

Bath & North East Somerset Council
'One Minute Guide' to Children's Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB)

Definition

Sexual behaviours expressed by children and young people under the age of 18 years old that are developmentally inappropriate may be harmful towards themselves or others, and/or be abusive towards another child, young person or adult.

Concerns and risks

Hackett's continuum (2010) can help indicate the level of concern:

Normal	Inappropriate	Problematic	Abusive	Violent
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developmentally expected Socially acceptable Consensual, mutual, reciprocal Shared decision making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single instances of inappropriate sexual behaviour Socially acceptable behaviour within peer group Context for behaviour may be inappropriate Generally consensual and reciprocal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Problematic and concerning behaviours Developmentally unusual and socially unexpected No overt elements of victimisation Consent issues may be unclear May lack reciprocity or equal power May include levels of compulsivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victimising intent or outcome Includes misuse of power Coercion and force to ensure victim compliance Intrusive Informed consent lacking or not able to be freely given by victim May include elements of expressive violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physically violent sexual abuse Highly intrusive Instrumental violence which is physiologically and/or sexually arousing to the perpetrator Sadism

Trained staff may use the Brook Traffic Light Tool (2012) to categorise sexual behaviours according to the age of the child and help suggest the level of risk. It should be used with the published guidance and together with other forms of assessment:

- 'Green' behaviours reflect natural curiosity and consensual experimentation between children of similar age or developmental ability
- 'Amber' behaviours are unusual for that particular child, of potential concern due to age or developmental differences and/or activity type, frequency, duration or context
- 'Red' behaviours may be excessive, secretive, coercive or threatening and may involve significant age, development or power differences and be of concern due to the activity type, frequency, duration or context.

Harmful sexual behaviour may be used by children who have been groomed and exploited but this is not always the case.

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Principles

- Separate consideration must be given to the victim's support and safeguarding needs in accordance with usual safeguarding procedures, including calling a separate Strategy meeting
- Many children and young people who carry out harmful sexual behaviour have themselves been victims of abuse, neglect or other trauma and may benefit from a trauma-informed approach to meeting their needs.
- It is vital to view them as children first and offenders second
- All assessment must take full account of the voice of the child
- Much of the work to address concerns can be undertaken by staff working in universal and targeted settings
- Parents/carers may benefit from additional information and support

What should practitioners do?

Consult with your agency's safeguarding lead and/or the CAMHS HSB Clinical Specialist to help determine the level of concern.

- a) If the behaviours are 'green, there is no known risk but may be an opportunity to positively reinforce appropriate behaviour or provide relevant information and support
- b) 'If there is a risk of harm i.e. the behaviours are 'amber,' consult with the CAMHS HSB Clinical Specialist and complete or update an Early Help Assessment. Establish any risk to child displaying harmful sexual behaviour and to alleged victims and make a multi-agency plan
- c) If there is an immediate risk of significant harm i.e. the behaviour is 'red,' consult with Social Care Duty on 01225 396312 or 396313 to agree the way forward. Request for Service Forms can be found at: <https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/children-young-people-and-families/child-protection>
- d) Where behaviour may be abusive or violent, trained staff will undertake a specific assessment ('AIM3') to understand the needs and risks and plan work to be undertaken to address these
- e) Where Police have been notified and children either admit an offence or are charged to Court, the Youth Offending Service will be involved in the response to the harmful sexual behaviour, including completion of an 'AIM3' assessment.

All safeguarding procedures are available at <https://www.proceduresonline.com/swcpp>