



**Westmorland and Furness
Safeguarding Children
Partnership**

Child Sexual Abuse Toolkit

The Westmorland and Furness Safeguarding Children Partnership Child Sexual Abuse Toolkit brings together a range of practical tools and evidence informed resources designed to help professionals identify, respond to and support children who are at risk of, or experiencing, child sexual abuse. Central to this toolkit is a preventative approach that promotes early recognition of concerns and timely intervention. By fostering a culture where stigma, shame and silence surrounding child sexual abuse are actively challenged.

It is vital to recognise that many children do not verbally talk about the abuse they are experiencing instead, their behaviours, interactions and emotional responses, as well as signs and indicators in their environment and the behaviour of people around them may be the only indicators that something is wrong. As professionals, we must remain hyper vigilant, attuned to these signs, and prepared to act on concerns even in the absence of a child telling us directly. This toolkit supports that proactive, child centred approach by equipping practitioners with the guidance and confidence needed to ensure every child's voice spoken or unspoken is heard.

Furthermore, data from the CSA Centre of Expertise, tells us that children who live in conditions of neglect are five times more likely to be sexually abused than those with no experience of neglect and that over a half of children who are sexually abused also experience other forms of child abuse, most frequently emotional abuse or witnessing domestic abuse. Therefore, while other forms of abuse may appear more prominent, it remains important for professionals to stay curious and continue to consider the possibility of sexual abuse.

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Signs and indicators of child sexual abuse template

Sexual abuse is frequently preceded and accompanied by grooming behaviours, which are intentional and staged. In the context of child sexual abuse (CSA), sequencing refers to the patterned, step by step way abuse may develop over time, rather than happening suddenly or randomly. It is most often discussed as part of grooming behaviour.

Sequencing shows that child sexual abuse is usually a process, where each step prepares the ground for the next. Recognising sequencing allows earlier intervention and better, more trauma informed responses when children disclose or show signs of harm.

Abusers may deliberately sequence their actions to:

- Build trust with a child
- Reduce the child's ability to recognise harm
- Gradually test and push boundaries
- Decrease the likelihood of the child disclosing what is happening

Typical stages in a sequencing process

(These stages may overlap or vary, and not every case follows all steps.)

1. **Targeting & access** - The adult identifies a child and gains regular access (for example through family, school, sport, or online spaces).
2. **Trust building** - The adult appears safe, kind, or helpful; they may give attention, praise, or special treatment.
3. **Boundary erosion** - Small rule breaking or inappropriate behaviours are introduced gradually so they feel "normal" to the child.
4. **Isolation or secrecy** - The child may be encouraged to keep secrets or become emotionally dependent.
5. **Abuse** - Harmful behaviour occurs after earlier steps have reduced resistance and confusion.
6. **Maintenance of control** - The adult may use guilt, fear, responsibility, or threats to prevent the child from telling anyone.

The CSA Centre encourages professionals to:

- Look for patterns across time, not isolated incidents
- Take early boundary concerns seriously
- Avoid expecting children to present a "clear disclosure"
- Understand abuse as developmental and strategic, not impulsive

The Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse has developed a Signs and Indicators Toolkit, a structured template designed to help practitioners identify and record concerns relating to child sexual abuse. This tool supports professional reflection on behaviours observed within the home and highlights areas that may require further exploration. It is most effective when completed collaboratively by all professionals working with the family, enabling the sharing of observations, concerns and professional curiosity. This joint approach helps to build a holistic picture of risk, ensuring that emerging suspicions are considered collectively and acted upon in a timely and coordinated way.

Partner agencies should consider completing this template, based on the information they know when making a referral to the Multi-Agency Childrens Hub.

Signs and indicators: A template for identifying and recording concerns of child sexual abuse

The full document and guidance are available via the CSA Centre's Signs and indicators of child sexual abuse practice resource. [**Signs and indicators of child sexual abuse | CSA Centre.**](#)

Communicating with Children

Children will communicate with the adults that they know and trust the most, not necessarily those in specific safeguarding roles, and it's therefore vital that all professionals are able to have that initial conversation.

WFSCP Quick Guide: Tools and Resources: [**Communicating with children A guide for those working with children who have or may have been sexually abused**](#)

The full document is available via the [**CSA Centre's Communicating with Children practice resource. Communicating with children | CSA Centre**](#)



Sibling Sexual Behaviour

'Sibling sexual behaviour' is an umbrella term that may refer to any form of sexual behaviour between siblings. Sibling sexual abuse has the potential to be every bit as harmful as sexual abuse by a parent; it can have both short- and long-term consequences for children's physical and mental health, and lead to relationship difficulties throughout their lifetime. However, some sibling sexual interactions may be exploratory and mutual rather than abusive.

