



Children who display Harmful Sexual Behaviour: Procedural Guidance



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1 Introduction

- 1.1 The primary objective to all work with children who display inappropriate and harmful sexual behaviour must be the protection of the victim and the prevention of a reoccurrence of the inappropriate and harmful sexual behaviour. A coordinated, multi-disciplinary response in accordance with statutory guidance is required.

[Understanding sexualised behaviour in children | NSPCC Learning](#)

- 1.2 This document details procedures that are designed to provide guidance for all professionals within Knowsley in how to respond when there is a concern in relation to children who are presenting with harmful sexual behaviour. It offers detailed guidance for professionals when differentiating between harmful sexual behaviour across the age ranges covered by these procedures (0-18 years).
- 1.3 Consideration must be given to the origins of harmful sexual behaviour displayed by a child, and the possibility that they themselves, may be at risk of actual or likely significant harm in their own right. This requires a holistic approach that recognises such children as having significant unmet needs and as potential victims, as well as children and adolescents who display harmful sexual behaviour.
- 1.4 Whilst children should be held accountable for their harmful behaviour they should also be identified and responded to in a way which meets their needs as well as protecting others. It should also be remembered that children may also pose a risk to others, as well as the victim.
- 1.5 This document outlines the procedures that should be followed by all agencies involved at different stages of the process from time of notification of a sexually harmful incident to completion of relevant stages of intervention. The procedure refers to the following range of children:
- Where in appropriate and harmful sexual behaviour has been identified as a cause for concern
 - Where incidents of harmful sexual behaviour have been reported to the police
 - Where children have admitted harmful sexual behaviour
 - Where young people have been convicted of sexual offending
 - Where there is an identifiable subject of sexual behaviour.
- 1.6 This policy outlines a guide of best practice that should be followed by all agencies when they have been made aware of a concern regarding harmful sexual behavior by a child. The Policy is for children in a range or circumstances, including but not specific to:
- An incident of HSB has been identified by any person with a child.
 - An allegation of HSB has been made to the Police – this includes where the matter has been outcome by No Further Action [NFA], Released Under Investigation [RUI] or bailed.
 - A child is voicing concerns about their own behavior with respect of HSB.
 - A child is convicted of a Sexual Offence.



2 Links to Knowsley Helping Children Thrive Guidance (2020)

- 2.1 The Knowsley Helping Children Thrive Guidance documents details the 4 offers of support available to support children and their families thrive.

[Helping-Children-Thrive-Knowsley.pdf \(knowsleyscp.org.uk\)](https://www.knowsleyscp.org.uk/Helping-Children-Thrive-Knowsley.pdf)

Universal	All children accessing mainstream services with low-level need that can be met by a single agency.
Early Help	Children with emerging needs or low level concerns that can be met with the support of a multi-agency Early Help Assessment and Plan.
Targeted Early Help	Children with multiple or complex needs have to be met by targeted services or by a multi-agency Early Help Assessment or by other specialist assessments. e.g., Education Health Care Plans.
Safeguarding	Children who present with acute needs / risk. This includes those at risk of abuse or neglect. They will require a response by Children's Social Care

- 2.2 Early identification and Early Help support can be crucial in preventing an escalation of inappropriate and concerning sexual behaviour. This can involve single or multi-agency delivery and co-ordination of support to the child and their family in order to holistically address the concerns that give rise to the child's behaviour and any additional needs.
- 2.3 In order to achieve this partner agencies such as schools, early years settings and health services are willing to adopt the role of Lead Professional and use Team Around the Family (TAF) approach to address any emerging worries regarding sexualised behaviour using a range of appropriate resources and guidance.

[How to prevent harmful sexual behaviour in children | NSPCC Learning](#)

- 2.4 When identifying sexualised behaviour at the Early Help stage, it is important for professionals not to over-react and for them to understand that some types of sexualised behaviour is part of a child and adolescents normal and health sexual development.
- 2.5 In order to support practitioners in identifying a child's sexualised behaviour as part of 'normal' development they should have an understanding of the characteristics of normal sexual behaviours as well as characteristics of harmful/abusive/violent sexualised behaviours.
- 2.6 When attempting to categorise the sexualised behaviour presented by a child, practitioners should also take into consideration a number of factors intrinsic to the child such as:



- Age
- Learning Difficulties
- Impairment of understanding

Consideration of these factors should not negate the impact of the sexualised behaviour on a child who is a subject of the behaviour, however, they should be used to ensure the approach to managing the behaviour is proportionate and appropriate for all those involved in the incident.

- 2.7 Once practitioners have identified that the sexualised behaviour a child presents is not considered to be part of normal development, they need to consider which category of sexualised behaviour it fits into Harmful/Abusive/Violent, they need to decide how best to offer support to the child to address the sexualised behaviour and the child who has been the subject of the behaviour. This will be done on a case by case basis.
- 2.8 Not all cases of sexualised behaviour will necessarily result in a referral to the MASH. Some behaviours that are identified as inappropriate or problematic may be addressed using the early help interventions available to the practitioner in their service area. This will be done on a case by case basis.
- 2.9 Given that not all sexualized behaviour will result in a referral to MASH but still is a cause of concern then interventions and can and should take place with the practitioner with the best relationship with the child and the family.
- 2.10 An immediate Safeguarding referral must be made in those cases where the sexualized behaviour is identified as Harmful/Abusive/Violent, and where a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm.

3 Recognition

- 3.1 The definition of sexual abuse included in the multi-agency guidance document 'Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018'. will be part of the Child Protection training made available to staff by the agencies they represent. This definition includes reference to, 'Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children'.

Therefore, practitioners who work with children should have an understanding of the signs, symptoms, and indicators of sexual abuse.

The sexual abuse of children by other children is a specific safeguarding issue, also known as peer-on-peer abuse.

- 3.2 In addition to their understanding of sexual abuse, practitioners should also be aware of important factors to take into account when looking at inappropriate and harmful sexual behaviour include:
- The immediate protection of all children involved and any others in contact with the child who is alleged to have displayed inappropriate or harmful sexual behaviour.



- The attitude and response of parents or carers and their ability to protect their own child/ren. Can they ensure appropriate supervision is in place around other children?

The behaviour:

- Did both parties agree to the sexual activity?
- Is the sexual activity age appropriate?
- How frequently has the behaviour occurred?
- Has the type of behaviour changed overtime?
- Is there evidence of aggression, force, coercion, or bribery?
- Have the individuals tried to ensure that the behaviour remains secret?

