

Calderdale Safeguarding Children Board

Safeguard Guide No. 4 – December 2015

Sexually Harmful Behaviour

What is it?

Healthy sexual behaviour is part of normal childhood or youthful experimentation and is characterised by mutual consent and understanding whereas sexually harmful behaviour is characterised by behaviour that involves coercion, threats or aggression together with secrecy or where one person relies on an unequal power base. Such a power imbalance means that the victim or person being harmed cannot give informed consent. Power imbalances may be due to age, intellectual ability, status, physical size and /or strength, gender, or race. It is therefore important to separate out those unacceptable, but developmentally appropriate sexual behaviours from those which are harmful or problematic.

What is involved in sexually harmful behaviour?

Both problematic and harmful sexual behaviours may involve aspects of physical and / or emotional abuse. Some young people are involved in peer on peer exploitation. This is where a “young perpetrator befriends and grooms a young person into a ‘relationship’ and then coerces or forces them into sexual activity.” In this context, harmful sexual behaviour may be related to child sexual exploitation. Consideration should also be given to the fact that the young person who is considered to be sexually exploiting, may themselves be a victim of child sexual exploitation or sexual harm. Children and young people may be involved in harmful sexual behaviours on-line, using new technologies. On-line sexual behaviour might involve grooming, sexual abuse, extortion, threats, or creation or showing of sexual images without the knowledge or consent of the person who was filmed or pictured.

What do we know about the children and young people that sexually harm others?

Young people who sexually harm include a range of ages, males and females and young people with a learning disability and minority ethnic young people. Their needs are often complex. Many have suffered abuse, for example, domestic violence, which can have important mental health consequences and may affect the impact of future intervention for their sexually abusive behaviour.

Responding to concerns about sexually harmful behaviour

When responding to children or young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour, it is important to undertake an assessment of the needs of the whole child (seeing them as a child first) and the risk that they may present. This should include an understanding of the role of parents/carers in supporting their change and welfare. Any sexualised behaviour which does not seem right for the child’s age or stage of development should be addressed.

The CSCB has produced a tool '[Sexually Harmful Behaviour \(SHB\): Initial Identification and Assessment Tool for professionals](#)' (S) for use by all agencies working with children and young people in a range of settings to help to identify and assess what is healthy albeit unacceptable or problematic or harmful sexual behaviours and to inform the intervention pathway where SHB has been identified. All cases involving sexually harmful behaviour (SHB) by children and young people must be managed in a consistent manner and at all times consider the impact for both the child or young person displaying sexually harmful behaviour and the child or young person harmed, as at any point either party could be in need of services or protection.

The initial assessment of the sexual behaviour using the [tool](#), should be used in conjunction with [West Yorkshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Procedures 5.1](#); and [CSCB Practice Guidance \(Sexually Harmful Behaviour Children and Young People\)](#). The tool will help to decide if the behaviour is:

Worrying and Problematic and requires Early Intervention Assessment and Planning (Level 3 of the Continuum of Need). If consent is given, refer to the Early Intervention Panel;

Upper Valley	eis.uppervalley@calderdale.gov.uk	01422 368279
Lower Valley	eis.lowervalley@calderdale.gov.uk	01422 394094
Halifax Central	eis.halifaxcentral@calderdale.gov.uk	01422 392510
North & East	eis.northandeast@calderdale.gov.uk	01422 392495

Serious, Problematic, Sexually Deviant and requires more intensive, multi-agency support, a referral should be made into MAST (Level 4 or 5 of the Continuum of Need).

MAST@calderdale.gcsx.gov.uk (NB - only works when sending from another secure email address), or FAX: 01422 392875 or Telephone 01422 393336

Disabled Children Team dctadmin@calderdale.gcsx.gov.uk - 01422 394091

Where there is concern that a child / young person might have been harmed sexually by another child / young person, a referral should be to MAST in accordance with the procedure '[Reporting a Concern](#)'. Allegations of peer 'sexual abuse' will be taken as seriously as allegations of abuse perpetrated by an adult.

The Police will need to be informed if a crime has been committed.

West Yorkshire Police Telephone 101