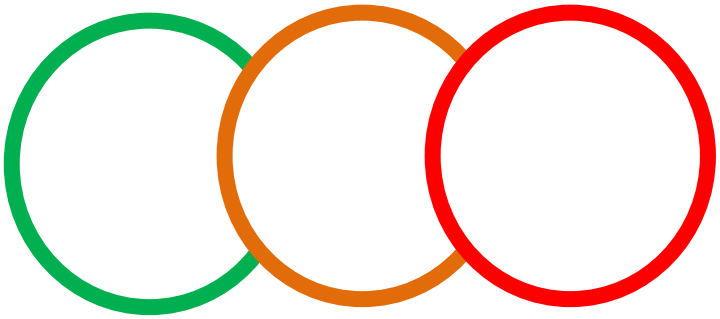
Responding to Sexual Behaviour in Children and Young People

A Whole School Approach



Guidance 2017

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We would also like to thank those who contributed to the development of this guidance.

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Responding to Sexual Behaviour – a Whole School Approach

Sexual behaviour in children and young people can be very concerning to the adults around. This can often be difficult for school staff to respond to and can evoke strong reactions. An appropriate and consistent response is key in managing sexual behaviour. Sometimes people may over-react to sexual behaviour in schools and sometimes they may under-react or do nothing, neither is helpful. This document is intended to provide support for school staff to respond appropriately to children and young people within a structured framework.

What is harmful sexual behaviour?

Not all sexual behaviour in children and young people is problematic or harmful; some sexual behaviour is part of **healthy development**. It can sometimes be difficult to differentiate between **developmentally appropriate**, **problematic** and **harmful** sexual behaviour. This document is intended to develop understanding and aid decision making.

DEFINITION

"Harmful sexual behaviour refers to sexual activity that does not involve mutual consent by the individuals involved and/or where the relationship includes an imbalance of power, and where the behaviour has the potential to cause physical and/or emotional harm."

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

Harmful sexual behaviour in children may:

- Occur at a frequency greater than would be developmentally expected
- Interfere with the child's development
- Occur with coercion, intimidation or force
- Be associated with emotional distress
- Occur between children of divergent ages or development abilities
- Repeatedly recur in secrecy after intervention by caregivers

(Chaffin et al. 2002)

When considering whether a child or young person's sexual behaviour is harmful it is essential to take account of their age and developmental stage. Please refer to Appendix 1. It is also important to consult the Brook Traffic Lights Tool which can be found here https://www.brook.org.uk/our-work/the-sexual-behaviours-traffic-light-tool

Birmingham Sexually Harmful Behaviour (HSB) Team

SHB is a specialist service for children and young people aged 7-17 living within the city of Birmingham, where there are concerns about harmful sexual behaviour and/or a criminal offence. The team is hosted by the Youth Offending Service managed by the Youth Offending Service Management Board. The team is a substantial Think Family Provider and is one of the Youth Offending Service Early Intervention Programmes.

The SHB team provide a range of services to children, young people, families and professionals with the aim of reducing risk and supporting young people to live happy and fulfilling lives.

The SHB team accepts referrals from any professional agency as well as accepting self-referrals. The team will aim to provide support, consultation and resources to those who are working with young people who engage in sexually harmful behaviour.

The SHB team encourage telephone consultations from any individual who is concerned about a child or young person's sexual behaviour, including the young person themselves. The team also encourage telephone consultations prior to submitting a referral. This allows for discussions around safety planning, risk management and signposting.

To contact the SHB team please call **0121 464 0600**.

It is important to note that SHB is a specialist service and not all children and young people who display harmful sexual behaviour require direct input from a specialist service.

Procedure for Responding to Harmful Sexual Behaviour

When considering the most appropriate response to an incident of harmful sexual behaviour there are three key points to highlight;

- Wherever any safeguarding concerns are noted a referral should be made to Children's Advice and Support Service (CASS)
- The child or young person should always receive clear and consistent messages that the behaviour is not OK as soon after it has occurred as possible. *Appendix 2 gives some suggestions for this*.
- Contact should be made with the parents or carers of the young person to inform them of the behaviour

Use the SHB Risk Matrix to determine whether the behaviour is developmentally appropriate, problematic or harmful (Appendix 1). It is also advisable to refer to the Brook Traffic Lights Tool which can be found on the Brook website.

Universal Needs

All children and young people in schools should receive education around healthy relationships, development and age appropriate sexual knowledge. Please use your own PHSE programme to facilitate this.