The child who has displayed the harmful sexualised behaviour:

- Have there been any previous concerns in relation to harmful sexual behaviour or lack of sexual boundaries?
- Whether the child acknowledges their behaviour or actions, minimise, or denies the allegations made.
- The likelihood or progress of any criminal prosecution
- Whether there is any evidence or grounds to believe that the child who is suspected or alleged to have sexually harmed, has also been the victim of abuse themselves.

The child who is the subject of the sexualised behaviour:

- The age and vulnerability of the child who is the subject of the behaviour.
- The impact on them – both in terms of the harm that resulted from the alleged sexual behaviour and also their response to professional intervention.
- The needs of the child who is the subject of the sexual harmful behaviour should be considered separately from those of the child who has demonstrated the harmful sexual behaviour.

4 Impact of a disclosure of harmful on parents and carers

- 4.1 Identification or disclosure of harmful sexual behaviour will impact not only the parents, family and carers of the child who displays the behaviour but also the parents, family and carers or the child who is the subject of the behaviour. It can be extremely distressing for all those involved.
- 4.2 As a result of their distress parents, carers and families of the child who is the subject of the harmful sexual behaviour means they could react in a way in which, while understandable, may not be helpful in developing strategies and safety plans to manage the behaviour and safeguard all the children involved.
- 4.3 Similarly, the distress of the parents, carers and family of the child displaying the harmful sexual behaviour may mean they react with disbelief and minimise the situation which could escalate concerns and it is therefore important that professionals help them through this process at an early stage so that they can support and where appropriate, protect their child.



4.4 There may also be attempts to hide the abuse by family or peers, including withholding of information or deception, known as “disguised compliance”, from both the child whose sexual behaviour is raising concerns and the subject (who may be under threat or too ashamed to disclose). Disguised compliance happens when parents or carers do not own the concern of the practitioner, or don’t admit their lack of commitment to the process and work subversively to undermine it.

4.5 The practitioner should maintain a focus upon the needs of the children, whilst being sensitive to the impact upon the family. Should children or family members accuse practitioners or become hostile, this should not stop work with these families to uncover the reality of the child’s life.

5. Consultation

5.1 Where there are concerns about a child displaying inappropriate or harmful sexual behaviour, staff should consult with their line manager or safeguarding lead within their agency. The purpose of this will be to seek advice and support to assist in their judgement regarding the level of intervention required. Staff dealing with an incident of sexually inappropriate or harmful behaviour will try to establish:

- The context of the behaviour
- The nature of the behaviour – referencing details of the incident
- The details of those involved.
- The context of the children involved.

Only when information from a number of sources has been gathered can the level of concern and proportionate response be agreed.

5.2 Where there is suspicion of, or an allegation of a child having been harmed in sexual way by another child, it should be **referred immediately** to the multi-agency MASH team in the local authority where the child lives, using the MARF (Multi Agency Referral Form).

[Multi Agency Referral Form \(knowsley.gov.uk\)](http://knowsley.gov.uk)

5.3 Both the subject and the child who has allegedly displayed the inappropriate or harmful sexual behaviour will need to be referred for assessment.

5.4 ***Action in relation to a child under the age of 13.***

If a child is under the age of 13 years old, they cannot legally consent to any form of sexual activity (Sexual Offences Act 2003). Therefore, a child protection referral is required in **all such cases**.

5.5 ***Action in relation to 13, 14, and 15 year olds***

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 reinforces that, whilst mutually agreed, non- exploitative sexual activity between children does take place and that often no harm comes from it, the age of consent should still remain at 16. This acknowledges that this group of children is still vulnerable, even when they do not view themselves as such.

5.6 When an incident of a sexual nature occurs between children, an assessment should take



place to establish if the child is competent to give consent and the nature of the relationship. Consideration should be given to,

- Age difference
- Maturity
- Cognitive development and functioning
- Awareness of consequences of actions

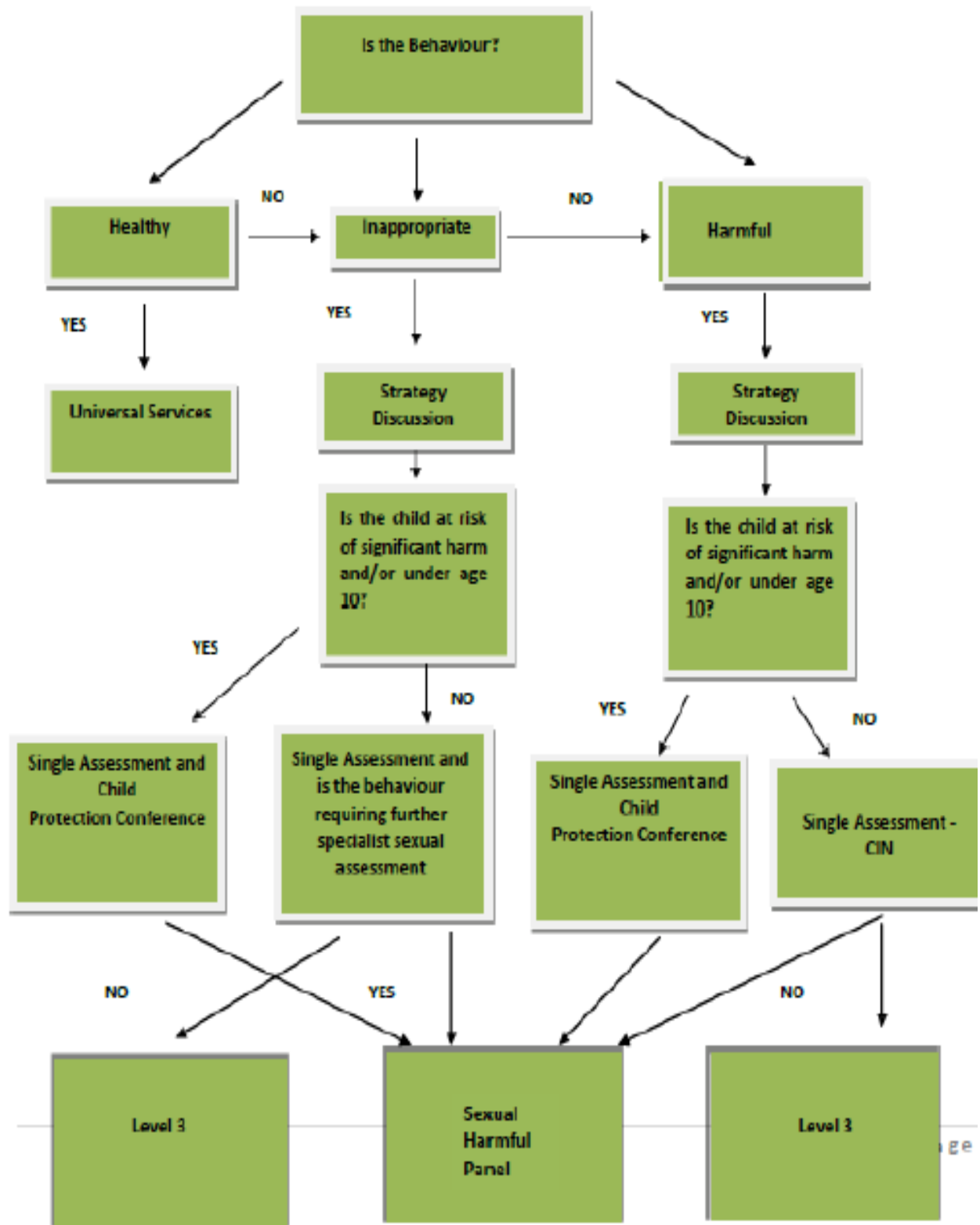
5.7 Whilst not all cases involving sexual activity with a child under the age of 16 years will lead to a child protection referral, a conversation with the police should be considered, as technically it may constitute a criminal offence and an assessment (including whether the children are Gillick competent using Fraser guidelines) must be undertaken.

