

## Structure of the brains of career criminals may shed light on ‘persistent antisocial behavior’

[A]dults with a long history of offenses show striking differences in brain structure compared with those who have stuck to the straight and narrow or who transgressed only as adolescents.

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Prof Terrie Moffitt, another co-author of the research from Duke University in North Carolina, said the study helped to shed light on what may be behind persistent antisocial behaviour.

“It could have been just that the life-course-persistent group were choosing to lead their lives in a difficult way and could have chosen differently. I think that what we see with these data is that they are actually operating under some handicap at the level of the brain,” she said, adding that while such individuals may have committed serious crimes, the study suggested a level of compassion was needed.

The team say the findings suggest more needs to be done to identify children who show signs of ongoing antisocial behaviour and to offer them or their parents support – a move they say could reduce crime later on.

Prof Huw Williams, a clinical neuropsychologist at the University of Exeter, who was not involved in the study, stressed it was not set in stone that a child with antisocial behaviour would go on to become a persistent offender.

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