Universal Plus

Where children and young people are displaying behaviours that are considered to be Universal Plus (or Green behaviours on the Brook Traffic Lights Tool) the following advice is given;

1. Monitor the behaviour
2. Consider a whole-class activity. For Primary schools the NSPCC Underwear Rule may be useful and for Secondary Schools consider free support from Umbrella. (Please see the end of this document for contact details for other agencies).
3. If the behaviour continues or escalates after the above, contact the SHB team to discuss further
4. Consider an Early Help response

Additional Needs (Category 2)

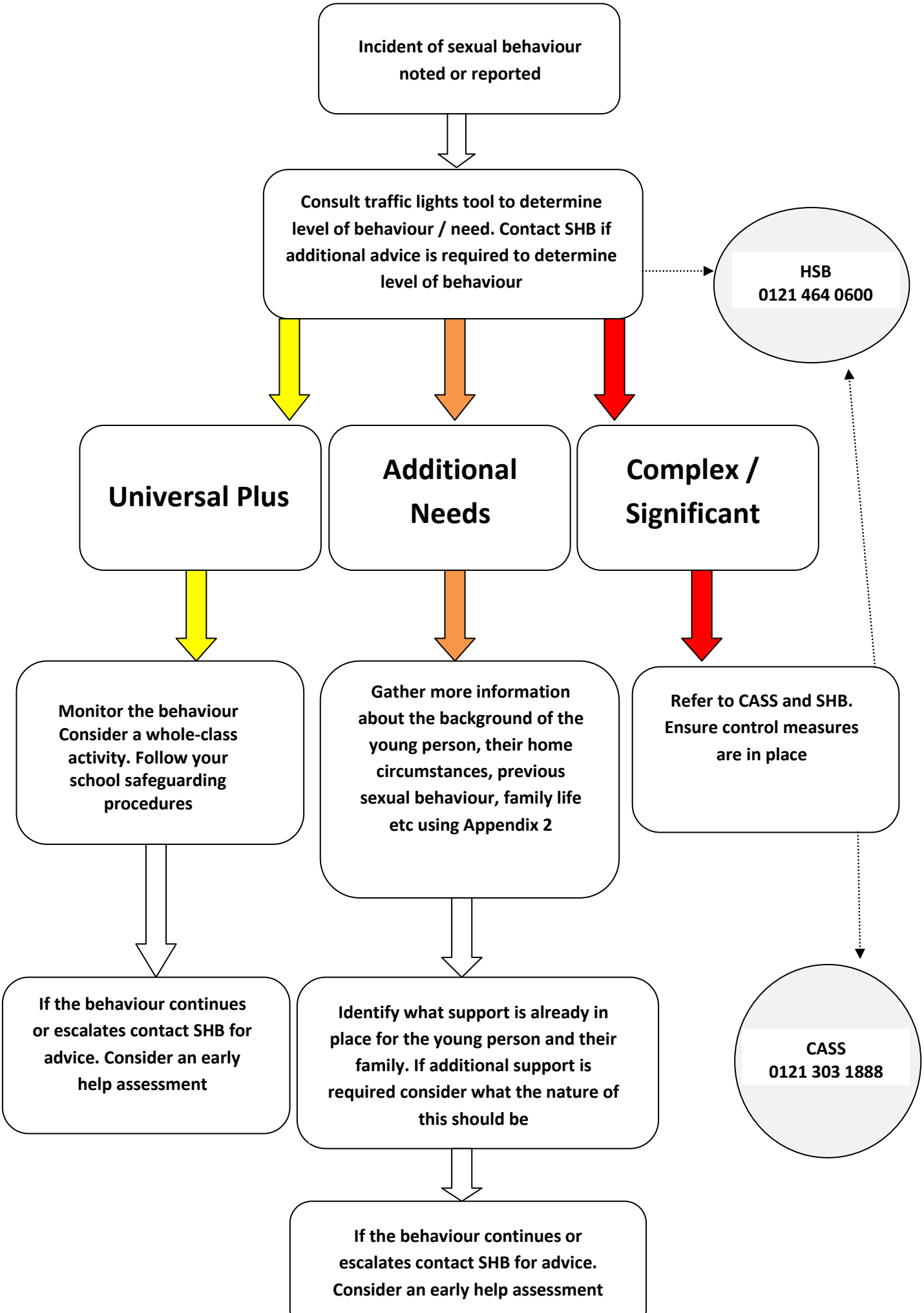
Where children and young people are displaying behaviours considered to represent additional needs (or Amber behaviours in the Brook Traffic Lights Tool) the following advice is given;