6 Disclosure

6.1 Staff should follow the procedural guidance in relation to appropriate professional responses to disclosures and where any doubt or need for advice exists, they should contact MASH, the Police, or their designated safeguarding lead.

Flowchart for pathways to respond to concerns about harmful sexual behaviour.
This ensures suitable responses to sexual behaviour proportionate to the nature of the behaviour.

Pathways of response to sexual behaviour open to Children's Social Care





7. Referral

- 7.1 When an allegation of sexual assault or offence has been made, the police are generally the first point of contact and it is critical for them to always consult with MASH regarding cases that come to their attention and ensure that a VPRF has been shared in order to ensure that there is an appropriate assessment of the needs of the child that is the subject of the behaviour, and of the child who has displayed the sexually harmful behaviour, including any risk factors within and outside of the family home.
- 7.2 Where a child displays harmful sexual behaviour, but there is no actual complaint or specific incident, this should be reported to Children's Social Care via the MASH. Consideration should be given as to whether any further information available assists in deciding on a proportionate and appropriate response.
- 7.3 Where a child is open to CSC and then displays harmful or concerning sexualised behavior but there is no "incident" then a referral to the HSB panel should be made.
- 7.4 Where an incident occurs and either the child displaying the harmful sexual behaviour or the child who is the subject of the behaviour lives in another borough, Knowsley Children's Social Care will inform the relevant authority the same day by the relevant lead agency. A child under 10 years of age alleged to have displayed harmful behaviour cannot be investigated by the police as they are under the age of criminal responsibility. This means that the responsibility for the investigation lies with Children's Social Care for harmful sexual behaviour.
- 7.5 Child welfare or criminal justice agencies involved in case should be aware of any actions they take which may have implications for the other. They should ensure appropriate consultation has taken place before they embark in a course of action.
- 7.6 Concerns should usually be shared with the parent or carer of the child. However, where there is an indication or cause for concern of sexual abuse within the family, guidance from statutory services should be sought first, before informing carers or family members. Consideration must be given to prevent any contamination of evidence or re-victimisation.
- 7.7 When making a referral, it is important for workers to carefully consider whether the information provided is indicative of harmful sexual behaviour, not least because of the impact of labelling on the child if it is incorrect. The following factors should be considered:
- The age relationship between the children
 - Any differences in their size, power, ability, or authority
 - Whether the behaviour is age inappropriate
 - The purpose of the behaviour
 - Any evidence of planning
 - Characteristics of the subject(s)
 - Whether the behaviour is repetitive
 - The frequency and nature of the behaviours
 - Any evidence of escalation
 - Any change of behaviours



8. Strategy Discussions/Meetings

- 8.1 Where a particular behaviour is felt to be harmful a strategy discussion/meeting is an appropriate forum in which to share concerns before reaching a collective way forward. The potential complexities of these concerns usually require that planning takes place in the form of a meeting to ensure that a safety plan is in place.
- 8.2 When a child is suspected or alleged to have harmed another in a sexual way, the Police and/or Children's Social Care must convene a strategy discussion or, in most cases, a strategy meeting via the MASH, within the following timescales:
- For allegations of sexual abuse, the Strategy Discussion/Meeting should be held on the same day as the receipt of the referral if this is required to ensure forensic evidence.
 - Where prior emergency action has been taken, a Strategy Discussion/Meeting must be held within one working day.
- 8.3 When the child concerned resides in a different local authority, it is expected that the strategy meeting is convened and chaired by the authority in which the potentially harmful behaviour occurred although geographical considerations and urgency have also to be taken into account.
- 8.4 Where strategy discussions are required for both the alleged subject and young person presenting with harmful sexual behaviour, it may be beneficial to hold an initial combined strategy meeting to consider all the children and then establish separate strategy meetings for individual children. The primary aim of any intervention should remain focused on the protection of the subject, the protection of any other potential subjects and the avoidance of repetition of the harmful sexual behaviour.
- 8.5 The Strategy Discussion/Meeting should involve Children's Social Care, Health, and the Police*; also, the referring agency and other agencies involved with the family as appropriate (for example Education). Where there is a possibility that the child may be charged with a criminal offence, the Youth Offending Service should always be invited. **Where required, a legal adviser should be invited, or legal advice sought to inform the Strategy Discussion/Meeting.**
- 8.6 The aim of the strategy meeting is to share all the available information and confirm if any further action needs to be taken, such as Section 47 or social work assessment and any criminal investigation. Consideration should be given to:
- Identifying which children may be at continued risk.
 - Any urgent action needed to protect children.
 - The need for a medical examination or treatment
 - Whether language differences or complexity of needs require the involvement of someone able to help in the communication needed
 - Whether a referral to a specialist service is needed – such as CAMHS.



8.7 Agreed action points, timescales, roles and responsibilities and a mechanism for reviewing completion of the action points must be recorded and circulated to all parties within one working day. Children's Social Care will record this on the relevant form. For telephone discussions, a copy of the action points authorised by the manager should be sent to all participants. Records of Strategy Discussions/Strategy Meetings will be held in the relevant record systems for the child.

