



When two become one

13 January 2025

Netsafe, a leading advocate for digital and online safety and cyberbullying prevention, is proud to announce Sticks 'n Stones is joining forces with Netsafe. Sticks 'n Stones will now be powered by Netsafe. This strategic move aims to expand the reach of the highly successful initiative, taking it to a national level to combat bullying and promote digital wellbeing among young people across New Zealand.

Founded more than 10 years ago, Sticks 'n Stones has been a pioneering programme with young people in the anti-bullying space.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development OECD May 2024 report highlights the significant impact bullying has on students' mental health and attendance.

The document said New Zealand reports the highest rate of bullying among OECD countries and the PISA 2018 survey indicated that 15% of students in New Zealand reported being frequently bullied.

Netsafe's own research completed in 2018 and 2023 by Economist Shamubeel Equab estimated the societal cost of cyberbullying to New Zealand is \$1,071m a year, up from \$444m in 2018.

Since 2013, Sticks 'n Stones have partnered with tamariki and rangatahi to empower them to develop skills and confidence to change the attitudes, norms and behaviours that accept bullying. Through in school workshops, online and offline resources, training, activities and events, Sticks 'n Stones have changed expectations about the involvement of young people in bullying prevention and positive social change and positively impacted the skills, confidence and understanding of thousands of young people to make a difference in their schools and communities.

Netsafe CEO Brent Carey says that combining Sticks and Stone's expertise and youth focused efforts with the expertise and reach of Netsafe will create a unique proposition. "Together we will form a youth centric national anti-bullying force that can provide better preventive and faster and more cost effective support to youth experiencing online and offline bullying."

Carey went on to say that by joining Sticks 'n Stones operations to Netsafe's, the organisation can significantly extend our knowledge in this area built off Sticks 'n Stones expertise working with young people in the anti-bullying space. "It's a significant step forward in our mission to create a safer online and offline environment for young people," said Carey. "We are committed to amplifying the programme's impact and ensuring that its benefits are accessible to students, schools, and communities nationwide."

At the beginning of Term 1 2025 Sticks 'n Stones will be part of Netsafe. As part of the change, Karla Sanders, Founder and CEO of Sticks 'n Stones and Jennifer Huddleston, Operations Lead, will join Netsafe as employees and lead the integration work and programme expansion.

"I am thrilled to join the Netsafe team from my South Island home base and bring the Sticks 'n Stones programme to a wider national audience," said Sanders. "This partnership allows us to build



on the success we've achieved and make an even greater impact on the lives of young people across New Zealand."

Sanders added, "Joining forces with Netsafe provides us with the resources and support needed to take Sticks 'n Stones to the next level. Together, we can empower even more young people to stand up against bullying, share their insights and expertise about their challenges and needs, and drive positive change in their communities through authentic and inclusive collaboration,

The Sticks 'n Stones powered by Netsafe changes take effect in January 2025. For more information about the Sticks n Stones programme continue to visit sticksnstones.co.nz

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About Netsafe

Netsafe is an independent, non-profit online safety organisation committed to helping people stay safe online. Netsafe provides education, resources, and support to individuals, schools, and businesses to navigate and mitigate online risks.

About Sticks 'n Stones

Sticks 'n Stones is an authentic partnership with tamariki and taiohi, working together to create positive social change by centring their voices and lived experiences in every aspect of decision-making, including governance. Each year, Sticks 'n Stones engages with over a thousand tamariki and rangatahi, leading the way in participatory design and active youth involvement.