1. Gather more information about the background of the young person, their home circumstances, previous sexual behaviour, family life etc using Appendix 4
2. Identify what support is already in place for the young person and their family. If additional support is required consider what the nature of this should be.
3. Contact the SHB team to discuss the young person and to consider whether a referral is required
4. Consider an Early Help Assessment

Complex / Significant Needs (Category 1)

Where children and young people are displaying behaviours considered to represent complex or significant need (or Red behaviours in the Brook Traffic Lights Tool) the following advice is given;

1. Refer to CASS
2. Contact the SHB team to discuss further and make a referral


Incident of sexual behaviour noted or reported
Consult traffic lights tool to determine level of behaviour / need. Contact SHB if additional advice is required to determine level of behaviour
HSB
0121 464 0600
Universal Plus
Additional Needs
Complex / Significant
Monitor the behaviour Consider a whole-class activity. Follow your school safeguarding procedures
Gather more information about the background of the young person, their home circumstances, previous sexual behaviour, family life etc using Appendix 2
Refer to CASS and SHB. Ensure control measures are in place
If the behaviour continues or escalates contact SHB for advice. Consider an early help assessment
Identify what support is already in place for the young person and their family. If additional support is required consider what the nature of this should be
CASS
0121 303 1888
If the behaviour continues or escalates contact SHB for advice. Consider an early help assessment

Responses to HSB

The specific responses to inappropriate or harmful sexual behaviour will vary dependent upon the young person's age, level of understanding, behaviour displayed and environment at the time. The most important things to remember are that the behaviour should be addressed as soon as possible after it occurs and responses should be clear and consistent.

- It is important that the child or young person understands exactly what is inappropriate about their behaviour and why. Please be specific when explaining what has been observed or reported. The words you use will depend upon the age and developmental stage of the child or young person involved. Please note that the following information box gives some example responses. However, please remember that they are only examples, please ensure you use words and phrases that are easily understood by the specific child or young person you are working with.

Example responses

"I just saw you touch that boy's bottom, you should not touch other children's bottoms, bottoms are private areas. You should not touch other people's private areas and no one should touch your private areas".

"I understand you just exposed your penis to X. That is not acceptable and must not happen again"

"I have noticed you touching X's vagina under the table in class. This is not Ok and must not happen again"

- It is important that the young person does not feel shamed and that wherever possible these conversations happen in private.

- Responses to the behaviour should be applied consistently. It is important not to ignore the behaviour or not respond to such behaviour as the young person needs to consistently receive the message that this behaviour is not appropriate and such behaviour will always result in a set response or consequence. For some young people it may be necessary to

repeat the message more than once, particularly if the young person has additional learning needs.

- It is also really important to reward and reinforce positive and appropriate behaviours. This will motivate the young person to repeat these behaviours and understand the benefits of behaving in appropriate and safe ways. For example young people who have been using the Internet unsafely should be praised for using the Internet appropriately to complete a piece of homework without getting distracted by other websites.

- For young people with learning difficulties and social communication difficulties, or young people who frequently display inappropriate behaviour in public places where it may be difficult to discuss their behaviour openly, it may be beneficial to put together a coding system (for example based on traffic lights). This can help to communicate to the young person when their behaviour is **appropriate (green)** and when it is **not (red)** or when it is beginning to look like it **might become inappropriate (amber)**. Incidents of **red**, **amber** and **green** behaviour can be linked to consequences and rewards and can be tracked in a visual format for the young person to monitor their progress.

- Some children will deny their involvement. It is important to understand that **denial is not a risk factor for sexual behaviour in children and young people** and it is often a perfectly rational response to such behaviour.

- Please do not spend time trying to elicit a confession or a rationale as this may lead the child or young person to distance themselves from you. It is perfectly possible to change behaviour and support young people regardless of whether they deny their behaviour or not.

- When a behaviour is identified as **amber** or **red** consideration should be given to completing a school safety plan in order to safeguard the child involved and other children in the school. Please contact the SHB team who can provide you with this plan and support you in completing it.

Consequences

- Consequences of such behaviour should be agreed with the young person and should be employed consistently. This helps young people make informed choices about their behaviour and understand what will happen if they act in a certain way.