9. Possible outcomes from the strategy discussion/meeting

9.1 The process could result in one or more of the following outcomes for both children:

- Further strategy meeting
- Safety plan
- CSC Child and Family Assessment
- Child Protection procedures to be followed.
- Child in Need process to be followed.
- Universal services intervention
- Early Help/Family First partner completing tasks at the appropriate level of risk.

9.2 Where the decision is reached within the strategy meeting that the sexual behaviour of concern does not meet the threshold criteria for significant harm, the details of the referral and reasons for this decision must be clearly recorded. The outcome should also be appropriately shared with any professionals involved – in writing; if the referrer is not a professional, only limited information can be shared in accordance with inter-agency information sharing arrangements. The parents or carers of the children will also be informed of the outcome of the meeting. Parents or carers should not be invited to, or receive minutes of, the strategy meeting(s), and careful consideration is needed in the timing and detail of discussions with them. Safety plans where devised and appropriate should be implemented by lead professional.

9.3 The need for further assessment and support services to either child should still be considered within a multi-agency framework. If the child is not deemed at risk of significant harm, then Social Care should complete a C&F Assessment of the child who has allegedly displayed inappropriate or harmful sexual behaviour and of the victim. Ideally the assessment of each child should be completed by different social workers to promote individuality of needs and risks. The social workers should take into account when completing their assessments to inform their decision-making that there needs to be analysis of potential other harmed children which may be a risk and a robust safety plan should be implemented where potential harmed children have been identified. Consideration is needed to other children who may be at risk, such as within the school environment and safety plans should be considered for both the home and for school

**The Police should be involved in the decision making process even if the child is under ten years of age and therefore below the age of criminal prosecution as they may, for example, have information about the child or the child's family which is relevant to the enquiries.*



10. Section 47 enquiries

- 10.1 Where a section 47 enquiry is required, a different social worker must be allocated for the subject and for the child whose sexual behaviour might be harmful, even if they live in the same household, to ensure that both are supported through the assessment process and that their individual welfare and safety needs are being addressed.
- 10.2 If it appears that either the child whose sexual behaviour is of concern or the subject is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, the section 47 enquiry process will be followed. In these circumstances, relevant considerations include:
- The nature and extent of the harmful sexual behaviours and the impact on the victim
 - The context of the harmful sexual behaviours
 - The age of the children involved.
 - The child's development, and family and social circumstances
 - Whether the child acknowledges the alleged behaviour
 - Whether there are grounds to suspect that the child has been abused themselves or that adults have been involved in the development of the harmful sexual behaviour
 - Both children's needs for services across the thresholds
 - The risks the child poses to him/herself and others, including other children in the household, extended family, school, peer group or wider social network. This risk is likely to be present unless: the opportunity to further abuse is ended, the child has acknowledged the abusive behaviour and accepted responsibility and there is agreement by the child and his/her family to work with relevant agencies to address the problem.
- 10.3 If during the course of the assessment there are concerns about any risks to other children posed by the child presenting with harmful sexual behaviour, a further strategy meeting should be convened straight away to develop:
- A written risk management plan in relation to any child identified as at potential risk, including educational and accommodation arrangements both for the child and the potential subject(s)
 - Appropriate arrangement for the continuation of the assessment and the need for any specialist assessment and
 - How the services to be provided will be coordinated
- 10.4 Where possible children have a right to be consulted and involved in all matters and decisions that affect their lives and the use of interpreter services should be accessed if needed to achieve this. This right and respect extends to parents and carers and their active participation should be promoted.

11. Outcome of Section 47 Enquiries

- 11.1 The decision about initiating a child protection conference should be made following the outcome of the section 47 enquiry. A child who is alleged or suspected to have displayed harmful sexual behaviour should only be the subject of an initial child protection conference if they are considered to be at risk of significant harm. The (reconvened) strategy meeting should consider the following issues when making a decision to proceed to a child protection conference:



- The attitude of the parents/carers and any deficit in parenting
- The relationship between the subject and the child presenting with harmful sexual behaviour.
- The sharing of full information if the police investigation is ongoing.
- The participation of the children at the conference
- The likelihood of future harm occurring unless the opportunity to further harm is ended, the child has acknowledged the harmful sexual behaviour and accepted responsibility and there is agreement by the child and his/her family to work with relevant agencies to address the problem.
- The need for safety plans in relation to any child identified at potential risk: including educational and accommodation arrangements both for the child presenting with harmful sexual behaviour and the potential subjects.

11.2 A child protection conference is called within 15 days of the last strategy meeting, and its purpose is to address the concerns for the subject and the child presenting harmful sexual behaviour, where they reside together.

11.3 Knowsley school's/education settings may seek the support of the Education Safeguarding lead regarding completion of a plan within school to manage any concerns in relation to the child who may have demonstrated the harmful sexual behaviour.

11.4 If the child becomes the subject of a child protection plan, the coordination of services will continue through the core group, which should address the child's harmful behaviour, the potential risks the child poses to others as well as the concerns which resulted in the need for a child protection plan.

12.0 Child/ren in need

12.1 If a child protection conference is not convened and there is an identified need for services to address the needs of the children concerned, a child in need plan should be drawn up in consultation with the child, their parents/carers, and professionals. The plan should be subject to review and include the child's need for any work to address their harmful sexual behaviour. Appropriate consideration should be given to maintaining care and education arrangements.

13.0 Criminal justice processes

13.1 All children entering the statutory Youth Justice system for Youth Caution upwards should receive a structured needs assessment by the local Youth Offending Service (YOS) using the relevant Youth Justice Board-approved assessment tool (Asset Plus). This national tool is designed to identify the child's strengths, risks and protective factors associated with the offending behaviour and harm to others and provides the foundation to select an effective need led intervention program. Alongside YOS intervention the most serious sexual and violent offences are managed through Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangement (MAPPA) processes to ensure that coordinated multi-agency arrangements are in place to manage and reduce risk of harm. However, other high-risk offences are managed through the Youth Offending Service Multi- Agency Risk Management (MARM) processes.



