

CHILD ON CHILD HARMFUL SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR POLICY FOR MERRYLANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL

(A member of Berlesduna Academy Trust)

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POLICY TO BE REVIEWED September 2027 (or sooner should legislation change)

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MERRYLANDS
PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY

Growth through Learning

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1. Introduction

Children's sexual behaviour exists on a wide continuum. It ranges from normal and developmentally expected (age-appropriate), to inappropriate, problematic, abusive, and violent. Problematic, abusive, and violent sexual behaviour is developmentally inappropriate and may cause developmental damage. This is known as Harmful Sexual Behaviour, which children can experience in various settings, including at school, at home (or in another home), in public places, online or in person, or simultaneously. Our school recognises that children are vulnerable to, and capable of, harmful sexual behaviour.

We take any allegation of abuse between our children seriously and follow our child protection procedures if a report of harmful sexual behaviour is made. This may include seeking advice and support from other agencies as appropriate. Decisions are made taking into account the age and developmental stages of any child involved. We also consider any other factors as appropriate and balance this with our duty and responsibilities to protect all children.

Within this policy we use the following widely used and recognised terms in places: 'victim(s)' and 'alleged perpetrator(s)'. We recognise that a child who has disclosed abuse may not consider themselves to be a victim and may not want to be described in this way. We also recognise that a child who is reported to have displayed harmful or abusive behaviour may not consider that they have done so, and that they will also need a safeguarding response. When managing reports of abuse, we are mindful of the language used, particularly when speaking with children, and will adapt this according to the needs of the child.

2. What harmful sexual behaviour means

The Department for Education (DfE) publishes statutory guidance for all education settings: [Keeping children safe in education](#) (DfE). Part five of this statutory guidance sets out how schools should manage reports of child-on-child sexual violence and harassment (harmful sexual behaviour).

Sexual violence

This means sexual offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 as described below:

- rape;
- assault by penetration;
- sexual assault (which includes inappropriate or unwanted sexualised touching); and
- causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent (consent is about having the freedom and capacity to choose – a child under the age of 13 can never consent to any sexual activity).

Sexual harassment

This means unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, which can occur online and offline and both inside and outside of school, including:

- sexual comments (telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance, calling someone sexualised names);

- sexual ‘jokes’ or taunting;
- physical behaviour, such as deliberately brushing against someone, or interfering with someone’s clothes;
- displaying pictures, photos, or drawings of a sexual nature; and
- upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture or video under a person’s clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, and / or to cause the victim humiliation, distress, or alarm (this is a criminal offence).

Online harmful sexual behaviour

This can be a single event, or part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and / or sexual violence. It may include:

- consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos (this is a criminal offence);
- sharing of unwanted explicit content;
- sexualised online bullying;
- unwanted sexual comments and messages, including, on social media;
- sexual exploitation, coercion, and threats; and
- coercing others into sharing images of themselves or performing acts they are not comfortable with online.

3. Whole school approach to harmful sexual behaviour

Today’s children and young people are growing up in an increasingly complex world and living their lives seamlessly online and offline. This presents many positive and exciting opportunities, but also challenges and risks. In this environment, children and young people need to know how to be safe and healthy, and how to manage their academic, personal, and social lives in a positive way.

[Relationships and sex education \(RSE\) and health education](#) (DfE, updated 2025)

Children

We use lessons and assemblies to teach children in an age-appropriate way about healthy, positive, and respectful relationships. We help our children to understand what is meant by boundaries and privacy, online and offline. We aim to provide children with the language to report abuse and explain how they can report concerns and tell a trusted adult if someone is behaving in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable.

We balance teaching children about making sensible decisions to stay safe (online and offline), whilst being clear that abuse is never the fault of a victim, and why victim blaming is always wrong. These subjects

complement our delivery of health education, including physical and mental health and wellbeing, and are part of our whole-setting approach to safeguarding our children.

Merrylands Primary School RSE Policy is available on the school website.

<https://www.merrylandsprimaryschool.co.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=283&type=pdf>

Parents and carers

It is important that parents and carers understand what is meant by harmful sexual behaviour and that they reinforce key messages from school at home. We work in partnership with parents and carers to support our children and want to help them to keep their child/ren safe. Parents and carers should understand:

- the nature of harmful sexual behaviour;
- the effects of harmful sexual behaviour on children;
- the likely indicators that such behaviour may be taking place; and
- what to do if it is suspected that child-on-child harmful sexual behaviour has occurred.

Further information to support parents and carers in relation to harmful sexual behaviour is available online, including on the [NSPCC](#) and [Lucy Faithfull Foundation](#) websites.

Staff

Our staff undertake annual safeguarding training to ensure they are aware of the signs of abuse and how to recognise them. Staff also receive regular updates on a number of safeguarding issues, including harmful sexual behaviour. The training ensures that our staff know what to do if they receive a report that harmful sexual behaviour may have occurred, including how to support our children.

Online Safety

It is essential that children are safeguarded from potentially harmful and inappropriate online material. We have systems in school to filter information and block internet access to harmful sites and inappropriate content. These systems are monitored and regularly reviewed to ensure they are effective, and all staff are trained in online safety and how to report concerns.

4. Procedures for responding to harmful sexual behaviour

How we respond to harmful sexual behaviour is very important. The wellbeing of our children is always central to our approach. Any child reporting a concern will be treated respectfully. We always reassure them that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. No child will ever be made to feel that they are creating a problem by reporting harmful sexual behaviour or to feel ashamed.

We will do this by:

- wherever possible, managing any report of harmful sexual behaviour with two members of staff present. This will usually include our Designated Safeguarding Lead (or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead).

- listening carefully to a child in a non-judgemental way and ensuring we are clear about how the report will be progressed. We will ensure our children know they can speak to our staff again if they wish to provide more information, or for any other reason.
- where a report includes an online element, we will work to the government advice in [Searching screening and confiscation](#) and [UKCIS Sharing nudes and semi nudes advice for education settings working with children and young people](#). We will never view an illegal image of a child as part of our response to a report of harmful sexual behaviour, unless absolutely necessary in exceptional circumstances. We will never forward an illegal image of a child.
- working in partnership with other agencies (including statutory partners) to ensure that concerns are appropriately managed. Where a child already has Children's Social Care involvement, such as a Looked After Child, a Child In Need or a child with a Child Protection Plan, we will inform the child's Social Worker and work in partnership with them as appropriate.

Our Designated Safeguarding Lead will take the lead in our setting where harmful sexual behaviour has occurred. They will liaise with other agencies as appropriate, including the statutory agencies for safeguarding when required. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will ensure that accurate safeguarding records are kept, and that all relevant information is included in the Child Protection file of any child involved.

Confidentiality and information sharing

Our staff will never guarantee confidentiality to anyone (including children or parents/carers) about a safeguarding concern, nor promise to keep a secret. In accordance with statutory requirements, where there is a child protection concern, this must be reported to our Designated Safeguarding Lead (or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead) and may require further referral to and subsequent investigation by a statutory agency (police and / or Social Care). Parents and carers will normally be informed about any report of abuse, unless we consider that this may place a child at greater risk.

In some cases, where we may need to involve another agency, this may be against the wishes of a child and / or their parent / carers. In such cases, we will explain our reasons for doing so and support them accordingly.

Anonymity

It is important that any child (victim or perpetrator) is safeguarded when an incident of harmful sexual behaviour has occurred. We will do all we reasonably can to protect the anonymity of all children involved and will make decisions about sharing information, and with whom, based on the individual circumstances.

We are aware of the potential impact on safeguarding where a victim or perpetrator's identity is exposed and will take all necessary action to prevent this from happening in order to keep children involved safe. Where the use of social media becomes a factor and compromises the safety of any child, we will address this and involve other agencies as appropriate.

Recording incidents

It is essential that we record all reports about harmful sexual behaviour within our school, as with any other child protection concern, in line with our Child Protection Policy (<https://www.merrylandsprimaryschool.co.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=307&type=pdf>) .Any

member of staff receiving a report of harmful sexual behaviour or noticing signs or indicators of this will record it as soon as possible, noting what was said or seen (if appropriate, using a body map to record), giving the date, time, and location. The record will then be presented to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead), who will decide on appropriate action and record this accordingly.

If a child is at immediate risk of harm, our staff will speak with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead) first as soon as possible, and deal with recording afterwards.

Brook Traffic Light Tool- At Merrylands Primary School, we have undertaken training and hold a licence for Brook's nationally recognised Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool. This tool helps professionals to identify, understand and respond appropriately to sexual behaviours in children and young people. It helps us make consistent and informed decisions about our response to sexual behaviours and it supports our existing safeguarding arrangements.

Risk Assessment

We will usually complete a risk assessment following a report of harmful sexual behaviour. Our risk assessment will include the following considerations:

- the victim, and any actions that may be appropriate to protect them;
- whether there may have been other victims;
- the alleged perpetrator(s);
- the time and location of the incident(s), and any action required to make the location(s) safer; and
- all other children (and, if appropriate, our staff) at the school, especially any actions that are appropriate to protect them from the alleged perpetrator(s), or from future harms.

Our risk assessment will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains relevant and fit for purpose. Wherever possible, the victim, alleged perpetrator, and their parents and carers will be invited to contribute to the completion and subsequent reviews of the risk assessment.

At all times, we will be actively considering any risks that are identified through our risk assessment, and its ongoing review, to our children. We will put measures in place to protect our children accordingly.

Principles

We will, at all times, take a balanced and proportionate approach to harmful sexual behaviour, based on the principle that it is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. Our approach will help us to ensure that all children are protected and supported appropriately.

Whilst inappropriate behaviours will be challenged and addressed, it is in the context of providing appropriate support to all children in our school where harmful sexual behaviour has occurred. We understand there are many factors which may lead a child to display abusive behaviours towards other children, and that these matters are sensitive and often complex. We recognise our school may be the only

stable, secure, and safe element in the lives of some children, particularly those who have experienced harm and trauma.

