

# Children's Service

## Kaitūhura Explorer™ programme

**Safe Network** is a specialist community-based service offering clinical assessment and interventions for children whose sexualised behaviour is causing concern.



### Who we are

Safe Network provides specialist services for children whose sexual behaviour appears inappropriate for their age and is causing concern.

Our goal is to work with the child, their family and the other adults or agencies in their life to address the factors that are driving this behaviour, creating positive outcomes and a safer environment for the child, their family, friends, and the wider community.

Safe Network has been successfully providing therapeutic, prevention and education services throughout the upper North Island for over 30 years, with eight sites throughout Auckland, Northland, Waikato and Bay of Plenty. Our multi-disciplinary team includes psychologists, psychotherapists, counsellors, art therapists and social workers.

Safe Network services are primarily funded by our Government partners, Oranga Tamariki / Ministry for Children, the Ministry of Social Development and the Department of Corrections.

### When is sexual behaviour concerning or harmful?

It is normal and healthy for children to engage in some sexualised behaviours that are appropriate for their age. However, some behaviours may be age-inappropriate, hurt others or make them feel uncomfortable or confused.



Try or use our **Problem Sexual Behaviour indicator App**

Download the App or use the URL: <https://safenet.co.nz>

ANDROID APP ON Google play | Apple App Store | Enter URL or QR code

QR code

safe network .co.nz

safe network .co.nz

Safe Network's **Problem Sexual Behaviour Indicator App** can assist you to identify whether someone's behaviour is concerning or not.

### You may be concerned about the sexual behaviour of a child if:

- it is different from that of other children of the same age
- the sexual behaviour continues despite repeated requests to stop
- they appear 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
- they use sexual behaviour to hurt, frighten or upset other children
- the sexual behaviour is engaged in with children of different ages or developmental levels
- they use force, threats, bribery or coercion to get another child to participate in sexual behaviour
- they force another child to keep the sexual behaviour a secret
- the sexual behaviour progresses in frequency, intensity or intrusiveness over time
- their sexual behaviour is directed at adults who feel uncomfortable about it
- their 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.

Stopping concerning sexual behaviour in children may require specialist help that directly addresses their age-appropriate developmental needs.

## Our children's service

Safe Network's Kaitūhura Explorer™ programme is designed specifically for children aged 5-12 years. Developed in New Zealand and based on the latest research and international best practice, the programme's flexible and adaptive approach means every child receives support that is individually tailored to their strengths and their therapeutic needs.

Working closely with the child's family, whanau and other professionals ensures every child has the best possible support to change behaviours and move on towards a more positive future. This means that when our child clients complete their programme, we expect that they:

- are able to have healthy and safe relationships with others
- have fewer or no more incidents of concerning sexual behaviour
- can manage difficulties in new and healthy ways
- have a greater level of wellbeing and resilience.

Because the Kaitūhura Explorer™ programme is tailored to the individual child's needs, it can vary in duration and focus. Some children may only require a brief intervention that focusses on strengthening their environment and helping the adults in their life support positive, safe behaviours. Other children may need a more intensive programme of one-on-one therapy and family sessions, typically up to six months in duration.

## What is the process?

### Referral

Safe Network's Kaitūhura Explorer™ programme is open to referrals of children from government agencies, community organisations, schools, health professionals, parents and caregivers.

The first step in the process is for those wanting to refer a child to complete a referral form, available on our website.

### Assessment

Once we receive the referral form, we undertake an initial review to identify whether Safe Network's services are right for the child, and how best we can help meet their needs.

Where the needs are less acute, the child may be accepted directly into our brief intervention service that focusses on the child's environment and helping the

adults in their life support positive, safe behaviours.

For children with a higher level of need, we undertake a more comprehensive assessment, looking in more detail at information about their history and the sexualised behaviour causing concern. The assessment will typically cover a range of areas including personality traits, the child's strengths, resources available to support the child, the current issues and barriers they face, the effects and impact of their sexual behaviour on themselves and others, the safety of everyone concerned and the overall needs of the family, support network and community. Along with the child themselves, we also engage whanau, family members, caregivers and other professionals in this process.

The assessment process can vary depending on the client but usually involves the following steps:

**STEP 1** Two or three interviews with the child and key family members or support people



**STEP 2** Collection of information and reports from other agencies or professionals who may be involved



**STEP 3** Completion of questionnaires by the child and their adult family members or other support people

Following assessment, a detailed and confidential report is completed, confirming whether or not Safe Network's service are suitable for the child and recommending next steps. Subject to confidentiality provisions, a copy of this assessment report and recommendations will be sent to the referring agency or other appropriate people.

### Intervention

If the child's parent or guardian accepts our recommendation that the child takes part in our Kaitūhura Explorer™ programme, the child will be assigned one of our specialist clinicians to provide therapy and manage their progress through the programme. The duration of therapy for children varies based on the child's needs but is typically around six months. Therapy generally includes:

- weekly individual appointments with a clinician

- regular sessions with family/whanau
- regular review sessions with the child's support system.