- 13.2 In circumstances where the child presenting with harmful sexual behaviour is charged to Court and there is consideration of the child either needing an alternative bail address or being securely remanded, YOS will assess the vulnerability and risk posed by the child as part of their statutory service.
- 13.3 Youth Justice Procedures are followed using Standard for Children in Youth Justice and Case Management Guidance in respect of children at all levels of youth justice from court, community, and custody. All of which involve partnership working and multi-agency risk management in cases of high-risk harmful sexual behaviour
- 13.4 The Children & Young Person's Independent Sexual Violence Advisor Service works separately from the police and the courts. They support victims of sexual violence through the criminal justice process from reporting the offence to the police to the court process. The service in Knowsley is currently provided by Rape & Sexual Abuse Support Centre (RASASC) telephone 03303630063 email support@rapecentre.org

14.0 Sexual Harmful Panel (Safeguarding)

- 14.1 Where a child has displayed sexualised behaviours which are a cause of concern, and the case is an open case to Children's social care (safeguarding case) this must be brought to the Sexual Harmful Panel for discussion and further scrutiny. This panel is convened by the Knowsley Local Authority Quality Assurance Unit and the meeting will be chaired by the Quality Assurance Manager. Representatives from Children's Social Care, YOS, CAMHS, Education and Health with experience in sexual harmful behaviours will sit routinely on the panel and may include relevant others as indicated by the circumstances of individual cases.
- 14.2 The issues requiring discussion at the panel include:
- the background to the C&F assessment, the current state of criminal and childcare processes (embracing home, school, community, and extended family),
 - police investigation updates, including any restrictions from bail conditions,
 - the family and child's reaction to the allegations and current degree of acceptance and responsibility,
 - any significant gaps or outstanding information,
 - request for further provision with reasons and options and date for the next panel review,
 - the need to expedite investigations with the Police.
- 14.3 Social workers are to complete the case formulation template in preparation for the panel to aide their analysis of the specific harmful behaviour. They will present this at panel and actions from the meeting will be recorded under the intervention plan. Cases requiring a period of review to monitor the safety plans and intervention delivery will be scheduled to be heard at a further panel date, which will be set by the Chair. The case formulation will be a working document and will be reviewed accordingly



Please see referral form and case formulation form that will need to be completed for HSB Panel



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HSB%20Referral%20form%20-%20Draft.d



- 14.4 The panel convenes four weekly or as necessary, and their role is to oversee the safe management of these cases. The panel will assess whether the child requires a specialist assessment or whether it can be managed based on assessments already completed by existing agencies. The panel will ensure oversight of the plans to ensure the safeguarding needs of the child are met and risks to the public are considered. The panel will also have an oversight of the safety plans put in place for these children. The panel may suggest specific interventions, how to tailor work to meet the needs of the child or suggest that the threshold has been made for a specialist assessment such as AIM3. Minutes in relation to the young person will be inputted into ICS. The social worker may be required to attend Resources Panel if external funding is required for any more specialist assessments or intervention.
- 14.5 If the police investigation is still ongoing then the Harmful Sexual Panel will review the agreed family intervention plan including the 'keep safe plan' and make any additional amendments, if required. Social Care will remain the lead agency until the child's criminal case has concluded. YOS will oversee any bail or remand management requirements and they will report into the Harmful Sexual Panel and work alongside the Social Worker, during this stage of the criminal justice process.
- 14.6 The panel will also monitor all children being investigated for harmful sexual offences and analyse investigation outcomes including cases NFA'd by the police. In addition, the panel will also analyse any emerging trends. This requires information by the police being brought to the attention of the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service Manager so that any trends or patterns can be identified and any further support needs for specific children identified.
- 14.7 If the Child is convicted and sentenced, then YOS will hold a statutory multi-agency risk management meeting within 15 working days of sentencing if they are classed as high risk. In the event that a specialist assessment has not already been completed for sentence then YOS and social care will need to jointly complete this. Following the specialist assessment, specialist intervention can be designed to meet the needs of the child and the risk of harm they pose to others.
- 14.8 The panel will have responsibility and oversight for monitoring the successful completion of AIM3 Assessments at a safeguarding level. Social workers are required to submit the findings of their assessment to panel along with the AIM3 report. The panel will review these documents with the social worker and agree the actions, level of supervision and intervention plan.
- 14.9 All cases who have been referred for discussion at the Panel must remain open to CSC until a closure review has taken place at the panel and panel have ratified the decision to close. The panel must be satisfied that all necessary safety planning and intervention work has been completed to successfully reduce the risks to the public. A panel can be request early and does not have to wait for the scheduled dates if necessary.



15. Safety Planning:

15.1 Home Safety Plans

15.2 It is possible that a decision will need to be made in the course of child protection enquiries to remove a child from the family home as a protective measure for siblings. If a decision is made that the child can remain at home, a Home Safety Plan should be undertaken by the professionals involved to provide some rules and guidelines about what is permissible. It should also be completed in any other setting where a child is placed – whether that is in a residential setting or a foster placement or with other family members.

15.3 Understanding the context and relationship that exists between children with harmful sexual behaviours and their living environment is highly significant in understanding and managing risk. Whatever the care context, (family home, foster placement, residential unit) there is an expectation that the adults will be proactive in preventing further harmful behaviours and creating a safe environment. In addition, children learn many skills required to help them manage their behaviours through their ongoing life experiences, therefore interventions need to be considered through both a combination of one-to-one work and skills training being undertaken by significant adults in their day-to-day interactions. A child's living environment therefore plays a pivotal role in the overall safety plan to manage and reduce risk. A comprehensive assessment of the living environment, be that family home, foster placement, or residential unit, should be undertaken and this should run parallel to the assessment of the child. The broad areas to assess include:

- the adults understanding of the child.
- the impact of the living environment on the child's risk areas of strength and need in relation to capacity for managing risk.
- any obstacles or risks or other factors contributing to the child's behaviours.
- the identification of key goals for the living environment to work proactively with the child to help them change their behaviours.

The detail in the plan should include as a minimum:

- A realistic level of supervision that must be provided.
- The living environment is free from confusing sexual behaviour and information.
i.e., DVDs magazines, language, behaviour.
- Sleeping arrangements need to be considered including making arrangements with extended family members.
- Clear rules on nudity/privacy.
- State of dress around the house.
- Limitations on play fighting.



16. Community safety plan

16.1 Please refer to Terms of Reference for Harmful Sexual Behaviour Panel

[HARMFUL SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR PANEL TOR.docx](#)

16.2 During each phase of intervention, it is necessary to consider and respond to a number of areas that could contribute to further sexual behaviours occurring. The Community Safety Plan is a set of external controls and limits designed to help parents/carers and workers manage potential risk situations out with the child's living environment. This plan should be developed and reviewed by workers undertaking the assessment and intervention in collaboration with the family and other relevant professionals. It should be formally reviewed in risk management meetings.