Given all of the complexities around sibling sexual behaviour, professionals need to be precise about the language they use to describe the behaviours, which can be broadly divided into three types:

- **Normative sexual interactions between siblings** – behaviour between young siblings that exists within expected developmental norms
- **Inappropriate or problematic sexual behaviour involving siblings** – behaviour between siblings that falls outside developmental norms and which may cause developmental harm to the children involved
- **Sibling sexual abuse** – behaviour that causes sexual, physical and emotional harm, including sexually abusive behaviour which involves violence.

CSA Centre (2023)

WFSCP Quick Guide: Tools and Resources: [Sibling Sexual Behaviour A guide to responding to inappropriate, problematic and abusive behaviour](#)

The full document is available via the CSA Centre's Sibling Sexual Abuse and Behaviour. [Sibling sexual abuse and behaviour | CSA Centre](#)

Other useful resources

The AIM checklists referenced under the Harmful Sexual Behaviour section can also be used where sibling sexual behaviour is a concern, supporting proportionate assessment and informed decision making alongside wider consideration of family context and safety planning.

A particularly useful resource is AIM Practice Notes: Harmful Sexual Behaviour between Siblings (HSB S), which outlines prevalence, impact, and practice considerations, and reinforces that sibling sexual harm requires a family wide approach requiring coordinated, trauma informed intervention.

[AIM Practice Notes -HSB-S- Harmful Sexual Behaviour between Siblings](#)

Harmful Sexualised Behaviour Screening Tool

In Westmorland and Furness we use the AIM checklist to recognise concerning sexual behaviour.

The AIM Checklists provide a structured framework to guide and support professional decision making, recognising that not all behaviours with a sexual element require a referral to another agency. The Checklists incorporate Simon Hackett's Sexual Behaviour Continuum (2010), which categorises behaviours as Normal, Inappropriate, Problematic, or Abusive/Violent.

Identifying Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) follows the same principles as responding to any other safeguarding concern: you assess the presenting behaviours, consider the context, and determine the level of need and support required for the young person.

All four AIM Checklists are grounded in research and practice, using eight key questions to give a contextual overview of the behaviour. This supports a balanced and informed assessment.

To ensure the AIM Checklists remain up to date with new research and developing practice, they are periodically reviewed and updated. For this reason, when you need to use them, please access the Checklists directly from the AIM website to make sure you are viewing the most current version- aim-hsb.com/aim-checklists/

It is also essential that you understand how to use the Checklists before applying them in practice. Please visit the webpage to watch a short guidance video: <https://aim-hsb.com/aim-checklists/>

Guidance document: How to Use AIM Checklists Guidance

Step 1 – Identification of Concerns

Concerns are identified regarding potential harmful sexual behaviour.
The AIM Checklist is completed by the concerned professional/s.



Step 2 – Analysis

The information gathered through the AIM Checklist is reviewed and analysed to understand the level of concern and contributing factors.



Step 3 – Next Steps

Appropriate next steps are determined based on the completion of the [AIM checklist Outcome Form](#). Referring to the AIM Checklist Outcomes and Intervention Levels Guidance.

AIM Checklist Outcomes and Intervention Levels: Guidance

Guidance relating to checklist outcomes and the corresponding level of intervention has been adapted in line with the AIM Project framework, with local application for Westmorland and Furness.

Inappropriate

Behaviours	Outcome/ Response
<p>These behaviours are the least worrying. The child/adolescent requires a low-key intervention.</p> <p>Parents/carers are usually positive and supportive of the child/adolescent.</p>	<p>Home/School liaison, review of single agency safety plan. <u>Safety Planning in Education</u></p> <p>Education relating to the behaviour and setting appropriate boundaries and expectations.</p> <p>Life skills work, self-esteem etc.</p> <p>Any professional working with a young person in Westmorland and Furness Council can access PoEd Resources- specific topics such as Consent and Healthy Relationships.</p> <p>See resources - <u>Talking Together- A parent and carer guide to boundaries, relationships, sex and consent</u></p>



