



**DISCOVERY**  
EDUCATIONAL TRUST

## **Harmful Sexual Behaviour/ Child-on-Child Abuse Policy**

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## 1. Introduction

This Policy is based on the Harmful Sexual Behaviour/Child-on-Child Abuse Policy produced by Essex County Council (ECC), authored by the ECC Safeguarding Team, dated Autumn 2024.

CYP'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 behaviours are developmentally inappropriate and may cause developmental damage. This is known as Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB), which CYP can experience in various settings, including at school, at home (or in another home), in public places, online or in person, or simultaneously. At school, issues can occur in places, which are supervised and unsupervised. For example, abuse may occur in toilets, corridors, changing areas, common rooms, outside spaces such as the playground and sports facilities, and when CYP are travelling home.

Discovery Educational Trust (DET) and its Schools recognise that CYP are vulnerable to, and capable of, HSB. DET and its Schools consider any allegation of abuse between their CYP seriously and do not tolerate or pass off HSB as 'banter', 'just having a laugh' or 'part of growing up'. All such allegations are managed in accordance with the DET Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and local School procedures in the same way as any other child protection concern, including seeking advice and support from other agencies, as appropriate.

All decisions are made considering the age and developmental stages of any CYP involved. DET and its Schools also consider any other factors, as appropriate, and balance this with their duty and responsibilities to protect all CYP.

This Policy uses the following and widely used and recognised terms in places: "victim(s)" and "alleged perpetrator(s)". DET and its Schools recognise that a CYP, who has reported abuse, may not consider themselves to be a victim, and may not want to be described in this way. They also recognise that a CYP, who is reported to have displayed harmful or abusive behaviour, may not consider that they have done so, and that they also need a safeguarding response. When managing reports of abuse, DET and its Schools are mindful of the language used, particularly when speaking with CYP, and adapt this according to the needs of the CYP.

This Policy is in line with the safeguarding requirements in [Keeping children safe in education](#) (KCSiE) (Department for Education ('DfE'), 2024), which DET and its Schools must work to and comply with; Part 5 of the Keeping children safe in education statutory guidance sets out how schools should manage reports of child-on-child sexual violence and harassment (HSB).

## 2. 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 online that they are uncomfortable with.

Refer also to the DET Online Safety Policy.

## **3. Whole Trust/School Approach to Harmful Sexual Behaviour**

Today’s CYP 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, CYP need to know how to be safe and healthy, and how to manage their academic, personal, and social lives in a positive way. DET and its Schools work to a culture in which the voice of all CYP is central, where pupils feel able to share their concerns openly, knowing that they are listened to, and that they are not judged.

### **Children and Young People**

DET Schools use lessons and assemblies to teach CYP, in an age-appropriate way, about healthy, positive, and respectful relationships. They help CYP to understand what is meant by boundaries and privacy, online and offline. They aim to provide CYP 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.

They balance teaching CYP 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 the delivery of health education, including physical and mental health and wellbeing, and are part of the DET whole-setting approach to safeguarding their CYP.

DET and its Schools help all CYP, **in an age-appropriate way**, to develop the skills to understand:

- what constitutes HSB;
- that such behaviour is unacceptable;
- the possible reasons for such behaviour, and vulnerability of perpetrators;
- that they must tell a trusted adult if someone is behaving in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable – and must tell a trusted adult if they witness such behaviour towards others;
- the characteristics of positive, respectful and healthy relationships, including friendships;
- boundaries, privacy, and consent;
- what constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence and why these are always unacceptable; and
- the concepts of, and laws relating to sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment, and rape (not in Primary phase).

DET and its Schools understand that CYP may not always feel able to talk to adults about child-on-child sexual abuse. To help them, DET and its Schools encourage them to share their thoughts and opinions, respond to their concerns, and respect and listen to them. DET and its Schools want all pupils to feel confident that any concerns they raise are responded to appropriately.

The RSE Policy for each DET School is available on the individual School websites and from each School Office/Reception upon request.

### **Parents/Carers**

It is important that parents/carers understand what is meant by HSB and reinforce key messages from School at home. DET and its Schools work in partnership with parents/carers to support pupils and want to help them to keep their child/ren safe. Parents/carers should understand:

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

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

### **Staff**

All DET/School staff undertake annual safeguarding training to ensure that 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 HSB. The training ensures that staff know what to do if they receive a report that HSB may have occurred, including how to support all CYP.

## Online Safety

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

Refer also to the DET Online Safety Policy.

## 4. DET/School Response to an Incident/Allegation of Harmful Sexual Behaviour

How DET and its Schools respond to reports of HSB is very important. The wellbeing of all DET CYP is always central to the DET/School approach. Any CYP reporting a concern is treated respectfully. DET and its Schools always reassure the CYP that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. No CYP is ever made to feel that they are creating a problem by reporting HSB, or made to feel ashamed.

