Comparisons between adolescent- and adult-onset sexual offences against children: An examination of first offence characteristics

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It is often assumed that adolescent and adult sexual offending is, in many respects, only distinguishable by stage of development (e.g. Abel, Osborn & Twigg, 1993) often leading to the adoption of blanket approaches to its prevention. The question remains as to why some individuals begin sexual offending in adolescence, whilst others do not begin to offend sexually until adulthood despite often having similar dispositional and developmental vulnerabilities. To our knowledge, no research has directly compared the contexts and circumstances in which adolescent and adult sexual offences first occur in order to determine whether any differences (or commonalities) in fact exist. We integrated three datasets in order to conduct a direct analysis of adolescent- and adult-onset sexual offences against children. In this presentation we discuss the commonalities and differences found between the two onset-groups and what this may mean for understanding life-stage origins of child sexual abuse and its prevention.