

# Children's (Early Intervention) Service

**Safe Network** operates the largest community-based specialist clinical assessment and intervention service in Aotearoa New Zealand for those with concerning and harmful sexual behaviour.

## Who we are

Safe Network is New Zealand's largest community-based specialist service for those with concerning and harmful sexual behaviour. Our specialist clinicians work with children who have problematic or concerning sexual behaviours, assisting them to learn to express themselves in healthier ways. We also specialise in working with adults and youth to address their harmful sexual behaviour.

Our services are based in Auckland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, and Te Tai Tokerau/Northland. Our clinical staff includes psychologists, psychotherapists, counsellors and social workers.

## Safe Children's Service

The Safe Network Early Intervention Service offers a specialist clinical assessment and intervention service for boys and girls aged 5-12 years who have problematic or concerning sexual behavior, including using electronic technology to make, access or distribute images and videos of a concerning and harmful sexual nature of themselves or others. (Refer to the side panel for a range of concerning sexual behaviour that may need specialist intervention.)

Many children engage in and display a range of sexualised behaviour that is healthy and normal for their age. But sometimes children engage in, or display sexualised behaviour that causes others to be concerned because it is unusual for their age or it makes others feel uncomfortable, confused or hurt.

### You may be concerned about the sexual behaviour of your child or another person's child if:

- it is different from that of other children of the same age
- the sexual behaviour continues despite repeated requests to stop
- the child appears driven to engage in sexual behaviour regardless of whether or not they will be punished or reprimanded
- other children complain about the child's sexual behaviour or are adversely affected
- the child uses sexual behaviour to hurt, frighten or upset other children
- the sexual behaviour is engaged in by children of different ages or developmental levels
- one child uses force, threats, bribery or coercion to get the other child to participate in sexual behaviour
- one child forces another child to keep the sexual behaviour a secret
- the sexual behaviour progresses in frequency, intensity or intrusiveness over time
- the child's sexual behaviour is directed at adults who feel uncomfortable about it
- the child's sexual behaviour is targeted at animals
- verbal and/or physical expressions of anger precede, follow or accompany the sexual behaviour.

Information sourced from *Understanding Children's Sexual Behaviours* by Toni Cavanagh Johnson, PhD, and *Ending Offending Together* by Caroline Witten-Hannah, Frances Miller, John McCarthy.

## Referring to Safe Network

### How to get help

If you are concerned about a child's sexual behaviour you can arrange for a referral to Safe Network services.

### Referral to Safe Network services

A child can be referred to Safe Network by family members, statutory agencies (e.g. Oranga Tamariki), health professionals, schools or other professionals within the community.

Where appropriate, Oranga Tamariki may need to be made aware of the referral to ensure that the child and any other children or young people are safe. Safe Network is committed to working with the child, their family/whanau and Oranga Tamariki to ensure that the safest outcome is reached for all concerned.

## What is the process?

### Assessment

Before a child is accepted into the service, it is important to assess whether Safe Network is the right place to provide the help that he or she needs. A comprehensive clinical assessment is undertaken in which we find out about the child, their history and the problematic or concerning sexual behaviour that brought them to Safe Network. Their strengths and resources will be assessed, as well as their problems and challenges. Family members and/or other supporting adults will be part of the assessment process where possible. The wide-ranging effects of the sexual behaviour, the safety of others and the needs of the family are all important factors for consideration.

Assessment is likely to involve the following:

- An initial interview with parents, caregivers or other supporting adults, and relevant family members
- One to two interviews with the child (determined by the child's age and needs)

- A review of information and reports from other agencies or professionals who may be involved, e.g. Oranga Tamariki, counsellors
- Written questionnaires and psychological tests completed by the child or by their parent or caregiver.

Once completed, a detailed assessment report is prepared, with recommendations about the child's suitability for Safe Network's Early Intervention Service and the proposed intervention required. A copy of this report, including recommendations about the next steps, may be sent to the referring agency where it is suitable to do so. All recommendations will be discussed and explained clearly.

### Intervention

If the child is accepted into our Early Intervention Service, they will be allocated to a clinician to undertake the intervention. A schedule of regular appointment and meeting times will then be made. The Early Intervention Service is typically a six-month service that includes weekly one-hour appointments when the child meets with their clinician. As part of this service the family or significant adults will have regular appointments together with the child, at the same time or separately. Safe Network's work with children also offers the opportunity for other involved family members and professionals to be an active part of the intervention.

### Will parents need to pay for their children to attend Safe Network?

Generally the full costs of services at Safe Network are covered by our Government-funded contracts. Where there are limited or no funded positions available, then a part-charge or fee-for-service contract may be offered.

### How do I contact Safe Network?

To enquire or to make a referral, contact Safe Network by phone or download a referral form from our website, complete it and forward it to us.

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