

Breaking the links

## Target population

Breaking the Links is targeted at adult, males who have been arrested for internet related sexual offences but who also have experienced trauma themselves (such as childhood sexual abuse), and where there may be a potential link between their trauma and their offending behaviour.

## Delivery organisation

Stop It Now Scotland

## Mode and context of delivery

This group is delivered in a group setting by two facilitators, with no more than six participants per group. Ten sessions are delivered, frequency of one session per week. The sessions are a mixture of information sharing and group discussions, using interactive materials, such as handouts, flipchart exercises, and online materials such as video clips. The group are encouraged to discuss topics, but their individual trauma experiences and offending behaviour is not explored in depth, and participants do not have to share their individual experiences.

On a one to one basis suitable materials are selected from the group work programme based on the individual needs of the participant.

## Level/Nature of staff expertise required

Facilitators backgrounds vary and include work in criminal justice social work fields, psychology, mental health, child protection and the police. Familiarity with internet related sexual offending and working with offenders is important, as well as an understanding of trauma and how this affects people thinking, emotions and behaviours. Facilitators must be non-judgemental and empathic in their approach, and able to manage the complexities that this group brings, often related to suicidal ideation and active trauma symptoms. They must also be skilled in facilitating groups and presenting information clearly.

## **Intensity/extent of engagement with target group(s)**

The group consists of ten sessions, delivered once a week for ten weeks. Each session lasts for a duration of two hours including a short break.

Individualised work can last between five to 12 sessions depending on the needs of the individual.

## **Description of intervention**

Breaking the Links is a ten-week psychoeducational group-work programme, designed for men who have been arrested for internet related sexual offences but who have also been affected by past trauma themselves. The group aims to provide participants with information about common trauma symptoms and responses, and introduces a variety of different strategies to manage some of the difficulties that arise after experiencing trauma. The group also explores the possible links between past traumatic experiences and internet related sexual offending. The group provides participants with information about the Criminal Justice process and what they should expect next following their arrest. The group is designed to be a supportive environment, and specific individual's experiences of trauma, such as childhood neglect or sexual abuse, are not explored within the group setting.

## **Evaluation**

Individuals considered suitable for this group are assessed in the first instance by the team's Forensic Psychologist. Often several individual sessions are conducted to help stabilise and prepare the participants for the group environment. Pre and post evaluation measures are taken using the Justice Outcomes Star Chart tool. This tool identifies the participant's areas of need and assists them to develop a personal action plan to work towards. This measure explores ten areas, and they are encouraged to focus on those which indicate the most need, or the areas that they can realistically target at this time. The ten areas include; accommodation, living skills and self-care, mental health and well-being, friends and community, relationships and family, parenting and caring, drugs and alcohol (including other addictions), positive use of time, managing strong feelings, and living a crime-free life. This measure is undertaken in a one-to-one setting prior to the group and again once the group has been completed.

In addition to this participants are asked to complete pre and post questionnaire specifically about the programme, to explore their expectations and post

programme to explore their learning, as well as providing feedback for how the programme can be improved.

During the programme the participants are asked to complete a CORE-10 questionnaire which explores their current well-being including anxiety, depression, trauma, physical problems, functioning and risk to self.

## References

Barkham, M., Gilbert, N., Connell, J., Marshall, C., & Twigg, E. (2005). Suitability and utility of the CORE-OM and CORE-A for assessing severity of presenting problems in psychological therapy services based in primary and secondary care settings. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 186, 239-246.

Burns, S., & MacKeith, J. (2016). The Justice Star: The Outcomes Star for people in the Criminal Justice System. Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise Ltd. [www.outcomesstar.org.uk](http://www.outcomesstar.org.uk)

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RATING: *Pioneering*