**Harmful Sexual Behaviours Policy**

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9. **Definition**
   1. Harmful sexual behaviours is defined as, “Behaviours expressed by children and young people under the age of 18 years old that are developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful towards self or others, or be abusive towards another child, young person or adult'.” (Hackett 2014 Children and Young People with Harmful Sexual Behaviours).
   2. The current definition of Sexual Abuse in [**Working Together to Safeguard Children**](http://www.workingtogetheronline.co.uk/glossary/sex_abuse.html) is also relevant as it recognises that abuse can be perpetrated by children as well as adults.
10. **Indicators**
11. There are no diagnostic indicators in personal or family functioning that indicate a pre-disposition towards sexual offending although the following characteristics have been found in the background of some young people who sexually offend:

* Attachment disorders - poor nurturing and parental guidance;
* Domestic violence and abuse;
* Previous sexual victimisation - a younger age at the onset of the abuse is more likely to lead to sexualised behaviour;
* Social rejection and loneliness;
* Poor empathy skills
* Many of these factors exist alongside typical family environments where other forms of abuse are present.

1. Studies identify that approximately 40% of young people displaying this behaviour have varying degrees of learning difficulties. Their needs must be carefully assessed as some assessment tools are not suitable. Also, the intervention may need to be extended and involve a high degree of coordination between agencies.
2. It can be useful to think of sexual behaviour as a range or continuum from those behaviours that are developmentally and socially accepted to those that are violently abusive (see [**Children and Young People with Harmful Sexual Behaviours (Research in Practice)**](http://www.proceduresonline.com/4lscb/shared_content_SCB_php/shared_files/ch_yp_harm_sex_behav.pdf)). Most healthy sexual behaviour can be characterised by:

* Mutuality (Children of a similar developmental and chronological age);
* Absence of coercion in any form (bullying, emotional blackmail, fear of the consequences);
* Absence of emotional distress

1. Additionally, sexual behaviour which seems compulsive, is repeated in secrecy and continues after interventions from parents or carers, is a cause for concern. The [**Brook Traffic Light tool**](file:///C:\Users\dlewis\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Outlook\THLY290H\Traffic%20LightsBrochure%5b1%5d.pdf) may also be useful in distinguishing between 'normal' age-appropriate behaviour and behaviour which causes concern.
2. **Identification of Risks**
3. Two thirds of contact sexual abuse is committed by peers;
4. History of abuse, especially sexual abuse, can contribute to a child displaying harmful sexual behaviour;
5. All children, including the instigator of the behaviour, need to be viewed as victims;
6. Children have greater access to information about sex through technology and this has had an impact on their attitudes to sex and sexual behaviour;
7. Children with harmful sexual behaviours who receive adequate treatment are less likely to go on to commit abuse as an adult compared to children who receive no support;
8. Incidents of harmful sexually behaviour should be dealt with under the specific child protection procedures which recognise the child protection and potentially criminal element to the behaviour. There should be a coordinated approach between the agencies;
9. The needs of the children should be considered separately from the needs of their victims;
10. An assessment should recognise that areas of unmet developmental needs, attachment problems, special educational needs and disabilities may all be relevant in understanding the onset and development of abusive behaviour;
11. The family context is also relevant in understanding behaviour and assessing risk.
12. **Solihull Sexual Harmful Behaviors Offer**
13. The Youth Offending Service offers AIM 2 assessment and interventions for young people aged 12-18 years of age that are displaying harmful sexual behaviours. There are two referral routes for requesting support for young people displaying harmful sexual behaviours:

* Child Protection/Child in Need Route: A young person that is referred by Childrens Social Work Services following their assessment and the identification of abusive behaviour (section 5)
* Criminal Justice Route: A young person who has admitted or partially admitted a sexual offence to Court order for a sexual offence will be seen by the YOS (section 6)

1. **Protection and Action to be Taken**
2. Incidents of harmful sexual behaviour come to light, either through discovery or disclosure, which may be third-party or second-hand information. The details provided should be accurately recorded by the person receiving the initial account. Concerns about the behaviour and the welfare and safety of the child/ren should be referred to Childrens Social Work Services as set out in the [**Referrals Procedure**](http://www.proceduresonline.com/4lscb/portsmouth/p_referrals.html).
3. Children's Social Work Services will undertake an assessment and there will be an interagency strategy meeting if the concerns are that a child has suffered, or a child or children is/are likely to suffer, significant harm. The Strategy Discussion/Meeting is a forum for analysing risk, sharing background information on the young people and planning further action. In addition to police and children's social care, schools, Youth Offending Services or any other agency with significant contact to any of the young people should also be invited to the meeting where appropriate.
4. The strategy meeting should consider:

* Issues of child and public protection, including a clear understanding and description of any alleged incident;
* An assessment of the child/young person's needs, and the need for further specialist assessment;
* The roles and responsibilities of child welfare and criminal justice agencies;
* Any on-going safety issues for all of the young people involved

1. The context of the behaviour and background of the young people and their family are important factors in determining next steps. Where there is no requirement to hold a formal strategy meeting, it is still good and useful practice to hold a multi-agency planning meeting to consider the needs of the children or young people involved.
2. Strategy meetings will make contingency plans for future actions following further assessment and investigation of the incident. The option of reconvening the strategy meeting post the investigation may be useful in some cases.
3. Specialist opinion may be required to inform the assessment from those providing specialist treatment services for young people who sexually harm others.
4. Where there are concerns that the alleged abuser is also a victim of abuse consideration should be given to convening a Child Protection Conference if the young person is deemed to have suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm.
5. Where a child protection conference is convened the multi-agency meeting could be incorporated into it in order to avoid repeat meetings. The child protection conference will therefore need to address the needs of the child/young person both as an abuser and as a victim, and this should be made clear at the outset.
6. In cases where the threshold is met, a meeting should be convened under the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements to consider public protection matters and safety.
7. Following the investigation, if the decision is made to engage the young person in further work, it is important that these discussions take place as soon after the investigation as possible. A referral should then be made using the interagency referral form as available on the Solihull LSCB website. If the referral meets the criteria the case will allocated to a YOS Offcier who will undertake the AIM 2 assessment and develop a plan that meets theneeds of the child/ren / young person. Successful engagement of families significantly diminishes if there is a time delay in arranging specialist intervention.
8. **Criminal Justice and Action to be Taken**
9. Young people may be in denial about having a problem with their sexual behaviour and this may be supported by parents who do not want to confront reality of their child behaving in this way. There is often no legal requirement for the child or family to accept help and it may be easier to ignore the problem than confront it. This is a common response to this issue, practitioners will need to be familiar with the proposed intervention if they are to encourage anyone to accept it. The offer of further work may be helpfully framed as an opportunity to understand how the young person came to be in a position where they behaved in a way considered to be abusive.
10. Delays in completing criminal investigations need not necessarily delay referral for specialist help; there is often a significant delay between completing enquiries and a decision being made about whether to prosecute. A programme of work can be agreed with police and Crown Prosecution Service usually with the proviso that the victim and specific incidents are not discussed.
11. Where a young person is subject to a criminal investigation for a sexual offence and either partially or fully admits a sexual offence following a police interview, the police can seek a request for AIM2 assessment if the police are seeking to bail the young person. This is triggered with consent from the young person, parent or carer. Support of parents and carers is extremely helpful in promoting engagements and successful outcomes. Parents need to be informed about the programme to the extent that they are aware that sexually explicit conversations will take place, also they may be asked to speak to their child about sexual issues. They may also be asked to model appropriate and respectful sexual attitudes and language.
12. Request for this support can be made via the inter agency referral form. This form should be sent through to MASH (CSWS) and the Youth Offending Services. Upon receipt of the referral form the processes outlined in section 5 will be followed through. Where a Pre Sentence Report has been requested the YOS Officer will draw on the AIM2 assessment to inform the court of an outcome relating to the offence.
13. Where a child / young person has pleaded guilty and is facing a court hearing the AIM2 assessment will be delayed until the court has reached a verdict of guilty. If the court concludes a guilty verdict the YOS will become informed of this through the court processes. The YOS will inform Childrens Social Work Services of the outcome.
14. If a young person is sentenced to custody the secure establishment should commence the AIM2 assessment before the first review meeting to ensure that it informs the plan for the young person. Where the young person is LAC this should become apart of the young person’s care plan.
15. Issues

All issues with the AIM2 process, assessment or interventions should be raised with the YOS and CSWS in the instance, following the relevant escalation processes. Where there is no resolution then the LSCB complaints procedures should be followed.

1. Further Information

Further information on the AIM2 Project can be found at <http://aimproject.org.uk/>

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