

Adolescents

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1. Adolescents - What does the Stop Adolescent service provide_

Tēnā koe, my name is Alicia Keefe. I work for Stan Children's Services and my role is a mana ake kaimahi. Kia ora, ko Lara Baskin tōku ingoa. My name is Lara Baskin and I am the Team Lead for the Adolescent Service at STOP. Kia ora, my name's Joel. I work at STOP in the Adolescent Service across the Christchurch, Invercargill and sometimes the Dunedin team. I'm a Registered Counsellor. First of all, I just want to ask, what is STOP? So, we're an organisation with children, adolescents and an adult service. And we're working with people and their families where they have engaged in harmful or concerning sexual behaviour.

So, specifically in the Adolescent Service, if a young person has engaged in some behaviour that has really crossed that line into that harmful or concerning sexual behaviour. Then we would be working with them to do an assessment of their behaviour and that person. And then working out how we're going to intervene with them and their family. And what age group do you work with? I know you've said Adolescent, but what age group is there? So, we generally go from 12 to 18. We also have the children's service. So, sometimes when the young person's on the cusp, we'll sort of have a discussion around where he is.

We'll have a discussion around which service they might fit with. And we have had young people who have come into our service at 18 and then have continued past that. So, we're not sort of strict on our ages. So, how do you get your referrals? Do you want to talk to the staff? Sure, yeah. I guess there are a number of referral pathways into STOP. I guess STOP does straddle the youth justice and care protection. And therapeutic sector. And so, with that in mind, we take referrals from police, youth aid, community counsellors. And then through the youth court as an outcome or recommended by an FGC.

But there are other community referrals as well, such as schools, GPs. We currently don't have a self-referral pathway. But parents or caregivers can call up and seek advice around the best way for a referral to be made. Yeah, we do have a lot of parents and caregivers that do contact us through that pathway when they've discovered something or something's become known to them. And then they'll

give us a call. And we'll work through that to work out whether that is something that the referral will come from Oranga Tamariki or whether they might go and speak to their GP and for their GP to refer us.

So, we'll sort of walk them through that process.

2. Adolescents - Engaging with whānau

If whānau disengage, what does that look like? Is it something that is mandatory, if it's through something like the airport or the place? Yeah, I think that's really dependent on the pathway that the young person has been referred to us. So we always want to, whoever has referred to us, we try and keep them updated throughout. But ultimately, we're a therapeutic service, so we always want to try and put that therapeutic relationship and that rapport at the front end, so that we're not having to sort of fall back on those mandates. But yeah, there are times that we do have to inform people who have referred to us, and then that's sort of passed back to them.

And we try and sit in that. It's not a therapeutic space, but we are really engaging with the young people, with their whānau, to just help them move through a really stressful time and to just go forward and have a good life. So yeah, we hope that that doesn't happen, but we understand that chaos happens and lives happen, and we sort of fall back on the referrer to sort of... Disengagement. As in usually? Disengagement becomes an issue with our service. I think it's a free service for all adolescents. So that's a huge factor in engagement as well. And we're very, we can be very flexible. Sometimes we can even meet online or on occasion go out to different places to do the therapeutic work.

So there is the flexibility there to support that if disengagement becomes an issue. Nice. A whānau are part of your work as well. Did they come with their tamariki? Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. So in the adolescent service, that's something which we hold very strongly. And so that whānau engagement, and that's based on the research that actually if we're going to get good outcomes for young people who have engaged in concern or harbour sexual behaviour, it's having the family on board with them. Some of our longer term interventions, having a trauma and attachment sort of focus, then the family are really key in that.

So typically if a young person was coming into our service for assessment intervention, then we would have two clinicians assigned, an individual and a family clinician. So they would co-work the case. That allows the parent or the caregiver to have a person, you know, that they are directly linked with and the young person has theirs, and then we come together in joint sessions. Yeah. We also, as part of an intervention, the young person might be recommended to engage in group therapy as well. So it's quite a wrap around programme, service, therapeutic service where you've got individual therapy, family therapy, group therapy.

And sometimes I call it systems therapy because sometimes the system needs a bit of therapy. But actually that means liaising with the wider system of the whānau, the young person, and or any other professionals that are involved to get them in on holding the level of, I guess, care but also accountability. Great.

