



# One minute guide

## Problematic and harmful sexual behaviour

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### What is problematic and harmful sexual behaviour?

Problematic and harmful sexual behaviour can involve one or more children engaging in sexual discussions or acts that are inappropriate for their age or stage of development. These can range from using sexually explicit words and phrases to full penetrative sex with other children or adults.

Sexual behaviour between children is considered harmful if it involves coercion or threats of violence or one of the children is much older than the other.

When assessing if a child's sexual behaviour is harmful, it is important to not only take their age into account but also their physical, intellectual and emotional development.

### What do we need to know?

All children and young people will enter a process of sexual development throughout their childhood and adolescence, and much of this forms a healthy and necessary part of growing up. However for some, their behaviours will not be developmentally appropriate and, at times, may be harmful.

In assessing how concerned we should be about children and young people's sexual behaviours, we need to be aware of what is developmentally appropriate and what would be out of the norm.

The context of the behaviour, level of understanding, cultural and peer norms as well as the reaction of the perceived victims are all important factors to consider when assessing how concerned we should be about sexual behaviour displayed by children and young people.

We now know a lot more about this, and in Leeds we have a coordinator whose role it is to promote awareness and good practice.

### What should schools do?

Schools should be aware of the [AIM Education Guidance](#) (AIM – Assessment, Intervention, Moving on) to be able to identify concerns and then to act on them.

Both primary and secondary schools in Leeds should use these guidelines when an incident has occurred to determine the level of concern and response needed to the behaviour.

## What should all practitioners do?

All those working with children and young people have a role to play in identifying and responding to sexually problematic/harmful behaviours. This includes: making an initial response to the child/young person; then reporting their concerns to the named person with responsibility for child protection within their agency and to appropriate services if necessary; recording concerns accurately and where appropriate being involved in the implementation of a plan of work to support that child/young person.

If it is decided that there is sufficient concern, practitioners should contact Duty and Advice who will decide whether further assessment is required. Should a specialist assessment be needed, this will be conducted by Children's Social Work Service wherever possible with another service or agency such as the Youth Offending Service or NSPCC. Such specialist assessments should only be completed by trained workers. There are two specialist assessment tools – one for children under the age of 12 and the second for adolescents aged 12-18 years of age. Following the assessment, a multi-agency approach will be taken to intervention and care planning for the child or young person concerned.

## Who are the key contacts?

Duty and Advice Team tel: 0113 3760336 (out of hours tel: 0113 2409536)

Nathalie Fontenay - Sexually Harmful Behaviour Coordinator

[nathalie.fontenay@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:nathalie.fontenay@leeds.gov.uk)

Jenny Greensmith - Specialist Youth Offending Service Worker

[jenny.greensmith@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:jenny.greensmith@leeds.gov.uk)

Raminder Aujla – Children's Services Safeguarding Education Team

[raminder.aujla@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:raminder.aujla@leeds.gov.uk)

Ian Waring - Duty and Advice – Single point of contact for Harmful Sexual Behaviour

[ian.waring@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:ian.waring@leeds.gov.uk)

Morgana Bairstow - NSPCC harmful Sexual Behaviour Project Manager

[morgana.bairstow@NSPCC.org.uk](mailto:morgana.bairstow@NSPCC.org.uk)

## For more information

Refer to the [Leeds Safeguarding Children's Board](#) procedures regarding response and assessment to children and young people who display harmful sexual behaviours.

The [NSPCC](#) website provides a number of articles and research studies.