

THE UNSPEAKABLES

THEY arrive in cars with their relatives, spend a few hours in the community but never visit the shops or get involved with the locals.

These men are pairings and possibly the only group in society against whom it is widely acceptable to hold a prejudice. Few would defend them because what they have done is indefensible.

They are men who have abused children, and they are trying to make amends. In cases where the victims are related to the abusers, families may be brought in to assist in the process.

"The vast majority are actually not callous psychopaths," says psychologist Dr Pat Walsh of his patients at the Granada Institute in

Cricken House, Shankill.

"They are ordinary people who go seriously wrong. They need help. They're basically people who want happiness."

Dr Walsh, who is Director of Psychological Services for the St John of God organisation as well as being director of the institute, can see child abuse from the victims' perspective as he spent the early part of his career, in the 70s, looking into the minds of troubled children and adolescents.

He also worked in other branches of psychology

before he was asked to take on the job of dealing with the perpetrators of sexual abuse when the Shankill centre opened in the 90s.

"Up to 60 per cent of them have themselves been abused as children," he told *Southside People*.

"We have to break that cycle by engaging with them."

Following assessment by Dr Walsh and his team of eight therapists, including psychologists, counsellors and social workers, the patients attend group sessions for about two years.

There are only four people in each group so the sessions are very intensive.

"They look at the damage they have caused; they look at the factors why they caused the abuse; look at how they're going to maintain an abuse-free life in the future."

Dr Walsh and his staff also treat two groups of convicted sex abusers who have been referred by the Probation and Welfare Service, but they meet at a city centre location.

There's a common perception that sex abusers can't be cured, but Dr Walsh is more optimistic – and with good reason.

"When we talk about cure, we're usually talking about diseases. The people who attend here, many of them will have abused within the context of their own families.

THEY'VE COMMITTED THE MOST HEINOUS OF CRIMES BUT THEY AREN'T BEYOND REDEMPTION, ACCORDING TO A MAN WHO TREATS CHILD SEX ABUSERS



PUBLIC NOTICE

APPLICATION FOR A PROPOSED RAILWAY ORDER BALLYFERMOT TO HAZELHATCH (KILDARE ROUTE PROJECT)

Under Section 42 (1) (a) of the Transport (Railway Infrastructure) Act, 2001 the Minister for Transport has established a Public Enquiry to be held into an application to him from the Board of Córas Iompair Éireann for the



Children who have been abused need help to come to terms with the trauma

convicted sex-abusers committed in prisons.

Dr Walsh believes it is

abused your child has to be the most painful experience imaginable especially in

tened to by Dr Walsh, who has the air of one who has heard it all soon it all and

He also believes his staff get a good idea of the character of the patients