3. Adolescents - Assessment and engagement with a young person

is there a certain amount of time that you do spend with someone or is it depending on each person yeah so if a young person was to be referred to our service for an assessment we we allow we allow 10 weeks for that assessment and that's um you know because we're talking about some pretty um hard stuff and stuff that we might not talk about straight away and so we allow that time so that we can build up that engagement and we can get a really full picture of this young person's life their upbringing sort of what things might have led them towards crossing the line um so we do have quite a you know an ability to spend a time assessing and then once we've finished our assessment um then we recommend intervention but that can be quite varied you know if we're looking at short-term intervention but sometimes it can be they can go for a really year um and um but it really is specific to that young person what they need um and also their engagement as well and how long it takes us to work through some of the stuff we're working through um but there's also um a part of our work where they might we might not do a full assessment we might just think we're just going to do a brief intervention and then we might just be doing some educational work with the young person and their family yeah and i guess our assessment key to that is is if we're doing a comprehensive assessment you know it's good to look at developmental points so over the lifespan of the young person up until that point what's happened in their life that may have shaped their perception of themselves of um of sex and or how they relate to another so that might include looking at trauma now that that continues to shape in the world when we come to the end of our assessment we come together as a as a group with the whānau and it may be any other professionals that might be involved in the case and we we propose certain recommendations and we don't impose them so it's a super collaborative approach where we do sit down and we go this is what we think could help but we're keen to hear your thoughts too yeah

4. Adolescents – Building relationships between adolescents and parents

What messages can parents, caregivers and adults give to enhance thriving, safe relationships between rangatahi and adolescents? Yeah, I think it's a huge part of our work. Yes, young people come to us for specific reasons, but ultimately we're looking to the future. We want them to go forward as young adults and have a good sense of relationships, what's safe, what's healthy and just how to do relationship really well. Adolescence is a time where it's about figuring that stuff out. And obviously, parents and caregivers and adults are so key in giving those messages. And I think in the current landscape of the online world, it's even more important for adults to be given those messages to young people.

So it's those conversations that come up and just open up that curious conversation around what they notice about their friends' relationship or what they notice with whoever they're following online. And just as many opportunities to open those conversations. Because I suppose, teenagers are notorious for wanting to shut things down and to feel embarrassed. And I think it's really important for parents and caregivers to continue opening that space up. Because I think a lot of what young people are learning about relationships as teenagers is it's really nuanced. There's not a clear cut. This is how you do this.

And there's some things that are clear, but there's some really nuanced things that are quite difficult that you just learn. And as you go in, I think parents probably have a lot better outcomes when they're sat shoulder to shoulder with young people, having conversations about awkward topics when they're in the car, when they're out for a walk, when they're cooking a meal in the kitchen. And as opposed to sitting down and having a really intense chat around what does a good relationship look like? What do you need to remember when you're in a relationship? Yeah. I guess when it comes to bringing up those tricky topics around inappropriate or concerning, maybe even harmful sexual behaviour, having a conversation doesn't necessarily look like one conversation, but it's a series of conversations over a period of time that might elicit more information over time.

But I guess the hope is that it's a cool engagement. There's enough relationship first before enough relationships around some of the difficult conversations. So is that something that Stop focuses on initially with the engagement building with the tamariki? Instead of going straight into maybe what's happened, is it more about that relationship building initially? Absolutely. Yeah. At Stop, I guess, we're striving to step towards becoming a bicultural organisation. And it does look like starting with whakawhinanga taonga. It does look like making connections and building rapport, therapeutic alliance, all those good things.

Because that's the therapeutic vessel that will carry the young person through the programme. So we always start there. But we also name it first as well. So it's really important that at Stop we don't beat around the bush, so to speak. But we name the fact that we are an organisation that works with young people who have engaged in harmful sexual behaviour, as opposed to other phrases or labels that you might hear thrown around it or towards young people. We make that distinction, but we name it upfront. Accountability and therapeutic work together. Yeah. Yeah. And I think sometimes role modelling that to, you know, parents and caregivers who might not feel comfortable sort of using the language and naming behaviours or just having conversations around sex and relationships.

And I suppose in the engagement's a big part of it to help people feel comfortable and safe. But also at role models, actually, we just are going to have these conversations. Yeah. Because if we don't, you know, young people are not getting the messages from their safe adults. They're getting the messages from peers on the internet. And yes, we've got to kind of be brave and courageous to be able to sort of just talk about the stuff that sometimes as grown ups we don't talk about or that it feels like a taboo topic.