Problematic

Behaviours	Outcome/ Response
<p>These behaviours are of concern but may have moderating features of the child/adolescent taking responsibility for their behaviours and being prepared to engage in work.</p> <p>The behaviours may be indications of the child/adolescent's own abuse.</p> <p>Parents/Carers may be struggling or ambivalent about the sexual behaviours.</p>	<p>Possible discussion with children services Multi-Agency Childrens Hub for Family Help/ Safeguarding support.</p> <p>Pattern mapping with partner agencies to develop a more in-depth understanding of the sexual behaviour. Pattern Mapping should be incorporated into Family Help reviews, Child in Need reviews, Core Group meetings, where parental behaviours are identified as contributing to risk pattern mapping to take place during professional discussions. Link to Pattern Mapping Template</p> <p>Schools to complete safety and support plan. Safety Planning in Education</p> <p>Level of supervision or monitoring</p> <p>Setting appropriate boundaries and expectations</p> <p>Lead professional to complete work on managing their behaviour</p> <p>Life skills work, self-esteem etc</p> <p>PoEd Resources- lessons on Consent and Healthy Relationships.</p> <p>Professional or member of the public can make a referral to the Child Centred Policing Team to complete short-term pieces of work to understand the needs of the family unit, explaining the law, consequences and identifying any ongoing support. with young people under the age of 18. Child Centred Policing Team Referral</p> <p>Where harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) clearly indicates that a child has been, or is being, sexually abused, this meets the threshold for a suspected crime, and the Police must be contacted. Where HSB is identified but it is not immediately clear whether it meets a criminal threshold, a Partner Intelligence Sharing Form should be completed.</p>

Abusive/Violent

Behaviours	Outcome/ Response
<p>These behaviours are of significant concern, with little or no moderating factors.</p> <p>They may have features of threat, force, coercion or harms to others.</p> <p>The behaviours may be indications of the child/ adolescent's own abuse.</p> <p>The behaviours may be out of the child/ adolescent's control.</p> <p>Parents may be dismissive of concerns or posing a threat to the individual and/or the victim.</p>	<p>Referral to children's social care and the Police</p> <p>Where a criminal offence is identified in relation to Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB), the Youth Justice and Prevention Service will become involved. An Aim Assessment of the sexual behaviours and child/adolescent family background is required.</p> <p>Supervision and restrictions initially until fuller assessment is managing. This must be kept under review.</p> <p>Individual work on understanding and controlling their sexual behaviour</p> <p>Schools to complete safety and support plan. <u>Safety Planning in Education</u></p> <p>If HSB has come to the attention of the Police for a criminal offence, then discussion would take place with YJS.</p> <p>If open to Childrens Social Care on a statutory basis, consultation with Youth Justice Service.</p> <p>Creating a safe environment and building self-esteem, life and social skills etc</p>



Useful Websites and Resources in relation to Harmful Sexualised Behaviour

- **Shore** is an anonymous, expert led online space created by the Lucy Faithfull Foundation to support teenagers who are worried about their own or someone else's sexual thoughts, feelings, or behaviours. Children can access a topic library, real life stories, and fully anonymous email or live chat support to help them stay safe online and offline. Shore aims to prevent harmful sexual behaviour by giving children a safe, confidential place to seek help, ask questions, and make informed, healthy choices. [View the website here.](#)
- The **Centre of Expertise for Child Sexual Abuse** (CSA Centre) completed research on harmful sexual abuse in 2018, and key messages can be found here. [View the website here.](#)
- The **NSPCC** has a wealth of resources to support professionals who are working with children displaying harmful sexualised behaviour, including reports, podcasts and online training. [View the website here.](#)
- **StopItNow** has a toolkit and helpline which not only focuses on harmful sexual behaviour but covers all child sexual abuse prevention. [View the website here.](#)
- The **Inform Young People Programme** is an educational programme for young people who have come to the attention of the police, school, or college due to inappropriate use of technology and the internet, including sexting, possession or sharing of indecent images, and online risk taking behaviours. The programme also works with parents, carers, or main caregivers to strengthen safeguarding and support. [Inform young people - Stop It Now.](#)
- The **AIM Project (AIM)** offers training, consultancy and resources for workers and managers to educate, support and develop their practice around harmful sexualised behaviour. [View the website here.](#)
- **ParentsProtect** has resources, training and a support line for parents and carers around child sexual abuse, exploitation, and harmful sexual behaviour (including technology assisted harmful sexual behaviour). [View the website here.](#)
- The **Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command**, or CEOP Command has articles, advice, and guidance for parents whose child has displayed harmful sexualised behaviour. [View the website here.](#)
- **Thorn's "Be Your Kid's Safety Net"** is a parent focused digital safety resource designed to help families navigate the complex overlap between children's online lives and their developing understanding of relationships and sexuality. [View the website here.](#)
- **Report Remove** is a free and confidential tool from **Childline** and the **Internet Watch Foundation** (IWF) that helps children under 18 report sexual images or videos of themselves and get them removed from the internet. [View the website here.](#)
- **Internet Matters** is a comprehensive online safety resource that provides parents, carers, and educators with clear, practical advice to help keep children safe in the digital world. [View the website here.](#)
- **Safe4me** has a range of resources for educators, service providers and parents to help educate, guide and support children to keeping safe. [View the website here.](#)

