

# ...with Ruth Mann

Rehabilitation Services Group, National Offender Management Service

## One inspiration

Early in my career my understanding of sexual offending was shaped by Professor Bill Marshall – one of the leading academic-practitioners working with sex offenders. Bill has tirelessly reminded us that sex offenders are human beings and our best chance of breaking through with them is to treat them with humanity and respect.

## One moment that changed the course of your career

It was probably simply going into a prison. Originally I took a fixed-term contract in a prison to fill a year while I waited for a postgraduate university place in a different field. Once I had started working in a prison I knew that this was the career for me and so I changed all my plans.

## One myth about working with sex offenders

That they are all devious liars by nature, determined to dupe

everyone so they can go on offending. Most sex offenders do not reoffend, and many of



**Ruth Mann**  
Ruth.Mann@noms.gsi.gov.uk

them are very distressed and ashamed about what they have done.

## One book that you think all

## psychologists should read

*The SPSS Survival Guide* by Julie Pallant. The author is a genius at explaining how to analyse data. I am living proof of the fact that you can do publishable research simply by following her advice.

## One thing that you would change about psychology

The fact that so many applied psychologists feel underconfident about doing research.

## One challenge psychology faces

Working against the tide of public opinion. Sex offenders are more likely to reoffend if they feel threatened and ostracised.

## One great thing about the Sex Offender Treatment Programme

I think the great thing about our programme is that, taking into account its size, it runs so well. Across 25 sites we have hundreds of people implementing evidence-based treatment with great skill, flexibility and determination.

## One nugget of advice for

## aspiring psychologists

Read as widely as you can across all fields of psychology. Although it is a job just to keep up with the forensic psychology literature, reading outside the forensic literature is often more inspiring.

## One cultural recommendation

Stay away from films and books that present sadistic violence as a form of entertainment.

## One alternative career path you may have chosen

I would probably have been a teacher like both my parents.

## One hero from psychology past or present

My professional hero is Professor Clive Hollin (University of Leicester) who supervised my PhD. As another of his students said of him, Clive is a scholar and a gentleman. I could not have wished for a better supervisor.

## One great thing that psychology has achieved

Making evidence-based practice the norm.

## One hope for the future

That it continues to break new ground. We still have a lot to learn about the psychology of crime.

## One more question

As a society we rightly condemn sexual offending. But we also sexualise youth and glamorise violence. We rightly pity children who have been abused. But we disown them when they grow up angry and disconnected from others.

**More answers online at [www.thepsychologist.org.uk](http://www.thepsychologist.org.uk)**

## resource

Maruna, S. & Mann, R.E. (2006). A fundamental attribution error? Rethinking cognitive distortions. *Legal and Criminological Psychology*, 11, 155–177. 'I thought Shadd Maruna's 2001 book *Making Good: How Ex-convicts Reform and Rebuild Their Lives* was exceptional, and I could not believe my luck that I got to write an article with him.'

## coming soon

Articles on aesthetics, teaching happiness, participant reactivity, an interview with Alan Baddeley, and much more...

Send your comments about *The Psychologist* to the editor, Dr Jon Sutton, on [jon.sutton@bps.org.uk](mailto:jon.sutton@bps.org.uk), +44 116 252 9573 or to the Leicester office address

To advertise in *The Psychologist* or at [www.psychapp.co.uk](http://www.psychapp.co.uk): [giorgio.romano@redactive.co.uk](mailto:giorgio.romano@redactive.co.uk), +44 (0)20 7880 7556

## contribute

Think you can do better? Want to see your area of psychology represented more?

See the inside front cover for how you can contribute and reach 48,000 colleagues into the bargain, or just e-mail your suggestions to [jon.sutton@bps.org.uk](mailto:jon.sutton@bps.org.uk)