5. Adolescents – What is meant by age appropriate sexualised behaviour _

So what do you mean about age-appropriate sexualised behaviour in adolescence? So we often use, different terms get used, but sort of that age expected is a term we sometimes use. Sometimes people talk about normal sexual behaviour for the age and I think normal is quite difficult because we were talking about this the other day about how, you know, what one person's normal is totally different to another person's normal. Like what one person in a family home, different families have different rules around, you know, doors being open and levels of, you know, being dressed or clothing. So it's really hard to talk about normal, but I think for all young people in terms of the, you know, brain development that's going on and hormonal changes that are going on, no matter what background you're from, what culture, what values, you know, you're from, it's really difficult to talk about normal.

And so I think that age expected is a term we often use, but for those that we don't have as much knowledge, we're going to go back to the question of age expected, you know, when it comes to the age expected behaviours. And, without listing off all the behaviours, you know, some of them are going to be those behaviours that might have parents or caregivers worried, and it might not fit with that parent or caregiver's own values.

So in terms of examples of those, you know, we do have a period, you know, in my research, we kind of use the term age expected in our older children a really great resource on our website that goes through each age and breaks it down because I suppose if you think

around the teenage age range what we'd expect to see from a 13 year old is going to be very different to an 18 year old so it breaks it down and I think it can be really helpful for parents, caregivers, even professionals sometimes to just kind of re-evaluate and to have a look through those lists of behaviours and to think oh yeah that's that is probably what I'd expect to see from that young person.

Can you talk more about any specifics?

Yeah well I think just in terms of acknowledging in terms of human development, adolescence is a very formative time for the young person because they are really looking at their own identity, they're making sense of who they want to be in the world and they're going through some really rapid physical changes through puberty so there are hormonal changes that are shifting to and of course what really matters for a young person and the research time and time reflects this is that young people take the lead from other peer-aged young people so if you've got young people that are you know if it's age typical to be to be sharing sexualized content you may have young people who want to gravitate towards that we're not saying that that's appropriate or okay but sexuality to be attracted to someone developing a sense of attraction I guess we don't want to we don't we don't want to stop that process because it is it is a quote-unquote natural process to to develop a sense of what they're attracted to but it's about doing that in a way where there are trusted and safe adults in the young person's life who can help shape and counter message some of the some of the messages that the big multi-million dollar corporations are promoting yeah and I think the you know what Joel was saying that you know what's age expected you know in terms of that starting off developing relationships and whatever term is used but like that hooking up sort of early-stage formative relationships is all really age expected and then you combine that with technology and then you do then end up seeing the sexualized images you know being shared which that then brings up the legal context around that so then you've got this okay this is age expected but actually now this is getting into that realm where you know if you're taking an image saying oh send an image what that means in a legal context and I think there's a video that was made by one of the other organizations which talks to some of that legal the legal context around that so it's really it's a really difficult area to kind of go this is age expected and this is okay because there's some age expected stuff which starts to fall into that in that realm and I think it's really I think in the you know for the children's space it's a bit clearer around what's age expected and that's okay and we're used to sort of managing behaviors with younger children and then when it comes to the the adolescent space we know there's these age expected behaviors but it's a lot there's a lot of gray areas in what is what is okay and what's not okay and when it doesn't align with perhaps a parent caregiver or whanau's own values and it goes against them then that could be space as well but I think it is just important that we that we you know no matter what your your values are that we're just thinking actually this is a stage that everybody goes through no matter what background you come from and I think also just to acknowledge like we are sexual beings we are visceral beings we are sensory beings we experience the world in a number of different ways and particularly with you know with puberty kicking in also has effects risk taking as a part of being an adolescent and it's something that's that's that's important because we always are learning to take risks and life's a bit of an adventure sometimes so you actually do need to learn how to take risks but to do that safely hopefully with the guidance of trusted and safe adults yeah and I think that you know combining risk-taking with sexualized behavior and that's when you've got a parent and caregiver often like it it can be a scary scary place but just again taking that moment to pause and just to kind of take stop because again the big reactions is what's going to probably lead to a young person not sharing and so yeah holding in mind that that you know these potentially risk-taking yeah age expected behaviors are happening and to just take a moment for how we respond and to just be to be curious and to still show that support for the young person instead of a you know a big response that that can be like you said before like that shaming response

6. Navigating conversations about pornography

So we were talking about online content before. How would you suggest that parents and caregivers can navigate conversations around pornography to their children? Great question. It's something that we're seeing just more and more of in our work. I think it's huge. Pornography has been around for a long, long time, but the landscape that pornography has now is quite different. How accessible it is has made a big difference. So I think there's research that would say maybe between the age of 10 to 12, which would be when young people would first be viewing pornography, maybe that's accidentally or seeking it out.

