



## **The Specialist Treatment Organisation for Perpetrators and Survivors of Sexual Offences**

**By Sharon**

StopSO, The Specialist Treatment Organisation for Perpetrators and Survivors of Sexual Offences, is a charity that has a ground-breaking solution to the problem of sexual abuse in the UK: to offer therapy in the community to anyone who feels at risk of committing, or who has already committed, a sexual offence of any kind. Clients come to StopSO knowing that they will be matched to a therapist who is open to working with these issues, and trained to do so.

StopSO has had over 1,500 asking for help. 90% have been male. Our clients are self-motivated with 89% making direct contact to ask for therapeutic help. StopSO works with clients of all ages including children. We have had a number of young clients, the youngest 'perpetrator' so far being only five years old.

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. StopSO is the only UK-wide organisation that offers long term therapy to both *potential* and actual sex offenders. The reoffending rates are surprisingly low. The likelihood of a person who has been convicted for theft being reconvicted is 42% within a year. Whereas, for a sex offender, the probability of them being convicted for a further sexual offence is only 2% within a year. Since 36% of our clients have not come to the attention of the police or social services, StopSO therapists are, on occasion, preventing the first crime, and this is a primary focus.

Since the demand for StopSO therapy is increasing exponentially, we welcome therapists and supervisors applying to join StopSO. Therapists undergo a rigorous application process to join StopSO, which includes a minimum of 3 days of specialist training. StopSO offers a variety of training courses (see the article on *Training to work with people who commit sexual offences*). StopSO offers access to specialist supervision when required. StopSO has an online support group for all professionals working in this field.

Many therapists are hesitant about publicising that they offer a service to paedophiles and sex offenders. StopSO acts as the 'point of contact', a referral agency. We evaluate the client's issues and match them with a local StopSO therapist, usually within a few days. The therapist charges the client their usual fee. For clients who cannot afford to pay for therapy, StopSO offers a subsidy (subject to having available funds), thus ensuring no-one who asks for help is turned away. Therapist and client agree to fill in an evaluation form, to help with future StopSO funding applications. StopSO charges an annual membership fee and a referral fee to therapists.

In 2018 StopSO will expand its services to offer therapy to the survivors of sexual abuse. StopSO wants to make these therapeutic resources available to everyone who has suffered from sexual abuse, and to every active, or potential, sex offender, to protect our children and safeguard society.

### **SHARON BIOGRAPHY**

Sharon joined StopSO in 2015 as a volunteer, and for this won a Highly Commended Award from Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations and Monmouthshire County Council. She became a full time staff member in 2016. She is now Head of Operations. She has over 23 years experience in business & industry.

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