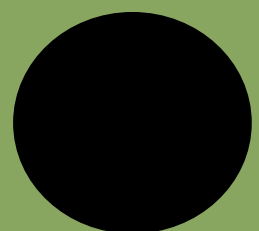


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Harmful
Sexual
Behaviour



What is Harmful Sexual behaviour?

Harmful sexual behaviour is '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 abusive towards another child, young person or adult' (Hackett, 2014).

HSB is harmful to the children who display it as well as the people subjected to it.

It can include:

- Frequently and intentionally accessing age-inappropriate sexual material online
- Using inappropriate language
- Undertaking mutual sexual activity they are not ready for with peers
- Sending and receiving illegal images
- Sexual interactions where there are significant power differences, lack of consent, or through force or threats
- Engaging in abusive or sexually violent sexual behaviour online or offline.

Sexual abuse is most likely to be experienced by children from members of their family and community. What is important to know is that not all sexual abuse is carried out by adults. It is and will be hard to fathom that children and young people can sexually abuse other children and young people but it does happen. It is also not easy to tell the difference between abusive sexual behaviour and normal sexual behaviour between children.

Children, particularly in younger age groups, might engage in such behaviour without knowing that it is wrong or abusive. **That's why it can be more accurate to talk about harmful sexual behaviour rather than abuse.**



Research shows

Under 18s are responsible for at least a third of recorded sexual offences against children and young people in the UK.

- Boys in early adolescence, around the time puberty starts, tend to display the most harmful sexual behaviour although younger children and girls do sometimes engage in these behaviours too.
- Girls tend to be over-represented amongst the victims of harmful sexual behaviour.
- Young people with learning disabilities and autism also tend to be over-represented amongst young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour.
- Around half of young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour have experienced sexual abuse themselves.
- The vast majority of young people do not persist with these behaviours into adulthood.

It is important that parents and carers are equipped with the knowledge to be able to consider the risks their own children and young people might pose to others. This is both online and in person. They need to be alert to the signs of harmful sexual behaviour that children and young people display.

Criteria to receive a service

This service works with Children and Young People aged 8 – 18 years of age.

A child/young people must be ready, consenting, safe and willing to engage in HSB Assessment and Intervention for it to offer any benefit.

Robust risk assessments must be in place before any intervention can begin including early intervention.

Criteria for Early intervention referral

Early intervention is offered to children and Young people aged between 8 to 18 years old who are displaying problematic sexual behaviour.

Examples of some of these behaviours may be:

- Developmentally inappropriate use of pornography
- Sending sexual texts, including sexting without images
- Exposing other children and young people to pornography
- Engaging in sexual conversations that are not age-appropriate
- One-off incidents or low key, such as touching over clothing
- Harmful sexual behaviour Peer pressure
- Spontaneous rather than planned sexual behaviour
- Self-directed, e.g. public masturbation



Other balancing factors include the lack of intent to cause harm or level of understanding, or acceptance of responsibility.

Children (victims) become irritated and or uncomfortable but not scared by the acts that they feel free to tell someone.

Parents and or carers are concerned but remain supportive.



Criteria for an AIMS assessment referral

Offered to children and Young people aged between 8 to 18 years old who have been court ordered to comply with AIMS Assessment and display behaviours harmful to themselves and/or others, for example:

- Sexual harassment
- Grooming
- Viewing and the distribution of Indecent Images of children and extreme pornography
- Voyeurism, e.g. recording an individual(s) in a state of undress or engaging in sexual activity without their knowledge or consent.
- 'Child on child abuse' (known previously as 'Peer on Peer') which is defined by Farrer & Co's (2019) as any form of physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse, and coercive control exercised between children, and within children's relationships (both intimate and non-intimate), friendships, and wider peer associations.
- Elements of planning, secrecy, force or coercion or lack of consent
- Power differentials, e.g. age, size, status and strength
- The responses of others e.g. fear, anxiety, discomfort
- The child blames others and takes no responsibility
- Frequent incidents or increasing in frequency and disproportionate to other aspects of their lives
- Display of violence
- Physically violent sexual abuse
- Highly intrusive
- Instrumental violence which is physiologically and/or sexually arousing to the perpetrator
- Sadism

If the above Criteria applies then please get in touch with us.

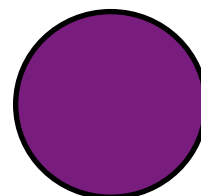
**Please email to request a referral form at
carefamilysupport@barnardos.org.uk**

If you have any questions and you would like to speak to someone please leave a message on our answer phone

01268 558448

Someone will call you back as soon as possible.

Thank you.



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