



And



**Suffolk**  
County Council

# Procedures for the Management of Children and Young People Who Display Sexually Harmful Behaviour



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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 In the last decade there has been growing awareness and acknowledgement of the incidence of sexually harmful behaviour by children and young people. Criminal statistics for England and Wales (Home Office 1997) covering the year 1996 show that there were 31,400 recorded sexual offences. Of the 6500 individuals subsequently cautioned for or found guilty of sexual offences approximately 1500 (or 23 per cent) were between 10 and 20 years of age inclusive. Of the 2000 or so offenders cautioned (the vast majority of whom are male) approximately 200 (10 per cent) were aged 10 – 13 years, 500 (25 per cent) were aged 14 – 17 years and 200 (10 per cent) were aged 18 – 20 years. **In other words young people under the age of 21 years accounted for 45% of all cautions for sexual offences.**
- 1.2 The current system for identifying and treating young sex offenders is failing.
- 1.3 The latest Safeguarding Children report by 8 Government Chief Inspectors urged the Government to 'make the necessary provision to ensure all children who display or are convicted of sexually harmful behaviours are assessed and their needs met'.
- 1.4 In 2004 The Home Office estimated 1/3 of all sexual offences were committed by young people. According to the Youth Justice Board sexual offences committed by young people are on the rise:  
1821 in 2006/7  
2088 in 2007/8
- 1.5 These criminal statistics refer only to offenders over the age of criminal responsibility and record only reported offences. Since much abuse is unreported or unrecognised official statistics are likely to reveal only a small proportion of actual incidence.
- 1.6 Evidence suggests that children and young people who display sexually harmful behaviour towards others may have:
  - Suffered considerable disruption in their lives
  - Been exposed to violence within the family
  - May have witnessed or been subjected to physical or sexual assault
  - Have problems with their educational development, and
  - May have committed other offences.

Such young people are likely to be children in need and some in addition will be suffering or be at risk of significant harm and may be in need of protection.
- 1.7 Children and young people who display sexually harmful behaviour are often not emotionally mature and cannot therefore be treated in the same way as adults who have been abusing for years. Young people are still developing their sexual feelings and understanding. Early intervention can assist this development and channel it in a positive way.

It is essential that children and young people who are involved in sexually harmful behaviours are properly and consistently assessed in order to establish the extent, the nature and the antecedents of the behaviour.

- 1.8 Sexually harmful behaviour by children and young people includes a range of behaviours in a variety of situations and can be defined as:

*Young people who engage in any form of sexual activity with another individual that they have powers over by virtue of age, emotional maturity, gender, physical strength, intellect and where the victim in this relationship has suffered an exploitation and or a betrayal of trust. (Palmer 1995)*

## 2. Objectives

The objectives of this set of procedures are that partner agencies within Suffolk:

- 2.1. Use a common set of policies/procedures/practice guidelines incorporating a common initial assessment model for assessing children under 10 years and young people 10 – 18 years who have admitted sexually harmful behaviour, regardless of how these young people come to the notice of the statutory agencies.
- 2.2. Adopt a multi-agency partnership approach, which is essential if effective practice is to develop.

*Research and experience have shown repeatedly that keeping children safe from harm requires professionals and others to share information: about a child's health and development and exposure to possible harm. Often, it is only when information from a number of sources has been shared and it is then put together that it becomes clear that a child is at risk of suffering harm. (Working Together to Safeguard Children – Department of Health)*

## 3. Principles, Philosophy and Values

- 3.1. Work with children and young people who display sexually harmful behaviour requires a coordinated and multi-agency response. It is important that all agencies work closely together to enhance communication and ensure consistency of approach. No single agency can manage children and adolescents with sexually harmful behaviour. Child protection and criminal justice agencies need to collaborate.
- 3.2. The causes of child/adolescent sexually harmful behaviour are multi- factorial involving socio-cultural, environmental, familial, inter-personal and developmental factors. These are unique in each case.

- 3.3. The welfare of children is paramount and the primary objective must be the prevention of future victims. Abuse perpetrated by children/adolescents is harmful to victims. Sexual abuse is always the responsibility of the abuser. However, child/adolescent sexual abusers are children/adolescents who sexually abuse, and not sexual abusers who happen to be children/adolescents.
- 3.3. Children/young people who sexually harm are often children/young people 'in need' themselves. Intervention must recognise the child/adolescent in his/her total context with particular reference to the family.