DET and its Schools do this by:

- wherever possible, managing any report of HSB with two members of staff present. This usually includes the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) (or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead) (DDSL);
- listening carefully to a CYP in a non-judgemental way and ensuring clarity about how the report is progressed. DET and its Schools ensure that their children know that they can speak to staff again if they wish to provide more information, or for any other reason;
- where a report includes an online element, DET and its Schools 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](#). DET/School staff never view an illegal image of a CYP as part of their response to a report of HSB, unless absolutely necessary in exceptional circumstances. DET and its Schools never forward an illegal image of a CYP; and
- working in partnership with other agencies (including statutory partners) to ensure that concerns are appropriately managed. Where a CYP 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, DET and its Schools inform the CYP's Social Worker and work in partnership with them, as appropriate.

DET School DSLs take the lead where HSB has occurred. They liaise with other agencies, as appropriate, including the statutory agencies for safeguarding, when required. The DSL ensures that accurate safeguarding records are kept, and that all relevant information is included on the Child Protection file of any CYP involved.

## Confidentiality and Information Sharing

DET/School staff never guarantee confidentiality to anyone (including CYP 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 the School's DSL or DDSL and may require further referral to, and subsequent investigation, by a statutory agency (Police and/or Social Care).

Parents/carers are normally informed about any report of abuse, unless they consider that to do so places the CYP at greater risk.

In some cases, where DET and its School may need to involve another agency, this may be against the wishes of a CYP and/or their parents/carers. In such cases, DET and its Schools explain their reasons for doing so and supports them accordingly.

### **Anonymity**

It is important that any CYP (whether victim or perpetrator) is safeguarded when an incident of HSB has occurred. DET and its Schools do all that they reasonably can to protect the anonymity of all CYP involved and make decisions about sharing information, and with whom, based on the individual circumstances.

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

### **Recording Incidents**

It is essential that information relating to allegations of HSB are recorded within DET/School, as with any other child protection concern, using CPOMS, and in line with the DET Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Any member of staff receiving a report of HSB or noticing signs or indicators of this, must record it in CPOMS 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 is automatically shared with the DSL (or Deputy DSL), who decides on appropriate action and records this in CPOMS accordingly.

If a CYP is at immediate risk of harm, staff consult the DSL (or Deputy DSL) first, and deal with recording as soon as possible thereafter.

All related concerns, discussions, decisions, and reasons for decisions are dated and signed and include the action taken.

### **Brook Traffic Light Tool**

DET School staff 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 CYP. It helps make consistent and informed decisions about the response to sexual behaviours, and it supports existing safeguarding arrangements.

### **Risk Assessment**

DET and its Schools complete a risk assessment following a report of HSB, considering all CYP involved in an incident. They also consider all other CYP at the School and any actions that may be appropriate to protect them.

The risk assessment includes 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 CYP (and, if appropriate, staff) at the School, especially any actions that are appropriate to protect them from the alleged perpetrator(s), or from future harms.

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

At all times, DET and its Schools are actively considering any risks that are identified through the risk assessment, and its ongoing review, to the CYP. DET and its Schools implement measures to protect CYP accordingly.

Refer also to the DET Risk Assessment Policy for Pupil Welfare.

## **Principles**

DET and its Schools take a balanced and proportionate approach to HSB, based on the principle it is not acceptable and is not tolerated. This approach helps DET and its Schools to ensure that all CYP are protected and supported appropriately.

Whilst inappropriate behaviours are challenged and addressed, it is in the context of providing appropriate support to all CYP in School where HSB has occurred. DET and its Schools understand that there are many factors, which may lead a CYP to display abusive behaviours towards other CYP, and that these matters are sensitive and often complex. DET and its Schools recognise that School may be the only stable, secure, and safe element in the lives of some CYP, particularly those who have experienced harm and trauma.

Cases of HSB are considered carefully on an individual basis, and in conjunction with other agencies, when they are involved. The safety of all of our CYP is paramount and we have a duty of care to all CYP.

The following principles guide DET/its Schools:

- the wishes of the CYP in terms of how they want to proceed – the victim is given as much control, as is reasonably possible, over decisions regarding how any investigation is to progress and any support that they are offered. Notwithstanding the above, the decision on how an investigation proceeds, sits, ultimately, with DET/its Schools;
- the nature of the alleged incident(s), including whether a crime may have been committed, and/or whether HSB has been displayed;
- the ages and developmental stages of all CYP involved;
- consideration of any power imbalance between the CYP. For example, is the alleged perpetrator significantly older, more mature, or more confident/does the victim have a disability or learning difficulty?
- consideration of whether the alleged incident is a one-off or a sustained pattern of abuse;

- that sexual violence and sexual harassment can take place within intimate personal relationships between CYP;
- the importance of understanding intra-familial harms and any necessary support for siblings following incidents;
- consideration of any ongoing risks to the victim, other CYP, or staff;
- consideration of any other related issues and wider context.

