



A NEW AND GROUNDBREAKING APPROACH TO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN THE UK

We do not want child-abusers in our society, yet we have done nothing to prevent paedophiles from becoming child molesters. The Specialist Treatment Organisation for the Prevention of Sexual Offending (STOPSO) has introduced a ground-breaking solution to this problem, offering therapy in the community.

HOW CLIENTS ACCESS THERAPY

A client who is worried about their sexual thoughts, or who has committed a sexual offence, contacts StopSO by phone, an online form, or email. StopSO acts as an agency, evaluating the client's issues and matching them with a StopSO psychotherapist or counsellor within a few days of the initial contact.

WHAT KINDS OF PERPETRATORS DOES STOPSO WORK WITH

StopSO works with all kinds of people: from those who are worried about their thoughts, to people looking at online images, exhibitionists, voyeurs, child molesters, rapists etc. And their families. Our clients are self-motivated, 89% of them contact us themselves asking for help to stop.

WHAT DO CLIENTS WORK ON IN THERAPY

Most of the sex offenders we see at StopSO have had a very disturbed childhood. Therapy helps them: heal any underlying trauma that may have predisposed them to acting out, build self-esteem, understand their triggers, manage stress factors and other dynamic risk factors, so that they can develop pro-social behaviour.

WHO PAYS

Clients currently pay for their own therapy, making direct payments to their therapist. StopSO sometimes has sufficient funds to be able to offer a subsidy for clients who cannot afford to pay for their own therapy. StopSO hopes to raise sufficient funds to ensure that no-one is ever turned away. We think therapy should be provided free of charge to any perpetrator asking for help, as a way of reducing sexual abuse.

STOPSO IS THE FIRST POINT OF CONTACT

Many therapists do not want to advertise that they work with this client group. For this reason, StopSO acts as the point of contact for clients who ask for help. StopSO works like an agency, connecting the client with a specially trained therapist who will be open to working with their issues.

STOPSO THERAPISTS ARE QUALIFIED AND TRAINED

StopSO invites already-qualified therapists, who are willing to work with sex offenders, to apply to join. They go through a rigorous application process which includes attending a minimum of three-days specialist training. StopSO has more than 200 therapists across the UK who are trained or in training. Therapists pay StopSO an annual membership fee of £50 and a referral fee of £20 per client.

WHAT IS THE SCALE OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

[According to the NSPCC, almost one in four \(24.1%\) young adults](#) have experienced sexual abuse during childhood. Over [47,000 sexual offences against children](#) were recorded in the UK last year. The Crime Survey for England and Wales showed that 19% of 16-59 year olds had been sexually assaulted by the age of 16. In 2015 the National Crime Agency (NCA) [estimated that there were 750,000](#) men in Britain with a sexual interest in children. It is widely recognised that child sexual abuse is vastly underreported.

THE COSTS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE TO THE UK

There are profound mental, emotional & physical costs for the victims of sexual abuse, including an increased risk of: mental health issues, substance abuse, sexually transmitted diseases and suicidal behaviour. Their families are affected. The NSPCC estimates the financial cost of child sexual abuse at £3.2 billion per annum.

WE CANNOT LOCK ALL THE OFFENDERS UP

Currently, there are approximately 86,000 people in prison for *all* crimes. Put that against the NCA figure of 750,000 men with a sexual interest in children, and it is clear that we need new solutions, that go beyond locking them up. Even if we had space to imprison them all, most will eventually be released into society.

Norfolk chief constable Simon Bailey, the Police believes [thousands on police database “pose no threat”](#) and don't belong in prison. “We have to think about an alternative solution. [We] need to engage with service providers from mental health and the health service to work with us.” StopSO provides this service.

PREVENTING THE FIRST OFFENCE

Despite the numbers of victims of sexual offences, the re-offending rates for sex offenders is surprisingly low. According to [UK government figures in 2014-5](#), the re-offending rate for theft was 42%. For sexual crime in the same year it was 13%, and in 2012-3, for a serious violent and or serious sexual crime it was 0.4%. Since reoffending is so low, it is even more important to offer solutions in the community to [stop the first sexual offence](#), as well as targeting the potential re-offenders. Since 36% of StopSO clients have not come to the attention of police or social services, StopSO therapists are, on occasions, stopping the first crime.

NON-OFFENDING PAEDOPHILES

StopSO's client group includes what are known as 'non-offending paedophiles'. These are people whose primary or exclusive sexual desire is for prepubescent children – but they have never acted on this and they have never committed an offence. Jules Mulder of Stop It Now! in Holland says that most paedophiles recognise their desires by the time they are twenty years old, but don't act on them until they are thirty. Society has a ten-year window to intervene, and teach them strategies to remain law abiding. StopSO therapists help non-offending paedophiles to live lawful lives, preventing the first sexual offence.

WHAT AGE DO PEOPLE KNOW THEY HAVE A SEXUAL PROBLEM

The results of an online questionnaire asking 'what age did you know you had a problem with your sexual behaviour or thoughts?' indicate 72% know by the time they are 25 years old, of which 51% know by aged 16!

OTHER ORGANISATIONS IN THE UK OFFERING HELP

No other organisation offers one-to-one therapy within a few days of the client asking for help, to those who have committed (or feel at risk of committing) a sexual offence, across the whole of the UK.

PREVENTION PROJECT DUNKELFELD IN GERMANY

The German approach to the prevention of child abuse is to ensure that perpetrators feel safe enough to come forward for help. In Germany, therapists are obliged to maintain confidentiality. Their aim is to get all offenders (potential and active) on a course that will help to reduce the sexual abuse of children. Through their innovative programme, Prevention Project Dunkelfeld they offer 100% confidentiality and free-of-charge therapy, to child molesters and those viewing child abuse imagery. This is also offered to those who have not yet acted out but have troubling thoughts. Clients can speak openly about their desires and their crimes, knowing that there will be no legal repercussions. Staff at Project Dunkelfeld say this allows their clients (over 6,400 of them) to feel safe enough to come forward to access therapy. We propose StopSO becomes a UK version of Project Prevention Dunkelfeld. This could be a completely safe place where offenders (potential and active) can access subsidised therapeutic help to make it affordable for all. Until then, StopSO therapists will charge their clients for the service in the normal way.

WHAT STOPSO HAS ALREADY ACHIEVED

The benefits of the work that StopSO is currently doing are immeasurable. Without advertising our services, StopSO has already stopped hundreds of crimes. For every victim that is *not* created there are family members, partners and children who also will *not* be affected. For every StopSO client who does *not* act out, and does *not* need to go to prison, society is saving £65,000 (which is the cost of one year in prison including court costs and police time). To mid-March 2017 StopSO helped over 500 people. If one quarter of these would have gone to prison, StopSO has saved society well over £7 million.

LET'S USE THIS INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO REDUCE SEXUAL OFFENDING IN THE UK

These potentially curative resources should be universally available to every active, or potential, sex offender.

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