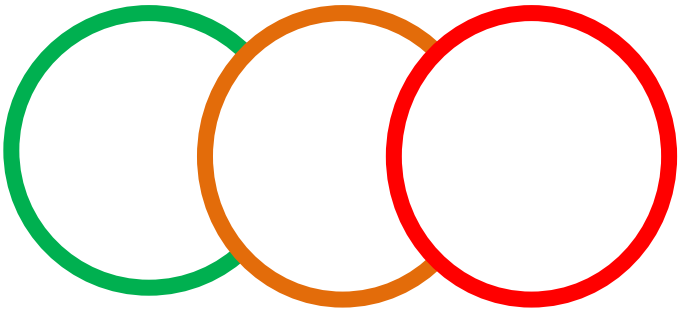
- Consequences to incidents of harmful sexual behaviour will vary dependent on the behaviour, the age and developmental stage of the young person and potential risk factors. It is important that any consequences are proportionate, applied consistently and are clearly explained to the child or young person.

- It is essential to ensure the safeguarding of the child or young person and of those around them. However, it is also important to recognise that building strengths is also essential in risk management. Isolation from peers can often limit opportunities for appropriate social interaction and can increase risk.

Remember:

- Be clear, specific and factual (e.g. I just saw you touch that boy's bottom or I just saw you expose your penis'
- Use accurate terminology for body parts and behaviours
- Answer questions – if a young person asks you what a particular word means, explain in to them in a way they can understand
- Avoid shaming young people
- Be consistent in your responses
- Allow the young person time to talk and actively listen to them
- If the young person denies their behaviour remember that this is a natural response. Don't spend time trying to elicit a confession

Appendices



Appendix 1 – SHB Risk Matrix

The information in this section is intended as a guide and does not cover all behaviours you may come across. When considering the level of a young person's behaviour it is essential that you consider the context within which the behaviour has occurred and any other aggravating factors. Please refer to Page 4 for a reminder of possible aggravating factors.

- It is important to remember that the above is intended as a guide and does not represent all potential behaviours you may come across. Please consult the Traffic Lights Tool and contact a member of the SHB team for further advice.

- In relation to incidents of 'sexting' please refer to the Sexting Guidance developed by CASS. This can be found on the Birmingham Safeguarding Children's Board Website. http://www.lscbbirmingham.org.uk/index.php

Universal Plus

Children and young people who display behaviours considered to represent a universal plus level of need are unlikely to require intervention from the HSB team.

Examples are such behaviour are;

- Age appropriate and non-abusive sexual behaviours
- Use of sexual language in isolation from harmful sexual behaviour
- Children over the age of thirteen consenting to taking and sending explicit pictures to other young people if there is sufficient evidence to suggest there were no aggravating factors (such as large age or power differences) and both young people understood and consented to the pictures being taken, sent and/or received.
- Young people who have been accidently exposed to pornographic material or have received indecent images from other young people (without having requested them).
- Young people who have been accessing pornographic imagery that appears to be linked to information-seeking, healthy exploration of sexuality.

Additional Needs

- A single report of harmful sexual behaviour, but not including force, coercion, attempted penetration or clear power difference. E.g. exposing genitals, masturbation in a public place.
- Accidental exposure to indecent images of children, extreme pornography and illegal pornography
- Young person is pre-pubescent and accessing 'legal' pornographic images

AND one or more of the following:-

- History of aggressive (non-sexual) behaviour
- History of cruelty to animals
- Experience of high levels of trauma such as physical, emotional, sexual abuse, neglect or witnessing domestic violence
- Generally highly impulsive/compulsive behaviour
- Difficulty emotionally regulating
- Previous non-sexual offences
- Frequent use of pornography
- Evidence of previous, contact, sexually abusive behaviours

Complex / Significant

Examples of behaviours which may be considered complex and/or significant include;

- Charged or convicted with a sexual offence (NB/ This work is likely to be facilitated through the HSB Champion model employed by Birmingham Youth Offending Service)
- Evidence of non-accidental (more than one image) use of illegal pornography (e.g. child, animal, necrophilia, serious violence, rape)
- Pre-occupied with pornography- where the young person's consumption of pornography is significantly impacting on their daily life
- Self-reported sexual interest in children which is age inappropriate
- Evidence of detailed planning/targeting/victim selection
- Used or threatened violence or coercion during sexual assault
- Used blackmail, coercion, threats, exploitation, manipulation, bullying or extortion in order to obtain sexual images of another child/young person
- Abusive behaviour included attempted or actual penetration
- Clear power differences between young person and victim – age, size, status, ability or strength
- Behaviour is persistent and/or escalating in seriousness
- Beliefs are held that minimise or support sexually abusive behaviours. E.g. blaming the victim, lack of empathy.
- Child/Young person lives in same place as victim and there are ongoing safeguarding concerns