Cases of harmful sexual behaviour will be considered carefully on an individual basis, and in conjunction with other agencies when they are involved. The safety of all our children is paramount and we have a duty of care to all pupils.

The following principles will guide us:

- the wishes of the victim in terms of how they want to proceed;
- the nature of the alleged incident(s), including whether a crime may have been committed and/or whether harmful sexual behaviour has been displayed;
- the ages and developmental stages of all children involved;
- consideration of any power imbalance between the children involved;
- consideration of whether the alleged incident is a one-off or part of a sustained pattern of abuse;
- that sexual violence and sexual harassment can take place within intimate personal relationships between children;
- the importance of understanding intra-familial harms and any necessary support for siblings following incidents;
- consideration of any ongoing risks to the victim, other children, or school staff; and
- consideration of any other related issues and wider context.

Safeguarding and supporting a victim

We will assess what short-term and long-term support a child may need to help them manage the immediate aftermath of an incident, and to recover from what they have experienced. A child's existing support network will be central to this work; we will work with other partners as appropriate and in accordance with a child's wishes and, wherever appropriate, in discussion with parents and carers.

We will consider what is necessary to support a victim straightaway. For example, making adaptations to their timetable and in-school support and taking steps to protect them from attention or peer pressure they may experience due to making a report. We will also ensure there is regular review of arrangements to be confident they meet the needs of all children involved.

It may be necessary to make requests for support to mental health and wellbeing services or for therapeutic intervention. We may also need to liaise with other agencies to remove inappropriate material from the Internet, such as the [Internet Watch Foundation](#).

Safeguarding and supporting an alleged perpetrator

We will also protect and support children who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour. We will do this through considering a child's needs, any risks to their safety and what multi-agency responses are needed to support them and their family.

Some children may not realise they have behaved abusively. We aim to avoid language that may make them feel judged or criminalised and to ensure that any intervention will effectively address the behaviour at the appropriate level of need. We want to ensure that children receive the right help at the right time.

We will carefully consider when to inform an alleged perpetrator(s) about a report of harmful sexual behaviour made against them. Where contact with Children's Social Care and / or the police is required, our Designated Safeguarding Lead will speak to those agencies to discuss next steps, including when and how the alleged perpetrator(s) will be informed of the allegations. This will not prevent us from taking immediate action to safeguard children, where required.

We will consider appropriate sanctions using our behaviour policy, and work with a child and their support network to consider measures that may help to address their behaviour.

Information to parents and carers

In line with our child protection procedures, we inform parents or carers about reports of harmful sexual behaviour, unless to do so may place a child at additional risk. We will seek advice from other safeguarding partners in individual cases based on the circumstances of the individual case. Where we have been advised that parents / carers should not be immediately informed, we will continue to support any child involved, according to their needs. This is likely to be with the support of Children's Social Care and / or the police and any other appropriate specialist agencies.

Ongoing support for our children

We will consider what ongoing support our children may need, and tailor this on a case-by-case basis, according to the needs of all children involved. Support, where it is required, may include pastoral support, counselling services, provision of a trusted adult or a referral to an external specialist agency. Where other agencies are involved, decisions about support will be made in the context of partnership working, with the needs of the child central to these discussions.

We may also need to provide support to children who have witnessed harmful sexual behaviour, or who have otherwise been affected. This will be informed by our risk assessment and our ongoing work.

We will also consider whether any intervention or support is required as part of a whole-setting approach for our children, or with the wider community of our setting.

5. Outcomes

We will always seek to ensure that outcomes are appropriate and proportionate to the circumstances in relation to an actual or alleged incident, liaising with our safeguarding partners as appropriate.

The following scenarios may apply:

Manage internally

In some cases of sexual harassment, for example one-off incidents, we may take the view that the children involved are not in need of early help or statutory intervention. In these cases, we will follow our other school policies in addressing matters, for example our child protection / behaviour / anti-bullying policies and provide pastoral support where appropriate.

<https://www.merrylandsprimaryschool.co.uk/page/?title=Policies+%26amp%3B+Procedures&pid=27>

Early Help

Where statutory intervention is not required or agreed, we may use an early help approach instead. This means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life. We will work with parents and carers and other relevant partners when following this approach, which can be particularly useful in addressing non-violent harmful sexual behaviour and may prevent escalation.

Requests for support to Children's Social Care

Where a child has been harmed, is at risk of harm, or is in immediate danger, we will make a request for support to Children's Social Care. We will inform parents and carers of this unless to do so may put a child at additional risk. We will seek advice from other safeguarding partners in individual cases.

If we make a request for support, Children's Social Care will consider whether the children involved need protection or other services. Where statutory assessments are undertaken, the school will work with Children's Social Care and other agencies as appropriate. Partnership working helps to ensure the best possible package of coordinated support is implemented for the victim and, where appropriate, the alleged perpetrator and any other children that require support.

In some cases, Children's Social Care will review the evidence and decide a statutory intervention is not appropriate. If a statutory assessment is not considered appropriate by Children's Social Care, we will consider what other support for the children involved may be required. We will make further requests for support to Children's Social Care if we consider that a child is at risk of harm.

Reporting to the police

Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, we are required to report it to the police. Whilst the age of criminal responsibility is ten, if the alleged perpetrator(s) is under ten, the starting principle of reporting to the police remains. However, the police will take a welfare, rather than a criminal justice, approach.

Where we have made a report to the police, we will consult with them and agree what information can be disclosed to our staff and others, in particular the alleged perpetrator and their parents or carers. We will also discuss the best way to protect the victim and their anonymity.

Where there is a criminal investigation, we will work closely with the police and other agencies as appropriate to support all children involved (including potential witnesses). This will help to ensure that any actions we take do not jeopardise a police investigation. Sometimes the police will decide that further action is not required. In these circumstances we will continue to engage with other agencies to support the children involved.

Appendix A: Contacting other agencies, including statutory agencies

“Schools and colleges should not feel that they are alone in dealing with sexual violence and sexual harassment” [Keeping children safe in education](#) (DfE, 2025)

When dealing with incidents of Harmful Sexual Behaviour, schools and settings will often need to contact outside agencies to access specialist advice and services. Local authority Children’s Social Care and the police will be important partners where a crime might have been committed or there are safeguarding concerns for a CYP.

This guidance brings together statutory and non-statutory guidance on when schools should consider contacting other agencies in their response to harmful sexual behaviour incidents and child-on-child abuse.

No guidance can give definitive step-by-step advice for every case. Each case will need to be handled according to its own unique circumstances and decisions made on a case-by-case basis.

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When to contact the Police
When to contact Children's Social Care
When to consider Early Help procedures
When to involve Health agencies
When to contact the ECC Education Access Team

When to contact the Police

This guidance draws upon several statutory and non-statutory documents. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy DSLs should read the below documents in their entirety and be familiar with them.

Document	Summary in relation to HSB	Specific pages of interest for Police contact advice
When to call the police - guidance for schools and colleges (National Police Chiefs' Council, 2020)	This document contains information on when settings should contact the police. Regarding Sexual Offences, it advises settings to defer to the documents below. It advises that if the crimes of rape or a serious sexual assault are involved, the police should be called immediately.	Pages 2 to 8 – set out the general principles on when settings should contact the police and how to handle this alongside the setting's processes and policies Page 13 – Harassment flow chart. Sexual harassment is included Page 14 – Sexual offences flow chart
Keeping children safe in education (DfE, 2025)	Statutory guidance for schools and colleges on safeguarding CYP, including information on how to handle cases of harmful sexual behaviour.	Pages 112 – 143 - Part five: Child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment. Reporting to Police and the on-going management of cases is covered in this section. We advise being familiar with the whole section

		Pages 128 – 130 – Contains the information on initially reporting to Police
Working together to safeguard children (DfE, 2023)	A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of CYP. In many incidents of harmful sexual behaviour, it will be important to engage other agencies and this document provides the framework for doing so.	The whole document is relevant
Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people (Department for Science, Innovation and Technology and UK Council for Internet Safety, 2024)	A guidance document providing advice for education settings dealing with incidents involving CYP sharing nudes and semi-nudes.	The whole document is relevant

Do you need to consider contacting the police?

If a crime has or may have been committed, the setting needs to consider contacting the police. [When to call the police - guidance for schools and colleges](#) contains a list of factors you will need to consider within this decision. These include:

- the seriousness of the incident – some crimes MUST be reported to the police (see the table below for further information)
- the level of harm caused
- the circumstances leading to the incident
- aggravating factors which contribute to making the incident and level of harm more serious. Aggravating factors increase the level of risk, or highlight the need for a wider investigation and the need for the involvement of a range of agencies as well as the police
- whether the young people involved have any vulnerabilities
- whether this could be part of a pattern of behaviour also occurring in the community, in which case the police will want to be involved
- the age of the CYP who has displayed the harmful sexual behaviour. Whilst the age of criminal responsibility is ten, if the alleged perpetrator is under ten, the principle of referring to the police remains. The police will take a welfare, rather than a criminal justice approach, in these cases. This should be in parallel with contacting Children's Social Care
- the wishes of the victim and how they wish to proceed must be important considerations within the setting's response to a report. They should have as much control as is reasonably possible over decisions regarding the support provided to them and the progression of the investigation, however this must be balanced carefully with the setting's duty and responsibility to protect CYP

The table below organises the guidance on reporting to the Police by crime. Definitions of Sexual Offences can be found under the [Sexual Offences Act 2003](#). The setting must be familiar with these definitions to enable accurate decision making.

