



ARTICLE KINDLY WRITTEN FOR StopSO

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**Reflections of an ex-paedophile cured by NHS psychoanalytic psychotherapy
By Jack Dawson (a pseudonym)**

I have told the story of my cure several times over the past decade [\[i\]](#). Briefly, I was wholly paedophilic in my sexual orientation, attracted to pre-adolescent boys of 'choirboy age'. I never offended either directly or indirectly, through the use of child pornography. At 21 I sought help from the NHS Portman Clinic, where I was treated by psychoanalytic psychotherapy. By the end of 3 years' treatment I was wholly cured of my paedophilia and have been heterosexual ever since. I am in a committed relationship, with several step-grandchildren.

I have been silent on this issue for most of the 42 years since my cure, and am not alone in that silence. There is no cohort of cured paedophiles and ethical paedophiles advocating for universal treatments for these sufferers and an end to their demonisation, though the oppression of other sexually different and gender-variable people is subject to effective challenge by their widespread collectives.

We need to question the notion of the incurability of paedophilia. Even though the Portman's formal admission criteria have narrowed since my treatment (to accept only paedophiles who have acted on their sexual impulses) a few of their patients may wholly rid themselves of paedophilic fantasies, whilst others may sometimes predominantly replace these fantasies with adult sexual fantasies [\[ii\]](#). I recently collaborated with a woman who had been on the paedophile spectrum, though the child sexual abuse she suffered was much greater than mine. She successfully resisted the urge to abuse, found a therapist and rid herself of her paedophilic urges. She now lives well and happily. My therapist at the Portman, Dr Mervin Glasser, made plain his perspective that my paedophilia could be cured - as it was.

The published accounts of psychoanalytic work with paedophiles are few [\[iii\]](#), for this is an under-theorised area. Those accounts often refer to private in-depth psychoanalytic work (multiple sessions per week over long years) with offending paedophiles, and the NHS does not offer such services. Furthermore, many psychoanalysts may resist working with paedophiles because of moral revulsion and because they are not trained to work with such 'difficult' patients. The Portman's treatment sessions are once a week, more rarely two or more, and the length of treatment would not stretch to that available in private practice. It

may be that these imposed constraints act to distort perceptions of the possibilities of cure. The Portman works with the assumption that the notion of cure is not usually applicable for contact offenders.

However, the prospects of cure for those who have not crossed into offending are acknowledged to be greater, and new research by StopSO suggests the existence of a window of opportunity to treat many paedophiles before they act out their distress. It indicates that 51%^[iv] of paedophiles recognise their orientation by the age of 16. Yet offending tends to begin around age 30. The fact that those treated at the Portman are mostly in their 30's, 40's and even 50's, suggests that there is a gap in their service for those who recognize that they are paedophiles but have not collapsed into offending.

The implication of all this is that the notion of the incurability of paedophilia may be self-fulfilling, given the structural rationing of potentially curative psychoanalytic treatments towards those for whom cure is most difficult.

The demonisation of paedophilia intersects disastrously with public failure to widely utilise the healing potentials of psychoanalysis for paedophiles. This greatly damages the fight against child sexual abuse. By stymieing the creation of a cohort of healed and ethical paedophiles who can model an alternative future and provide hope for its sufferers, it leaves paedophiles with no identity but that of the despised abuser. It thus leaves paedophiles to despair, and despair is the parent of abuse.

By conflating the category of 'child sexual abuser' with the category of 'paedophile' it also invests paedophilia with huge repugnance. This toxic confusion provides a powerful unspoken justification for the public failure to therapeutically address the suffering of paedophiles in its own right. What publicly funded in-depth therapeutic treatment there is for paedophiles is founded upon the need to prevent child sexual abuse. It is justified forensically, not medically or humanistically. This must account for the dearth of healing therapeutic resources for paedophilia. This dearth leaves paedophiles in dangerous despair of any prospects of living lives of adult normality.

We need to question whether the notion of a paedophile 'voice' is intrinsically sociopathic. Dr Sarah Goode's research^[v] points to the presence of a number of non-abusing paedophiles in on-line paedophile groups who challenge other participants' notions that sex with children is acceptable. Recent films, such as 'The Paedophile Next Door', have given a voice to some ethical paedophiliac men.

My small attempts to advocate for paedophiles have several times been smeared as covert attempts to apologise for adult-child sex, and I have not been able to respond properly to such attacks because of my need for anonymity. This highlights the imperative that any advocacy cohort of ex-paedophiles and ethical paedophiles must have external allies who are willing to operate publicly without substituting their own voices for ours. I believe that StopSO recognises this need.

Without a 'voice' I fear paedophiles will not rise above the status of a despised 'other'. If they remain in despairing isolation we lose a huge opportunity to break the cycle of child sexual abuse.

[i] For instance <<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2006/feb/25/socialcare.familyandrelationships>> and <<http://www.stopso.org.uk/my-experience-as-a-paedophile-cured-by-nhs-psychoanalysis/>>.

[ii] Pers. comm. Dr Jessica Yakeley, the Portman's Clinical Director.

[iii] They include Mervin Glasser's paper 'Psychodynamic Aspects of Paedophilia', pages 121-135 in 'Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy' (1988) Vol 3 No 2. Karnac Books have produced two multi-contributor books on paedophilia: 'On Paedophilia', edited by Cosimo Schinaia (2010) and 'The Mind of the Paedophile, Psychoanalytic Perspectives', edited by Charles W. Socarides and Loretta R. Loeb (2004).

[iv] From StopSO statistics page: <https://www.stopso.org.uk/statistics/> Retrieved 10th April 2017

[v] See 'Paedophiles in Society', Palgrave Macmillan (2011) and 'Understanding and Addressing Adult Sexual Attraction to Children', Routledge (2011), both by Sarah D. Goode.

JACK DAWSON BIOGRAPHY

I am a man of 65, cured by in depth psychoanalytic psychotherapy at the NHS Portman Clinic from 1972-'75. I was never an offender. I have a long-standing loving relationship, step-children and grandchildren. In the last 15 years I have written on this issue, using a pseudonym, with letters and articles, an interview on BBC Radio London, and a Guardian interview by Decca Aitkenhead: *The shadow that refuses to disappear*.