#### **4.0 Assessment (See also 10 steps to Assessments – Appendix 1)**

- 4.1 The AIM (**A**ssessment, **I**ntervention and **M**oving On) assessment model for children under 10 years is in line with the 'Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need'.
- 4.2 The AIM initial assessment for young people 10 – 18 years incorporates the concepts of the Department of Health 'Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families' as employed by CYP Services and the 'Asset' framework as employed by the Youth Offending Service. It is intended to be useable within the timescales agreed by the criminal justice, child protection systems and Public Law Children Act cases.
- 4.3 The AIM assessment aims to provide a model to assist all professionals within Children and Young People's Services, Education, Youth Offending Service and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Teams to conduct an initial assessment of sexually harmful behaviour in order to:
- Identify potential risk of repeated sexually harmful behaviour
  - In child protection terms identify risk to either the child/young person or their actual /potential victim(s)
  - Identify the child/young person's needs
  - To assess the child/young person's motivation and capacity to engage in services and plans
  - Identify the capacity of the parents /carers to manage and support the child/young person
  - Suggest priorities for initial response
- 4.4 Information gathered throughout the assessment process should ultimately be written in report format. This information will be used by those agencies involved with the child or young person to make decisions and plans for management of the case. The sharing of information compiled in the assessment report is covered by existing protocols agreed by LSCB.

## 5. The Assessment Report

- 5.1 The assessors should draw conclusions from the assessment framework and identify the initial level(s) of intervention necessary.
- 5.2 The assessors will read through the report with the young person and their parents in a supportive setting and any areas of disagreement will be noted and attached to the report. The family is entitled to retain a copy of the report.

Where the assessment has been initiated through the criminal justice route, the report will be forwarded to the investigating Police officer and will make a recommendation to CPS regarding disposal for the young person. However, having fully considered the assessment team's recommendation and any other relevant information which has been collated regarding mitigating and aggravating factors, the CPS maintains the right to make a final decision.

- 5.4 The completed assessment report will then be taken to the AIM2 multi- disciplinary meeting.
- 5.5 Copies of the assessment report will remain on the files of the assessor's agencies and a further copy will be held by the Suffolk Sexually Appropriate Behaviour Service (SSABS) Manager. Copies will be retained in line with individual agencies file destruction policies.

## 6. Applicability

- 6.1 These procedures consider three specific groups:
  - Children under 10 years
  - Young people 10 – 18 years
  - Young People with a mild to moderate learning disability
- 6.2 Children and young people under the age of 18 years, including those with a disability, who have displayed sexually harmful behaviour against children, adolescents and/or adults, within the family, outside the family and stranger abuse.
- 6.3 For those young people entering the criminal justice system where the young person admits an offence, the assessment can apply to:
  - Young people whose behaviour is deemed so serious at the outset that the police in consultation with the CPS make an immediate decision to charge.
  - Young people who have previous offences and are therefore not eligible for the final warning and reprimand scheme and are immediately charged.
  - Young people who are likely to receive a reprimand or a final warning.

6.4 Young people who deny an alleged offence will not go through the initial assessment process at this stage. However those young people who deny the offence but are later found guilty will be subsequently assessed and the model can be an appropriate framework to inform a pre-sentence report.