### **Safeguarding and Supporting a Victim**

DET and its Schools assess what short-term and long-term support a CYP may need to help them manage the immediate aftermath of an incident, and to recover from what they have experienced. The CYP's existing support network is central to this work; DET and its Schools work with other partners, as appropriate and in accordance with the CYP's wishes, and, wherever appropriate, in discussion with parents/carers.

DET and its Schools consider what is necessary to support the CYP straightaway, for example, by making adaptations to their timetable and in-school support and taking steps to protect them from attention or peer pressure that they may experience due to making a report. DET/its Schools also ensure that there is regular review of arrangements in order to be confident that they meet the needs of all involved.

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

### **Safeguarding and Supporting an Alleged Perpetrator**

DET and its Schools also protect and support CYP, who have displayed HSB. They do this through considering the needs of the CYP, any risks to their safety and what multi-agency responses are needed to support them and their family.

Some CYP may not realise that they have behaved abusively. DET and its Schools aim to avoid using language that may make them feel judged or criminalised, and ensure that any intervention effectively addresses the behaviour at the appropriate level of need. It is key that CYP receive the right help at the right time.

DET and its Schools carefully consider when to inform an alleged perpetrator(s) about a report of HSB made against them. Where contact with Children's Social Care and/or the Police is required, the DSL speaks to those agencies to discuss next steps, including when and how the alleged perpetrator(s) is informed of the allegations. This does not prevent DET and its Schools from taking immediate action to safeguard CYP, where required.

DET and its Schools consider appropriate sanctions using the relevant School Behaviour Policy, and work with the CYP and their support network to consider measures that may help to address the CYP's behaviour.

### **Information to Parents/Carers**

In line with the DET Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and School child protection procedures, DET and its Schools inform parents/carers about reports of HSB, unless to do so may place a CYP at

additional risk. They seek advice from other safeguarding partners in individual cases, based on the circumstances of the individual case. Where they have been advised that parents/carers should not be immediately informed, they continue to support any CYP 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 DET School Children and Young People**

DET and its Schools consider what ongoing support their CYP may need, and tailor this on a case-by-case basis, according to the needs of all CYP 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 are made in the context of partnership working, with the needs of the CYP central to these discussions.

DET and its Schools may also need to provide support to CYP, who have witnessed HSB, or who have otherwise been affected. This is informed by the risk assessment and the ongoing work.

DET and its Schools also consider whether any intervention or support is required as part of a whole-setting approach for their CYP, or with the wider DET School community.

## **5. Outcomes**

DET and its Schools always seek to ensure that the outcome of an investigation is appropriate and proportionate to the circumstances in relation to an actual or alleged incident, liaising with safeguarding partners, as appropriate. The following scenarios may apply:

### **Manage Internally**

In some cases, for example, one-off incidents, DET and its Schools may take the view that the CYP concerned is not in need of Early Help or statutory intervention. In these cases, DET/its Schools follow other Trust/School policies in addressing matters, for example, the DET Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and the School's Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policies, which are available on each School's website, and provide pastoral support, where appropriate.

### **Early Help**

Where statutory intervention is not required or agreed, DET and its Schools may use an Early Help approach instead. This means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a CYP's life. DET and its Schools work with parents/carers, and other relevant partners when following this approach, which can be particularly useful in addressing non-violent HSB, and may prevent escalation.

### **Requests for support to Children's Social Care**

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

If DET and its Schools make a request for support, Children's Social Care considers whether the CYP involved needs protection or other services. Where statutory assessments are appropriate, DET and its Schools 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 CYP, who requires support.

In some cases, Children's Social Care reviews the evidence and decides that a statutory intervention is not appropriate. If a statutory assessment is not considered appropriate by Children's Social Care, DET/its Schools consider what other support for the involved CYP may be required. They make further requests for support to Children's Social Care if they consider that a CYP is at risk of harm.

### **Reporting to the Police**

Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, DET and its Schools are required to report the incident 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 take a welfare, rather than a criminal justice, approach.

Where DET/its Schools have made a report to the Police, they consult with them and agree what information can be disclosed to staff and others, in particular the alleged perpetrator and their parents/carers. They also discuss the best way to protect the victim and their anonymity.

Where there is a criminal investigation, DET and its Schools work closely with the Police and other agencies, as appropriate, to support all CYP involved (including potential witnesses). This helps to ensure that any actions taken do not jeopardise a Police investigation. Sometimes the Police decide that further action is not required. In these circumstances, DET/its Schools continue to engage with other agencies to support the CYP involved.

## Appendix 1 - Harmful Sexual Behaviour: Common Language Framework

When dealing with incidents of sexual behaviour, it is important that 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 CYP.

The below Common Language Framework aligns with the current language used and recommended by several sources including: the Government, Children’s Social Care, the police and Health Services.

