



Bravehearts

EDUCATE, EMPOWER, PROTECT

**Keeping children safe from harmful sexual
behavior: An examination of Bravehearts'
therapeutic approach**

Rebekah Chapman and Kathleen Chalmer

**Our
Kids**



About Bravehearts

History

- Bravehearts is Australia’s leading child protection organisation working to prevent and respond to child sexual assault.
- Dedicated to the holistic prevention of child sexual assault and exploitation, as well as helping survivors and their families.
- Aims to identify and lobby for evidence-based responses to child sexual assault.



Terminology



Sexual behaviour problems (≤ 12)



Harmful sexual behaviour (13-17)



Sexual offenders (18+)



Appropriate sexual behaviour



- A normal part of development
- Siblings and same aged peers
- Natural and healthy
- Information gathering process
- Context is important

What are sexual behaviour problems ?

- Sexual behaviour outside of age/developmental level
- ‘Adult like’ sexual knowledge
- Sexual behaviour that is excessive and obsessive
- Sexual curiosity that seems out of balance with other interests
- Sexual behaviour that causes harm (emotional, physical)

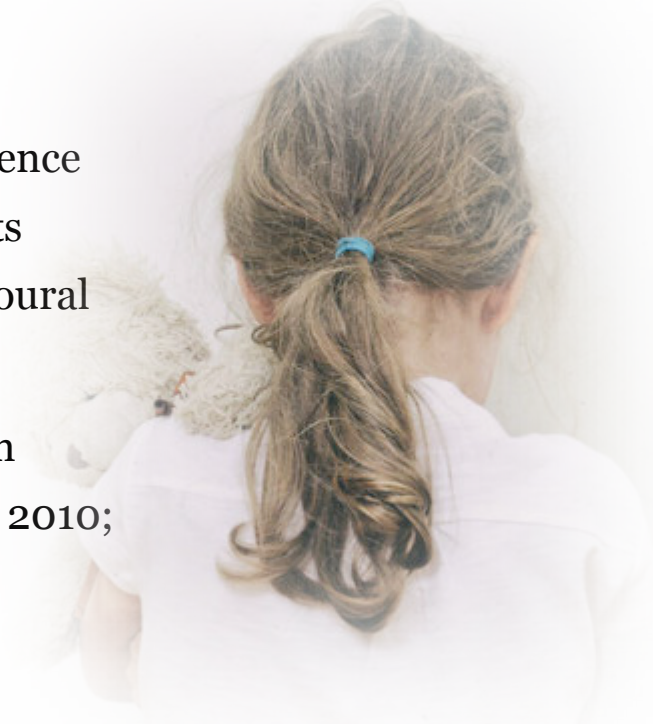


Potential impacts

- Harm to the child (e.g. developmental harm, labelling, marginalising, potential for victimisation)
- Harm to other children (physical, emotional)
- Children who are sexually harmed by those of a similar age experience significant ongoing impacts, comparable to those harmed by adults (anxiety, depression, flashbacks, nightmares, learning and behavioural difficulties) (O'Brien, 2010)
- If not addressed, sexual behaviour problems may lead to long term patterns of behavioural or conduct problems later in life (O'Brien, 2010; Shlonsky et al., 2017)