## **7. Referral (Summarised in Flowchart - Appendix 2)**

### **Criminal Justice Route**

- 7.1 For those young people with an allegation of sexually harmful behaviour against them and who have admitted the offence the investigating police officer in consultation with the CPS will inform the young person and their parents/carers that the young person is to be bailed for 28 working days, to allow for an AIM 2 assessment to be undertaken.
- 7.2 Leaflets will be available in police stations, for the young person and their parents/carers, which will explain the assessment process in more detail and help to ensure that consistent messages are given. The Youth Offending Service will also hold these leaflets for distribution.
- 7.3 The Police officer will then contact the Youth Offending Service with the young person's details, which will trigger the AIM initial assessment process
- 7.4 In these cases the Youth Offending Service worker will take lead responsibility for the assessment. They will contact CYPS to identify a co-worker with whom to undertake the initial AIM assessment. Where there has been previous Social Care, Specialist Voluntary Sector or Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) involvement with the young person, the worker from the appropriate service may be invited to co-work the assessment if they have received AIM Training. This is in line with best practice and will ensure that both the criminal justice and child protection areas have been adequately addressed.
- 7.5 Youth Offending Service SSABS Manager will arrange an AIM multi-disciplinary meeting, which will be held on completion of the assessment report. This meeting will be chaired by the Safeguarding Manager in the area in which the young person resides.
- 7.6 The report will make a recommendation to the Police/Crown Prosecution Service regarding disposal for the young person. However, having fully considered the assessment team's recommendation and any other relevant information which has been collated regarding mitigating and aggravating factors, the Police/Crown Prosecution Service maintain the right to make a final decision.
- 7.7 In all cases it is important that an AIM2 assessment is carried out. The young person and their parents/carers will be asked by the assessors to participate in this process. If consent is not given, but concern remains, an assessment can still be undertaken drawing on existing information.

- 7.8 For those young people who are charged, the assessment will be triggered by their admission of guilt or by them having been found guilty in court. At this point a request for an adjournment should be made in order to carry out the initial assessment, which will inform the pre-sentence report.
- 7.9 In those cases where a young person commits a further offence whilst on bail, their bail status will be reviewed.

### **Child Protection/Children in Need Route**

- 7.10 In all cases where a child or young person who has allegedly displayed sexually harmful behaviour comes to the attention of CYPS they will take lead responsibility and hold a Strategy Discussion to which the Police will be invited, under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 prior to an Achieving Best Evidence interview and/or a PACE (Police and Criminal Evidence Act) interview. If these interviews do not take place, the reason(s) why should be clearly recorded.
- 7.11 In all cases where it is confirmed that an incident has taken place the AIM2 assessment should proceed. The SSABS Manager should be contacted in the first instance on 01284 352378 to identify workers to undertake the assessment; where the young person is under 10 years of age this will be from CYPS. In cases where the young person is over 10 years of age, CYPS should contact the Youth Offending Service to identify a co-worker with whom to undertake the initial AIM assessment. Where there has been previous Social Care, Voluntary Sector or CAMHS involvement with the child or young person, the worker from the appropriate service will be invited to co-work the assessment. This is in line with best practice and will ensure that both the criminal justice and child protection areas have been adequately addressed.
- 7.12 In all cases it is important that an AIM2 assessment is carried out. The child or young person and their parents/carers will be asked by the assessors to participate in this process. If consent is not given but concerns remain, an assessment can still be undertaken drawing on existing information.
- 7.13 The safeguarding manager will contact the SSABS Manager to arrange an AIM multi-disciplinary meeting, which will be held on completion of the assessment report.
- 7.14 At this point a decision will be made regarding the need for a child protection case conference in respect of both the victim and/or the young person who has displayed sexually harmful behaviour.
- 7.15 AIM multi agency meetings should, where appropriate, co-ordinate with other meetings that the family is attending, such as Looked After Children Reviews, Child Protection Conferences, Child Protection Review Conferences and Strategy Meetings.

## 8. Roles and Tasks

- 8.1 If a Youth Offending Service worker acts as the appropriate adult in the PACE interview of the young person, it is not appropriate for that worker to subsequently undertake the AIM initial assessment.
- 8.2 In those situations where there is an immediate decision to charge the young person, the Youth Offending Service worker who undertakes the initial AIM initial assessment will, if appropriate, complete any subsequent report(s).
- 8.3 If there is an identified Social Worker for the victim, they should not be directly involved in the assessment of the child or young person who has been sexually harmful.
- 8.4 In those cases where the child/young person and/or their families may have a different first language from the assessors, where there are mental health issues, learning disabilities or physical health issues, appropriate arrangements must be made to ensure equality of access to service provision.
- 8.5 The assessors are required to contact the relevant person in the school which the child/young person attends and inform them of the situation as well as including any information/opinions the school may hold in respect of the child/young person/family within the body of the assessment report.

