

Youth Service

Whakahuranga Discovery™ programme



Safe Network is a specialist community-based service offering clinical assessment and interventions for youth who have engaged in harmful sexual behaviour towards others.



Who we are

Safe Network provides specialist services for young people who have engaged in harmful sexual behaviour towards others.

Our goal is to work with the young person, their family and the other agencies in their life to address the factors that are driving this behaviour, creating a safer environment and a more positive future for the young person, 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?

Sexual development is one of many areas of change during adolescence, and young people engage in and display a range of sexual behaviours that are healthy and normal for their age. But when these behaviours are harmful, action is needed to prevent further harm.

A promotional banner for the 'Problem Sexual Behaviour Indicator App'. It features a yellow background with a QR code on the left. Text reads: 'Try or use our Problem Sexual Behaviour indicator App'. Below this, there are icons for 'ANDROID APP ON Google play' and 'Apple App Store Enter URL or QR code'. To the right, the 'safenetwork' logo is displayed above the text 'Download the App or use the URL: <https://safenet.co.nz>'. At the bottom, there are images of a laptop and a smartphone displaying the app's interface.

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

Youth 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
- they appear driven to engage in sexual behaviour regardless of whether or not they will be punished or reprimanded
- others complain about their 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
- it includes using electronic technology to make, access or distribute images and videos of concerning and harmful sexual behaviour involving themselves or others
- 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 harmful sexual behaviour in young people may require specialist help that directly addresses their age-appropriate developmental needs.

Our youth service

Safe Network's Whakahuranga Discovery™ programme is designed specifically for young people aged 13-17 years. Developed in New Zealand and based on the latest research and international best practice, the programme's flexible and adaptive approach means every young person receives support that is individually tailored to their strengths and their therapeutic needs.

Working closely with family, whanau and other professionals ensures the young person has the best possible support to discover new ways of thinking, change behaviours and move on towards a more positive future. This approach means that when our youth clients complete their programme, we expect that they:

- are able to have safe intimate relationships with others
- have fewer or no more incidents of concerning or harmful sexual behaviour
- gain acceptance as a safe, responsible member of their family, whanau and community
- are living a safe, healthy and balanced life.

Because the Whakahuranga Discovery™ programme is tailored to the individual young person's needs, it can vary in duration and focus. Some clients may only require a brief intervention that focuses on strengthening their environment and helping the adults in their life support positive, safe behaviours. Others may need a more intensive programme of one-on-one therapy, group sessions and family sessions, typically up to twelve months in duration.

What is the process?

Referral

If you are concerned about the sexual behaviour of a young person, you can get help by contacting Safe Network and arranging a referral to our services.

Safe Network's Whakahuranga Discovery™ programme is open to self-referrals or referrals from government agencies, community organisations, schools, health professionals, parents and caregivers.

The first step in the process is to complete and send through 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 young person, and how best we can help meet their needs.

Where the needs are less acute, the young person may be accepted directly into our brief intervention service that focuses on their environment and helping support positive and safe behaviour choices.

For young people with a higher level of need, we undertake a more comprehensive assessment, looking in more detail at information about their history and the sexual behaviour that is causing concern. The assessment will typically cover a range of areas including personality traits, their strengths, resources available to support them, 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 young person 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 young person 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 young person 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 young person 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.

76% of our youth clients feel more positive about their future



Intervention

If our recommendation that the young person takes part in our Whakahuranga Discovery™ programme is accepted, they will be assigned one of our specialist clinicians to provide therapy and manage their progress through the programme. The duration of therapy for our youth clients varies based on each young person's needs but is typically around twelve months. Therapy generally includes:

- weekly group meetings (except for female clients)
- weekly individual appointments with a clinician
- regular review sessions with family/whanau and support people
- intensive group therapy or adventure-based interventions.

Our clients

Because our Whakahuranga Discovery™ programme is strengths-based, it can be adapted for each young person to best reflect their developmental stage, culture and gender, as well as their preferred communication and learning styles. This enables us to provide services to:

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

“I had family issues but not now. I was in hell before but now I'm back on my feet. I have hope in myself.”

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.

90% of our youth clients will not engage in any harmful sexual behaviour again



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. Research shows that 90% of adolescents who complete a Safe Network programme will not engage in any further harmful sexual behaviour.

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 client has given us consent to contact.

Do you work with youth with special needs?

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

Do you work with females?

Yes. Although not as common as in males, females also engage in concerning or harmful sexual behaviour, often putting themselves at risk from others. About 6% of the youth we work with are female.

Do you work with different cultural groups?

Yes. The youth 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 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 youth?

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

Will clients need to pay to attend Safe Network?

The Whakahuranga Discovery™ programme is fully funded by Oranga Tamariki, and there is no charge for taking part in the programme for the young person, their family or the referrer.

Can we get appointments outside of school or work hours?

Yes, subject to availability.

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 consent requirements for your service?

Informed consent is a legal requirement for all health services. Youth are generally competent enough to give informed consent for themselves, but where they aren't, it requires parents or guardians to consent on their behalf. The consent of one parent is sufficient but if there is a parenting order from the court in place 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 young person accessing Safe Network's services by withholding consent. However, having the support of parents and guardians can be important in supporting a young person to participate in the Whakahuranga Discovery™ programme and benefit from it.

Do clients have to admit to claims of harmful sexual behaviour made about them, confess their harmful sexual behaviour to others or apologise to people their harmful sexual behaviour may have impacted?

No. Clients are not pressured to confess or admit to others about harmful sexual behaviour, nor required to apologise to anyone impacted by it. Although this can be an important step in family reconciliation and healing, it is not a requirement of our therapy process. Our Whakahuranga Discovery™ programme is strengths-based and focusses on helping clients develop the skills to lead better, safer and more fulfilling lives.

Will clients be stigmatised or labelled 'sex offenders' if they come to your service?

No. We recognise that concerning or harmful sexual behaviour in young people is usually a response to other factors, such as mental health diagnoses, trauma, family issues or life experiences. Other youth experiencing the same things may respond differently, e.g. violent behaviour, abusing alcohol or drugs, engaging in anti-social activities. We work hard with the youth, their family and their support systems (e.g. school) to ensure they are not labelled and stigmatised. Our approach is to build on the youth's strengths and help them develop effective ways of coping, rather than dwelling on their sexualised behaviour or making them feel shame.

Does harmful sexual behaviour towards children or underage young people mean someone is a 'paedophile'?

No. This is not a term that is used in clinical settings anymore and we do not use it with any of the clients we work with.

What if there are also other issues to be worked through (e.g. mental health issues, alcohol or drug problems)?

We can support clients to access appropriate support in these other areas and coordinate this with the services Safe Network provides.

Does concerning or harmful sexualised behaviour mean a young person has been sexually abused?

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

What do you do if a client 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.

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.

Hope • Trust • Confidence •