## Our clients

Because our Kaitūhura Explorer™ programme is strengths-based, it can be adapted for each child to best reflect their age, culture and gender, as well as their preferred communication and learning styles. This enables us to provide services to:

- boys
- girls
- gender diverse children
- neuro-diverse children
- children with special needs
- children from different cultural and language groups.

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“Our son has a far more positive self and reflecting far more. Much happier and safer.”

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## Our locations

Safe Network provides services at our sites in:

- Regent, Whangarei, **Northland**
- Windsor Park, North Shore, **Auckland**
- Grafton, **Auckland**
- Manukau, **Auckland**
- Hamilton Central, **Waikato**
- Greerton, Tauranga, **Bay of Plenty**
- Rotorua Central, **Bay of Plenty**
- Whakatane, **Bay of Plenty**

Services may also be available online, where suitable.

Our staff can travel to other, smaller centres in these regions to meet with clients if appropriate. This is dependent on finding a suitable place to meet and the logistics involved.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Does your service work?

Yes. Feedback from family and whanau is unanimous about the positive difference Safe Network's programme has made for their child and their family. Although there is not yet any specific research on long-term outcomes for children who have been through Safe Network's programme, research into our youth programme shows a success rate of 90%, which is likely to be similar for children.

### Is this service confidential?

Safe Network will keep all client information confidential except where the client has consented for it to be released to a third party, where we are required to disclose it by law or where we raise a report of concern. We will only talk to people the child's parents or guardians have given us consent to contact.

### What ages are the children you work with?

We work with children from ages 5 to 12, after which our Whakahuranga Discovery™ programme for youth is available.

### Do you work with children with special needs?

Yes. We work with children with a range of special needs and tailor our service to suit their preferred learning styles.

### Do you work with girls?

Yes. Although not as common as in boys, girls also engage in concerning sexualised behaviour, often putting themselves at risk of harm from others. About 26% of the children we work with are girls.

### Do you work with different cultural groups?

Yes. The children we work with come from a range of cultural backgrounds and we tailor our service to respect and be responsive to their culture.

### Are there online options?

Yes. Although face-to-face appointments are preferred, we can offer online appointments where appropriate.

### Do Government agencies such as Oranga Tamariki need to be involved in making a referral to Safe Network?

No. We accept referrals directly from members of the public or other agencies and professionals. We would

**OVER 200**  
children worked  
with each year

**100%**  
of parents/  
caregivers  
say their child is  
doing better after  
Safe Network

only involve Oranga Tamariki if we were to raise a report of concern as per our Child Protection Policy.

**Do you include families when you work with children?**

Yes, working with families is a key part of a child's intervention. The extent of family work will depend on the child's needs and the commitment of the family.

**Will parents need to pay for their child to attend Safe Network?**

The Kaitūhura Explorer™ programme is fully funded by Oranga Tamariki, and there is no charge for taking part in the programme for the family or the referrer.

**What expertise does your clinical team have?**

Safe Network has specialised in working with concerning and harmful sexual behaviour for over 30 years. All members of our multi-disciplinary team of clinical staff are professionally registered or working towards this.

**What are the requirements for consent for your service?**

Informed consent is a legal requirement for all health services. With children this usually requires parents or guardians to consent on their behalf, unless a (generally older) child is competent enough to give informed consent for themselves. The consent of one parent is sufficient but if there is a parenting order in place from the court, then it is up to that parent to meet the requirements of the order. Recent court decisions make it unlikely that one parent can prevent a child accessing Safe Network's services by withholding consent. However, having the support of parents and guardians is important in supporting a child to participate in the Kaitūhura Explorer™ programme and benefit from it.

**Does my child's sexualised behaviour mean they have been sexually abused?**

No. Concerning sexual behaviour in children can result from one or more of a wide range of contributing factors, with sexual abuse being just one of these.

**Can we get appointments outside of school hours?**

Yes, subject to availability.

**What do you do if a child has also experienced their own sexual abuse?**

We can support them to access ACC-funded counselling for this and will liaise with that provider to coordinate our services.

**Will my child be stigmatised or labelled a 'sex offender' if they come to your service?**

No. We recognise that concerning sexual behaviour in children is just a way that a child may respond to other factors such as a mental health diagnosis, trauma, family issues or life experiences. Other children experiencing the same things may respond differently, e.g. violence, aggression, general anti-social behaviour. We work hard with the child, their family and their support systems (e.g. school) to ensure they are not labelled and stigmatised. Our approach is to build on the child's strengths and help them develop effective ways of coping, rather than dwelling on their sexualised behaviour or making them feel shame.

**How do I contact Safe Network?**

If you need assistance, contact us via the contact form on our website or the email address below. To make a referral, download a referral form from our website, complete it and forward it to us.



Successfully providing therapeutic, prevention and education services throughout the upper North Island for over 30 years.

Hope • Trust • Confidence •

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