Crime	Guidance on involving the Police	Factors to consider in your decision
Rape Assault by Penetration Sexual assault	When to call the police - guidance for schools and colleges - call the Police immediately if a rape or serious sexual assault is reported. Keeping children safe in education (DfE, 2025) - rape, assault by penetration and sexual assaults are crimes. Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, this should be referred to the police.	Any report to the police will generally be in parallel with a referral to Children's Social Care
Sexual harassment, sexual bullying and online sexual harassment	When to call the police - guidance for schools and colleges - a sexual element within harassment is an aggravating factor and requires consideration of a referral to police. Keeping children safe in education (DfE, 2025) – depending on the circumstances of the incident/s and the presence of aggravating factors, the response to a report of sexual harassment can vary from handling the incident internally to reporting to statutory partners such as the police.	- What is the nature of the harassment? What behaviours have constituted the harassment? Are any of them crimes? - What are the victim's wishes? Do they want to report to the police? - What level of harm has been caused by the harassment? - Is this a one-off incident of harassment or an on-going campaign? - How many victims of the harassment are there? Is it in the interests of the school/wider community to report to police?
Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent	Sexual Offences Act 2003 - Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent is a crime.	Any report to the police will generally be in parallel with a referral to Children's Social Care
Upskirting	Keeping children safe in education (DfE, 2025) – lists upskirting as a behaviour that can be included within sexual harassment but acknowledges that it is a criminal offence.	Any report to the police will generally be in parallel with a referral to Children's Social Care
Youth produced sexual images / sexting / nudes	Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people (Department for Science,	Can the incident be defined as aggravated or experimental? See Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with

Crime	Guidance on involving the Police	Factors to consider in your decision
	<u>Innovation and Technology and UK Council for Internet Safety, 2024)</u> Making, possessing, and distributing any imagery of someone under 18 which is 'indecent' is illegal, including self-produced imagery. However, the NPCC has made it clear that incidents involving sharing nudes and semi-nudes should have an immediate focus on safeguarding CYP. In many cases, education settings may respond to incidents without involving the police, for example where an incident can be defined as 'experimental' and there is no evidence of abusive or aggravating elements. The police may need to be involved in some cases where there are abusive and/or aggravating factors. A referral should be made to the police if a CYP has been pressured or coerced into sharing an image, images have been shared without consent and with malicious intent, if there was a deliberate intent to cause harm by sharing the nudes and semi-nudes or if they have been used to bully or blackmail a CYP. If the incident involves an adult (age 18 or over), the Police must be informed.	<u>children and young people</u> (Department for Science, Innovation and Technology and UK Council for Internet Safety, 2024) 1.6(a) for support with defining incidents. ▪ Is there an immediate risk to the CYP? For example, are they presenting as suicidal or self-harming as a result? ▪ What are the victim's wishes? Do they want to report to the Police? ▪ Would contacting the police be a proportionate response? ▪ What was the motivation behind the incident? ▪ How appropriate was the CYP's behaviour? ▪ How widely has the image been shared? Was it shared without the consent of the CYP who produced the image? ▪ Is there reason to believe that the CYP has been coerced, blackmailed, or groomed, or there are concerns about their capacity to consent (for example, owing to special educational needs)? ▪ Does what you know about the images or videos suggest the content depicts sexual acts which are unusual for the young person's developmental stage, or are violent? ▪ Do the images involve sexual acts and the pupil in the images or videos is under 13? ▪ Has the nude or semi-nude been shared beyond its intended recipient? ▪ See ANNEX B of <u>Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people</u> (Department for Science, Innovation and Technology and UK Council for Internet Safety, 2024) for a comprehensive list of questions to support the assessment of the incident

If an incident is reported to the police, a referral to local authority Children's Social Care will also generally be made.

In the initial response to an incident, whilst considering whether to report the crime to the police, the setting should:

- make the decision to report to police or manage internally at an early stage, stopping any internal school/setting investigation immediately once the decision to report to police has been made. The setting should only ask questions to establish the basic facts of the incident before making the decision
- fully document the setting's initial enquires to establish the basic facts, as they may be required if the matter goes to court. This includes recording questions asked to young people and their replies
- record the rationale for involving the Police. This will include advice received from other agencies such as the police or Children's Social Care
- make every effort to preserve any relevant evidence
- assign a single point of contact between the setting and police – this will usually be the Headteacher or Designated Safeguarding Lead

For further information on how to proceed within the setting once a report has been made to police, please see [Keeping children safe in education \(DfE, 2025\)](#). Pages 3 and 4 of [When to call the police - guidance for schools and colleges](#) provide information and advice for settings who are reporting a crime to the police.

How to contact the Police in Essex

- 999 – for an emergency. If there is: a danger to life; a risk of injury; or a serious crime is in progress or about to happen
- 101 or [online](#) – to report non-emergency crimes
- Your local Children and Young Persons (CYP) Officer or the Youth Justice Police Team (YJT) (Youth.justice.team@essex.police.uk) - for advice and guidance. The CYP Officers work alongside the Youth Justice Police Team so if you do not know your CYP Officer or your Officer is not on shift, this is a good alternative contact. *The YJT may be able to offer general advice but if the CYP's details are shared with them, it is likely they will be duty bound by National Crime Recording Standards to record the crime. This does not criminalise a CYP but will amount to sharing information with the police. Be clear on whether you are seeking 'general guidance' or 'specific information sharing about an incident'.*

Dealing with an incident internally

If a setting decides to deal with an incident internally without reporting it to the police, the setting should:

- record the rationale for not involving the Police if there has been a crime or potential crime reported. This will include advice received from other agencies such as the Police or Children's Social Care
- investigate the incident in line with the setting's behaviour policy and any other relevant policies
- record the outcome of the investigation and how the incident has been resolved

Please note that if a referral to the Children and Families Hub is deemed necessary, this may result in a referral to the Police.

When to contact Children's Social Care

Children's Social Care is the main point of contact for settings if there are safeguarding concerns about a CYP. ***If a CYP is suffering significant harm, or is at immediate risk of significant harm, a request for support to Children's Social Care must be made immediately via the Priority Line.***

[Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex](#) (ESCB, 2024) contains the information settings need to decide whether Children's Social Care should be contacted about an incident of harmful sexual behaviour or child on child abuse. The 'indicators of possible need' (page 21 – 44) are a helpful resource for settings looking for an indication of the likely level of need for the CYP. Page 27 indicates levels of need with regard to harmful sexual behaviour.

The 4 Levels of need in Essex, set out on pages 13-18 in the Effective Support Document, are:

- ☐ Universal – Level 1
- ☐ Additional – Level 2
- ☐ Intensive – Level 3
- ☐ Specialist – Level 4

In many cases of harmful sexual behaviour or child on child abuse, Children's Social Care should be consulted. A request for support may be needed, depending on the level of need the CYP is presenting.

The Consultation Line at the Children and Families Hub offers professionals in Essex the opportunity to discuss with a social worker their concerns about a CYP. This can support settings in deciding whether a request for support is needed (Levels 3 and 4) or if Early Help procedures should be initiated (Levels 2 and 3). Further details of this service can be found on page 7 of [Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex](#) (ESCB, 2024).

How to contact Children's Social Care in Essex:

- **Request for Support:** Requests for support are made online via an [Online Form](#). Details of how to make a good referral are included on the website
- **Consultation Line:** Settings can contact the Children & Families Hub on 0345 603 7627 and ask for the Consultation line
- **Priority Referral:** For emergencies that require a rapid social care response only. Telephone the Children and Families Hub on 0345 6037627 and ask for the Priority Line. Requests for Support made through the Priority Line must be followed up with a [written Request for Support](#) within the given timeframe

When to consider Early Help procedures

This guidance draws upon several statutory and non-statutory documents. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy DSL (DDSL) should read the below documents in their entirety and be familiar with them.

Document	Summary in relation to HSB	Specific pages of interest for Early Help advice
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Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex (ESCB, 2024)	Guidance for all practitioners in working together with CYPs and families to provide early help, targeted and specialist support.	Early Help is discussed on pages 7, and 13 – 14,
Keeping children safe in education (DfE, 2025)	Statutory guidance for schools and colleges on safeguarding CYPs, including information on how to handle cases of harmful sexual behaviour.	Part 1 of the guidance, as well as page 127 for the use of Early Help in HSB cases
Working together to safeguard children (DfE, 2023)	A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of CYP. In many incidents of harmful sexual behaviour, it will be important to engage other agencies and this document provides the framework for doing so.	Chapter 3, Section 1 covers Early Help

[Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex](#) (ESCB, 2024) sets out the indicators of need for Level 2: accessing additional support and early help. Early Help is appropriate where the threshold for referral to a statutory agency (Police and Children’s Social Care) is not met, but the CYP requires support from other services, whilst the setting manages the incident internally. [Keeping children safe in education](#) (DfE, 2025) recognises that Early Help may be useful for non-violent HSB and for preventing sexual violence from escalating.

The Children & Families Hub may be contacted about an incident of harmful sexual behaviour or child on child abuse, as part of the setting’s response to an incident. The Children and Families Hub can provide advice and signpost to other services, to support the Early Help process. The Consultation Line at the Children & Families Hub can be contacted on 0345 603 7627.

How to contact Early Help providers in Essex

- [Early Help drop-ins](#) are available in each quadrant for advice and guidance to settings
- A selection of Early Help resources, including Early Help Plan templates, can be found on the [ECC 'Resources for Practitioners' page](#)
- Team Around the Family Support Officers (TAFSOs) can be contacted via TAFSO@essex.gov.uk
- The Essex [Directory of services](#) has the details for a vast number of services that can support CYP and families.
- The [Level 2: getting some additional support and early help page](#) provides up to date information on Early Help options in Essex

When to involve Health agencies

Settings should consider whether the CYP involved in an incident of harmful sexual behaviour / child on child abuse have any presenting health needs and whether they would benefit from a referral to a

specialist health service. This may be for either the victim or alleged perpetrator for their physical, sexual, or mental health.

Support for victims and survivors of sexual assault and abuse

There are several specialist services who can support CYP who have experienced sexual violence. Settings should signpost CYP to these services following an incident and support with referrals if requested.

