

Working with Problem Sexualised Behaviour in the Community

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Over the past several years however an increased incidence of problem sexualised behaviour by young males aged 6 to 12 years of age has been noted by SASS. These behaviours are those which are sexual in nature and cause problems for the child themselves or those around them. The behaviours can include; inappropriate touching of other children, preoccupation with sexual topics, developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour with other children, and in some cases the sexual assault and rape of other children (Gill, 1993). Problem sexualised behaviour is often a result of some kind of sexual abuse, this abuse can be physical and or psychological, through exposure to sexual materials before the child is able to process them (a common theme amongst children with these behaviours appears to be exposure to pornography). SASS is dedicated to the idea that these children are demonstrating problematic behaviours of which they do not fully understand the impact, and cannot be classified together with adult sexual offenders.

In working with children demonstrating these behaviours SASS counsellors use a child centred approach which works on the specific needs of the child as an individual. Through physical, play based activities and more introspective techniques, SASS counsellors provide an environment where children can work through their trauma by expressing the problematic thoughts and feelings (which lay at the root of their sexualised behaviours) in a more positive and adaptive manner. A large part of their recovery also involves the development of empathy for the victims of their behaviour, which is achieved through further exploration of feelings and education on the experiences of sexual assault victims.

SASS receives referrals for children displaying problem sexual behaviour up to the age of 12.