

Speech by Sarah Templeton at Houses of Parliament to the Justice Minister

Hi. My name is Sarah. I am a qualified counsellor with 25 years experience working with offenders inside four prisons, and on the outside for probation, Thames Valley Police, numerous exoffender charities including The Princes Trust and now in private practice.

I've worked as a Tutor and Counsellor at young offender and adult male prisons including HMP The Mount, HMP Guys Marsh and HMP young offender institutes Aylesbury and Portland.

Initially, when I started working with offenders I could never understand why I understood & bonded with them so ridiculously well. Why was me a middle-aged therapist able to relate so incredibly well to these crime breaking, incarcerated boys? I didn't condone crime or break the law myself, so why did I completely GET all their risk-taking and thrill-seeking behaviour? Their loathing of authority, their thinking they knew best and propensity to break boundaries at every given opportunity!!!

In 2015 I got my answer. I was diagnosed ADHD and then the penny dropped. The vast majority of clients I was working with had the same condition as me!!

And when I say the vast majority - when I was working at HMP Aylesbury I had six clients. Of those 6, THREE were diagnosed ADHD as children, then after my diagnosis I realised another TWO were ADHD and have since gone on to be diagnosed and only one I don't believe is ADHD - so that is FIVE out of SIX clients diagnosed ADHD.

From that day forward I have made it my mission in life to get the government to sit up and take notice of how the prisons are packed to the rafters with DIAGNOSED but even more UNdiagnosed ADHD.

When every prisoner enters an induction wing, they spend at least a week if not more on it being tested for every condition under the sun. This includes eyes, hearing, literacy, numeracy, signs of depression, suicidal thoughts, hearing voices, self harm and more so I firmly believe they should be tested for ADHD as well. The diagnostic test I use on private clients takes less than 10 minutes. It is based on the DSM-V which is the diagnostic manual for psychiatric disorders as used by every psychiatrist in this country and America and has in my experience been 100% accurate in identifying ADHD. So in less than 10 minutes on an induction wing EVERY prisoner could easily be assessed for ADHD. Those meeting the criteria could then be referred to the prison psychiatrist or psychologist to be diagnosed.

ADHD is an epidemic in the prison system. If these boys were assessed, diagnosed and medicated the vast majority would be able to reign in their risk-taking, thrill seeking, boundary pushing behaviour and be able to have the patience and motivation to pursue crime free lives.

Without it they will continue to clog up the prison system for their petty crimes. The vast majority of people in prison with ADHD are not in there for murder, rape or any of the category A and B crimes. The vast majority are in for ABH, GBH, criminal damage, stealing cars, gang crime, joint enterprise & fighting.

I will not rest until every prisoner currently in the system is tested for ADHD and every prisoner going into prison for the first time is tested for ADHD on the induction week.

This is such a simple and cost free way of finding out exactly how many people in prison do have ADHD and with medication, I firmly believe the vast majority would change their criminal ways. And the money the government could save by not locking up people with a very treatable mental health disorder, would be colossal.

Finally Today I received this letter from a doctors surgery in Chard Somerset. Last November I asked them to refer and undiagnosed but obviously Adhd, ex offender Client of mine for ADHD assessment. This man has since gone on to become homeless and suicidal. Today I get a letter saying that the surgery DID apply for funding but this was rejected by the CCG. In the very next sentence they go on to agree with me that this man is very vulnerable and yet he's not being assessed.

I ask you to seriously consider, with all the current media attention on mental health, why is this still being allowed to happen?