Referrals will often be in parallel with referrals to police and social care. Settings should be aware that CYP who have been abused may not be ready to access help instantly and therefore should ensure that CYP are aware of the services so they can access them when/if they feel comfortable.

Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) - CYP that have a health need arising from sexual assault or abuse can access specialist NHS support from a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC). SARCs offer confidential and non-judgemental support to victims and survivors of sexual assault and abuse. They provide medical, practical, and emotional care and advice to all CYP and adults, regardless of when the incident occurred. Details of local SARCs can be found on the [NHS website](#).

Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs) - Children and Young People's Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ChISVAs) provide emotional and practical support for victims of sexual violence. They are based within the specialist sexual violence sector and will help the victim understand what their options are and how the criminal justice process works if they have reported or are considering reporting to the police. ChISVAs will work in partnership with schools and colleges to ensure the best possible outcomes for the victim. In Essex, ChISAVs can be accessed via [Synergy Essex](#), a partnership of rape and sexual abuse centres in Essex (CARA and SERRIC). They deliver specialist community-based services in Essex for victims and survivors of all forms of sexual violence and abuse, sexual domestic violence, sexual harassment, and child sexual abuse.

Appendix G signposts to agencies and resources to support CYP who have experienced harmful sexual behaviour.

Support for CYP displaying harmful sexual behaviours

Settings should be aware that CYP who display harmful sexual behaviour have often experienced abuse and trauma themselves and this should be acknowledged within the response. It should also be acknowledged that displaying harmful sexual behaviour is often due to the CYP having an unmet need themselves.

Appendix G signposts to agencies and resources to support CYP who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour.

When to contact the ECC Education Access Team

The Education Access Team has responsibility for commissioning suitable education for pupils who are unable to attend school, including permanent exclusion, suspensions, alternative education, and commissioned placements at Pupil Referral Units (PRUs).

If a permanent exclusion or suspension is being considered following an incident of HSB, the ECC Education Access Team can be contacted for advice and guidance using the contact details on the [Essex Schools InfoLink Education Access page](#). A commissioned placement at a PRU may be a more positive option and

can be explored by making a [Request for support](#) to the Education Access Team. If a permanent exclusion is issued, the Education Access Team must be notified via a Permanent Exclusion Notification which can be found on the [Education Access Permanent exclusion page](#). If a suspension is issued, the local authority must be informed without delay, regardless of the length of the suspension, by forwarding a copy of the suspension letter issued to parents to suspensions@essex.gov.uk.

Appendix B: Harmful Sexual Behaviour: Signposting to agencies, resources, and support

This document signposts to resources, websites, training, and agencies to support:

[A whole school / setting approach to HSB, including RSHE](#)

[Knowledge and training for DSLs and other staff, including handling incidents of HSB](#)

[Victims of harmful sexual behaviour](#)

[Online sexual abuse and images](#)

[CYP displaying harmful sexual behaviour](#)

[SEMH support](#)

[Parents / carers](#)

A whole school/setting approach to HSB, including RSHE

Resource	Resource type	Description	Access details
Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) curriculum support and contact information for Essex Schools - ECC	Signposting to RHSE resources and information	Essex schools have access to a range of commissioned services which support the RSHE curriculum including offers to schools, teachers, children and young people, parents, and carers. Details of these services and other support organisations can be found in this document	A copy can be accessed on the Essex Healthy School Programme ESI page
Tackling Sexual Abuse and Harassment in Schools - DfE	Recorded webinars	The Department for Education and subject experts recorded a series of three 90-minute webinars to support high quality delivery of relationships, sex, and health education (RSHE). The webinars focus on three important topics:	Visit the DfE page Tackling Sexual Abuse and Harassment in Schools

Resource	Resource type	Description	Access details
		Domestic abuse and coercion, pornography, and the impact of viewing harmful content online and Child Sexual Exploitation	
Talk Relationships - Learning service for secondary teachers to support RSHE delivery - NSPCC	Whole-school approach framework, elearning courses, lesson plans and a dedicated helpline	Talk Relationships aims to support secondary school teachers with delivering sex and relationships education and fostering a sense of safety for young people to discuss relationships	Visit the page: Talk Relationships Access the training: Talk Relationships: delivering sex and relationships education training
Relationships and sex education (RSE) resources for schools - NSPCC	Lesson resources	A list of teaching resources to help settings plan health, relationships and sex education that protect young people and promotes healthy wellbeing	Relationships and sex education (RSE) resources for schools NSPCC Learning
Resources on harmful sexual behaviour in schools including child-on-child sexual abuse and healthy relationships - NSPCC	Resources	A range of resources from the NSPCC on healthy relationships and harmful sexual behaviour, including child-on-child sexual abuse. These can be used by anyone who works or volunteers with children and young people	Resources on child-on-child sexual abuse in education and healthy relationships NSPCC Learning
It's Not Ok Positive relationships and responding to behaviour - NSPCC	Resources	Lesson plans for Key Stages 3 and 4, films and accompanying activities, helping pupils to identify characteristics of positive relationships and recognise concerning behaviour, including how to respond to it	It's Not Ok - NSPCC
It's Not Love Teaching resources about positive relationships – NSPCC	Resources	Teaching resources including three films and accompanying lesson plans about domestic violence in familial, friendship and intimate partner relationships. Aimed at 11- to 14-year-olds, the resources seek to prevent harmful	It's Not Love: teaching resources about positive relationships NSPCC Learning

Resource	Resource type	Description	Access details
		sexual behaviours and coercive control	
Pants (the underwear rule) - NSPCC	Website and resources	Free resources including a lesson plan, slide presentation, curriculum links, classroom activities	PANTS resources for schools and teachers NSPCC Learning
Speak Out Stay Safe - NSPCC	Website and resources	A safeguarding programme for children aged 5-11 years-old available to all primary schools in the UK. The programme helps children to understand: abuse in all its forms and how to recognise signs of abuse; that abuse is never a child's fault and that they have the right to be safe, where to get help and the sources of help available to them	Speak out Stay safe programme NSPCC Learning
Respectful School Communities - DfE	Self-Review and Signposting Tool	This tool has been designed to support schools to develop a whole-school approach which promotes respect and discipline, in order to combat bullying, harassment and abuse of any kind. It is intended for use by the senior leadership team within schools	Respectful School Communities: Self Review and Signposting Tool - Educate Against Hate
That Guy – better ways to be a man – Police Scotland	Website	Police Scotland Campaign that aims to reduce rape, serious sexual assault, and harassment by having frank conversations with men about male sexual entitlement	That Guy website page
Equally Safe at School	Website	Equally Safe at School has been developed for secondary schools to help them take a whole school approach to preventing gender-based violence, with staff and students working together with a shared	Equally Safe at School A whole school approach to preventing gender-based violence

Resource	Resource type	Description	Access details
		understanding and commitment to equality and safety for all	
Undressed - LGFL	Resource	Provides settings with advice about how to teach young children about being tricked into getting undressed online	LGFL Undressed website
Thinkuknow – CEOP Education (Education from the National Crime Agency)	Website and resources	Provides support for the children's workforce, parents, and carers on staying safe online and includes lesson plans and resources to teach children about staying safe online and maintaining healthy relationships Send Me a Pic Resource pack about the consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude images among young people. It is designed for use with young people aged 11-14 in Key Stage 3. Includes session plans based on short film clips	Thinkuknow: Parents and Carers CEOP Education
Beyond referrals: Harmful Sexual Behaviour	Website and resources	Resources for gathering pupil voice	Beyond referrals: Harmful Sexual Behaviour
Agenda	Website and resources	Resources providing opportunities for young people to gain awareness of how gender-based and sexual violence impacts upon their lives and the lives of others. Issues include addressing gender discrimination; consent; LGBTQ+ rights; bullying; street harassment; female genital mutilation (FGM); sexual exploitation; relationship violence Separate resource for settings supporting children aged 7-11 about positive relationships in school and the community.	AGENDA: promoting positive relationships in schools and communities NSPCC Learning

Resource	Resource type	Description	Access details
		Background information for teachers including activity ideas to use as part of RSHE. Topics include feelings and emotions, friendships and relationships, body image, consent, gender and sexuality and equality and equity	
Beyond Equality – Imagine Toolkit	Website and resources	Free resource for engaging boys in preventing sexual harassment and sexual violence against women and girls. The toolkit contains advice and interventions for use by anyone working with boys on this issue	Beyond Equality - Imagine Toolkit
BigTalk Education	Website and resources	Growing Up Safe Cards for schools and parents available for purchase. Designed to offer proactive discussion around helping to keep children safe in potentially risky situations	BigTalk Education
Bish UK	Website and resources	Web-based resources for children aged 14 and above, designed for parents to signpost their children to and support in answering questions they may have - helping them to make sense of what they may have seen online	Bish UK
Blue Seat Studios - big ideas through humour	Online resource	Video which helps to explain consent for younger children	Blue Seat Studios - consent for kids video link
Bold Voices	Website and resources	Workshops, talks, digital sessions and online resources for teachers, parents and young people at school and university about gender inequality and cultures of gendered violence.	Bold Voices

Resource	Resource type	Description	Access details
		The aim is to equip and empower young people with the knowledge and tools to talk about and address these inequalities in their everyday lives and communities	
Brook RSE Teaching Resources	Website and resources	Free downloadable resources including handouts which can be used to supplement RSHE lessons. Topics include contraception, consent, pornography, puberty, sexually transmitted infections, LGBT terminology, abortion, and condom use	Brook: free RSHE resources
Childnet	Website and resources	Various resources, including: Crossing the line Films and lesson plans exploring the idea of online behaviour sometimes being riskier and the possible consequences of this. Topics covered are cyber bullying, sexting, peer pressure and self-esteem Just a Joke? Lesson plans, activities, quiz, and teaching guide designed to explore the issue of sexualised online bullying with 9–12-year-olds Myth v Reality - Healthy Relationships – online body image Lesson and talking heads films for Key Stages 3 and 4, exploring healthy relationships online. Myth v Reality - Online Pornography	Childnet

