

“Every conversation starts with the child”

Harmful Sexual Behaviour

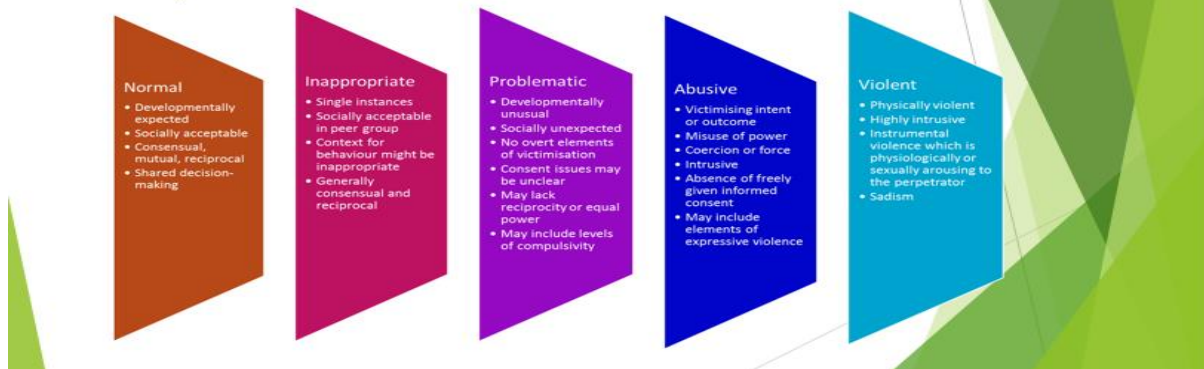


This week's blog is a reminder regarding working which young people where sexually harmful behaviour is a challenge. This blog was written by Ross Holden (Youth Justice Worker) in July last year and updated for this blog, so thank you Ross. I have also included some information regarding the City of York Safeguarding Partnership Response to Ofsted review of Sexual Abuse in Schools and Colleges developed on the 6th July 2021 in response to the publication of Ofsted's review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges, published 7th April 2021 ([Ofsted's review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/92421/Ofsted-review-of-sexual-abuse-in-schools-and-colleges-2021.pdf))

Often the thought of Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) can be unsettling and professionals can worry about how best to approach the subject or deal with emerging issues demonstrated by the young people they work with. One of the common issues people can have is that they struggle to identify which sexual behaviours are potentially harmful and which might represent healthy sexual development.

What is it? 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.

Continuum of behaviours (Hackett, 2010)



How serious is it? 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 the City of York Council 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 health and safe development Inappropriate or Problematic and where they are outside of safe and healthy behaviour 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 the young person to adopt a healthy development pathway and proceed to make healthy relationships taking steps to respond to HSB helps to;

- Identify potential risk of repeated harmful sexual behaviour
- Identify risks to either the child/young person carrying out the behaviours or their actual/potential victim(s)
- Identify the child/young person's needs including immediate sexual health needs
- Assess the child/young person's motivation and capacity to engage in services and plans
- Identify the capacity of the parents/carers to manage and support the child/young person

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 (see above). 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 become 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 Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) on 01904 551900 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 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 MASH for each child/young person. If the child is already open to CSC, the allocated worker and line manager should 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 YJS 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) provide a Harmful Sexual Behaviour Service seeking to deliver intervention work with young people around identified HSB concerns that had not resulted in ongoing police investigation or prosecution. 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 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 young

people to adopt a healthy development pathway and proceed to make healthy future relationships.

The YJS currently only take referrals for the HSB service directly from Children's Social Care. Written consent from the young person and parents/ carers for the referral to the YJS HSB Service will be required. Referral forms are available upon contacting the YJS on 01904 554565 and completed referrals should be emailed to yot.admin@york.gov.uk

York Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) Procedure Launch. On Monday 20th September to Friday 24th September 2021 will see the virtual launch of the HSB Procedure. The awareness campaign aims to highlight the new [HSB procedure](#) in York.

The City of York Safeguarding Partnership (CYSCP) Child Exploitation Subgroup created a HSB Task Group to rewrite the HSB Procedure and take forward recommendations highlighted during a Multi-Agency NSPCC HSB Audit. The HSB Task Group has worked over the past year to develop a new HSB procedure. Additionally the HSB Task Group has produced a [HSB One Minute Guide](#), rewritten the [CYSCP HSB Webpage](#) and developed [HSB Multi-Agency Training](#) which has now started to be rolled out to all partners. We think that it is important to highlight this work and therefore have created a series of key messages which can be shared across the partnerships to raise awareness of the HSB procedure.