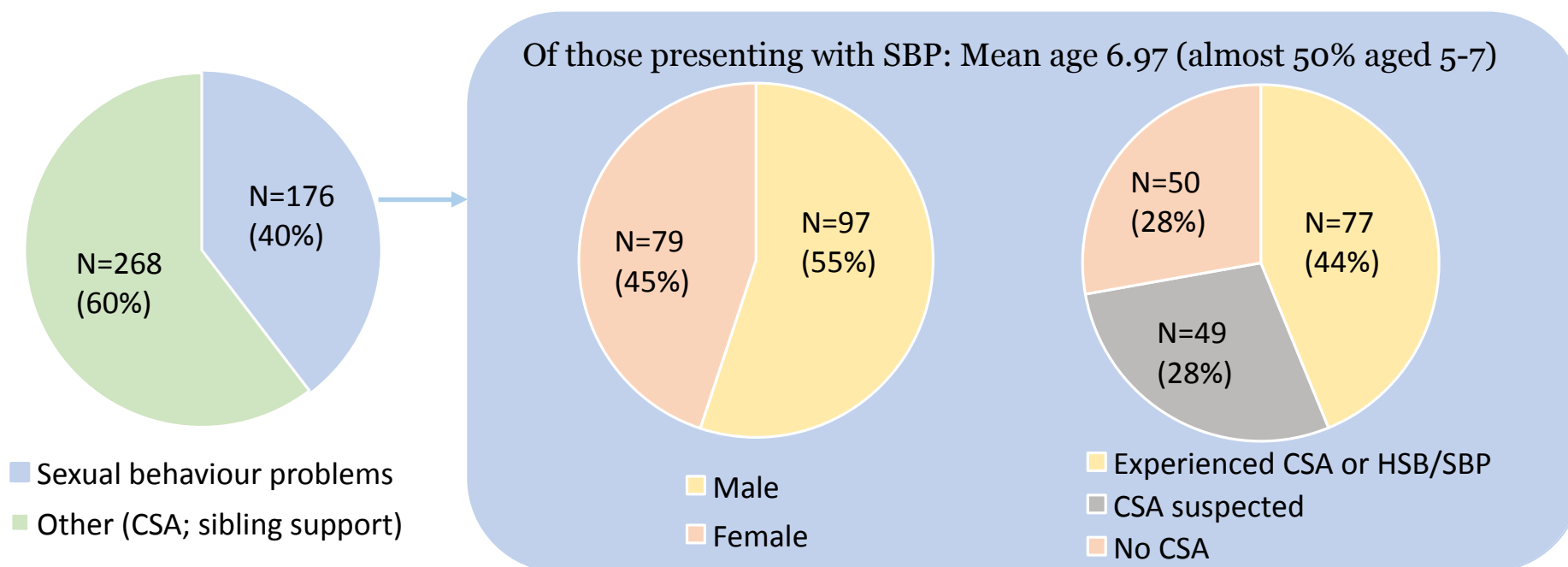
Bravehearts



Bravehearts' clients

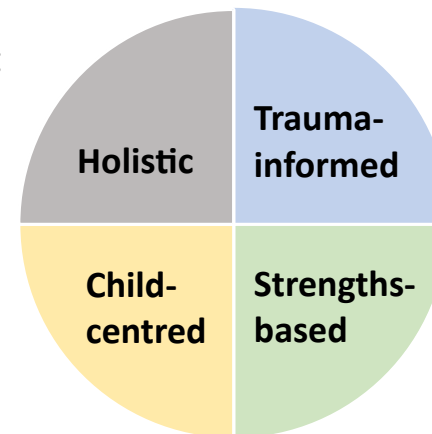


- Data for this service evaluation project came from the period 2016-2018.
- Clients only included if they (or their parents) provided research consent (approx. 72%)
- N=533 child and adolescent clients; N=444 clients aged 12 and under



Approach

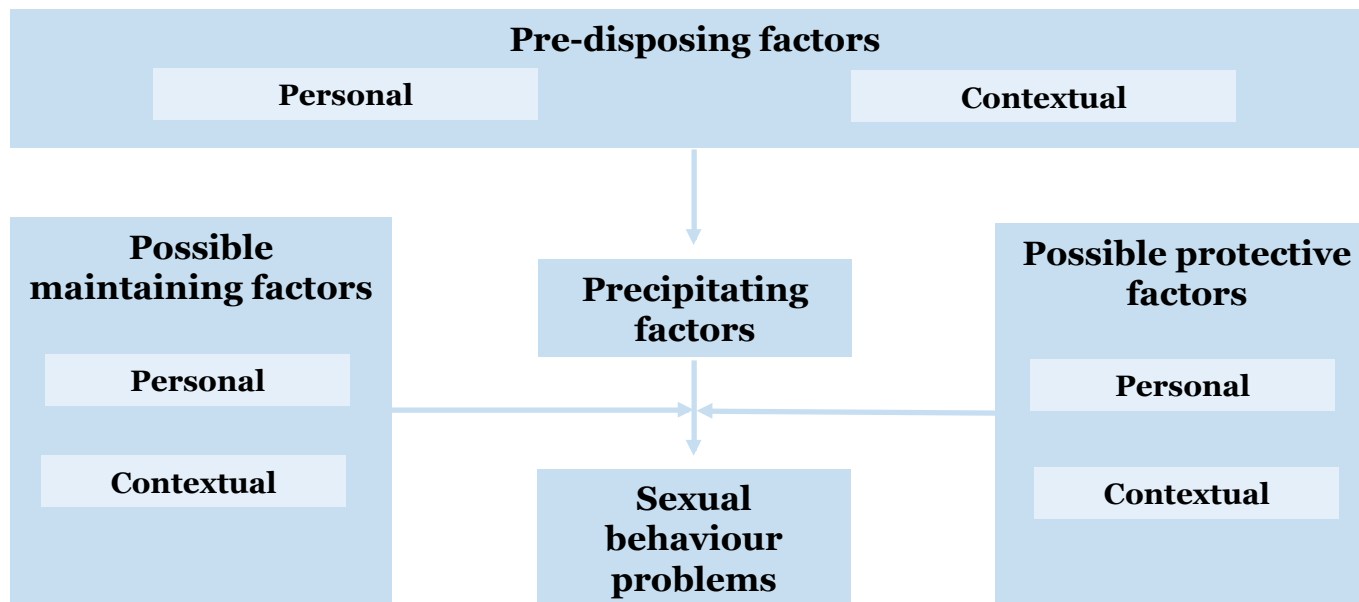
- The evidence-base for effective interventions for children under 12 years of age engaging in sexual behaviour problems is limited
- Studies have primarily focused on young people (aged 12-17 years) engaging in harmful sexual behaviours: Multi-Systemic Therapy is a promising approach
- Evidence shows benefit in engaging parents and caregivers in education to recognise and manage sexual behaviours (Shlonsky et al., 2017).
- Bravehearts clinicians uses a tailored approach that is:



Assessment



- Initially assess pattern of behaviour to develop a comprehensive treatment plan: multiple sources including families, schools, associated institutions
- Formation of a theory regarding needs child is meeting through sexual behaviour

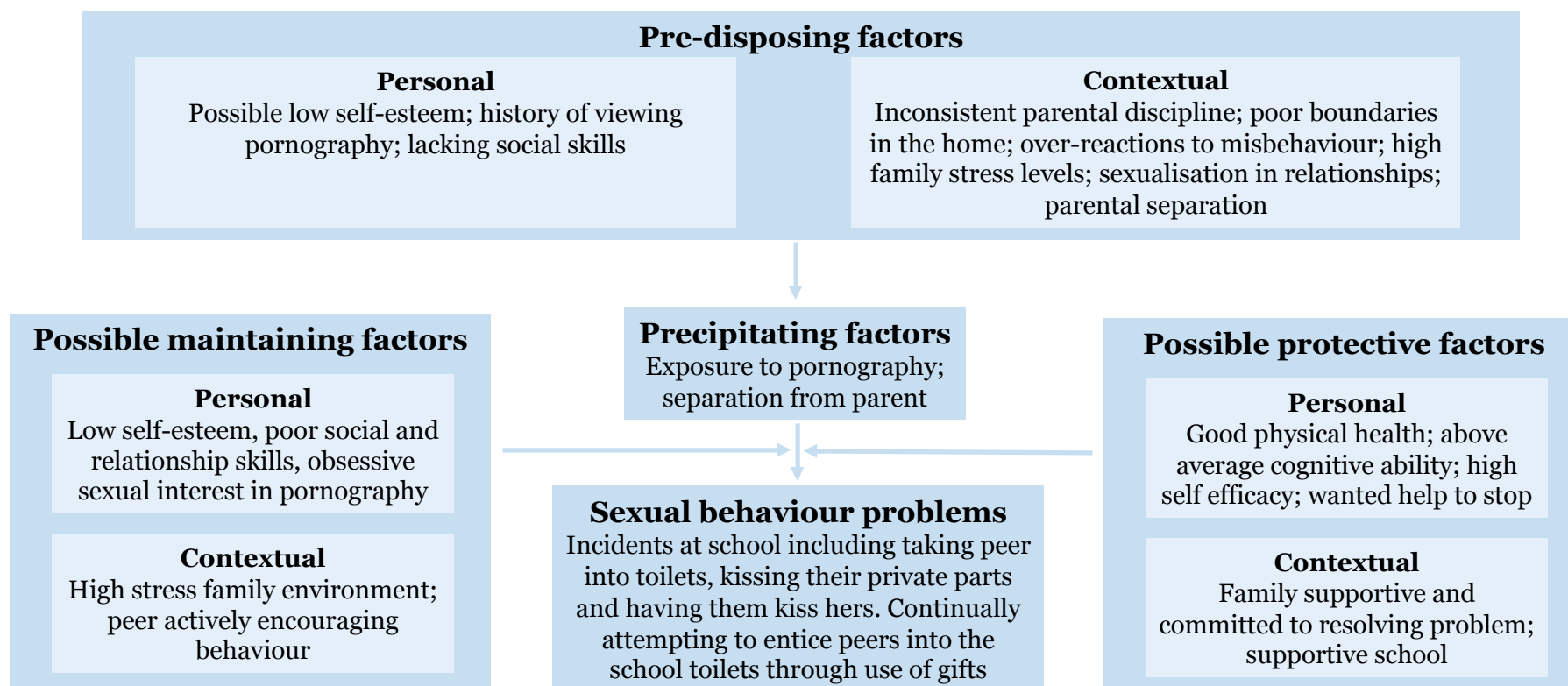


Tucker, R., adapted from Carr (2002) & Bickley (2004)

Case study: Suzy



- 6yo girl, lives in home with mother, stepfather, 15yo brother and 3yo sister



Case study: Suzy

- Sessions 1-5 with mother: assessment, psycho-education, safety plan for within the family home (address contextual pre-disposing and maintaining factors)
- School-based meeting with staff involved with child: access incident reports, consultation on school safety plan
- Development of theory regarding the behaviour: seeking connection with peers of opposite sex and lack of social skills to do this appropriately; also seeking excitement gained through viewing porn
- Identification of other means to meet the need (excitement) – sense of accomplishment and self-pride self-identified as giving her this same feeling



Case study: Suzy

- 12 sessions were conducted with Suzy herself:
 - building rapport
 - gaining information from child to support theory
 - discussing strengths
 - identifying emotion and other ways to meet identified need
 - looking at exceptions of the problem
 - building up “skills kit”
 - maintenance and reinforcement of positive behaviour
- Behaviour of concern was no longer occurring; as reported by the family, the school and the child herself

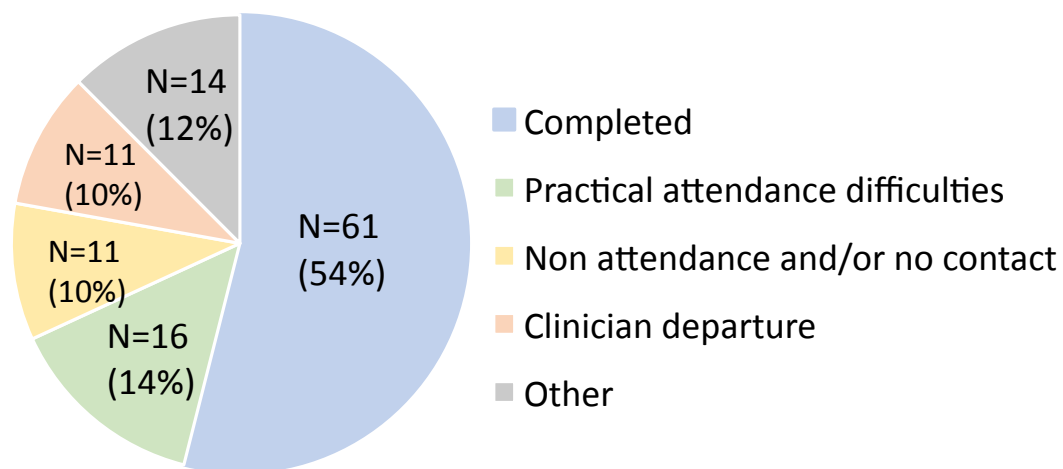


Evaluation study outcomes



- 48 clients (29.8%) did not attend a session beyond intake

Disengagement/closure (128 attending clients):