Resource	Resource type	Description	Access details
		Lesson and talking heads films for Key Stages 3 and 4, exploring online pornography Talk it Over Research-led resource designed to support settings in facilitating empathetic, honest, and evidence-based conversations with secondary aged pupils about online hate and how to tackle it	
PSHE Association	Website and resources	Disrespect NoBody Teaching resources aimed at preventing abuse in teenage relationships. Includes consent, relationship abuse and sharing sexual images Relationship Safety Three lesson plans and accompanying materials for KS4 and KS5: unhealthy relationship behaviours and stalking, in an interactive, safe, and age-appropriate way Something's Not Right Lesson plans and resources for KS 3-5 students, to support the 'Something's Not Right' campaign on recognising and making disclosures about different forms of abuse Pornography Research report about the potential impact of pornography on young people and a teacher briefing. Includes why and how to teach about it and how to build this learning into the wider PSHE curriculum	PSHE Association

Resource	Resource type	Description	Access details
School Zone – Department of Health & Social Care	Website and resources	Teaching resources and PowerPoint presentations for year 6, K3 and KS4 pupils. Topics include social media, bullying and cyber bullying, body image in a digital world, forming positive relationships	School Zone
Women's Aid	Website and resources	Expect Respect—Healthy Relationships Resources to help lead sessions on healthy and unhealthy relationships for pupils aged 4-18. Age-appropriate activities that can be used in a range of ways. The sessions are designed to be active, fun, and engaging but also challenging	Expect Respect - Women's Aid
Pause Play Stop	Website and resources	Interactive resource for parents and carers to use with their children and young people to help them understand and contextualise consent. Includes a quiz which parents can do with their adolescent children, which is sure to spark helpful discussions	Pause Play Stop
University of Exeter - Working Out Relationships	Website resources	Lesson plans for KS3 including teaching guides and presentations about the characteristics of an unhealthy relationship, how to exit such relationships safely, and the key attributes of healthy relationships	University of Exeter

Knowledge and training for DSLs and other staff, including handling incidents of HSB

Resource	Resource type	Description	Access details
NSPCC helpline – Report Abuse in Education	Helpline	The dedicated NSPCC helpline 'Report Abuse in Education' provides a bespoke helpline for	0800 136 663 or email help@nspcc.org.uk

Resource	Resource type	Description	Access details
		worried adults and professionals that need support and guidance	The helpline details can be found online here .
Supporting Young Victims and Survivors - SERRIC	Guidance leaflet	CARA (Centre for Action on Rape and Abuse) collaborated with young survivors and the professionals who support them to identify actions that schools can take to support young survivors in school. This guidance details the findings from this collaboration	 Supporting victims and survivors.odt
Understanding Young People's Experiences of Sexual Harm: Supporting Students	Animations, PowerPoints, and worksheets	A series of five animated videos to support professionals working with children and young people to understand the impacts of sexual violence	The animations can be accessed on the CARA website
Safety planning in education: a guide for professionals - Ilford: Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse, 2022	Guide to safety planning and responding to HSB incidents	Aims to support education professionals' knowledge, skills, and confidence to understand and respond to incidents of harmful sexual behaviour and ensure the safety of all children and young people is addressed	Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse website
Lucy Faithfull HSB prevention toolkit	Toolkit including practical tips and signposting	This toolkit is designed for parents, carers, family members and professionals, to help everyone play their part in keeping children safe. It has links to useful information, resources, and support as well as practical tips to prevent harmful sexual behaviour and provide safe environments for families	Stop It Now harmful sexual behaviour prevention toolkit Oct 2020.pdf
StopItNow – Preventing harmful sexual behaviour in children	Website and helpline	Help for professionals working in child sexual abuse prevention, so that they're well equipped to keep children safe	StopItNow website

Resource	Resource type	Description	Access details
SWGfl Harmful Sexual Behaviour in Schools resources	Website and resources	Support for professionals working with children and young people when responding to incidents or issues surrounding harmful sexual behaviours	SWGfl Website
NSPCC HSB pages	Website, training, and resources	Advice on how to respond to incidents, preventative measure support, training opportunities and resources to use with CYP	NSPCC Learning website
NSPCC 'Let children know you're listening'	Training	Helping adults respond to children disclosing abuse	Let children know you're listening
NSPCC Learning - Children and young people's views on learning about sex, sexuality, and relationships: literature review	A narrative review of UK literature	A literature review which drew on the direct views of children on: • how and where 11- to 25-year-olds learn about relationships, sex and sexuality • children's views of the relationships and sex education (RSE) they currently receive or have previously received • differences in children's experiences based on their personal characteristics (e.g. sexuality, gender identity, age)	The review can be accessed on the NSPCC Learning website .
Anti-bullying Alliance - Sexual and sexist bullying	Training, a guide for schools	The Anti-Bullying Alliance have created and curated tools to help settings develop effective anti-bullying practice in this area	Anti-bullying Alliance website
'Appropriate Language in Relation to Child Exploitation: Guidance for Professionals' – The Children's Society	Guidance document	This document seeks to provide guidance to professionals on the appropriate use of language when discussing CYP and their experience of exploitation in a range of contexts	Appropriate Language in Relation to Child Exploitation: Guidance for Professionals

Resource	Resource type	Description	Access details
Beyond referrals: Harmful Sexual Behaviour	Website and resources	Resources for schools to assess their own response to harmful sexual behaviour	Beyond referrals: Harmful Sexual Behaviour and A briefing on the findings, implications and resources for schools and multi-agency partners
Podcast: harmful sexual behaviour in schools - NSPCC	Podcast	A 3-part series of Podcasts on harmful sexual behaviour in education settings	Podcast: harmful sexual behaviour in schools
Childline		Talking About Sex Information and advice, providing reassurance, support, and advice for young people about a range of issues including consent and feeling judged, pressurised, or coerced into having sex	Childline
The Mix https://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/tools-information/all-about-bullying/sexual-and-sexist-bullying?mc_cid=750788cf8d&mc_eid=5f4c65dace	Website and resources	A website for young people, aged 14-25, providing information and advice on a range of issues including relationships, sex, consent, sexting and pornography	The Mixhttps://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/tools-information/all-about-bullying/sexual-and-sexist-bullying?mc_cid=750788cf8d&mc_eid=5f4c65dace

Victims of harmful sexual behaviour

Resource	Resource type	Description	Access details
NSPCC helpline – Report Abuse in Education	Helpline	The dedicated NSPCC helpline ‘Report Abuse in Education’ provides a bespoke helpline for children and young people who've experienced abuse at school	0800 136 663 or email help@nspcc.org.uk . The helpline details can be found online here .
Synergy Essex	A partnership of rape and sexual abuse centres in	Specialist community-based services in Essex for victims and survivors of all forms of sexual violence and abuse, sexual	Synergy Essex

Resource	Resource type	Description	Access details
	Essex (CARA and SERRIC).	domestic violence, sexual harassment, and child sexual abuse. ChiSAVs can be accessed via Synergy	
The Survivors Trust	Website signposting to counselling, support, helplines, resources and advocacy services	A collection of member agencies who provide a range of specialist services to survivors including counselling, support, helplines and advocacy services for women, men, non-binary people, and children	The Survivors Trust website
NHS - Help after rape and assault	Website and signposting	Advice and guidance from the NHS on the support available following rape and sexual assault	NHS website - help after rape and sexual assault
SARCs – Sexual Assault Referral Centres	Sexual assault support service	SARCs offer a range of services, including crisis care, medical and forensic examinations, emergency contraception and testing for STIs. They can also arrange access to an independent sexual assault advisor (ISVA), as well as referrals to mental health support and sexual violence support services	Local SARCs can be found on the NHS website - help after rape and sexual assault
Rape Crisis	Helpline (for ages 16+) and website	Information and support for people who have experienced rape, sexual assault, sexual abuse, or any other type of sexual violence	Rape Crisis England and Wales
Shore Space website (Lucy Faithfull Foundation in collaboration with the Home Office)	Website Chat/email service for teenagers	Online resource offers a confidential chat service supporting young people who are concerned about their own or someone else's sexual thoughts and behaviour	Home - Shore
Childline	Helpline, website	A free, private, and confidential service where children can access advice	Childline

Resource	Resource type	Description	Access details
		and support at any time with a counsellor	
The Male Survivors Partnership	Signposting website	Provides details of services which specialise in supporting men and boys	The Male Survivors Partnership
The Lucy Faithfull Foundation	Charity, website, helpline	A UK-wide child protection charity dedicated to preventing child sexual abuse. They work with entire families that have been affected by sexual abuse including young people with inappropriate sexual behaviours and victims of abuse	The Lucy Faithfull Foundation
The Marie Collins Foundation	Charity	Provide support to people to recover from technology assisted sexual abuse in childhood by supporting individuals and their families	The Marie Collins Foundation Website
Anna Freud	Website and support service	A website with support and information for professionals, CPY and their families	The Anna Freud website

Online sexual abuse and images

Resource	Resource type	Description	Access details
Report Remove - Internet Watch Foundation and Childline	Online image reporting and removing service for CYP	If you're under 18 and need to report online sexual images of yourself, you can report these confidentially	Childline website - report remove tool
CEOP	Online sexual abuse reporting tool	If a CYP has experienced online sexual abuse, or are worried this is happening to someone they know, they can report to a CEOP Child Protection Advisors	CEOP Safety Centre website
The UK Safer Internet Centre	Helpline for professionals	An online safety helpline for professionals that provides expert advice and support for school and college staff	Professionals Online Safety Helpline SWGfL 0344 381 4772 and helpline@saferinternet.org.uk