16.3 Careful consideration should be given as to how to communicate the safety plan with the child and how this can be incorporated in their own safety plan. It is important that the child receives positive messages about the plan and that positive behaviours are supported.

17.0 Management of Harmful Sexual Behaviour in Schools and Education Settings

17.1 Statutory Responsibilities

Statutory guidance for schools, Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2023, Part 5, details advice and guidance for schools in identification of, and response to incidents of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment in school and education settings.

The guidance gives a definition of such behaviour, and promotes a 'zero tolerance' approach to incidents, understanding,

'That it is never acceptable, and it will not be tolerated. It should never be passed off as "banter", "just having a laugh", "a part of growing up" or "boys being boys". Failure to do so can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviour, an unsafe environment and in worst case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse, leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it'. Paragraph 448, KCSiE, 23.

The guidance provides effective safeguarding practice and principles for schools and colleges to consider in their decision-making process.

Local authority children's social care and the police are important partners where a crime might have been committed, and schools and colleges should not feel that they are alone in dealing with sexual violence and sexual harassment.

17.2 KCSiE, 23 Education guidance refers to sexual violence and sexual harassment, it also uses the term Harmful Sexual Behaviour that is used as an umbrella term to refer to the full spectrum of sexualised behaviours displayed from normal, inappropriate, problematic, and harmful/abusive. It also recognises that these behaviours can take place online as well as in



real life, and technology can be used to facilitate incidents of child-on-child abuse.

17.3 **Inappropriate incidents.**

Where staff have received AIM Understanding and Managing Sexual Behaviour in Education Settings training, schools should use the appropriate AIM Checklists to identify the type of behaviour displayed. For incidents where the behaviour of a child falls into the inappropriate range under the spectrum of Harmful Sexual Behaviour as defined in Hackett's continuum, schools are most likely able to address these behaviours and manage them appropriately within the setting, without having to make referrals into other services.

Schools should follow their Behaviour and anti-bullying policies to address these 'inappropriate' behaviours, put appropriate boundaries in place for the child displaying the behaviour as part of an individual safety plan.

All incidents of Harmful Sexual Behaviour including those identified as 'inappropriate' should be recorded on the school's child protection recording system. As well as the incident that happened, it is important that interventions and their outcomes are also recorded. Such records are important and can inform a pattern mapping process around Harmful Sexual Behaviour.

17.4 Children who display harmful sexual behaviour continue to be entitled to education services, and school can be a significant protective factor for them. Children who display these behaviours may be safeguarded within the school community and protected from any bullying as a result of their behaviour.

17.5 KCSiE, 23, makes it clear that schools should have procedures to minimize child-on-child abuse. The systems they have in place should be well promoted and easily understood. Children should be able to report incidents with confidence knowing their concerns will be treated seriously. There should be clear processes on how to support children who are subject to incidents of child-on-child abuse, as well as those children who display harmful sexual behaviour

17.6 School Designated Safeguarding Leads and deputies can access support in managing incidents of child-on-child abuse from the Local Authority Education Safeguarding Lead. Support and guidance to schools to help them formulate plans to ensure the safety of all concerned.

18 **Child-on-Child abuse Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Child on child**

18.1 KCSiE, 23, Part 5, recognises that sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex, from primary through to secondary stage and into colleges. It can occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap; they can occur online and face to face (both physically and verbally) and are never acceptable.

18.2 KCSiE, 23, Part 5, also identifies that harmful sexual behaviour (HSB), including a



child displaying HSB may be an indication that they are a victim of abuse themselves.

- 18.4 While the guidance provides effective safeguarding practice and principles for schools and colleges to consider in their decision-making process. Ultimately, any decisions are for the school or college to make on a case-by-case basis, with the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) taking a leading role and using their professional judgement, supported by other agencies, such as children's social care and the police as required.

19. **Education response**

- 19.1 Where harmful sexual behaviour is displayed by a school age child, in most cases Education will be the one service with professionals the children will be regularly involved with. The safeguarding processes and success of risk identification tools and safety plans agreed and put into place is strongly reliant on the professionals in this service area. All staff members in school must know what to do if a child tells them they are being abused or harmed.
- 19.2 The exceptions are those children who are electively home educated by their parents. As the parents have removed their children from the formal school system and have taken direct responsibility to educate them, as such any incident of harmful sexual behaviour comes to the attention of Children's Social Care, or the Police should be addressed as part of the child protection process.
- 19.3 When supporting a child displaying inappropriate or harmful sexual behaviour, education settings may have to consider a number of factors:

The child displaying the behaviour and the child who is the target of the behaviour may attend the same school, meaning plans around risk and safety will be required for both pupils and arrangements to safeguard both children to be agreed.

There may be several children involved in the incident of inappropriate or harmful sexual behaviour.

Incidents of inappropriate sexual behaviour and sexual harassment should be addressed in school following the School Behaviour Policy and Anti Bullying policy.

- Following an incident of harmful sexual behaviour, school should follow the procedures set out in the school behaviour policy. Decisions on a managed move or permanent exclusion may be considered once all other options have been considered, or where the safety of the child displaying the behaviour is at risk and cannot be safeguarded.
- The possibility of children displaying these behaviours and/or children who have been the victim of these behaviours being bullied on their return to school.
 - The wider community may be aware of aspects of the incident.
 - The unequal treatment of children involved in an incident, especially where there are cross boundary issues.



- 19.4 Effective information sharing is essential to ensure the needs of all the children can be met in an education setting. The Joint Inspectors report, (CJJI, 2013) found that ‘some workers were reluctant to share information with education establishments, fearing that this might be detrimental to the child or young person’.

Failing to share relevant information with education settings not only prevents information that is held by the education establishment about the child being shared with other agencies, it may also put other children at risk if schools haven’t undertaken a risk assessment or made arrangements to manage the movements or behaviour of a child.

It is imperative that for schools to support children involved in incidents of inappropriate or harmful sexual behaviour that information is shared with the school Designated Safeguarding Lead in a timely manner.

20. Risk Assessments School

- 20.1 KCSiE, 23, States that when there has been a report of sexual violence, the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) should make an immediate risk and needs assessment.

Where there has been a report of sexual harassment, the need for a risk assessment should be considered on a case-by-case basis. Consideration should be given to,

- The child who is subject to the behaviour, specifically their protection and support
- If there has been more than one child subject to the behaviour
- The child who is displaying the behaviour
- All other children, and if appropriate staff at school especially can actions that are appropriated to protected them from any future harms.
- The time and location of the incident and any action required.

