

ONE MINUTE GUIDE:

Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB)

What is HSB?

Harmful Sexual Behaviours (HSB) are defined as; Sexual 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.

How serious is HSB?

It's important to remember that sexualised behaviours occur on a continuum from normal to inappropriate, problematic, abusive and violent and that to ensure consistency in responding to an incident, a standardised approach should be used to identify where the behaviour sits on this continuum. For that reason, Kirklees Children Social Care currently use Hackett's Sexual Continuum to help identify whether the behaviour reflects healthy and safe normal development, where it has the potential to be outside of healthy and safe development by being inappropriate or problematic and where behaviours are clearly outside of safe and healthy behaviour and are abusive or violent. Using the Continuum also gives clarity on how to respond and aids the determination of defensible decisions about safeguarding children and young people. Importantly this also helps professionals to assess and respond appropriately to sexual behaviour in children and young people and understand healthy sexual development and distinguish it from harmful behaviour.

Why do I need to take action?

It's important that incidents of HSB are not ignored and that they are responded to in a timely and consistent manner. Early intervention in cases of harmful sexual behaviour can enable children and young people to adopt healthy development pathways and proceed to make healthy relationships.

What if I have concerns about a young person's HSB?

If concerns around HSB are identified by a professional or a disclosure of potential HSB is made to a professional then in the first instance Hackett's Sexual Continuum should be used to identify whether the behaviour lies on the Continuum. Usually normal and inappropriate behaviour can be responded to through direct interaction with the child or young person and the giving of information, advice and explanation of boundaries with guidance including issues of privacy and consent. There may be instances in which if there is an absence of direct/indirect victims, problematic behaviours also result in a single agency response through targeted intervention, advice or guidance. However, if the agency or individual who becomes aware of the issue is unsure as to how to respond or of where the behaviour sits on the Continuum and are not prepared or unable to provide the child or young person with this information then contact with the Front Door Duty & Advice Team on 01484 456848

should be made for advice and who can then signpost to other professionals and/or agencies including the voluntary sector to provide information and resources to use with the child or young person.

If behaviour is considered to be problematic, abusive or violent and there is concern that a child, young person or an adult might have been harmed by the behaviour of the child or young person then the behaviour should be reported to the Police if it has not already been done so. Allegations of peer abuse should be taken as seriously as allegations of abuse perpetrated by an adult. Behaviour falling into this range should also result in a referral to the Front Door for each child/ young person. If the child is already open to Children's Social Care (CSC), the allocated worker and line manager will be notified.

What Happens next?

A lot depends on whether there is going to be a police investigation or prosecution. If there is, then the young person will be supported through the process and the Youth Justice Service will ensure that any identified HSB will be assessed and appropriate intervention delivered at the earliest opportunity. However, where it is concluded it is either not in the public interest to do so or there is insufficient evidence to charge then there remains the need to address the identified HSB through targeted HSB intervention. The Youth Justice Service (YJS) also provide Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) intervention work with young people around identified HSB concerns where the police investigation is considering an out of court disposal. The YJS has the opportunity to engage with children and young people displaying these behaviours with the aim of preventing offending and reducing re-offending. Using identification, assessment and intervention tools such as Hackett's Sexual Continuum and AIM3. The primary objective of YJS intervention remains at all times the protection of victims, potential victims and the avoidance of any repetition of inappropriate or harmful behaviour. Government findings indicate that those children and young people offered early intervention benefit from the child centred approach of youth justice practitioners and their chances of rehabilitation improve. Such intervention can enable children and young people to adopt a healthy development pathway and proceed to make healthy future relationships.

- YJS will consider requests made by Managers from within Children Social Care in regards HSB Interventions.

Links:

<https://www.kirkleessafeguardingchildren.co.uk/safeguarding-2/safeguarding-processes-and-systems/duty-and-advice/>

<https://www.kirkleessafeguardingchildren.co.uk/safeguarding-2/different-types-of-abuse/harmful-sexual-behaviour-hsb/>



HSB-Practitioners-Toolkit.pdf