- General language around HSB;
- Sexual Offence definitions

General language around harmful sexual behaviour	
Term	Definition
<b>Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB)</b>	<p>Description from Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024): <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></p> <p>Description from Hackett, 2021 &amp; NICE 2014: <i>Any Young Person under 18 years of age, who demonstrates behaviours outside of their normative parameters of development.</i></p>
<b>Child-on-child abuse</b>	The term used to describe abusive behaviour, including HSB, occurring amongst CYP. This was previously referred to as peer-on-peer abuse.
<b>Child, who is displaying the HSB/perpetrator/alleged perpetrator</b>	<p>HSB is a behaviour that 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.</p> <p>Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024) states: <i>‘... schools and colleges should think very carefully about terminology [Alleged perpetrator(s)] and where appropriate ‘perpetrator(s)’, 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></p>
<b>Child, who has experienced HSB/victim/survivor</b>	<p>A CYP, who has experienced HSB, 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.</p> <p>Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024) states:</p>

	<p>... ‘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.</p>
<b>Abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (sometimes known as ‘teenage relationship abuse’)</b>	<p>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.</p>
<b>Sexual violence offences</b>	<p>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.</p>
<b>Consent</b>	<p>The dictionary definition of consent is ‘permission for something to happen or agreement to do something.’ However, consent in a sexual context is wider than this.</p> <p>Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024) 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></p> <p>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></p> <p>Someone doesn’t have the freedom and capacity to agree to sexual activity by choice if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They are asleep or unconscious.</li> <li>• They are drunk or ‘on’ drugs.</li> <li>• They have been ‘spiked’.</li> <li>• They are too young.</li> <li>• They have a mental health disorder or illness that means they are unable to make a choice.</li> <li>• They are being pressured, bullied, manipulated, tricked or scared into saying ‘yes’.</li> <li>• The other person is using physical force against them.</li> </ul> <p><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></p>

<b>Zero-tolerance culture</b>	<p><i>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)</i></p> <p>Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024) 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></p>
<b>Power imbalance</b>	<p>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.</p> <p>Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024) 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></p>
<b>Coercive and controlling behaviour</b>	<p>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></p> <p><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></p>
<b>Continuum of sexual behaviours</b>	<p>Hackett (2010) created a continuum, which presents sexualised behaviour as a range from 'normal' to 'inappropriate', 'problematic', 'abusive' and 'violent'.</p>
<b>Statutory Partners</b>	<p>Children’s Social Care, the Police and Health Services are known as Statutory Partners.</p>
<b>Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)</b>	<p>Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024) 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></p>
<b>Children and Young People’s Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ChISVAs)</b>	<p>Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024) 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></p>

<b>Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals</b>	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.
<b>Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)</b>	<p><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. (Department for Education, 2017)”</i></p> <p>The Children’s Society has produced ‘<a href="#">Appropriate Language in Relation to Child Exploitation: Guidance for Professionals</a>’. 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.</p>
<b>Risk in the Community</b>	<p>The ESCB <a href="#">Risk in the Community page</a> states:</p> <p><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></p>
<b>Grooming</b>	<p>The ESCB defines grooming as:</p> <p><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></p>

<b>Sexual Offence definitions</b>	
<b>Sexual Offences</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Rape</b>	<p>Sexual Offences Act 2003 definition:</p> <p><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></p>
<b>Assault by Penetration</b>	<p>Sexual Offences Act 2003 definition:</p> <p><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></p>

<p><b>Sexual Assault (previously referred to as ‘indecent assault’ prior to the Sexual Offences Act 2003)</b></p>	<p>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></p> <p>Note from Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024):  <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></p> <p>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. 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. 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. And if there’s no consent then it is always sexual assault.</i></p>
<p><b>Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent</b></p>	<p>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></p> <p>Note from Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024):  <i>this could include forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party.</i></p>
<p><b>Sexual harassment</b></p>	<p>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. Sexual harassment is a form of unlawful discrimination under the Equality Act 2010. 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. 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></p>

	<p><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></p> <p>Description from Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024):  <i>[Sexual harassment is] ‘unwanted conduct of a sexual nature’ that can occur online and offline and both inside and outside of school/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></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>sexual comments, such as: telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance and calling someone sexualised names.</i></li> <li>▪ <i>sexual “jokes” or taunting</i></li> <li>▪ <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></li> <li>▪ <i>displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature</i></li> <li>▪ <i>upskirting (this is a criminal offence)</i></li> </ul>
<b>Online sexual harassment</b>	<p>Description from Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024):  <i>This may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence. It may include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos. Taking and sharing nude photographs of U18s is a criminal offence.</i></li> <li>▪ <i>sharing of unwanted explicit content</i></li> <li>▪ <i>sexualised online bullying.</i></li> <li>▪ <i>unwanted sexual comments and messages, including, on social media.</i></li> <li>▪ <i>sexual exploitation; coercion and threats, and</i></li> <li>▪ <i>coercing others into sharing images of themselves or performing acts they’re not comfortable with online.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Upskirting</b>	<p>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 (2024):  <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></p>
<b>Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude</b>	<p>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:</p>

