

Working therapeutically with adults who experience sexual attraction to minors: Insights from a national pilot.

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During 2022 and 2023, the workshop presenters Sarah Christofferson and Gwenda Willis led a national pilot of a therapeutic intervention designed for adults living in the New Zealand community who experience sexual attraction towards children/young people. The intervention was designed and piloted with government funding by Sarah and Gwenda along with their research team and a team of clinicians, and is known as *Stand Strong, Walk Tall (SSWT)*. The dual aims of the SSWT approach are to support child sexual abuse prevention, as well as to enhance client wellbeing.

This workshop will briefly overview the SSWT background and approach, including the intervention framework, theoretical underpinnings and philosophy. Results from the national pilot, which established preliminary empirical support for the SSWT approach, will be succinctly presented. Thereafter the workshop will take a skills focus. Participants will be introduced to selected SSWT Clinician's Guide content for working therapeutically adults who experience sexual attraction towards minors, including formulation and individualised treatment planning from a Good Lives Model perspective, helping clients develop skills and strategies for managing their attractions in safe ways, and navigating confidentiality and disclosure in the New Zealand legal context.

With prevalence research suggesting that conservatively some 50,000 to 100,000 New Zealanders may experience attraction to minors, this workshop will have broad appeal for those working in private practice, or in other roles in which they may encounter clients who seek help to understand and manage their experience of attraction to minors. Taking a solely risk-focused approach with such clients may be counter-productive and lead to lost opportunities for this important preventive work, yet professionals who they turn to are often understandably unsure and ill-equipped to provide effective care. This workshop will provide attendees with a greater level of understanding, and equip them with the foundations to engage effectively with a highly stigmatised client group.



Sarah Christofferson, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor in Clinical Psychology at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand, and a Registered Clinical Psychologist. Her research interests include the therapeutic and systemic prevention of sexual abuse, assessment and treatment approaches for people who have sexually offended, strategies for measuring therapeutic change, and the valid integration of change into risk evaluations.



Gwenda Willis, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor in Clinical Psychology at the University of Auckland, New Zealand, and Registered Clinical Psychologist. Her research and clinical interests focus on strengths-based approaches to psychological assessment and treatment in forensic/correctional settings and sexual abuse prevention.