

# Harmful Sexual Behaviour in Children and Young People



## Background

Harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) is developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour which is displayed by children and young people, and which may be harmful or abusive. HSB encompasses a range of behaviour, which can be displayed towards younger children, peers, older children, or adults. It is harmful to the children and young people who display it, as well as the people it is directed towards.

HSB is also known as sexually inappropriate behaviour (SIB) or sexualised behaviour.

## Further Information

- WM Child Protection Procedures [2.18 Sexual activity in children and young people](#) and [2.24 Children who abuse others and harmful sexual behaviour](#)
- [NSPCC – Stages of Health Sexual Development](#)
- [NSPCC – Responding to Children who Display HSB's](#)
- [NSPCC – Managing Incidents of HSB](#)
- [Brooks Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool](#) & [HSB Guidance \(Children's Services only\)](#)

## What should I do?

Don't be afraid to be explicit when relaying or recording information regarding HSB. It is important that information is clearly conveyed and recorded in order to build an accurate picture of any risk that may be posed. Contact the [Children & Families Front Door](#) to establish if a Multi-Agency Contact (MAC) Form needs to be submitted or speak to the child's allocated Social Worker, if they have one. A referral to the Sexually Inappropriate Behaviours Services (SIBS) may be necessary.

## Minute briefing

## Why is it important?

Around two thirds of all sexual abuse reported by children and young people was perpetrated by other children/young people (peer on peer abuse). It is important to remember that many children and young people exhibiting HSB's are vulnerable and may have been victims of abuse or neglect themselves.

## How do I identify HSB?

Children and young people demonstrate a range of sexual behaviours as they grow up, and this is not always harmful. Having a good understanding of how children develop sexually can help you recognise healthy sexual behaviours that are developmentally appropriate or if a child is displaying sexual behaviours that are inappropriate or potentially harmful.

## What are the signs of HSB? (Cont...)

- sexual interest in adults or children of very different ages to their own.
- using pornography or sending explicit images online, particularly without someone's consent.
- any sexual behaviour that's harmful to themselves or others.

## What are the signs of HSB?

- sexual behaviour that's inappropriate for their age.
- sexual behaviour that's becoming a compulsive habit or happening frequently.
- behaviour using force, aggression, or pressuring others.
- engaging in behaviour that upsets other children involved.