<p><b>and semi-nude images and/or videos</b></p> <p><b>Sexting</b></p> <p><b>Youth produced sexual imagery</b></p> <p><b>Nudes</b></p> <p><b>Indecent imagery</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>It is an offence to take, permit to be taken, possess, distribute, show and make indecent images of children.</i></li> <li>▪ <i>The Sexual Offences Act 2003 (England and Wales) defines a child, for the purposes of indecent images, as anyone under the age of 18.</i></li> </ul> <p>The below is paraphrased from the Government guidance ‘Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people’ (2024):</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Incidents may also occur where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ CYP find nudes and semi-nudes online and share them claiming to be from a peer;</li> <li>▪ CYP digitally manipulate an image of a young person into an existing nude online;</li> <li>▪ images created or shared are used to abuse peers, e.g., by CYP selling nudes or semi-nudes of others online, CYP coercing a peer into sharing a nude or semi-nude to blackmail them for money, further images, or force them into illegal activity, CYP hacking a peer’s account to share images more widely without consent, to publicly shame.</li> </ul> <p>Nude or semi-nude images, videos or live streams may include more than one CYP.</p> <p><u>Definition of indecent</u></p> <p>‘Indecent’ is not defined in legislation. When cases are prosecuted, the question of whether any photograph of a CYP is indecent is for a</p>
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	<p>jury, magistrate or district judge to decide based on what is the recognised standard of propriety.</p> <p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ nude or semi-nude sexual posing (e.g. displaying genitals and/or breasts or overtly sexual images of young people in their underwear);</li><li>▪ someone nude or semi-nude touching themselves in a sexual way</li><li>▪ any sexual activity involving a CYP;</li><li>▪ someone hurting someone else sexually;</li><li>▪ sexual activity that includes animals.</li></ul>
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## Appendix 2 – Contacting Other Agencies, including Statutory Agencies

### Contents

<a href="#">When to Contact the Police</a>
<a href="#">When to Contact Children’s Social Care</a>
<a href="#">When to Consider Early Help Procedures</a>
<a href="#">When to Involve Health Agencies</a>
<a href="#">When to Contact the ECC Education Access Team</a>

“Schools and colleges should not feel that they are alone in dealing with sexual violence and sexual harassment” [Keeping Children Safe in Education \(DfE, 2024\)](#)

When dealing with incidents of HSB, schools and settings often need to contact outside agencies to access specialist advice and services. Local Authority Children’s Social Care and the Police are important partners where a crime might have been committed or where 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 HSB incidents and child-on-child abuse.

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

### When to Contact the Police

This guidance draws upon several statutory and non-statutory documents. The DSL and DDSLs 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
<a href="#">When to call the Police - guidance for schools and colleges</a>	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.
<a href="#">Keeping children safe in education (2024)</a>	Statutory guidance for schools and colleges on safeguarding	Pages 105 to 135 - Part 5 - Child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment. Reporting to

	CYP, including information on how to handle cases of HSB.	Police and the ongoing management of cases is covered in this section. Staff should be familiar with the whole section.  Pages 121 to 123 - Contains the information on initially reporting to Police.
<a href="#">Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)</a>	A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of CYP. In many incidents of HSB, it will be important to engage other agencies and this document provides the framework for doing so.	The whole document is relevant.
<a href="#">Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people</a>	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 that need to be considered as part of 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 CYP 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 HSB. 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 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.

<b>Crime</b>	<b>Guidance on involving the Police</b>	<b>Factors to consider in your decision</b>
<b>Rape</b>  <b>Assault by Penetration</b>  <b>Sexual assault</b>	<a href="#">When to call the Police - guidance for schools and colleges</a> - call the police immediately if a rape or serious sexual assault is reported.  <a href="#">Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024)</a> - 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any report to the Police will generally be in parallel with a referral to Children’s Social Care.</li> </ul>
<b>Sexual harassment, sexual bullying and online sexual harassment</b>	<a href="#">When to call the Police - guidance for schools and colleges</a> - a sexual element within harassment is an aggravating factor and requires consideration of a referral to police.  <a href="#">Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024)</a> - 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the nature of the harassment? What behaviours have constituted the harassment? Are any of them crimes?</li> <li>What are the victim’s wishes? Do they want to report to the police?</li> <li>What level of harm has been caused by the harassment?</li> <li>Is this a one-off incident of harassment or an ongoing campaign?</li> <li>How many victims of the harassment are there? Is it in the interests of the school/wider community to report to police?</li> </ul>
<b>Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent</b>	<a href="#">Sexual Offences Act 2003</a> - causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent is a crime.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any report to the police will generally be in parallel with a referral to Children’s Social Care.</li> </ul>
<b>Upskirting</b>	<a href="#">Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024)</a> - lists upskirting as a behaviour that can be included within sexual harassment, but acknowledges that it is a criminal offence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any report to the police will generally be in parallel with a referral to Children’s Social Care.</li> </ul>
<b>Youth produced sexual</b>	<a href="#">Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can the incident be defined as aggravated or experimental? See</li> </ul>

