

**Should I report a person who has a sexual attraction to children,
but no intention or desire to act on it,
and is asking for help to ensure they don't?**

For a therapist in private practice, there is no legal duty to report a client who has told you they are attracted to children, but are not acting on that. If you work in a statutory agency or the NHS you may have a duty under your contract of employment, i.e. you can be sacked if you don't. I have written the law up here <http://sexuallyinappropriatebehaviour.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Law-in-the-UK-About-Reporting-Child-Abuse-by-JG2019.pdf>

But, whilst we have no *legal* duty in private practice to report child abuse, it does not preclude us, as counsellors, from an *ethical* duty to report.

During my training as a counsellor I was given the impression that this was a matter of legality, rather than an ethical issue. Being an ethical issue gives me more choice.

One question I have had to face for myself, is if someone reports historical child abuse - eg looking at images of children, that they no longer do but feel like they might again - should I report them?

If someone comes for therapy saying that they know they have a sexual attraction to children aged 2-8, and want help to ensure that they never act on that, but they live next door to a family with children aged 2, 4 and 6, should I report them?

And what if - as happened to me at the end of last year - the person asking me for help never to act on her attraction to children, is a 14 year old girl who was sexually abused herself and now finds herself very sexually attracted to 2-8 year olds. And I am the first person she has ever told. Should I report her? She is the person who lived next door to a family of 2, 4 and 6 year old.

So, knowing that I don't have a legal duty to report, but can take each example on a case by case basis, and discuss it with my supervisor and decide on the best action with regards to child protection - I find helpful.

Also, in order to report there has to be a named child at risk and I need the address of that child too.

Those are some of the issues I deal with from time to time. Hope it provides food for thought.

I am absolutely dedicated to keeping children as safe as possible from predators, and invested in exploring the best ways to do this.

Personally I feel that making myself a 'safe person' for people to open up to - to get help so that they don't act out on an attraction to children, is likely to protect more children.

My view is that if I report everyone who comes to me with an attraction they are not currently acting on, this is likely to push this client group underground so that they don't ask for help.

And from experience, I know that therapy can help people make changes, or strengthen their desire not to act on their attraction.

I don't expect all therapists, or the general public, to share my view.

And yes, I was sexually abused myself as a child.

But I see going upstream and working with the perpetrators as the most effective way to reduce child sexual abuse

And yes, I will report if I feel it is needed and a child is at significant risk.

For anyone interested in this topic, here is a man attracted to children talking on a phone in programme [https://www.lbc.co.uk/radio/presenters/james-obrien/the-brave-call-to-james-attracted-to-young-girls/disgusted than I am](https://www.lbc.co.uk/radio/presenters/james-obrien/the-brave-call-to-james-attracted-to-young-girls/disgusted-than-i-am)

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