Appendix 2 - Information Gathering and Understanding of Behaviour

- The first task is to gather as much information about the behaviour(s) as possible before going on to think more about the child's holistic needs.
- Use the questions below to think more about the behaviour and the responses to the behaviour.
- You may see a pattern emerging or notice things that perhaps weren't obvious before.
- This information will be useful for you in school to think about how to manage the behaviour(s). It may also be useful for any other agencies that become involved.

1. Describe the behaviour you are concerned about
- Is someone keeping a record of the behaviours?

2. How often does it occur?
- Has the child a history of this behaviour?
- Is the behaviour ongoing?
- If so, how long has it been happening?

3. Is there anyone else involved?
- If so, is there any age difference?
- Are there any other differences in terms of ability or developmental stage?

4. Has the child been spoken to about the behaviour?
- What was their response?

5. Has the behaviour been discussed with the child's parents/carers?
- If so, what was the response?
- If not, why has this not happened?

6. Has the behaviour continued after the child has been spoken to?

7. Where does the behaviour happen?
- Could the behaviour be happening anywhere else?
- Could this behaviour be happening in secret?

8. When does it happen? (consider antecedents, triggers, context etc)

9. Is there an element of force or coercion involved?

10. Are other children or parents/adults complaining?

11. Are there other behaviours you are concerned about?
- How long have these behaviours been present?

12. What are the child's strengths?

13. What are the family's strengths?

14. Has there been any change in the child's schoolwork?

15. Has the child got friends?

16. Has the child missed a lot of school lately?

17. Are there any medical issues?

18. Is the child's family known to other agencies?

19. Does the child take part in out of school activities?

Key points from the questions above;

- The response of parents is very important in considering boundaries and risk management within the home. Please make note of how parents respond and consider if there may be any indication of any safeguarding concerns
- If the behaviour has previously been addressed and continues to occur afterwards then a discussion should take place with the HSB team
- If other children and/or parents are aware of the behaviour please consider whether there is any risk to the child/young person
- If there is an indication that the child has missed a lot of school recently or if there is a change in behaviour or presentation noted please consider completing the CSE screening tool

Understanding of the Behaviour

Now you have more information about the behaviour(s) you may be in a better position to try and think about why it may have occurred. However, it is important to note that many children and young people do not know, or are unable to verbalise, why they may have engaged in a particular behaviour.

- There are many reasons why children and young people exhibit sexualised behaviours and it is important that we try to understand the behaviour from the child or young person's perspective rather than interpreting it through an adult lens.

- Adults and children alike all have needs that we try to meet in our everyday lives, some needs are more important to one person than another and we all go about meeting our needs in different ways.

- Children and young people who display harmful sexual behaviours are generally no different in this. In the majority of cases they are attempting to meet their needs but rather than doing so in appropriate ways, they are doing so in problematic or harmful ways. For example, a child who needs emotional closeness might touch another child in a sexual way in an attempt to meet their need.

- It is important that everyone working with the child or young person tries to understand what needs they were trying to meet with their behaviour and to develop strengths in the young person to help them to meet these needs in appropriate ways in the future. Of course trying to understand this can be a complex task and ***should be done in consultation with the HSB team.***

- It is important to note that, with appropriate intervention, most young people do not go on to engage in harmful sexual behaviour in adulthood.

Appendix 3 – Suggestions for Best Practice

It is important to note that your responses to incidents of sexualised behaviour will differ depending on a number of factors. The following information is intending to provide you with some pointers to consider when responding. However, please remember that there is no 'set' response and there are a number of factors that should be taken into consideration.

Key points to consider when responding to an incident of sexualised behaviour;

- The age of the child
- The developmental stage of the child
- The specific behaviour that has occurred
- The context within which the behaviour has occurred
- If there is anyone else involved (e.g. a victim)
- Is this is the first incident or have there been previous incidents?
- Have you have personally witnessed the behaviour of has been reported to you?
- Are you are addressing the behaviour in public or in a private space?
- Is the behaviour a criminal offence?
- Are there are any safeguarding concerns?