Crime	Guidance on involving the Police	Factors to consider in your decision
<p><b>images/sexting/nudes</b></p>	<p><a href="http://www.gov.uk">working with children and young people - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a></p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>If the incident involves an adult (age 18 or over), the police must be informed.</p>	<p><a href="#">Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a> 1.6(a) for definition guidance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there an immediate risk to the CYP? For example, are they presenting as suicidal or self-harming as a result?</li> <li>• What are the victim’s wishes? Do they want to report to the police?</li> <li>• Would contacting the Police be a proportionate response?</li> <li>• What was the motivation behind the incident?</li> <li>• How appropriate was the CYP’s behaviour?</li> <li>• How widely has the image been shared? Was it shared without the consent of the CYP, who produced the image?</li> <li>• 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)?</li> <li>• 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?</li> <li>• Do the images involve sexual acts and the CYP in the images or videos is under 13?</li> <li>• Has the nude or semi-nude been shared beyond its intended recipient?</li> <li>• See ANNEX A of <a href="#">Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a> for a comprehensive list of questions to support the assessment of the incident</li> </ul>

If an incident is reported to the Police, a referral to Local Authority Children’s Social Care is also generally 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 enquiries to establish the basic facts, as they may be required if the matter goes to court. This includes recording questions asked to CYP and their replies;
- record the rationale for involving the Police. This includes 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 is usually the Headteacher (HT) or DSL.

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 \(2024\)](#). Pages 3 and 4 of [When to call the police – guidance for schools and colleges](#) provide information and advice for settings that report 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.
- Local Children and Young Persons (CYP) Officer or the Youth Justice Police Team (YJT) ([Youth.justice.team@essex.police.uk](mailto: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 includes 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.***

The [Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex \(2021\)](#) contains the information settings need to decide whether Children’s Social Care should be contacted about an incident of HSB or child-on-child abuse. The ‘indicators of possible need’ (pages 23 - 29) are a helpful resource for settings looking for an indication of the likely level of need for the CYP.

The four Levels of need in Essex, set out on pages 8 to 11 in the Effective Support Document, are:

- Universal - Level 1;
- Additional - Level 2;
- Intensive - Level 3;
- Specialist - Level 4.

In many cases of HSB 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 21 of [Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex \(2021\)](#).

**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 DSL and DDSs 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
<a href="#">Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex (2021)</a>	Guidance for all practitioners in working together with CYP and families to provide early help, targeted and specialist support.	Early Help is discussed on pages 8 to 13, 20 to 22, 24 to 25.
<a href="#">Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024)</a>	Statutory guidance for schools and colleges on safeguarding CYP, including information on how to handle cases of harmful sexual behaviour.	Part 1 of the guidance, as well as page 119 and 120 for the use of Early Help in HSB cases.

<a href="#">Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)</a>	A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of CYP. In many incidents of HSB, it is important to engage other agencies and this document provides the framework for doing so.	‘Chapter 1: Assessing Need and Providing Help’ covers Early Help.
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[Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex \(2021\)](#) 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 \(2024\)](#) 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 HSB 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-in sessions](#) 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 [Essex.gov.uk 'Resources for Practitioners' page](#).
- Team Around the Family Support Officers (TAFSOs) can be contacted via [TAFSO@essex.gov.uk](mailto: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 HSB/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 that 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 that 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)** – CYP’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 help the victim to understand what their options are and how the criminal justice process works if they have reported or are considering reporting to the police. ChISVAs 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.

### **Support for CYP Displaying Harmful Sexual Behaviour**

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

### **When to Contact the ECC Education Access Team**

The Education Access Team has responsibility for commissioning suitable education for CYP, 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/carers to [suspensions@essex.gov.uk](mailto:suspensions@essex.gov.uk).

## Appendix 3 – 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 HSB;
- Online sexual abuse and images;
- CYP displaying HSB;
- 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, CYP, parents, and carers. Details of these services and other support organisations can be found in this document.	A copy can be accessed on the <a href="#">Essex Healthy School Programme ESI page</a> .
Talk Relationships - Learning service for secondary teachers to support RSHE delivery - NSPCC	elearning course, lesson plans and a dedicated helpline	Talk Relationships aims to support secondary school teachers with delivering RSE and fostering a sense of safety for young people to discuss relationships.	Visit the page: <a href="#">Talk Relationships</a> Access the training: <a href="#">Talk Relationships: delivering sex and relationships education training</a>
RSE resources for schools - NSPCC	Lesson resources	A list of teaching resources to help settings plan health, RSE that protect young people and promotes healthy wellbeing.	<a href="#">Relationships and sex education (RSE) resources for schools   NSPCC Learning</a>
Resources on HSB in schools, including child-on-child sexual abuse and healthy relationships - NSPCC	Resources	A range of resources from the NSPCC on healthy relationships and HSB, including child-on-child sexual abuse. These can be used by anyone, who works or volunteers with CYP.	<a href="#">Resources on child-on-child sexual abuse in education and healthy relationships   NSPCC Learning</a>
Tackling Sexual Abuse and Harassment in Schools - DfE	Recorded webinars	The DfE and subject experts recorded a series of three 90-minute webinars to support high quality delivery of RSE and health education. The	Visit the DfE page <a href="#">Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges</a>