We hope that by the end of the week professionals, wider partners and members of the public will have a better awareness of the HSB procedure and what they should do when supporting families and how to make a referral if they are concerned about a child or young person.

We have developed a campaign brand: My Body My Rules: Safeguarding Children York for our virtual launch with a series of hashtags that can be used for social media, these include:

- #HSBYork
- #harmfulsexualbehaviour
- #alifreefromhsb
- #Itsneverjustaphoto
- #safeguardingchildrenyork

Everyone's Invited. Everyone's Invited came to national attention in March 2021. It started as an Instagram account and website which invited people to share their experiences of sexual harassment and sexual violence through posting testimonies on the website and invited them to name the school or college they attended. On the 10th June 2021 'Everyone's Invited' released the names of schools and colleges that had been named by people who had posted testimonies on their website. The release was designed to coincide with the publication of Ofsted's rapid review report (see above for the link). The list included more than 3,000 schools, colleges and universities and a number of York schools (both state and independent).

The rapid thematic review revealed how prevalent sexual harassment and online sexual abuse are for children and young people. Moreover, that the issue is widespread. The review recommended that schools, colleges and multi-agency partners act as though sexual harassment and online sexual abuse are happening, even when there are no specific reports.

[Ofsted's recommendations for schools and colleges included that](#); School and college leaders should create a culture where sexual harassment and online sexual abuse are not tolerated, and where they identify issues and intervene early to better protect children and young people.

To create this culture school and college leaders should assume that sexual harassment and online abuse is happening in their setting and put in place a whole school approach to tackle this.

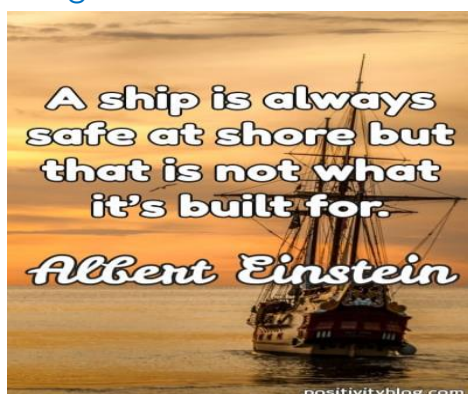
[This needs to involve:](#)

- A well planned RSHE curriculum and high quality training for teachers so that they can deliver this effectively
- Routine record keeping and analysis of sexual harassment and sexual violence
- Promotion of a whole school culture which does not tolerate and sanctions all forms of sexual harassment and sexual violence
- Training for the whole school community to recognise and challenge sexual harassment and sexual violence
- Close working with the local safeguarding partnership
- Specific support for DSLs

I have included a link to the Multi agency power point (in the accompanying email) which was developed to enable you to understand what each of our partners undertook in response to the report.

I hope that this information has been useful and if you need further detail please contact the Youth Justice team Orton, Sara <Sara.Orton@york.gov.uk>; Holden, Ross ross.holden@york.gov.uk

[Thought for the week](#)



What is going well	What is not going well	What would you like to change
Comments		

Useful resources and further reading

Child exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP)

CEOP is a National crime agency for the prevention and reporting of online abuse and exploitation. The Safety centre has links for children of all ages, parents and professionals to provide age appropriate information <http://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre>

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)

The NSPCC provides A Harmful Sexual Behaviour framework, which is a systemic tool to develop a local area response to HSB. They also provide a range of information on the website including research, advice for schools and professionals and how to respond to incidents of HSB.

<http://www.nspcc.org.uk>

Parents Protect

The Lucy Faithful foundation runs Parent Protect, an organisation aimed at helping parents identify and respond to sexual abuse. <http://www.parentsprotect.co.uk>

Brook

Brook provide online information, advice and research aimed at supporting young people to stay safe. Their vision is to provide clinical services, digital support, tailored counselling and inspiring relationships and sex education ensuring young people are able to take charge of their sexual health and wellbeing. <http://www.brook.org.uk>