



Note from Brendan

Kia ora koutou, as we approach the end of the year, two issues related to our delivery of harmful sexual behaviour therapy services stick in my mind.

The first is my wonderment about whether what we have done is enough, and how we can continue striving to do better. This might be about consistently identifying and removing barriers for client service entry, strengthening staff skill and capability, or have sufficient funding from Government to deliver the right services in the right locations. Continuing to address these issues will ensure clients get the harmful sexual behaviour help they need.

The other major issue that I'm stuck with is, looking forward to next year, how are we going to change the trajectory of sexual violence in Aotearoa? Ministry of Justice figures indicate that sexual violence victimisation has continued to increase (up 3% last year). What is it going to take to stop this, and ensure that people can have age appropriate, safe and consensual sexual relationships. We've got our work cut out to counter what many of our tamariki and rangatahi see and learn on social media, and we need to ensure that there are safe and positive counter-messages. We need to start positive and preventative conversations about consent, sexual relationships, appropriate and inappropriate behaviour early. These might be around the dinner table, in schools, rugby clubs, institutions, and student flats.

As a harmful sexual behaviour treatment sector, we have started conversations with our government partners to develop a New Zealand plan to intervene early and prevent sexual violence before it occurs. You can read more about this later in the newsletter. I am buoyed by the support from across the sexual violence prevention sector for this work, to sit alongside improved and expanded services to survivors, tertiary treatment services for people already exhibiting concerning or harmful sexual behaviour, and interventions designed to make the digital landscape a safer place for all New Zealanders.

Finally, I wanted to take the opportunity to thank you for your ongoing support to Stop and our Kaupapa, 'He hapori wātea taitōkai - A community free from sexual harm'. Our work can only be successful with the support of families, whānau, and communities.

Thank you and we look forward to working with you in 2026.

Meri Kirihimete ki a koe me te whānau,

Stop Chief Executive
Brendan

Proposal for a National Prevention Strategy

A Shared Vision for Prevention

Stop recently met with Emma Powell and The Centre for Family Violence and Sexual Violence Prevention to propose: The development of a National Sexual Violence Prevention Strategy for Aotearoa. As part of this discussion, we shared the following evidence to advocate for a coordinated, prevention-focused approach, one that aligns agencies, reduces fragmentation, and focuses on stopping sexual harm before it occurs.

Why action is urgent

Sexual violence remains one of New Zealand's most urgent public health issues. One in three women and one in eight men have experienced sexual assault, with an estimated social and economic cost of \$6.9 billion each year. Despite this, our current response system is primarily reactive, fragmented and reported sexual violence is continuing to rise. These figures underscore why prevention must be proactive, not reactive.

Globally countries such as [Scotland](#), [Australia](#), the [UK](#) and the [US](#) already operate national prevention frameworks. Aotearoa is falling behind these global trends, and the need for a coordinated national approach has never been more crucial.

Prevention starts before harm occurs

We cannot treat or prosecute our way out of sexual violence. A Primary Health Prevention approach, focused on reducing the number of actual and potential perpetrators, is essential for achieving meaningful long-term change. The US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) supports this approach, concluding that a “decrease in the number of actual and potential perpetrators in the population is necessary to achieve measurable reductions on the prevalence of sexual violence ([DeGue, Simon, et al., 2012](#)). To achieve measurable reduction in prevalence, we need to act early.

A [2023 Australian study](#) provides critical insight:

1 in 6 men reported sexual feelings for children and/or having sexually offended against a child. Extrapolated to NZ context, this equates to approximately 260,000 men.

Those with sexual feelings towards children were significantly more likely to:

- Work with children (3x)
- Report their own childhood sexual abuse (6x)
- Watch violent pornography (11x)
- View bestiality porn (26x)
- Purchase sexual content online (16x)
- 29.6% expressed wanting help, highlighting a major opportunity for early intervention

We also know that of those who commit sexual harm are more likely to have done so before the age of 17, underscoring the importance of early intervention, especially with young people who present risk indicators. These findings highlight that prevention cannot be one dimensional. To respond effectively, we need a structured, layered and multi-pronged approach that addresses risk across the population and at varying stages.

Building a Comprehensive Framework

To achieve this, we need a layered approach that addresses risk at every stage:



What a National Strategy Could Achieve

A National Strategy would provide the structure and alignment currently missing across the sector. Drawing on international evidence frameworks, a coordinated approach would bring together agencies across health (HNZ, ACC), education (MOE), justice (MoJ, Police & Corrections), social services (MSD, OT), digital safety (DIA) and for purpose NGO sector.