Resource	Resource type	Description	Access details
		webinars focus on three important topics: Domestic abuse and coercion, pornography and the impact of viewing harmful content online and Child Sexual Exploitation.	
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 SLT within schools.	<a href="#">Respectful School Communities: Self Review and Signposting Tool - Educate Against Hate</a>
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.	<a href="#">That Guy website page</a>
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 pupils working together with a shared understanding and commitment to equality and safety for all.	<a href="#">Equally Safe at School   A whole school approach to preventing gender-based violence</a>
Undressed - LGFL	Resource	Provides settings with advice about how to teach young children about being tricked into getting undressed online.	<a href="#">LGFL Undressed website</a>
Thinkuknow	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.	<a href="#">Thinkuknow website</a>

Resource	Resource type	Description	Access details
Beyond referrals: HSB	Website and resources	Resources for gathering pupil voice.	<a href="#">Beyond referrals: Harmful Sexual Behaviour</a>

### 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 worried adults and professionals that need support and guidance.	0800 136 663 or email <a href="mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk">help@nspcc.org.uk</a>  The helpline details can be found online <a href="#">here</a> .
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 CYP to understand the impacts of sexual violence.	The animations can be accessed on the <a href="#">CARA website</a>
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 HSB and ensure the safety of all CYP is addressed.	<a href="#">Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse website</a>
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,	<a href="#">Harmful sexual behaviour toolkit (The Lucy Faithfull Foundation, 2021)</a>

Resource	Resource type	Description	Access details
		and support as well as practical tips to prevent HSB and provide safe environments for families.	
StopItNow – Preventing HSB in children	Website and helpline	Help for professionals working in child sexual abuse prevention, so that they are well equipped to keep children safe.	<a href="#">StopItNow website</a>
SWGfl HSB in Schools resources	Website and resources	Support for professionals working with CYP when responding to incidents or issues surrounding HSB.	<a href="#">SWGfl Website</a>
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.	<a href="#">NSPCC Learning website</a>
NSPCC ‘Let children know you’re listening’	Training	Helping adults respond to children disclosing abuse.	<a href="#">Let children know you’re listening</a>
NSPCC Learning - CYP 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how and where 11- to 25-year-olds learn about relationships, sex and sexuality;</li> <li>• children’s views of the RSE they currently receive or have previously received;</li> <li>• differences in children’s experiences based on their personal characteristics (e.g. sexuality, gender identity, age).</li> </ul>	The review can be accessed on the <a href="#">NSPCC Learning website</a> .
Anti-bullying Alliance - Sexual and sexist bullying	Training, a guide for schools	The Anti-Bullying Alliance has created and curated tools to help settings develop effective anti-bullying practice in this area.	<a href="#">Anti-bullying Alliance website</a>
‘Appropriate Language in Relation to Child	Guidance document	This document seeks to provide guidance to professionals on the	<a href="#">Appropriate Language in Relation to Child</a>

Resource	Resource type	Description	Access details
Exploitation: Guidance for Professionals' – The Children's Society		appropriate use of language when discussing CYP and their experience of exploitation in a range of contexts.	<a href="#">Exploitation: Guidance for Professionals'</a>
Essex Schools InfoLink HSB page	Information	An overview of HSB and support available in Essex.	<a href="#">ESI Harmful Sexual Behaviour page</a>
Beyond referrals: HSB	Website and resources	Resources for schools to assess their own response to HSB.	<a href="#">Beyond referrals: Harmful Sexual Behaviour</a>
Podcast: HSB in schools - NSPCC	Podcast	A three-part series of podcasts on HSB in education settings.	<a href="#">Podcast: harmful sexual behaviour in schools</a>

### Victims 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 CYP, who have experienced abuse at school.	0800 136 663 or email <a href="mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk">help@nspcc.org.uk</a> .  The helpline details can be found online <a href="#">here</a> .
Synergy Essex	A partnership of rape and sexual abuse centres in Essex (CARA and SERRIC).	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. ChISAVs can be accessed via Synergy.	<a href="#">Synergy Essex</a>
The Survivors Trust	Website signposting to counselling, support, helplines, resources and advocacy services	A collection of member agencies that provide a range of specialist services to survivors, including counselling, support, helplines and advocacy services for women, men, non-binary people and children.	<a href="#">The Survivors Trust website</a>
NHS - Help after rape and assault	Website and signposting	Advice and guidance from the NHS on the support available following rape and sexual assault.	<a href="#">NHS website - help after rape and sexual assault</a>

