



SCHOOL OF LAW AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

INTERNATIONAL CRIMINOLOGICAL RESEARCH UNIT (ICRU): RESEARCH SEMINAR

WEDNESDAY APRIL 25, 2018: 3.30 p.m. - 5.00 p.m.

RENDALL BUILDING – SEMINAR ROOM 10

Children as 'Risk'? Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by Children and Young People

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Abstract: Drawing on a range of theoretical frameworks as well as primary research completed for a forthcoming book (Cambridge University Press, 2018), this seminar will critically examine socio-political constructions of 'risk' related to sexual offending behaviour by and among children and young people. It charts the emergence of harmful sexual or exploitative behaviour among peers against a backdrop of the premature cultural sexualisation of contemporary childhood which normalises 'risky' sexual practices and challenges traditional conceptions of childhood, victimhood and gendered sexual identities more broadly. It examines the nuances and complexities of peer-based sexual behaviours in a range of settings including within organisational contexts such as schools and care homes, within families and peer-based relationships including within 'gang' and 'party culture', as well as on-line contexts such as sexting and cyberbullying. The seminar will also draw out the myriad legal, practical and policy challenges of negotiating the boundaries between normal/experimental, risky/problematic and harmful sexual behaviour among peers, and in particular the often blurred demarcation between coercion and consent, both for legal and other professionals as well as children and young people themselves.

Anne-Marie McAlinden is Professor in the School of Law, Queens University Belfast. Her main research interests lie in the areas of the management of violent and sexual offenders, institutional child abuse, and restorative justice where she has published extensively.