Communicating with Parents and Carers - Education

A guide for education professionals when there are concerns about sexual abuse or behaviour.

WFSCP Quick Guide: Tools and Resources: [Communicating with parents and carers - Education](#)

The full document and guidance are available via the CSA Centre's communicating with parents and carers practice resource: [Communicating with parents and carers: A guide for education professionals when there are concerns about sexual abuse or behaviour](#)

Safety Planning in Education

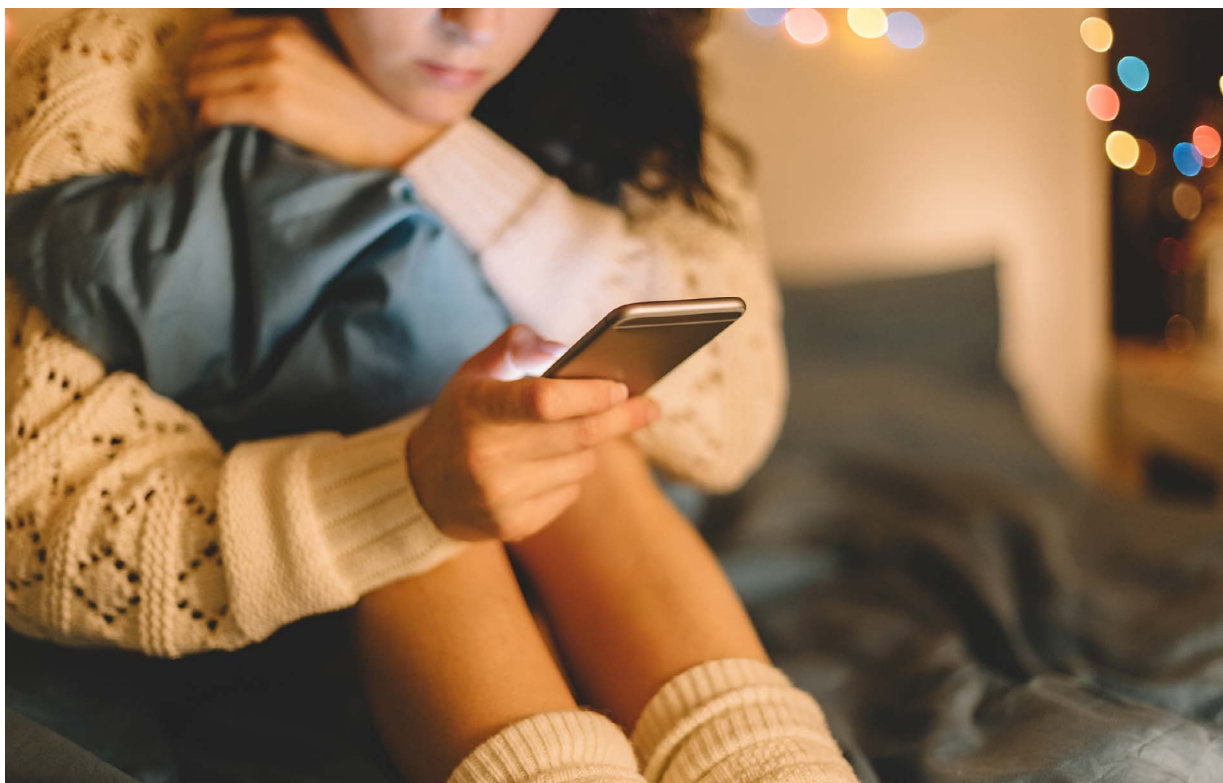
A guide for professionals supporting children following incidents of harmful sexual behaviour.