Resource	Resource type	Description	Access details
Internet Watch Foundation	Reporting tool	If the incident/report involves sexual images or videos that have been made and circulated online, the victim can be supported to get the images removed by the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF)	Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) website
Thinkuknow – CEOP Education (Education from the National Crime Agency)	Website and resources	Provides support for the children’s workforce, parents, and carers on staying safe online	Thinkuknow website
ESI online safety page	Information	An overview of online safety and support available in Essex	ESI online safety page
Childline	Website and resources	Information, advice, and guidance about sexting and sharing nude images, online porn online grooming, staying safe and getting help if things go wrong Information, advice, and guidance about online porn, staying safe and getting help if things go wrong	Childline

CYP displaying harmful sexual behaviour

Resource	Resource type	Description	Access details
Essex Sexual Health Service (ESHS)	1:1 Education and Early Intervention Programme for YP aged 13-24 (accepting referrals from Oct 2025)	1:1 Education and Early Intervention programme is intended to support young people with vulnerabilities, or who may be at risk from harm or sexual ill health, including: • Disclosure of/ or suspicion of	Early Intervention Criteria & Guidance – full details of criteria

Resource	Resource type	Description	Access details
		relationship abuse • Lack of understanding around consent which can include pressurising others to engage in sexual behaviour • YP is talking to unknown peer/adult online and having sexual conversations or sharing imagery • Victim of online sexual bullying or blackmail-with NF from Police or CEOP	
The Change Project	Charity offering support to prevent conflict in relationships	Youth Services: Changing Abusive Behaviour - Change offers confidential support for young people ages 11-18 (up to 25 for young people with additional needs) who want to change their behaviour, and develop improved awareness of healthy communication in relationships. We help young people to look at their abusive behaviour and find safe, non-abusive alternatives.	Youth Counselling - The Change Project

Resource	Resource type	Description	Access details
Lucy Faithfull Foundation	Charity offering support	A UK-wide child protection charity dedicated to preventing child sexual abuse. They work with entire families that have been affected by sexual abuse including young people with inappropriate sexual behaviours and victims of abuse	The Lucy Faithfull Foundation
Stop It Now website	Helpline, online chat service and website	Information and support services for CYP who are worried about their sexual behaviour / thoughts online and offline	Concerned about a child or young person's sexual behaviour? - Stop It Now
Stop It Now website	Inform Young People Programme (free of charge if certain criteria are met).	An educational programme for young people in trouble with the police, their school or college for inappropriate use of technology and the internet including behaviour such as: • Sexting • Possession and/or distribution of indecent images of children • Engaging in risk taking behaviours online, such as accessing adult pornography	Inform young people - Stop It Now
Shore Space website (Lucy Faithfull Foundation in	Website Chat/email service for teenagers	Online resource offers a confidential chat service supporting young people who are concerned about their	Home - Shore

Resource	Resource type	Description	Access details
collaboration with the Home Office)		own or someone else's sexual thoughts and behaviour	

SEMH support

Resource	Resource type	Description	Access details
SET CAMHS - Children's and Adolescent's Mental Health Service	Mental Health support service	Provides advice and support to children, young people and families who are in need of support with their emotional wellbeing or mental health difficulties	Southend, Essex and Thurrock Children's and Adolescents Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
SET CAMHS Professionals Advice Line	Support line for mental health queries from professionals supporting CYP	An advice line where settings can access advice and guidance from mental health professionals	The number is 0300 300 1996 and the line operates every Monday – Thursday between 10:00 and 12:00, excluding bank holidays
Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Portal on the Essex Schools InfoLink	Website, signposting	Contains a wide range of SEMH information to support children, families, and settings	Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Portal

Parents / carers

Resource	Resource type	Description	Access details
Dedicated NSPCC helpline – Report Abuse in Education	Helpline	The dedicated NSPCC helpline 'Report Abuse in Education' provides a bespoke helpline for children and young people who've experienced abuse at school, and for worried adults and professionals that need support and guidance	You can contact the NSPCC helpline Report Abuse in Education on 0800 136 663 or email help@nspcc.org.uk . The helpline details can be found online here .
Looking after yourself and your child	Guidance leaflet	A guide for parents/carers who are caring for a child who has experienced sexual violence and abuse. It is designed to help understand how the child	SERICC – Looking after yourself and your child

		may be responding to their thoughts and feelings, and includes ideas for trying to help the child cope and suggestions for the parent/carer to take care of themselves too	 SERICC - Looking after yourself and yc
Lucy Faithfull HSB prevention toolkit	Toolkit including practical tips and signposting	A toolkit designed for parents, carers, family members and professionals, to help everyone play their part in keeping children safe. It has links to useful information, resources, and support as well as practical tips to prevent harmful sexual behaviour and provide safe environments for families	Stop It Now harmful sexual behaviour prevention toolkit Oct 2020.pdf
Lucy Faithfull Foundation – Parents Protect	Website, information, helpline	Help for parents to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation	Advice – Lucy Faithfull Foundation Parents Protect! Programme Lucy Faithfull Foundation
Thinkuknow CEOP Education (Education from the National Crime Agency)	Website and resources	Provides support for the children's workforce, parents, and carers on staying safe online	Thinkuknow website
Lucy Faithfull Foundation: Stop It Now! - If your child gets into trouble for their online sexual behaviour	Website	Information for parents about supporting children who have got into trouble due to their online sexual behaviour	Stop It Now! Website page
Talking to your child about online sexual harassment: A guide for parents	Resource for parents	A guide for parents on how to talk to their children about online sexual harassment	Children's Commissioner website
eSafety Training - The 2 Johns	Website and training	Information and training for parents/carers, CYP and professionals on online safety	eSafety Training - The 2 Johns

Appendix C: Harmful Sexual Behaviour Self-Audit tool for Education Settings

This self-audit tool is designed to support settings assess the effectiveness of their safeguarding arrangements for child-on-child abuse / harmful sexual behaviour – it is for the individual setting to decide how much information to record, to meet their own needs. Further information on each area of the tool can be found within the main ECC guidance '*Child on Child Abuse - Harmful Sexual Behaviour - guidance for Essex schools and education settings*'.

The self-audit tool is divided into the following sections:

[A whole school/setting approach](#)

[Legal responsibilities](#)

[Policies](#)

[RE/RSE curriculum](#)

[Pupil voice](#)

[Reporting and recording procedures](#)

[Communicating safeguarding arrangements](#)

[Data collection and analysis](#)

[Governance](#)

[Designated/Deputy Safeguarding Lead \(DSL/DDSL\) knowledge and training](#)

[Wider staff knowledge and training](#)

[Responding to HSB incidents](#)

[Sanctions, suspension and exclusion](#)

A whole school/setting approach – key questions	Comments / supporting evidence	Actions identified
Are there clear messages that HSB is not acceptable and will never be tolerated? How is this communicated to pupils, parents, and staff?		
Do school leaders create a culture of vigilance in eradicating child on child abuse?		
Do staff and pupils feel confident to, and know how to, challenge HSB? How do you know?		
Do pupils feel safe to report concerns? How do you know?		
How does the setting demonstrate that concerns taken seriously?		
How does the setting adopt the approach 'it could happen here' and realise that harmful sexual behaviour is likely to exist within the setting, even if there have been no reports?		
Is the setting alert to issues such as sexism, misogyny, homophobia, and gender stereotypes? Is there a clear culture that these issues are not tolerated?		
Legal responsibilities – key questions	Comments / supporting evidence	Actions identified
Is the relevant statutory guidance followed within the setting and known and referred to by the DSL? ▪ Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2025) ▪ Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education (DfE, 2025)		

- Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, 2023) - Human Rights Act 1998 - Equality Act 2010 - Public Sector Equality Duty SET Procedures (ESCB, 2025)		
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Policies – key questions	Comments / supporting evidence	Actions identified
Does your setting have a policy which sets out its approach to child-on-child abuse? <i>(This may be within a Child Protection / Safeguarding Policy, or a separate Child on Child Abuse / HSB Policy)</i>		
Are all the elements detailed within paragraphs 156 and 157 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2025) included within the policy regarding harmful sexual behaviour?		
Are staff aware of the policy and do they follow it? How do you check this?		
Are your key safeguarding policies published on the school website? <i>(Do they refer to current statutory guidance and are they up-to-date and within their review period?)</i>		
What process is place for ensuring safeguarding policies are regularly reviewed (annually)? How do you ensure there is sufficient scrutiny of the content to ensure it is current and meets need?		

RE/RSE curriculum – key questions	Comments / supporting evidence	Actions identified
Has the school agreed and published its curriculum policy for the delivery of RSHE (Relationships, Sex and Health Education)?		
How do you know the teaching of the RSHE curriculum is effective? How do you test understanding?		
Do staff receive training to enable them to deliver RSHE lessons confidently?		

Is the implementation of the RSHE curriculum appropriately sequenced, resourced, and effective in all year groups?		
How do you teach pupils to keep themselves (and others) safe, including online?		

Pupil voice – key questions	Comments / supporting evidence	Actions identified
How do you engage with pupils to capture pupil voice, ensuring you reach all groups of pupils, including more vulnerable groups?		
How do pupil views contribute to and shape policies, RSHE teaching and develop practice?		
How do you evidence that pupil voice is heard and responded to and demonstrate how it has influenced aspects of school / setting life?		
Are there adequate arrangements in place to enable feedback to CYP so they feel listened to and so they are aware that their concerns are acted upon?		

Reporting and recording procedures – key questions	Comments / supporting evidence	Actions identified
What systems are in place to allow pupils to report HSB?		
Do the systems allow pupils to report concerns in a number of ways, such as online, face to face, or making reports for a friend?		
How do you ensure the systems are well promoted, easily accessible and easily understood?		
Are reports responded to in a timely manner?		
Do pupils feel able to identify a trusted adult to listen to their concerns?		
How do you check that pupils feel safe to report concerns and know how to report concerns?		