So I think the age that the young people have seen it is a lot younger. The ease of accessing it is a lot easier. And then the content of what's actually depicted in that is probably different to what it was a generation or two previously. So I think it's really important that parents and caregivers are aware of that. Otherwise, they may not have that. They may not feel motivated to feel like they've got to keep an eye on what's being viewed online. So yeah, it's pretty huge. And I think that it's probably a way that a lot of young people are receiving their sex education is through pornography.

So again, that importance of the adults in their life being able to counter message some of what they're seeing so that they don't think that is how relationships go. And I think we could say we don't want young people to be seeing it.

we also know that's probably not realistic so we usually take the approach with parents to be talking about how they can have the young person view it through a critical lens so they can really be thinking what am i seeing here like is this actually how relationships go

um is there is there any form of consent being shown in what i'm seeing um how would that work in real life because they don't usually show that in pornography and so just having those real um again open conversations taking from the perspective that that the young person is has seen it and probably will continue to see it i think it's um yeah again the the parent or um the caregiver being sort of educated themselves in what's actually online and being aware of what yeah i think there's a risk to respond i guess we want to as as caregivers and parents we want to be responding in a way that's proportional to um what's being watched or consumed with that we don't want to under respond but we don't want to over respond much in the same way actually in how we work at staff in terms of our intervention we um you know sometimes there's a number of laws that have been broken and so an appropriate proportional response is that there are police involvement and then it might be on somebody in certain situations um that's not necessary because the response i was just going to say in regards to proportionality we tag on but there are 168 hours in a week i actually often sit down with a young person we go how many hours do you reckon are in a week 168 wow that's a lot of hours imagine what you could do with all that well should be sleeping for at least 63 of those okay so what's that you know minus so you get 105 hours to play with okay what are you doing with your 105 hours a week you know i guess in that there's there's schooling there's eating there's mixing with peers there's also incident time yeah however much incident time is being you know you can add that into the math and then how much of that incident time is unsupervised a lot from the whole of it um and then how much of that incident time is harmful messaging or contains harmful messaging around how to relate sexually or or non-sexually but harmfully so you know you might you might do the maths on that whatever it comes out um you know how many hours of counter messaging is there to to counter some of those harmful messages a week yeah you know so i guess um some of the conversations that we have with rangatahi and their and their whānau that you know and and their families that might be the first time that they're hearing counter messages to some of some of the ways that they've been explicitly or implicitly taught how to relate to another response is to count a decision in summary to do that through talking about what it means to be in a healthy relationship sexually non-sexually and i think um yeah having a conversation about pornography with a young person for a parent is is always going to be challenged so again i think it's just those just giving it a go even if it falls flat one time give it a go again and just name it and just come from a place of we know it's out there we know it every young person's seeing it um and yeah and keep on coming back to the conversation about the stuff that it that it shows and some of the violent content um context that it depicts and there's a really um helpful new zealand-based website which we um use a lot of the light project and um you know i think just captures some of those statistics around um the percentage of um videos that depict violence and the level of violence there that is in some of the um the pornography that will be seen by young people um and yeah i think just parents knowing that stuff is really helpful to make them go oh gosh i really need to have these conversations and i have a better sense of perhaps what counter messaging of hey what does this look like in real life by already having the conversations either with their mates or with the internet so get in there as well um because probably better coming from you know trusted safe adult who knows a little bit about uh yeah what's what's fake and

7. Adolescents - Tips for keeping young people safe online

What are some top tips to keep Rangatahi adolescents safe online in relation to sexual behaviour? There's a number of resources out there. I'll just start with this one. It's just been developed by the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, but it's called Take It Down. It's a software that's been developed to basically try and take unsolicited or basically nude selfies, try and take them off the internet. So if you've sent a nude selfie and you've gone, oh no, I really wish I didn't send that. There is no time machine to go back in time to try and undo that. But there is this. It's a new software that you can report on.