WFSCP Quick Guide: Tools and Resources: [Safety planning in education A guide for professionals supporting children following incidents of harmful sexual behaviour](#)

The full document and guidance are available via the CSA Centre's Safety planning in education resource: [Safety planning in education: A guide for professionals supporting children following incidents of harmful sexual behaviour](#)

Other useful resources

[AIM Practice Notes Education Settings 2024 – AIM-HSB](#)



Support Guide

If you, or someone you know, has been affected by child sexual abuse there are places and people who can help. Find a local and national support service using the CSA Centre directory of support services, and find sources of immediate help and advice below.

[Get support | CSA Centre](#)

The Bridgeway Sexual Assault Support Service (SARC)

The Bridgeway Sexual Assault Support service provides free confidential healthcare and compassionate support to anyone in Cumbria that has experienced sexual assault or rape in their lifetime.

For leaflets explaining the SARC service, including information for children and young people, and contact details, please click here [Helpful Resources - Bridgeway](#)

Birchall Trust

Birchall Trust provide support to survivors of rape, sexual abuse or sexualised violence to anyone aged 4 and above in South Cumbria and across Lancashire. [Trauma Informed Support Services | The Birchall Trust | England](#)

Safety Net

Safety Net is a free service supporting the recovery of those affected by rape, exploitation, sexual and domestic abuse in Cumbria. [Safety Net UK](#)

Using supervision and team meetings

There is a growing understanding that practitioners need reflective spaces in individual supervision meetings, so they can:

- Explore all possibilities of what might be happening for the children and families they are working with, taking into account contextual factors and the characteristics of each child/family
- Consider their own emotional reactions to working with those children and families
- Discuss the response that those children and families receive
- Explore their own beliefs and attitudes about all aspects of child sexual abuse.

WFSCP Quick Guide: [Using Supervision and team meetings](#)

The full document and guidance are available via the CSA Centre's [Using supervision and team meetings to improve responses to child sexual abuse](#)

Fostering and Residential

Cared for children are among the most vulnerable to child sexual abuse (CSA). Many have experienced multiple forms of harm, including neglect, domestic abuse and trauma, often before coming into care. Sexual abuse may have happened before, during, or alongside their care experience, and its impact can shape behaviour, relationships and placement stability. The care provided to the child plays a key role in supporting, healing and preventing further harm.

WFSCP Quick Guide: [Cared For Children and Child Sexual Abuse Key Messages for Foster Carers and Residential Staff](#)

Other useful resources

[AIM Practice Notes Foster Carers 2024 – AIM-HSB](#)

Prevention

Resources for Parents/Carers

A resource for parents and carers bringing together webpages, books, and practical materials to support conversations with children of all ages about their bodies, consent, boundaries, sex, and healthy relationships.

[A Parent and Carer Guide to Boundaries, Relationships, Sex and Consent](#)

We recognise that talking to your child about sex, relationships, and boundaries can feel daunting. To support you, we have created a short guide to help you feel more confident and prepared for these conversations.

[A Parent & Carer Guide to talking about bodies, growing up and relationships](#)

Educative Resources for Professionals

Statutory guidance on relationships education, relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education from the Department of Education: [Relationships and sex education \(RSE\) and health education - GOV.UK](#)

[Communicating with parents and carers](#) A guide for education professionals when there are concerns about sexual abuse or behaviour

Although aimed at professionals, these tools and resources can also support parents and carers of electively home educated children and young people.

The Talks PANTS rules

[PANTS resources for schools and teachers | NSPCC Learning](#)

[Pants Rules Age 3 - 5](#)

[Pants Rules Age 5 - 7](#)

[Pants Rules Age 5 - 7 More](#)

[Pants Rules Age 7 - 9](#)

[Pants Rules Age 9 - 11](#)

- Pol-Ed is a PSHE and Citizenship educational programme that provides schools with free lessons, assemblies and resources covering a range of topic areas.- [Link to PolEd resource](#)
- [Healthy Relationships Booklet](#)
- [Sexual consent quiz](#) and [Sexual consent quiz - answers](#)
- [A Cup of Tea and Consent](#) video to explain consent to young people.
- [Bish Training - Sex & Relationships Education - RSE Training, teaching & resources](#)
- [Disrespect NoBody: campaign material - GOV.UK](#)
- [Teaching about healthy online relationships \(SEND\) | Childnet](#)
- [Digiduck Stories | Childnet](#)
- [Step Up, Speak Up! New resources to address peer based online sexual harassment with 13-17s | Childnet](#)
- [Talk Relationships: resources to deliver sex and relationships education | NSPCC Learning](#)