In Dec 2017 the Department for Education (DfE) issued ‘Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Guidance’ (Dec 2017, updates May 2018.) Giving a clear definition and setting out how to minimise the risk of incidents occurring in schools and what to do when an incident has or is alleged to have occurred.

The current guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education, Sept 2021, Part Five, places a statutory responsibility on schools to respond to behaviours of sexual violence and sexual harassment as part of school safeguarding responsibilities.

- 20.2 While Education guidance documents refer to sexual violence and sexual harassment in this document the term Harmful Sexual Behaviour is used to refer to these behaviours.

Peer on Peer abuse is also referred to in KCSiE, 2021, and includes references and details a range of behaviours from bullying and physical violence to sexualised behaviours which may be described as inappropriate or harmful.

- 20.3 Children who display inappropriate and/ or harmful sexual behaviour continue to be entitled to education services, and school can be a significant protective factor for them. Children



who display these behaviours may be safeguarded within the school community and protected from any bullying as a result of their behaviour.

- 20.4 In order to support schools in managing any real or perceived risk the Education Safeguarding Lead in the LA can provide support and guidance to schools to help them formulate plans to ensure the safety of all concerned. This will include not only when the child is in the school building, but also the arrangements agreed to get the child to and from school.

21. **Peer on Peer abuse Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment**

- 21.1 Keeping Children Safe in Education, Sept 2021, Part 5, offers school and college settings clear guidance on identifying, addressing, and managing incidents of Peer-on-Peer abuse, particularly in relation to Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment.
- 21.2 The document recognises that sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex, from primary through to secondary stage and into colleges. It can occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap; they can occur online and face to face (both physically and verbally) and are never acceptable.
- 21.3 Part 5 of KCSiE, 2021 also identifies that harmful sexual behaviour (HSB), including a child displaying HSB may be an indication that they are a victim of abuse themselves.
- 21.4 While the guidance provides effective safeguarding practice and principles for schools and colleges to consider in their decision-making process. Ultimately, any decisions are for the school or college to make on a case-by-case basis, with the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) taking a leading role and using their professional judgement, supported by other agencies, such as children's social care and the police as required.

22. **Education response**

- 22.1 Where sexually inappropriate or sexually harmful behaviour is displayed by a school age child, in most cases the once service the children will be regularly involved with is education. The success of risk identification tools and safety plans agreed and put into place is strongly reliant on the professionals in this service area.
- 22.2 The exception to this is those children who are electively home educated by their parents. As the parents have removed their children from the formal school system and have taken direct responsibility to educate them, any incident of inappropriate or harmful sexual behaviour that comes to the attention of Children's Social Care, or the Police should be addressed as part of the child protection process.
- 22.3 When dealing with children who display inappropriate or harmful sexual behaviour, education settings may have to consider a number of factors:

The child displaying the behaviour and the child who is the target of the behaviour may attend the same school, meaning plans around risk and safety will be required for both pupils and arrangements to safeguard both children to be agreed.



There may be several children involved in the incident of inappropriate or harmful sexual behaviour.

Incidents of inappropriate sexual behaviour and sexual harassment should be addressed in school following the school behaviour policy and Anti Bullying policy.

There is an incident of sexually harmful behaviour, to manage risk a managed move or permanent exclusion may be considered once all other options have been considered, or where the safety of the child displaying the behaviour is compromised.

The possibility of children displaying these behaviours and/or children who have been the victim of these behaviours being bullied on their return to school.

The wider community may be aware of aspects of the incident.

The unequal treatment of children involved in an incident, especially where there are cross boundary issues.

- 22.4 Effective information sharing is essential to ensure the needs of all the children can be met in an education setting. The Joint Inspectors report, (CJJI, 2013) found that 'some workers were reluctant to share information with education establishments, fearing that this might be detrimental to the child or young person'.

Failing to share relevant information with education settings not only prevents information that is held by the education establishment about the child being shared with other agencies, it may also put other children at risk if schools haven't undertaken a risk assessment or made arrangements to manage the movements or behaviour of a child.

It is imperative that for schools to support children involved in incidents of inappropriate or harmful sexual behaviour that information is shared with the school Designated Safeguarding Lead in a timely manner.

23. Risk Assessments School

- 23.1 Keeping Children Safe in Education, Sept 2021 identifies that when there has been a report of sexual violence, the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should make an immediate risk and needs assessment. Where there has been a report of sexual harassment, the need for a risk assessment should be considered on a case-by-case basis. The risk and needs assessment should consider:

- The subject, especially their protection and support
- Whether there may have been other subjects
- The alleged perpetrator(s); and
- All the other children, (and, if appropriate, adult students and staff) at the school or college, especially any actions that are appropriate to protect them from the alleged perpetrator(s), or from future harms



- 23.2 Risk assessments and risk identification can be used by schools to formulate safety plans for children who are involved in cases of inappropriate or harmful sexual behaviour.

'Risk assessments should be recorded (written or electronic) and should be kept under review. At all times, the school or college should be actively considering the risks posed to all their pupils and students and put adequate measures in place to protect them and keep them safe'. Para 445, KCSiE 2021

- 23.3 The Designated Safeguarding Lead, and deputies in school, with the support of Children's Social Care and other identified specialist services, including the Education Safeguarding Officer, as required, are best placed to evaluate any potential safeguarding risk on a case-by-case basis.

'The designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should ensure they are engaging with children's social care and specialist services as required. Where there has been a report of sexual violence, it is likely that professional risk assessments by social workers and or sexual violence specialists will be required. The above school or college risk assessment is not intended to replace the detailed assessments of expert professionals. Any such professional assessments should be used to inform the school's or college's approach to supporting and protecting their pupils and students and updating their own risk assessment.' **Para 446, KCSiE, 2021.**

- 23.4 An important part of risk assessment is pattern mapping, which can be undertaken with other agencies, to identify the life events of the child with the behaviour and the sexualised behaviours that have occurred or alleged to have occurred.

- 23.5 Pattern mapping is used as part of the Risk Assessment and management Plan (RAMP) set out in The AIM Project guidance 'Understanding and Managing Sexual Behaviours in education Settings, 4th Edition, (Carson and Aujla). Knowsley schools who have received the training from AIM on the use of their licensed tools, should follow the guidance and implement pattern mapping to inform the development of a RAMP.