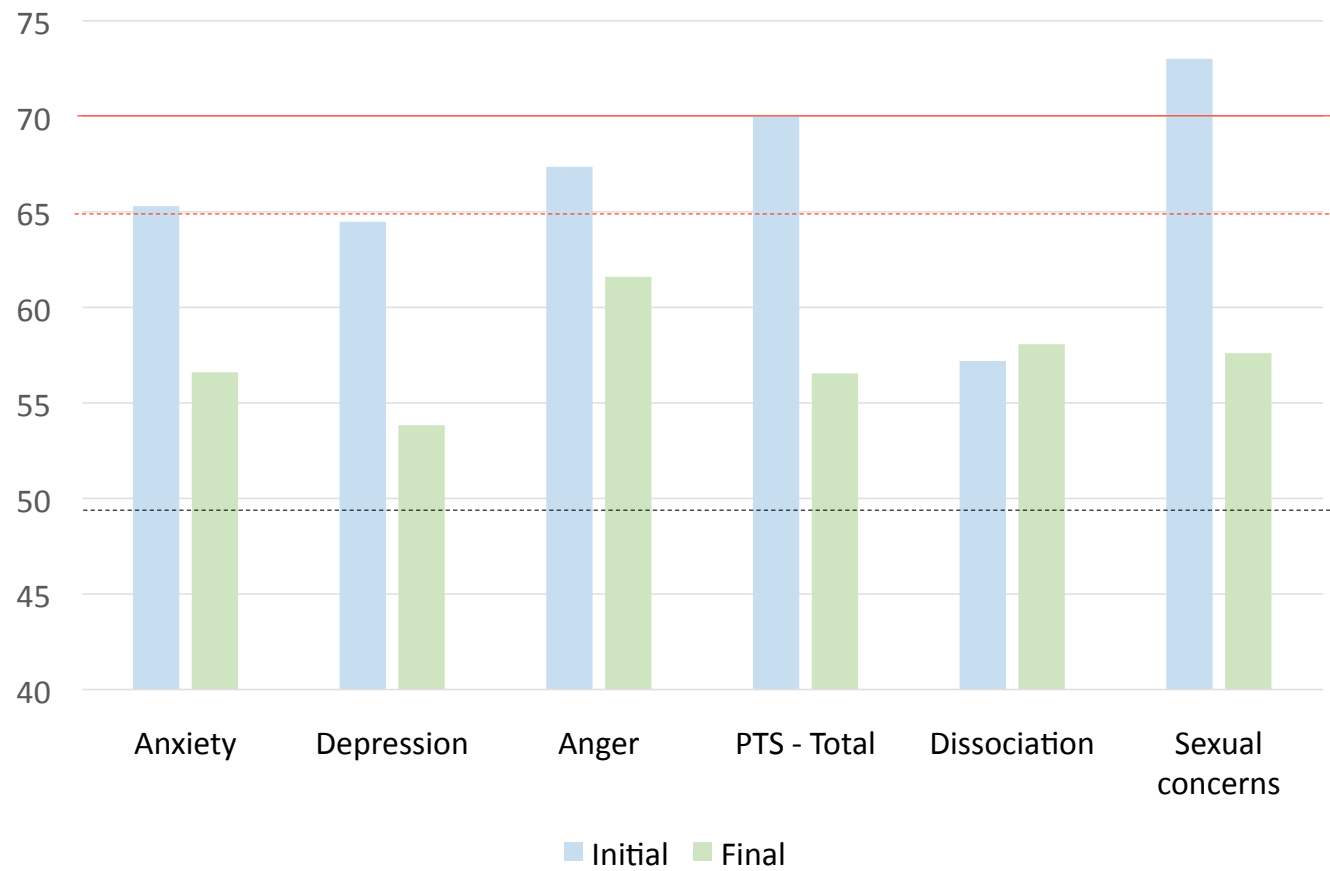
- Mean duration (61 completed clients): 10 sessions (range 3 – 22)

Outcomes



- Complexity of measuring outcomes for this group - capturing change in sexual behaviour problems
 - Working with parents, schools, other relevant parties to ensure discontinuation of behaviour prior to finalising with client; work to build relationship with parents/carers to ensure re-contact should behaviour re-commence
- Qualitative data important for this group – observations of school; parents and carers
- Other measures:
 - Child Outcome Rating Scale (pre and post data collected for 38% of completed clients). Significant improvement in scores from first session ($M=31.04$) to completion ($M=35.04$) ($t(22)=-3.07, p = <.05$)
 - Trauma Symptom Checklist for Young Children (pre and post data collected for 28% of completed clients).

Outcomes - TSCYC



Rebekah Chapman

rchapman@bravehearts.org.au

Kathleen Chalmer

kathleenc@bravehearts.org.au

Bravehearts Foundation Limited

PO Box 575 Arundel BC QLD 4214

Phone (07) 5552 3000

Information and Support Line 1800 272 831

Monday to Friday 8:30am – 4:30pm



Bravehearts

