising. The workshop ended on a positive and motivational note, with one of the key points to take away at the end of the workshop being that there is hope.

“A sense of hope is absolutely essential... there is a light at the end of the tunnel”

How can we sustain this message of hope for offenders when treatment ends? *onlinePROTECT* would like to say a big thank everyone to everyone that attended and contributed to the *Internet-based Sex Offending* workshop. Watch this space for future *onlinePROTECT* events!



An obligatory “selfie” from the lead researchers of onlinePROTECT: Prof Derek Perkins and Dr Hannah Merdian.



The wider onlinePROTECT team, from left to right: Danielle Kettleborough (PhD Student), Dr Hannah Merdian (University of Lincoln), Prof Derek Perkins (Surrey University & West London Mental Health NHS Trust), and Anisah Ebrahimjee (MSc Student).