

Who leads the team



Stella Gould MA DPsych candidate MBACP (accred) UKCP Reg has many years psychotherapy experience. After an early career in nursing, she transitioned into psychotherapy, setting up a successful counselling service in a GP practice. She also qualified as an eating disorder practitioner.

Ms Gould moved into forensic work within the prison service 12 years ago, working extensively with high security classification male offenders, and establishing and managing the Psychotherapy & Counselling Unit at HMP Sheppey Group. During that time she gained her MA for research into the factors operating in rage-type murder.



Professor Julie Hay MPhil, MSc, PG Dipl Mgt holds international accreditation as a trainer and supervisor in transactional analysis. She is MBACP (Accred) and UKCP Reg. Hay is a Visiting Professor at Middlesex University, and Academic Dean of an MSc programme for those seeking accreditation for the professional application of transactional analysis.

She was a volunteer psychotherapist/counsellor at HMP Swaleside 2010-2013 and in a similar role at HMP Chelmsford 2011-2012.

Fees

An indicative current fee for this service is £5500 per offender to complete the 12 x 50 minute one-to-one session programme, although this may be reduced significantly when more than one client can be seen at the same location. Bursaries may be available when family members are paying the fees. This fee includes travel costs and production of the comprehensive report. Extensions are charged pro rata. Fees for other therapeutic interventions provided on request.

Challenge Psychotherapy - Semi-Structured Psychotherapeutic Interventions

Although the number of IPP prisoners on an Indeterminate Sentence for Public Protection – IPP - has fallen from over 6000 in 2012 to 3353 at end June 2017, 85% of those were post-tariff. Also, the number of recalls continues to increase, indicating that more is needed for lasting change.

Whilst engaged in doctoral research into the experiences of such prisoners, Stella Gould, then Senior Psychotherapist & Head of Counselling at HMP Sheppey Group identified an urgent need for an intervention that would enable such inmates to meet Parole Board requirements of being seen to have addressed issues related to instrumental violence and similar issues. It has since become apparent that the same approach is relevant for those on life and determinate sentences where Parole Board require similar issues to be addressed.

Working with colleague Professor Julie Hay, Ms Gould designed and introduced a range of semi-structured therapeutic interventions that address such specific issues through a sequence of weekly one-to-one sessions. The number of sessions varies between 12 and 20, depending on the nature of the offence and the offender's needs, psychological awareness, and history. The offender is expected to write a short account (500-1000 words) demonstrating their understanding after each session; extracts from these are used in the final reports prepared by the psychotherapist. These reports were rapidly adopted for use at Parole Board Hearings, with instances of offenders being required to stay in prison long enough to complete a specific intervention.

For a no-obligation discussion please contact us at:

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How it works

Offences already catered for include Instrumental Violence (usually 12 sessions), Domestic Violence (16 sessions), Driving Offences, and Drug/Alcohol Related Offences. More offences will be added as the need is identified; those currently under consideration include Self Harm, Stalking, Depression, and Trauma. All follow a similar structure with the amount of time on any topic varying; the sequence broadly follows: Introduction and agreement to process (contracting), offender reviews their history of offences, offender explores underlying beliefs that justified offences, relationships at the time of offending, the role of addictions (to excitement, jealousy, power, violence itself, etc and not just drugs/alcohol), (lack of) management of emotional responses (e.g. rage, depression), how the foregoing come together to form patterns that need to be changed, how the offender typically sabotages through impulsivity, developing a changed identity that incorporates socially-acceptable values and taking responsibility for their own behaviours. At this stage, offenders are encouraged to review their offences from the perspective of their changed identity and to prepare and begin implementation of effective action plans. It is common to find that such changes have already been initiated at earlier stages and can now be consolidated. Attention is also given to ensuring the offender has a realistic plan that takes into account probable constraints and setbacks that will occur after release.

This initiative was developed and provided within HMP Sheppey Group, with some prisoners being transferred there to undertake it. Life and determinate sentence prisoners with similar issues have also applied. However, the Psychotherapy & Counselling Unit at that location was closed March 2013 so Ms Gould and Professor Hay now offer the interventions more widely through the Psychological Intelligence Foundation CIC, a non-profit educational community interest company.

What is Challenge Psychotherapy?

Challenge psychotherapy is the term introduced by Gould and Hay to refer to the style of psychotherapy used for these interventions. It is a confrontational approach, requiring clients to take full responsibility for their offences and future behaviour. At the same time, clients are prompted to develop considerable psychological intelligence, in the form of increased self awareness about how childhood experiences have shaped their beliefs and behaviours.

A wide range of therapeutic concepts are applied, particularly from attachment theory and transactional analysis, supported by current neuroscience research. The one-to-one nature of the intervention means that clients cannot 'hide' within a group training event; it is typical for offenders to recognise significant factors that require resolution before they can rely on the application of 'techniques'.

The reports produced for Parole Hearings provide an honest account of the therapeutic process, supplemented with quotes from the prisoner's own reports. These reports have rapidly become a significant addition to those provided by Offender Management, Probation, Psychology, Psychiatry, etc – as an example, the following is a comment from a Probation Officer: *"Stella Gould and her colleagues provide a unique service in terms of reducing re-offending and addressing risk successfully that, to the best of my knowledge, is not equalled elsewhere in the prison system, except perhaps in specialist units like Grendon."*

Clear contracts are established with clients so that therapeutic confidentiality is maintained (only content provided by the prisoner is quoted in reports); they are also made aware of the requirements for the psychotherapist to report any infringements of prison rules, any potential harm to anyone, and any uncharged criminal acts.