

Presentation title:

Improving investigations of sexual crime: developing victim-centred and suspect-focused practice

Speaker: Patrick Tidmarsh (University of Suffolk, UK)

This paper will draw on the chequered history of sexual crime investigation to propose pathways, processes, and practices that will improve both therapeutic and forensic outcomes in sexual offence investigations. It will address the twin challenges of maintaining a victim-centred approach, while focusing investigations on suspect behaviour, and highlighting the knowledge, attitudes, and skills required of effective sexual and relationship-based crime investigators. Structural challenges will also be addressed, including: understandings of consent, community myths and misconceptions of sexual crime, the forensic measure of "beyond reasonable doubt", and the phenomenon of 'downstream orientation' in investigative and prosecutorial decision-making. Finally, the paper will outline the principles of effective investigations, using Whole Story methodology, highlighting understandings of offender behaviour, victim reaction, and eliciting relevant contextual evidence.