Are reporting procedures monitored and reviewed to ensure that they are fit for purpose and being used effectively? How does pupil voice feed into this process?		
Are staff aware that a change in a CYP's behaviour could be the only way a pupil communicates an incident, and do they know how to act in this instance?		

Communicating safeguarding arrangements – key questions	Comments / supporting evidence	Actions identified
What communication systems are in place to inform parents, pupils, and the wider school community about safeguarding arrangements? Are these effective? How do you monitor their effectiveness?		
How do you engage parents in supporting safeguarding arrangements and reinforcing key messages with their CYP at home?		
How do you support parents with keeping their CYP safe?		
How do you reinforce with the setting community how you prioritise safeguarding in your setting, including the management harmful sexual behaviour?		
Are all pupils and parents / carers clear on the reporting process and support available if they have any safeguarding concerns including regarding child-on-child abuse?		
How do you ensure pupils, parents / carers and the wider community are aware of how to escalate concerns if they feel issues are not being recognised or addressed?		
Do staff know how to escalate concerns and are they aware of whistle-blowing procedures?		

Data collection and analysis – key questions	Comments / supporting evidence	Actions identified
Does the settings gather data on harmful sexual behaviour concerns and incidents?		
How do the systems for recording incidents support data collection?		
Does scrutiny of this data take place at leadership level to ensure there is strategic oversight of harmful sexual behaviour?		
Is your data regularly analysed and reviewed to determine emerging patterns, trends, or vulnerable groups?		
How is the data used to positively influence practice?		
Are there systems in place for regularly reviewing data and its use / outcomes?		

Governance – key questions	Comments / supporting evidence	Actions identified
How do governors ensure there is strategic oversight of safeguarding and that the response to harmful sexual behaviour and child on child abuse arrangements are effective?		
Is safeguarding a regular item on governing body meeting agendas?		
Do Governors ensure the relevant HSB policy complies with the standards outlined on pages 43 and 44 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2025)?		
Do governors ensure that the online safety policy / processes, and the filtering and monitoring arrangements comply with statutory standards?		
Does the Governing body / proprietors have regard to Part two and Part five of Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2025)?		

Do Governors have relevant and regular training to enable them to support and challenge the Headteacher and / or Designated Lead on safeguarding matters, including HSB?		
Do Governors receive regular reports about harmful sexual behaviour, including the number of incidents that have been reported and the action the setting takes?		
Designated/Deputy Safeguarding Lead (DSL/DDSL) knowledge and training – key questions	Comments / supporting evidence	Actions identified
Has the DSL/DDSL accessed training to understand HSB and be confident in both distinguishing and categorising sexualised behaviour?		
Does the DSL/DDSL understand child on child abuse, including an awareness of the groups of CYP that are more vulnerable to abuse than their peers, such as girls, LGBTQ pupils or CYP with SEND?		
Is the DSL/DDSL familiar with the definitions of sexual violence offences and sexual harassment, and the subsequent actions that should be taken following a report of a particular offence?		
Is the DSL prepared to confidently respond to incidents before they occur?		
Does the DSL take a lead role in each incident of harmful sexual behaviour?		
Has the DSL/DDSL read the relevant guidance and policies in relation to responding to HSB?		
Is the DSL aware of how to respond to incidents of sharing nudes and semi-nudes and of the guidance on this issue?		

Wider staff knowledge and training	Comments / supporting evidence	Actions identified
Do all staff receive regular and relevant training on how to recognise harmful sexual behaviour and how to report it? Has the quality and content of the staff training programme been reviewed to ensure it adequately covers this topic?		
Have staff had training on handling reports/disclosures sensitively?		
Have staff had training on handling reports/disclosures of sharing nudes and semi nudes?		
How do you evidence staff training and their understanding of your policies and procedures?		
How do you check the effectiveness of training and staff understanding?		

Responding to HSB incidents – key questions	Comments / supporting evidence	Actions identified
How are the needs of the victim kept central to decision making, and how are their wishes respected (as far as possible within the limits of the statutory framework), during a response to an incident?		
Do pupils receive timely and appropriate support to meet their needs, and is this reviewed to ensure it is an effective intervention?		
Are risk assessments and safety plans used where advised? Do the CYP, parents/carers and other agencies feed into the risk assessment and safety plan?		
Are the victim and alleged perpetrator kept informed of school/setting actions at each stage of the process?		

Is there a process for reviewing an incident to identify whether work with other pupils or the wider community is required? Does learning feed into practice going forward?		
Is the DSL/DDSL aware of when to report to statutory agencies (police and / or Social Care)? Do they know where to access guidance on when to report?		
Are all incidents recorded appropriately on the CYP's CP file, ensuring all evidence is carefully recorded in case it is required by the police (including the questions asked of CYP and their responses)?		
Do settings make referrals to relevant agencies, such as health agencies or early help agencies, to ensure ongoing support for CYP?		
Do settings follow up with pupils after incidents to ensure the issues are not continuing?		

Sanctions, suspension and exclusion – key questions	Comments / supporting evidence	Actions identified
Does the setting's Behaviour Policy inform the disciplinary action following HSB incidents?		
Does the setting work within Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement (DfE, 2024)?		
Does the school know when to link in with the ECC Education Access Team regarding exclusions and suspensions?		
Does the setting ensure they avoid unlawful 'informal' or 'unofficial' exclusions and suspensions by not asking CYP to stay at home for any period unless they are formally excluded?		

Appendix D: Harmful Sexual Behaviour: Common Language Framework

When dealing with incidents of sexual behaviour, it is important there is mutual understanding of these behaviours and of whether they are normally developmental or harmful. This framework is to support settings in assessing behaviours and to promote consistency of approach across the system. It is also important to think about appropriate and inappropriate language when discussing sexual behaviours, and the impact of this for the children/young people (CYP) we are working with.

The below Common Language Framework is in-line with the current language used and recommended by several sources including: the Government, Children's Social Care, the Police and Health.

1. General language around harmful sexual behaviour
2. Sexual Offence definitions

General language around harmful sexual behaviour	
Term	Definition
Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB)	Description from Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025): <i>Children's sexual behaviour exists on a wide continuum, ranging from normal and developmentally expected to inappropriate, problematic, abusive, and violent. Problematic, abusive, and violent sexual behaviour is developmentally inappropriate and may cause developmental damage. A useful umbrella term is "harmful sexual behaviour" (HSB). The term has been widely adopted in child protection. HSB can occur online and/or face-to-face and can also occur simultaneously between the two. HSB should be considered in a child protection context.</i> Description from Hackett, 2021 & NICE 2014: <i>Any Young Person under 18 years of age, who demonstrates behaviours outside of their normative parameters of development.</i>
Child on child abuse	The term used to describe abusive behaviour, including harmful sexual behaviour, occurring amongst CYP. This was previously referred to as peer-on-peer abuse.
Child displaying the harmful sexual behaviour / perpetrator / alleged perpetrator	Harmful sexual behaviour is a behaviour the CYP is using to communicate an unmet need. Understanding this unmet need is important. Labels such as 'perpetrator' and 'abuser' should be avoided, especially in front of the CYP. 'Child displaying the harmful sexual behaviour' is a useful term. Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025) states: <i>'... schools and colleges should think very carefully about terminology [Alleged perpetrator(s)] and where appropriate 'perpetrator(s)'</i>,

	<i>especially when speaking in front of children, not least because in some cases the abusive behaviour will have been harmful to the perpetrator as well... the use of appropriate terminology will be for schools and colleges to determine, as appropriate, on a case-by-case basis.</i>
Child who has experienced harmful sexual behaviour / victim / survivor	A CYP who has experienced harmful sexual behaviour may not want to be referred to as 'victim' or 'survivor'. Settings should be guided by the CYP's wishes on how they would like to be referred to. Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025) states: <i>... 'victim'... is a widely recognised and understood term. It is important that schools and colleges recognise that not everyone who has been subjected to abuse considers themselves a victim or would want to be described in this way. Ultimately, schools and colleges should be conscious of this when managing any incident and be prepared to use any term with which the individual child is most comfortable.</i>
Abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (sometimes known as 'teenage relationship abuse')	For relationships where both CYP are under 16 and abuse is present, it is referred to as 'abuse in intimate personal relationships between children' or 'teenage relationship abuse'. In law, the term 'domestic abuse' is only applied to relationships where both parties are over 16 years of age.
Sexual violence offences	Sexual violence is a non-legal term which can be used to describe the range of sexual offences set out in the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Definitions of these offences can be found in the section below.
Consent	The dictionary definition of consent is 'permission for something to happen or agreement to do something.' But consent in a sexual context is wider than this. Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025) states: <i>Consent is about having the freedom and capacity to choose. Consent to sexual activity may be given to one sort of sexual activity but not another, e.g. to vaginal but not anal sex or penetration with conditions, such as wearing a condom. Consent can be withdrawn at any time during sexual activity and each time activity occurs. Someone consents to vaginal, anal, or oral penetration only if s/he agrees by choice to that penetration and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice. A child under the age of 13 can never consent to any sexual activity.</i> Rape Crisis UK states: <i>Consent happens when all people involved in any kind of sexual activity agree to take part by choice. They also need to have the freedom and capacity to make that choice.</i> <i>Someone doesn't have the freedom and capacity to agree to sexual activity by choice if:</i> • <i>They are asleep or unconscious.</i> • <i>They are drunk or 'on' drugs.</i> • <i>They have been 'spiked'.</i>

	• <i>They are too young.</i> • <i>They have a mental health disorder or illness that means they are unable to make a choice.</i> • <i>They are being pressured, bullied, manipulated, tricked, or scared into saying 'yes'.</i> • <i>The other person is using physical force against them.</i> <i>Consent can be withdrawn at any time, including during sex or a sexual act. Just because someone consented to something before doesn't mean they consented to it happening again.</i>
Zero-tolerance culture	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. (Ofsted 2021) Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025) states: <i>"Schools and colleges should be aware of the importance of making clear that there is a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment, that it is never acceptable, and it will not be tolerated. It should never be passed off as "banter", "just having a laugh", "a part of growing up" or "boys being boys". Failure to do so can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviour, an unsafe environment and in worst case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse, leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it"</i>
Power imbalance	A power imbalance is an environment, relationship, or interaction where one party has far more social power than the other. Many factors can lead to a power imbalance such as: physical strength, social standing, abuse, age or one party holding sensitive information about the other. Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025) states: <i>"Schools and colleges should be aware that, by the very nature of sexual violence and sexual harassment, a power imbalance is likely to have been created between the victim and alleged perpetrator(s)."</i>
Coercive and controlling behaviour	The Government definition outlines the following: <i>"Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim"</i> <i>Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour"</i>
Continuum of sexual behaviours	Hackett (2010) created a continuum which presents sexualised behaviour as a range from 'normal' to 'inappropriate', 'problematic', 'abusive' and 'violent'.
Statutory Partners	Children's Social Care, the Police and Health Services are known as Statutory Partners.

Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC).	Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025) states: <i>"SARCs offer confidential and non-judgemental support to victims and survivors of sexual assault and abuse. They provide medical, practical, and emotional care and advice to all children and adults, regardless of when the incident occurred."</i>
Children and Young People's Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ChISVAs)	Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025) states: <i>"[ChISVAs] provide emotional and practical support for victims of sexual violence. They are based within the specialist sexual violence sector and will help the victim understand what their options are and how the criminal justice process works if they have reported or are considering reporting to the police. ChISVAs will work in partnership with schools and colleges to ensure the best possible outcomes for the victim."</i>
Initiation / hazing type violence and rituals	This could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element.
Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)	Child sexual exploitation: definition and guide for practitioners states: <i>"Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology."</i> The Children's Society have produced 'Appropriate Language in Relation to Child Exploitation: Guidance for Professionals'. The document seeks to provide guidance to professionals on the appropriate use of language when discussing CYP and their experience of exploitation in a range of contexts.
Risk in the Community	The ESCB page What is Risk in the Community (RIC)? states: <i>"Risk in the Community is the Essex partnership approach to tackling exploitation of young people. Traditionally, safeguarding young people focused on risks within the home, but it is more apparent today that young people experience risks in various contexts outside their family unit."</i>
Grooming	The ESCB define grooming as: <i>"Actions carried out to target, befriend, or establish an emotional connection with a child to lower their inhibitions in preparation for exploiting them and establish control over the child. This can take place over a short or long period of time, online or in person. The perpetrator can be known to the child or a stranger. It often includes breaking down a child's protective factors to isolate them, such as a positive relationship with family and friends who would usually be able to be alerted to concerns and safeguard the child. Family and friends of the child can also be groomed as part of this process."</i>

Sexual Offence definitions	
Sexual Offences	Definition
Rape	Sexual Offences Act 2003 definition: <i>A person (A) commits an offence of rape if: he intentionally penetrates the vagina, anus, or mouth of another person (B) with his penis, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.</i>
Assault by Penetration	Sexual Offences Act 2003 definition: <i>A person (A) commits an offence if: s/he intentionally penetrates the vagina or anus of another person (B) with a part of her/his body or anything else, the penetration is sexual, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.</i>
Sexual Assault (previously referred to as 'indecent assault' prior to the Sexual Offences Act 2003)	Sexual Offences Act 2003 definition: <i>A person (A) commits an offence of sexual assault if: s/he intentionally touches another person (B), the touching is sexual, B does not consent to the touching and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.</i> Note from Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025): <i>Schools and colleges should be aware that sexual assault covers a very wide range of behaviour so a single act of kissing someone without consent or touching someone's bottom/breasts/genitalia without consent, can still constitute sexual assault.</i> Rape Crisis UK: <i>It's a really common myth about sexual assault, rape and other kinds of sexual violence and abuse that they have to involve physical force or leave the person with visible injuries. But that isn't true.</i> <i>There are many other 'tactics' that someone might use to sexually assault someone. For example: pressure, manipulation, bullying, intimidation, threats, deception, drugs, or alcohol. BUT, none of these have to have happened for it to still be sexual assault.</i> <i>Many people find themselves unable to speak or move when faced with a scary, shocking, or dangerous situation. If that happened, it does not mean the person gave their consent.</i> <i>And if there's no consent then it is always sexual assault.</i>
Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent	Sexual Offences Act 2003 definition: <i>A person (A) commits an offence if: s/he intentionally causes another person (B) to engage in an activity, the activity is sexual, B does not consent to engaging in the activity, and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.</i> Note from Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025): <i>this could include forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party.</i>

Sexual harassment	Rape Crisis UK: <i>Sexual harassment is any unwanted sexual behaviour by someone towards another person that makes them feel upset, scared, offended, or humiliated, or is meant to make them feel that way.</i> <i>Sexual harassment is a form of unlawful discrimination under the Equality Act 2010.</i> <i>This means that people are legally protected from sexual harassment in certain places – for example, at work, on transport and at schools, colleges, and universities. So, if sexual harassment does happen in these places, victims and survivors have the right to take action to find a solution. This could include making a complaint or making a claim in the civil courts.</i> <i>Some forms of sexual harassment automatically break criminal law in England and Wales and are therefore crimes. These include: stalking, indecent exposure, ‘upskirting’ and any sexual harassment involving physical contact (this amounts to sexual assault in English and Welsh law).</i> <i>Other forms of sexual harassment might also break criminal law, depending on the situation. For example, if someone carries out sexual harassment behaviours on more than one occasion that are intended to cause another person alarm or distress, they may be committing the crime of harassment.</i> Description from Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025): <i>[Sexual harassment is] ‘unwanted conduct of a sexual nature’ that can occur online and offline and both inside and outside of school or college. Sexual harassment is likely to: violate a child’s dignity, and/or make them feel intimidated, degraded, or humiliated and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment.</i> <i>Whilst not intended to be an exhaustive list, sexual harassment can include:</i> ▪ <i>sexual comments, such as: telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance, and calling someone sexualised names</i> ▪ <i>sexual “jokes” or taunting</i> ▪ <i>physical behaviour, such as: deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone’s clothes. Schools and colleges should be considering when any of this crosses a line into sexual violence – it is important to talk to and consider the experience of the victim.</i> ▪ <i>displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature</i> ▪ <i>upskirting (this is a criminal offence)</i>
Online sexual harassment	Description from Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025): <i>This may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence. It may include:</i> ▪ <i>consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos. Taking and sharing nude photographs of those under 18 is a criminal offence.</i>

	▪ <i>sharing of unwanted explicit content</i> ▪ <i>sexualised online bullying</i> ▪ <i>unwanted sexual comments and messages, including, on social media</i> ▪ <i>sexual exploitation; coercion and threats, and</i> ▪ <i>coercing others into sharing images of themselves or performing acts they're not comfortable with online.</i>
Upskirting	The Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019 which amends the Sexual Offences Act 2003 to make upskirting a specific offence of voyeurism. Description from Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025): <i>[Upskirting] typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress, or alarm.</i>
Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos Sexting Youth produced sexual imagery Nudes Indecent imagery	The Protection of Children Act 1978 (England and Wales) as amended in the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (England and Wales) criminalised indecent photographs of children. The Act states: ▪ It is an offence to take, permit to be taken, possess, distribute, show, and make indecent images of children ▪ The Sexual Offences Act 2003 (England and Wales) defines a child, for the purposes of indecent images, as anyone under the age of 18 The below is paraphrased from the Government guidance 'Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people' (2024): In the context of harmful sexual behaviour within education settings, we are referring to: a person under the age of 18 creating and sharing nudes and semi-nudes of themselves with a peer who is also under the age of 18; a person under the age of 18 sharing nudes and semi-nudes created by another person under the age of 18 with a peer under the age of 18; and a person under the age of 18 who is in possession of nudes and semi-nudes created by another person under the age of 18. The sharing of nudes and semi-nudes of under 18s by adults (18 and over) constitutes child sexual abuse and education settings should always inform their local police force as a matter of urgency. The term 'sharing nudes and semi-nudes' encompasses the sending or posting of nude or semi-nude images, videos, or live streams by young people under the age of 18 online. This could be via social media, gaming platforms, chat apps or forums. It could also involve sharing between devices via services like Apple's AirDrop which works offline. The motivations for taking and sharing nude and semi-nude images, videos and live streams are not always sexual or criminal. Such images may be created and shared consensually by young people who are in relationships, as well as between those who are not in a relationship. It is also possible for a young person in a consensual relationship to be coerced into sharing an image with their partner. Incidents may also occur where:

- CYP find nudes and semi-nudes online and share them claiming to be from a peer
- CYP digitally manipulate an image of a young person into an existing nude online or use artificial intelligence (AI) to generate a new nude or semi-nude image of a young person
- images created or shared are used to abuse or blackmail peers e.g., by:
 - children and young people selling nudes or semi-nudes of others online
 - children and young people coercing a peer into sharing a nude or semi-nude to blackmail them for money, further images, or force them into illegal activity
 - children and young people hacking a peer's account to share images more widely without consent to publicly shame

Nude or semi-nude images, videos or live streams may include more than one CYP

Definition of indecent

'Indecent' is not defined in legislation. When cases are prosecuted, the question of whether any photograph of a CYP is indecent is for a jury, magistrate or district judge to decide based on what is the [recognised standard of propriety](#).

Indecent imagery does not always mean nudity; however, images are likely to be defined as such if they meet one or more of the following criteria:

- nude or semi-nude sexual posing (e.g. displaying genitals and/or breasts or overtly sexual images of young people in their underwear)
- someone nude or semi-nude touching themselves in a sexual way
- any sexual activity involving a CYP
- someone hurting someone else sexually
- sexual activity that includes animals