- Start early, start wide, prioritising early intervention across health, education, justice, digital safety and social service systems and increasingly focus on higher risk groups with secondary and tertiary prevention.
- Address online environments, recognising where risk develops and where harm first occurs
- Engage rangatahi and tamariki, who experience digital risk earlier and more frequently than adults
- Make it evidence based. Build on existing initiatives, identify gaps, and embed a continuous improvement cycle.
- Strengthen workforce capability, enabling consistent, high-quality practice nationwide

This approach aligns sector actions, supports consistent implementation, and ensures New Zealand's prevention system is coordinated, modern, and fit for purpose.

Our Position

Stop strongly supports and advocates for the development of a National Sexual Violence Prevention Strategy. A unified, evidence-based, prevention-focused approach offers one of Aotearoa's greatest opportunities to reduce sexual harm, protect survivors, prevent reoffending, and build safer communities.

We are committed to creating a community free from sexual harm. We recognise this vision cannot be achieved alone, but through coordinated, collaborative, and strategic partnerships, it becomes possible.

Problematic Pornography Programme 2026

Stop has identified a growing gap in early preventative responses to problematic pornography use and its potential escalation to sexual harm. In order to remain responsive to emerging community needs and to uphold our vision of a community free from sexual harm, we are pleased to introduce our new Problematic Pornography Programme, a preventative initiative designed to support individuals experiencing excessive or compulsive pornography use.

Evidence shows that while many individuals view pornography without harm, problematic or escalating use is linked to anxiety, depression, loneliness, relationship difficulties, and shifts in sexual expectations (Vieira & Griffiths, 2024). Repeated exposure and desensitisation can push individuals toward increasingly extreme material, elevating risk for some to engage in harmful or illegal sexual behaviour.

In Aotearoa, this sits against a concerning backdrop. The Department of Internal Affairs' Digital Child Exploitation Filtering System (DCEFS) blocked over one million attempts to access child sexual abuse material (CSAM) in 2024, and up to 30,000 URL's every day. These numbers highlight the hidden demand for illegal content and the importance of preventative intervention.

Why Early Intervention Matters

Problematic pornography use increases vulnerability to:

- Desensitisation and escalation to more extreme content
- Adoption of violent or coercive sexual scripts
- Distorted thinking about consent, entitlement, and partner expectations
- Objectification and coercive sexual attitudes
- Risks of transitioning into illegal content
- Engagement in harmful sexual behaviour (HSB)

About the Programme

Our structured 12-session intervention integrates:

- CBT and ACT to challenge cognitive distortions, permission-giving beliefs, and unhealthy sexual scripts.
- Motivational interviewing to strengthen commitment to change
- Neuroscience-based education on the reward cycle, desensitisation, and how pornography influences arousal patterns
- Skills for emotional regulation, urge management, and practical access-reduction strategies
- Relapse prevention and safety planning specific to preventing escalation into harmful or illegal sexual behaviour

This programme supports individuals to understand the function of their pornography use, interrupt distorted sexual beliefs, build healthier intimacy, and reduce risk to self, partners, and the wider community.

[Contact us to find out more](#)

Give a little - Make a big difference



Help us achieve our vision

A community free from
sexual harm

Donate to our
Give A Little Page



Help us to achieve our vision of 'He hapori wātea taitōkai – A Community Free from Sexual Harm'. Please show your support by donating today.

One in four girls and one in six boys in Aotearoa experience sexual harm before age 18, with lifelong impacts on individuals, whānau, and communities. At Stop our vision, drives our prevention-focused work with community professionals.

Your donation directly helps us to:

- Deliver prevention training and workshops to community-based professionals across Te Waipounamu.
- Provide resources and guidance to those working with tamariki, rangatahi, whānau and tāngata whaikaha.
- Build the confidence and capability of frontline kaimahi to respond early to concerning or harmful sexual behaviours.
- Strengthen community safety through integrated prevention, education, and therapeutic support.
- Together, we can reduce sexual harm, support recovery, and create safer communities for future generations.

Support Stop today and make a meaningful difference.

[Donate Today](#)



Christmas closing dates

Stop will be closed from:

***Thursday 25th December 2025 - Sunday 11th January 2026**

Please call us on: 03 353 0257 or email us on info@stop.org.nz to confirm regional office dates, as these may differ.



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