<b>Resource</b>	<b>Resource type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Access details</b>
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 <a href="#">NHS website - help after rape and sexual assault</a>
The Terrence Higgins Trust	Young Persons 1:1 Early Intervention and Education Programme	Support for young people aged 13 to 24, who may be at risk from sexual ill-health or harm.	Referrals can be made via the <a href="#">online referral system</a>  The team can be contacted with further questions relating to the programme via <a href="mailto:essexyoungpeople@tth.org.uk">essexyoungpeople@tth.org.uk</a>
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.	<a href="#">Rape Crisis England and Wales</a>
Childline	Helpline, website	A free, private and confidential service where children can access advice and support at any time with a counsellor.	<a href="#">Childline</a>
The Male Survivors Partnership	Signposting website	Provides details of services, which specialise in supporting men and boys.	<a href="#">The Male Survivors Partnership</a>
The Lucy Faithfull Foundation	Charity, website, helpline	A UK-wide child protection charity dedicated to preventing child sexual abuse. It works with entire families that have been affected by sexual abuse, including young people with inappropriate sexual	<a href="#">The Lucy Faithfull Foundation</a>

Resource	Resource type	Description	Access details
		behaviours and victims of abuse.	
The Marie Collins Foundation	Charity	Provides support to people to recover from technology-assisted sexual abuse in childhood by supporting individuals and their families.	<a href="#">The Marie Collins Foundation Website</a>
Anna Freud	Website and support service	A website with support and information for professionals, CYP and their families.	<a href="#">The Anna Freud website</a>

### 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 are under 18 and need to report online sexual images of yourself, you can report these confidentially.	<a href="#">Childline website - report remove tool</a>
CEOP	Online sexual abuse reporting tool	If a CYP has experienced online sexual abuse or is worried that this is happening to someone they know, they can report to a CEOP Child Protection Advisor.	<a href="#">CEOP Safety Centre website</a>
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.	0344 381 4772 and <a href="mailto:helpline@saferinternet.org.uk">helpline@saferinternet.org.uk</a>
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).	<a href="#">Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) website</a>
Thinkuknow	Website and resources	Provides support for the children's workforce, parents and carers on staying safe online.	<a href="#">Thinkuknow website</a>

Resource	Resource type	Description	Access details
ESI online safety page	Information	An overview of online safety and support available in Essex.	<a href="#">ESI online safety page</a>

### CYP displaying HSB:

Resource	Resource type	Description	Access details
Barnardos CARE service	A support service for children displaying problematic sexualised behaviours	The Barnardos CARE service offers support for children aged 8 to 18, who are displaying HSB, which meet the criteria.	 Barnardo's CARE HSB Service Referral Form
Lucy Faithfull Foundation	Charity offering support	A UK-wide child protection charity dedicated to preventing child sexual abuse. It works with entire families that have been affected by sexual abuse, including young people with inappropriate sexual behaviours and victims of abuse.	<a href="#">The Lucy Faithfull Foundation</a>
The Terrence Higgins Trust	Young Persons 1:1 Early Intervention and Education Programme	Support for young people aged 13 to 24, who may be at risk from sexual ill-health or harm.	Referrals can be made via the <a href="#">online referral system</a>  The team can be contacted with further questions relating to the programme via <a href="mailto:essexyoungpeople@tht.org.uk">essexyoungpeople@tht.org.uk</a>
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.	<a href="#">StopItNow website</a>

### 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 CYP and families, who are in need of support with their emotional wellbeing or mental health difficulties.	<a href="#">Southend, Essex and Thurrock Children's and Adolescent's Mental Health Service (CAMHS)</a>
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 to Thursday between 10:00 and 12:00, excluding bank holidays.
Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) portal on Essex Schools InfoLink	Website, signposting	Contains a wide range of SEMH information to support children, families and settings.	<a href="#">Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Portal</a>

#### 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 CYP, who have 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 <a href="mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk">help@nspcc.org.uk</a> .  Helpline details can be found online <a href="#">here</a> .
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 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.	<a href="#">SERICC – Looking after yourself and your child</a>
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	<a href="#">Harmful sexual behaviour toolkit (The Lucy Faithfull Foundation, 2021)</a>

		<p>part in keeping children safe.</p> <p>It has links to useful information, resources, and support as well as practical tips to prevent HSB and provide safe environments for families.</p>	
Parents Protect	Website, information, helpline	Help for parents to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation.	<a href="#">Parents Protect website</a>
Thinkuknow	Website and resources	Provides support for the children’s workforce, parents and carers on staying safe online.	<a href="#">Thinkuknow website</a>
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.	<a href="#">Stop It Now! Website page</a>
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.	<a href="#">Children’s Commissioner website</a>
eSafety Training - The 2 Johns	Website and training	Information and training for parents/carers, CYP and professionals on online safety.	<a href="#">eSafety Training - The 2 Johns</a>