

ONE CHILD

INTERNATIONAL

ONE CHILD INTERNATIONAL INC.

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION

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September 16, 2010

Maeve Lewis
Executive Director
One in Four
2 Holles Street
Dublin

Re: article in the Irish Times Sept 16, 2010 '*Incentives crucial to treating sex offenders*' – an open response.

Dear Ms Lewis,

I refer to the above mentioned article in the *Irish Times* today and wish to address the issues you discussed.

1. Your statement about sex offender treatment incentives is incorrect. Offender treatment data to date show that treatment rarely works. Studies in this area are in their infancy and the results are certainly not at a level to support your statement. Sex offenders are criminals whose behavior evolves from fantasy to rape; sometimes murder. Those who promote the effectiveness of treatment are, in my experience, generally searching for grant funding.

2. Regarding your position and statement: '*Ms Lewis called for a discourse about treatment of offenders in the community, and said treatment could work. "The response to people like Larry Murphy serves to drive sex offenders underground, where they become more dangerous and where children are seriously at risk."*

I feel impelled to remind you that you are a victim advocate. A victim advocate, not an offender advocate. Your call for a discourse on 'treating offenders in the community' is nothing less than obscene. You are suggesting using the community in a social experiment to see if sex offender treatment works. If it doesn't, the community ends up with more victims and even more serious offenses. The cost of such an experiment is unacceptably high and your proposal at best naive. What research supports your statement that treatment could work? If it is your personal opinion, you should have said so.

3. People like Larry Murphy can be stopped from becoming more dangerous by keeping them locked up in prison for life. That is the only way that is 100% guaranteed to work.

4. Your suggestion that participation in offender treatment should be an incentive for early release from prison reflects gross ignorance of the behavior of offenders.

On-going research in the United States has shown that

- a. most offenders are untreatable,
- b. many who respond to treatment do so to get release from, or to avoid, jail. They are good at fooling people like you into believing that they're cured. They're not.
- b. the risk of re-offence among offenders is unacceptably high. The term 'low risk' is a misnomer for a guarantee of re-offending by some. Would society accept the 'low risk' of re-offence by murders? Hardly.
- c. early release benefits no-one except the perpetrator and only exposes society to the potential repeated acts of a sexual criminal.

These are not petty thieves; sex offenders are true criminals. Child sex offenders, some would argue, are on par with murderers.

Unlike Ireland, the U.S. is at the forefront of sex offender research – the research is undertaken with urgency, is well funded and the results available free. I suggest you access this data rather than attempt to reinvent the wheel.

5. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled on May 17 of this year that sexual offenders may be incarcerated indefinitely. Why? Because research has shown that they are a life-long danger to society in general and their victims in particular. (* See article below)

6. One in Four's Purpose states quite clearly, '**One in Four offers a voice to and support for women and men who have experienced sexual abuse and/or sexual violence and also to their family and friends.**' There's nothing here about treating offenders.

Why are you attempting to treat 21 sex offenders in a victim advocate facility? This is not yours or One in Four's mandate as a victim advocate agency.

Your deviance from your stated purpose could jeopardize your charitable status with the Revenue Commissioners, along with endangering the victims whom you treat.

7. How do your victim clients rationalize your treatment of offenders? How could they possibly trust an agency that treats offenders and victims? As a child advocate I can't reconcile this; how can you? Your job as leader of the agency is for the treatment of victims. Offender rehabilitation is none of your concern in your professional capacity and does nothing to further the treatment or recovery of victims.

8. The Larry Murphy issue highlights not so much the public ignorance about sex offenders, rather the lack of information available to the public about their crimes and location. This is the fault of those who put offender rights ahead of victim rights. Information on offender's location and crimes should be readily accessible by the public. That is society's right.

9. Your accusations toward the HSE are a cheap shot aimed at an agency which has been targeted by just about everyone it would seem.

On one hand you praise the Gardai for their progress in their sensitive handling of victims but ignore the fact that investigations of sexual abuse are not an HSE issue but rather a criminal matter that should be dealt with by the Gardai. Your responsibility is to forward the letters from the HSE regarding abuse complaints (with which you could 'wallpaper your office') to the Domestic Violence section of the Gardai in Harcourt Street for investigation.

The funding for social workers is an issue to be brought up with Minister Andrews and Minister Ahern who have direct influence on Health and Justice.

My advice is to stick to what you know. The funding and time your agency is spending treating sex offenders is a misuse of resources that should be spent treating an equivalent number of victims. If offender treatment is such an interest to you, perhaps now is a good time for you to pursue a career in this new and developing field.

Sincerely yours.

EVIN M DALY

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* *Supreme Court: Sex offenders can be held indefinitely* (May 17, 2010)
http://articles.cnn.com/2010-05-17/justice/scotus.sex.offenders_1_civil-commitment-confinement-of-sex-offenders-federal-appeals-court?s=PM:CRIME

Irish Times: *'Incentives crucial to treating sex offenders'* Sept 16, 2010
<http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2010/0916/1224278993973.html>

cc. Mary Raftery
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Charlie Flanagan
HSE
Media