

The Sex Offender Treatment Programme

The Church on Fairford Leys' Minister is also involved in the Sex Offender Treatment (Core) Programme at Aylesbury Prison. The Church seeks to serve the community in many ways from working with children and Youth people to helping those who have been bereaved (and much in between). SOTP is an extension of that caring. As a facilitator on the programme, Rev Fred Ireland and the rest of the team are helping men to not to re-offend and, crucially for our communities, help to reduce the number of victims as a result.

The prison-based Sex Offender Treatment Programme has recently been evaluated by Caroline Friendship (Principal Research Officer in the Offending and Justice Group in the Home Office), Ruth Mann (Principal Psychologist in the Prison Service Offending Behaviour Programmes Unit) and Dr Anthony Beech, Senior Lecturer in Forensic Psychology at the University of Birmingham.

A comparison was made between those who had undertaken the SOTP course and those who had not participated. The results of that evaluation are documented below.

The Programme

SOTP, based on a cognitive behavioural model, covered offence-focused targets such as a reduction in the extent to which offenders minimised or even justified their offence, the enhancement of victim empathy and the development of plans to manage personally relevant risk factors. The current course runs for 170 hours over (usually) a five month period. Each group comprises of nine men and three facilitator (two of whom lead each session).

The Sample Group

647 adult male sex offender who undertook the treatment programme were compared to 1,910 who did not undertake the programme. They were a group of men all of whom had served at least four years in prison and who shared the same board characteristics.

The results

One of the most striking results was the difference in the re-offending rates amongst the sample group. Bearing in mind that of all offending who leave prison 60 out of a hundred re-offend and return to custody within two years. The table below shows the two year combined sexual and violent reconviction rates for the two groups.

RISK CATEGORY	TREATED GROUP (number 647)		UNTREATED GROUP (Number 1,910)	
	No.	%	No.	%
Low	5	1.9	25	2.6
Medium-low	6	2.7	83	12.7
Medium-high	6	5.5	31	13.5
High	13	26.0	13	28.1
Overall	30	4.6	155	8.1

From this research, we can see that SOTP practically halves the re-offending rates (from 8.1 to 4.6).

Conclusions

- The Core Programme has a significant impact on sexual and violent reconvictions for medium risk prisoners and is also successful at reducing the reconviction for low risk prisoners
- The Core Programme's impact appears to have a wider effect in that although the programme focuses explicitly on sexual offending, violent offending is also reduced by participation in the programme
- The reduction in sexual and violent criminal activity reduces the number of victims in society (many offenders have multiple victims)

Rev Fred Ireland comments:

“This work does not suit everyone; facilitating is often challenging, disturbing and tiring. But I am so committed to it for two reasons: it “works” because those who go through treatment are less likely to offend and we are helping to prevent further victims. We live in a society where there are too many victims and our area is not immune. I believe this to be a valuable intervention into a disturbing feature of life today.”