Remember:

- Follow your school safeguarding procedures at all times
- CPR – **C**onsistency, **P**redictability and **R**eliability are essential when working with young people who have engaged in sexualised behaviour
- Contact HSB for advice and guidance if you are ever unsure
- Not all sexual behaviour in children and young people is harmful
- Talk to young people in a clear and factual way
- Actively listen
- Use correct terminology
- It is essential that young people do not feel shamed

Appendix 3 – Other agency contact details

Children's Advice and Support Service (CASS) - 0121 303 1888

Relationships and Sexual Health			
Sexually Harmful Behaviour (SHB) Team	Work with children and young people between 7-17 who display sexually harmful behaviour	0121 464 0600	shb@birmingham.gov.uk
Umbrella	Sexual Health Services. Free and confidential advice (Includes Brook and Healthy gay Life)	0121 237 5700	www.umbrellahealth.co.uk
Broken Rainbow	UK National LGBT domestic violence helpline providing confidential support for all communities	0300 999 5428	www.brokenrainbow.org.uk
Worth Talking About	Talk to an adviser about sex and personal relationships	0300 123 2930	www.nhs.uk/worthtalkingabout
Stop it Now	Free helpline for adults and young people for confidential advice about worrying sexual thoughts and behaviours	0808 1000 900	www.stopitnow.org.uk
Families, Parents and Carers			
NCT	Support and information on parenting children and young people	0300 330 0700	www.nct.org.uk
Parents and Carers	Support and information for parents and carers of children with disabilities and SEN	0121 303 5004	www.birmingham.gov.uk/sendiass
Domestic Violence			
National Domestic Violence Helpline	Free and confidential 24 hour helpline. National service for women experiencing domestic violence. Family/friends/ colleagues can call on their behalf	0808 2000 247	www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk
The Hideout	Web space dedicated to helping children and young people understand more about domestic abuse and how to take action if it is happening to them		www.thehideout.org.uk
Drugs and Alcohol			
Lifeline/Aquarius	Specialist substance and alcohol misuse service for young people	0121 622 7780	www.aquarius.org.uk
Frank	Confidential advice about drugs, including alcohol.	0300 123 6600 (Text) 82111	www.talktofrank.com (Email)

	Speak via live chat, text, call or email		frank@talktofrank.com
Sexual Abuse/Exploitation			
Birmingham Amazon	Providing counselling in the Birmingham area to children and young people aged 21 and under, who have been sexually abused. Also offer support for their families and carers	0121 359 5333	www.barnardos.org.uk/amazon
Survivors	For men who have been raped or sexually abused. Speak via online chat or text only	(Text number) 0203 598 3898	www.survivorsuk.org
Birmingham Space	Provides a safe space for children and young people in vulnerable or risky situations which may lead to abuse and sexual exploitation	0121 359 5333	www.barnardos.org.uk/space
General Support for Young People			
Childline	Where young people can talk about anything, eg. bullying, friends, school, parents, feeling sad...	0800 1111	www.childline.org.uk
Open Door	Counselling service for young people aged 12-25	0121 454 116	www.opendooryouthcounselling.org.uk
Samaritans	Samaritans provide support and a confidential listening service to anyone in distress	0121 6666 644 (Free) 116 123	www.samaritans.org
Debt Advice Line	This team provides information and support to manage debts and financial problems	0121 303 2087	
Support Line	Offers confidential emotional support to children, young adults and adults by phone, email and post	01708 765 200	www.supportline.org.uk (Email) info@supportline.org.uk
Connexions Birmingham	Free career support service providing advice, information and guidance for eligible young people aged 16-19 (25 if they have learning difficulty/or disability)	0121 675 6105	www.connexions-bs.co.uk
The Site	Online guide for 16-25 year olds. Support for everything from sex to exam stress		www.thesite.org
Internet Use			
CEOP	Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre is there to help young people who have		www.thinkuknow.co.uk

	been approached, forced or tricked into taking part in sexual activity online or offline		
Internet Matters	Advice for children, young people and parents on how to stay safe online		www.internetmatters.org
Childnet	Website offers tips to help make the internet safer for children		www.childnet.com
Cybersmile	Charity committed to tackling cyberbullying and online hate campaigns		www.cybersmile.org
Internet Watch Foundations	UK hotline for reporting criminal online content, such as child abuse		www.iwf.org.uk
UK Safer Internet Centre	Help and advice to help young people and adults stay safe online		www.saferinternet.org.uk
Education			
Educational Psychology Service	Educational psychology support for young people	0121 303 8288	