

Safe Network services for women and girls

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 towards children.

Who we are

We specialise in working with adults and adolescents to address their harmful sexual behaviour. Our clinicians also work with children who have problematic or concerning sexual behaviours, assisting them to learn to express themselves in healthier ways.

With specialist clinical treatment services based in Auckland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, and Northland, our team of thirty clinical staff includes clinical psychologists, psychotherapists, counsellors, family therapists and social workers. We offer more than 20 years' experience in working with individuals and their families to address concerning and harmful sexual behaviour.

Safe service for women and girls

Safe offers specialist clinical assessment and intervention service for women and girls aged from five years old, who present with concerning and harmful sexual behaviour (CSB/HSB) and for their families.

This service pathway spans the range of Safe's service areas and was designed to understand and accommodate the specific needs of female clients by providing a gender-responsive and collaborative service that acknowledges the social and cultural realities of women and girls.

The intervention follows comprehensive assessment of a client's specific needs, her strengths and supports and the risk of future harmful sexual behaviour. This support will involve family who can support her and will seek to assist the client to understand how this behaviour has come about and how she can change.

The treatment provided seeks to:

- Develop and enhance resilience
- Reduce risks of recurring CSB/HSB

Girls or women's sexual behaviour is concerning or harmful if:

- It is targeted at younger children or anyone more vulnerable
- It is secretive
- It is aggressive, forceful, manipulative or threatening
- It is not consensual
- The sexual behaviour continues despite repeated requests to stop
- She appears driven to engage in sexual behaviour regardless of whether or not she will be punished or reprimanded
- Others complain about her sexual behaviour or are adversely affected
- The sexual behaviour progresses in frequency, intensity or intrusiveness over time
- The sexual behaviour is directed at adults, who feel uncomfortable about it
- The 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.

- Promote an understanding of how early trauma may shape current behaviour
- Develop relationships of support within the client's life
- Develop a stronger sense of identity, self-esteem and personal safety via a trusting, consistent and supportive therapeutic relationship.

Individual treatment is the primary clinical intervention, supported by regular family work and caregiver support. Social work support is provided, along with close liaison with other statutory or community agencies or organisations working with the client. Safety and support plans are provided as part of a comprehensive intervention plan. Reviews are held regularly with all professionals and family to support effective progress.

Providing support and safety planning for the client includes a mix of:

- Carefully assessing for physical and psychological safety
- Providing a safe therapeutic environment at Safe and a therapeutic relationship with a trained, qualified and experienced female clinician.

The referral pathway

How to get help

If you are concerned about the sexual behaviour of a girl or woman, you can arrange for a referral to Safe services.

Referral to Safe services

Individuals are referred to Safe by CYF (Child, Youth & Family), family members, friends or other professionals within the community, or via self-referral.

It is important to note that if CYF does not know about the referral to Safe, we may need to ensure CYF becomes involved, to check that others involved in the harmful sexual behaviour are safe. Once this has happened, we are committed to working with you, the person/s involved and CYF to ensure that the safest outcome is reached for all concerned.

You can get help by contacting CYF, the Police or Safe.

What is the process?

Assessment

Before a woman or girl is accepted into the service, it is important to assess whether Safe is the right place to provide the help that she needs. A comprehensive clinical assessment is undertaken in which we find out about the individual, her history

and the concerning or harmful sexual behaviour that has brought her to Safe. Her strengths and resources will be assessed, as well as her problems.

Family members and/or caregivers will be part of the assessment process. The wide-ranging effects of the concerning or harmful 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:

- Up to four interviews with the individual and her significant family members and/or caregiver
- Collecting information and reports from other agencies or professionals who are involved, e.g. CYF, Police, counsellors, school
- Written questionnaires and psychological tests completed by the client and/or their parent, caregiver or family member.

Once the interviews and tests are completed, a detailed report is prepared, including recommendations about the individual's suitability for Safe's services. A copy of this report, including recommendations about the next steps, will be sent to the referring agency or person.

If the individual is accepted into Safe's services, she will be allocated to a clinician to undertake the treatment intervention. A schedule of regular appointment times and other session times will also be made available. Safe generally offers up to 12-18 months of individually tailored intervention that includes all or some of the following:

- Weekly one-to-one appointments as required
- Family session each month
- Three-monthly case review for each client that involves parents and other interested parties, such as the school, CYF, etc.

Will parents or families need to pay for the client to attend Safe?

Generally the costs of services at Safe are covered by our funded contracts with CYF. If there are no available funded positions then a service fee contract is offered.

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