So basically every image has a hash. How it works is that you contact the centre, you let them know the image that's out there, and they can basically work out the hash that's out there. And all of the other big social media companies that have subscribed to Take It Down will go and find the hash and remove that image. Wow. From the internet. Or from those servers. Yeah. So it's pretty flash, pretty new. It is. Really? Yeah. And proof of it. Yeah. I think it's great that that's been developed because I think, you know, coming back to the conversation earlier around risk taking young people and how widespread it is to be sharing sort of sexualised images.

And perhaps young people doing that without thinking of the consequences and where that image is going to end up. And, you know, if this relationship with this person ends up falling over, what's going to happen to that image? So it can really snowball. And yeah, there's a nice sort of fallback, I suppose, for parents. Because again, it's about young people. They might have shared images. And then if things change. If things start to snowball, we want to know that they can go to a parent or a caregiver or somebody to tell them, oh, look, this has happened. Rather than trying to deal with it for themselves.

And again, just trying to, I feel like I've said it a lot now, but for parents to just try to be calm in their response. Yeah, we're going to work through this. And at least with that resource, the Take It Down website. There's somewhere for them to go to make sure that it's not going to end up, you know, sheared around the internet. But I think it's the world of, I mean, I think the term sexting gets used a lot. But, you know, whether that's a term that is still used now, I'm not sure. But, you know, the idea that, you know, sharing of images is hugely widespread. And, you know, trying to have the conversations with parents.

And young people up front about thinking around, like, what are the risks of that? And to try and sort of get them really, yeah, before they do that. Because there is a legal context to that. And also there's the potential harm to themselves if that image starts getting sheared and that they don't have the control over it. So, yeah, really important to be having those conversations and getting them aware of the risks. So they can try and start thinking, yeah, thinking of consequences. And technically, like in under New Zealand law. Like, you know. Any image of a young person under the age of 18 would not be, it would be considered as child sexual exploitation material.

So it's, there is that. So the place would come under their enemy's sake? Or how, do you know what that looks like? I think because it's so widespread. I think it comes to the police attention in some cases, but a lot won't. So a lot of this is just parents dealing with it and going, oh my gosh, I've just discovered my own person. Is doing this. And I think the thing for, you know, for when it sort of starts to become, you know, really concerning is that with the behaviors that happen online around sort of sharing of images is around considering about what the intent is behind that. So if the intent is around that connection with peers.

Yes, it's, it's concerning. It's concerning because young people are putting themselves at risk and, you know, images could be shared. But it probably wouldn't come to police attention or wouldn't come to our attention unless there was sort of an intent behind that that was some harmful intent. So if the image was used with some threats or, you know, that sort of behavior, that's one way we're starting to think, okay, we're a bit more concerned here that a young person is starting to share images. But it's concerning in terms of building that trust. And I think that's what keeps people connected among themselves is that in terms of being a family in terms of that, like connecting with peers, and how, yeah, how, how it becomes so normalized.

I, I think it's just so important that, you know, schools, teachers, parents, all just like really talking about it because it's

8. Adolescents – Resources

Stop is part of what's called a Trinity Alliance. So there's three agencies across New Zealand that works in this field. Stop covers the South Island, Well Stop, the Lower North, and then Safe Networks, the Upper North. Safe Networks have developed an app. I think it's called a Sexual Problem Indicator app. Sorry, app. And you can go into the app and you can put in your the age of either yourself or the person that you're working with. Then there's just a quick list of maybe 25 questions and based on your answers that will output whether or not those behaviors would be okay, concerning, or problematic and or harmful and may require like that.

It will make a suggestion whether or not you should go and consult your local HSB service. So in the case of South Island, Stop. So here's some of the resources we mentioned. The LIGHT project is a great website and that sort of is that the pornography landscape. That's helpful for young people, for professionals and for parents. Also mentioned Take It Down. We developed a resource. And there's also a really great I guess sex education focused website called Beyond the Birds and Bees, that was developed somewhere here at UC. And I think that can be a helpful resource for parents who are thinking, well, I need to have this counter message in around sex education and they've got some questions.

How do I talk about this and so yeah, all sorts of ideas. I'm talking about sex education. about consent basic sort of biological sexual development type questions is a great resource