24. Safety Planning

- 24.1 The development of a school safety plan has the purpose of setting out external controls and limits designed to help staff in school safeguard the child and manage potential risk situations in the school environment. The plan will be developed in response to the specific harmful sexual behaviour displayed by the child, therefore the senior staff in school must be fully informed of the case specific details. Effective safety planning will.

- Include the agreement of the child and family.
 - Be regularly reviewed in line with an agreed set of timescales included in the plan.
 - Be tailored to the specific details of an individual case.
 - Consider any special needs a child may have.
 - Have limits and controls that can be easily implemented.
 - Be supported and informed by relevant professionals working with the child.
 - Consider the transportation of the child to and from school.
 - Where necessary be reviewed in risk management meetings
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The school safety plan will support the child to be able to continue with their education as far as possible in the school setting.

- 24.2 To ensure a safety plan supports a child and is manageable in by the school or college setting a number of things should be considered.

These include.

Staffing

- Consider the staff who are directly involved in teaching and supporting the child.
- Who in school needs to know about the concerns in terms of the harmful behaviour.
- Sensitivity in terms of how members of staff may feel about supporting a child who displays sexually inappropriate or harmful behaviour.
- The level of staff supervision required in terms of the child displaying the behaviour, or about who the allegation has been made. Including responding to changes in circumstances that may affect the appropriateness and nature of the staff supervision.

Environment

- Areas in the school and grounds where there may usually be less supervision.
- Any additional circumstances that may potentially increase risk, such as, building works, co-location of nursery and primary provision.
- The use of toilet facilities.
- Places where children may go in breaks between lessons lunch times.
- Any off-site visits and activities that take place in a location other than the school setting, including work placement or alternative education provision.
- Consider the online environment the child may have access to, especially if the sexually inappropriate or harmful behaviours have occurred online, or where they have an online element.

Timetable

- Consider structured times, such as classes or assemblies.
- Specific lessons such as PE or Swimming where children may undress or change from their regular uniform.
- Consider unstructured time of the day such as, the beginning or end of the school day, lunch, and break times.
- Level of supervision required in the classroom.
- Agreed interaction with other students.
- Additional pastoral needs or the child displaying sexually inappropriate or harmful behaviour.

Pupils

- Consider and ensure the safety of all children who are school pupils.
 - Safeguarding any children who are pupils of the school, who may be identified as having specific vulnerabilities or additional needs, such as physical disabilities or
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learning difficulties, including children with an EHCP.

- Proactively support the education provision offered to the child/ren who are displaying the sexually inappropriate or harmful behaviour.
- Consider ways to support the emotional development and appropriate peer interaction of the child/ren who has displayed the sexually inappropriate or harmful behaviour.

Parents

- Including parents in the safety planning is crucial to ensure implementation of the plan.
- Consider exploring with parents because the child may be displaying the behaviour.
- Ensure parents are fully informed of all aspects of the plan and the clear purpose of the interventions agreed in the plan.
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24.3 The School Safety Plan will identify areas of vulnerability and risk, and as far as practicable, will set limits that aim to reduce the potential risk, while allowing the child displaying sexually inappropriate or harmful behaviour to continue to access education which is their right.

25.0 Transition

25.1 When young people move to college prior to their 18th birthday then the college concerned needs to be invited to the RMM. This is because it is the college's responsibility to ensure the safety of other young people who attend the college.

25.2 If the young person applies to college and is no longer subject to RMM the application form will ask about criminal convictions. At this point sufficient information must be provided to the college concerned to ensure that they are able to complete a risk assessment and ensure that they are able to complete a risk assessment and ensure that appropriate safeguards are put in place.

26.0 Child Looked After – Consent and Confidentiality in Placement

26.1 Where a child looked after has been involved in an investigation into harmful sexual behaviour, all children in placement must be interviewed (this includes the foster carers own children). All carers must be made aware of the concerns and be fully involved in any assessments and care planning meetings.

26.2 The strategy discussion must consider the risk of the young person remaining in his/her current placement. Any new carer must be informed of the disclosure and the risk management plan.

26.3 Social workers must consult with their managers regarding informing parents of any



disclosure in a foster care or residential setting where their child has not been the subject, if appropriate

27.0 Moving Out of Borough

27.1 At any stage a child or young person moves out of the Borough and is not deemed a child looked after, the social worker must complete a referral and a full handover of the case to the relevant Local Authority.

28.0 Complaints Procedure

28.1 If a complaint is made against a specific worker, then the agency complaints procedure should be followed. If a complaint is made regarding the Risk Management Process, the Safeguarding Boards complaints procedures should be applied (See Complaints and Resolutions Procedure).

29.0 References

- Understanding sexualised behaviour in children | NSPCC Learning
 - Helping-Children-Thrive-Knowsley.pdf (knowsleyscp.org.uk)
 - How to prevent harmful sexual behaviour in children | NSPCC Learning
 - Multi Agency Referral Form (knowsley.gov.uk)
 - Keeping Children Safe in Education, (Sept 2021)
 - 'Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Guidance' (Dec 2017, updates May 2018).
 - HARMFUL SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR PANEL TOR.doc
 - AIM 3 Assessment framework (2019)
 - AIM 2 Assessment framework (2012)
 - Technology assessed harmful sexual behaviour. Practice guidance. NSPCC & AIM. Swann, R (2017)
 - Assessment Manual.
 - Gilgun et al, 1999 quoted by Hackett, S. 2004 'What works for children and young people with harmful sexual behaviours?' Andrew Haig & Associates.
 - Hackett, Simon (2001) Facing the Future.
 - Hackett, Simon (2004) 'What works for children and young people with harmful sexual behaviours?' Andrew Haig & Associates.
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- Knowsley Resilience and Vulnerability Tool;
 - Sexual Offences Act 2003.
 - The Joint Inspection by HMI Probation, Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales, Care Quality Commission, Estyn, Healthcare Inspectorate Wales, HMI Constabulary, HMI Prisons and Ofsted, February 2013.
 - The Munro Review of Child Protection Interim Report: The Child's Journey also includes the ACPO statement of Risk Principles.
 - Worling, 2002, quoted in Hackett, S. 2004 'What works for children and young people with harmful sexual behaviours?' Andrew Haig & Associates.
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Key contact details

MAS	0151 443 2600
Police	0151 443 2600
Education Safeguarding Lead	0151 443 2969
Youth Offending Service	0151 443 3079
CAHMS	0151 489 6137
Early Help Team	0151 443 4707
Family First	0151 443 2670