

NTU DOCTORAL SCHOOL

NOTTINGHAM TRENT UNIVERSITY 

*“Creating future innovators and impact for education, industry,
the professions and society”*

School of Social Sciences, University Funded PhD Studentship, 2017/18 Entry

Important note: all applications for the project described below **must be accompanied by** a research proposal, which should be approximately 1000-2000 words. Proposals should (1) identify the proposed research supervisor from the list shown below, and (2) give details of your proposed research project. **The proposal should be clearly aligned to the PhD topic listed below:**

1. Dr Nicholas Blagden – Prevention of sexual abuse: Evaluation of the UKs first primary prevention project aimed at stopping potential abusers from committing offences

Please note that the application closing date for all of these studentships is **5pm (UK time) on 25th November 2017.**

Please see the project description below.

1. Dr Nicholas Blagden - Prevention of sexual abuse: Evaluation of the UK's first primary prevention project aimed at stopping potential abusers from committing offences

For informal discussion regarding the project, please contact: nicholas.blagden@ntu.ac.uk

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is defined as forcing or persuading a child to take part in sexual activity (nspcc.org, 2016). It is not limited to physical contact including behaviour such as grooming, exploitation and illegal online activities involving indecent images of children (nspcc.org, 2016a). In the UK, over 36,000 sexual offences against children were recorded last year (nspcc.org, 2016a) and research estimates that one in 20 children (Radford et al., 2011) have been sexually abused, increasing to as many as one in five across Europe (Council of Europe, 2010).

Attempts by the criminal justice system (CJS) to address CSA tend to be executed following the disclosure or detection of a sexual offence (Brown & Saied-Tessier, 2015). Intervention for those who have already committed sexual offences such as incarceration, sex offender treatment programmes and the sex offender registry, is known as tertiary prevention (McMahon, 2000) and may contribute to reduction in recidivism rates. However, these examples are limited to individuals who are known to the authorities and involved in the CJS. Alternatively, primary and secondary prevention efforts occur mainly within the community targeting whole populations and groups deemed to be at higher risk of becoming a CSA victim or perpetrator (Piche et al, 2016). Estimates report that as many as 5% of men find children sexually attractive (Seto, 2008), therefore the apparent gap between estimates of those who are sexually attracted to children (Seto, 2008) and actual offending rates strengthens the argument for efforts to prevent the occurrence of CSA offences. The combination of primary, secondary and tertiary levels of prevention exemplify a public health approach which aims to monitor the scope of CSA incidences while engaging in research to develop prevention strategies (Whitaker et al., 2005).

This PhD would comprise a programme of work that would run alongside the UK's first comprehensive intervention project (conducted by the Safer Living Foundation) to prevent potential abusers from committing offences (Smallbone et al., 2008). The PhD would evaluate a groundbreaking intervention (based on the latest evidence base for 'what works'), and would comprise both qualitative and quantitative methods, gathering numeric data for robust generalisation of the findings, together with rich and indepth qualitative data from the potential perpetrators to promote the holistic understanding of what can help to prevent people from committing sexual offences, particularly child sexual abuse.

Entry Criteria

UK 1st Class / 2.1 Bachelor's degree (or UK equivalent according to NARIC) in psychology, or related discipline is essential. A Masters in either psychology, education or linguistics is desirable. In addition, the successful applicant must successfully pass prison vetting prior to the studentship starting.