## 9 Therapeutic Treatment

- 9.1 The AIM2 (Assessment Intervention Moving on) intervention model provides three comprehensive assessment and intervention guides for staff working with young people who exhibit sexually harmful behaviours.
  - Comprehensive Assessment and Treatment Manual for Young People who sexually abuse others by Bobbie Print, Dave O' Callaghan and Jeremy Quayle
  - Comprehensive Assessment and Treatment guide for Families of young people who Sexually abuse others by Tony Morrison and Lisa Wilkinson
  - Comprehensive Assessment and Intervention Guide for Children under 10 years with Problematic Sexual behaviour and their families by Lisa Wilkinson.

- 9.2 Practitioners using these materials need to be properly supported by their agencies. This includes ensuring the practitioner;
- Has been trained in the use of the AIM2 Assessment framework
  - Receives regular and knowledgeable supervision/consultation on this area of work
  - Undertakes this work within an organisational framework of policy and practice guidance which is based on a multi-disciplinary approach
  - Brings a commitment to holistic and developmental working with young people with sexually problematic behaviours
  - Operates as part of a co-working team and does not work in isolation
  - Takes responsibility for seeking appropriate support if/when the work causes emotional stress or impact
- 9.3 Intervention should be based on a holistic perspective, which aims to reduce risk whilst working to improve strengths. In each case the young person's environment cultural and familial influences will need to be explored as well as their developmental history and the details of the offence/behaviour.
- 9.4 The programme should include healthy sexuality, what constitutes abusive behaviour, what the law is regarding issues of consent, the consequences of sexual abuse, managing risk, managing anger, and communicating and relationships with others.
- 9.5 It is important to include sessions on the young person's own experiences of abuse, as many perpetrators are also victims of sexual, physical or emotional abuse.
- 9.6 When young people enter treatment for a sexual behaviour problem it is important to talk about the problematic sexual behaviours from the first session and include this in a therapeutic contract.
- 9.7 The safety of potential victims is paramount, therefore the first goal of intervention must be to decrease the problematic behaviours by identifying and discussing the abuse and sexual behaviour patterns of the young person.
- 9.8 The practitioner can then move on to exploring the support systems that will help the young person to remain safe and prevent further offending by increasing their ability to meet their needs in socially appropriate ways.
- 9.9 The length of time needed for therapeutic work will vary according to the offences and the period of time the young person has been behaving in a sexually abusive way. This can range from a few weeks to several years; it is important that arrangements are flexible as risk factors are liable to change and what seems at the commencement of intervention to be straightforward may turn out to be far more complex and involve levels of planning and premeditation that was not previously envisaged.
- 9.10 It is important that managers and supervisors of the practitioners engaged in this work take these factors into account.

## 10. Multi-Disciplinary Meetings

- 10.1 Following the assessment, an AIM multi-disciplinary meeting will take place, organised by the SSABS Manager and the Area safeguarding manager, in all cases where a child or young person has displayed sexually harmful behaviour.
- 10.2 This meeting will be chaired by the Area Safeguarding Manager.
- 10.3 Parents/carers and the child or young person will be invited to attend the meeting and will only be excluded in exceptional circumstances.
- 10.4 The meeting should be attended by the assessors and any other relevant professionals involved with the child/young person and their family.
- 10.5 Any additional written reports by relevant professionals should be submitted before the meeting to the Safeguarding Manager. If an identified agency is unable to attend, they should receive minutes of the meeting.
- 10.6 The meeting should produce a shared multi-disciplinary plan, which addresses:
- Child Protection concerns for the young person
  - The safety of potential victims both adults and children
  - Risk management at home, in school and in the wider community
  - Immediate living arrangements for the young person
  - School attendance and related education issues
  - Individual health needs
  - Support for the young person and their family
  - The needs of the young person
  - Relevant victim issues
  - Intervention/treatment issues/identification
  - Outlining roles, tasks and expectations for different professionals/agencies
  - Any need for further assessment
  - Review date

## 11. Management

- 11.1 The assessment process will be supervised and supported by the lead agency manager/supervisor and the agencies' Quality Assurance procedures should be followed before signing off the report.
- 11.2 In the event of disagreement about the recommendation, a discussion with the assessors' line managers, and the SSABS Coordinator should take place.

## **12. Complaints Procedure**

- 12.1 If a complaint is lodged against a specific worker/assessor or their agency, complaints procedures should be followed.
- 12.2 If a complaint is lodged regarding the assessment process, the agency will examine the complaint and consult with the SSABS Manager.

## Appendix 1

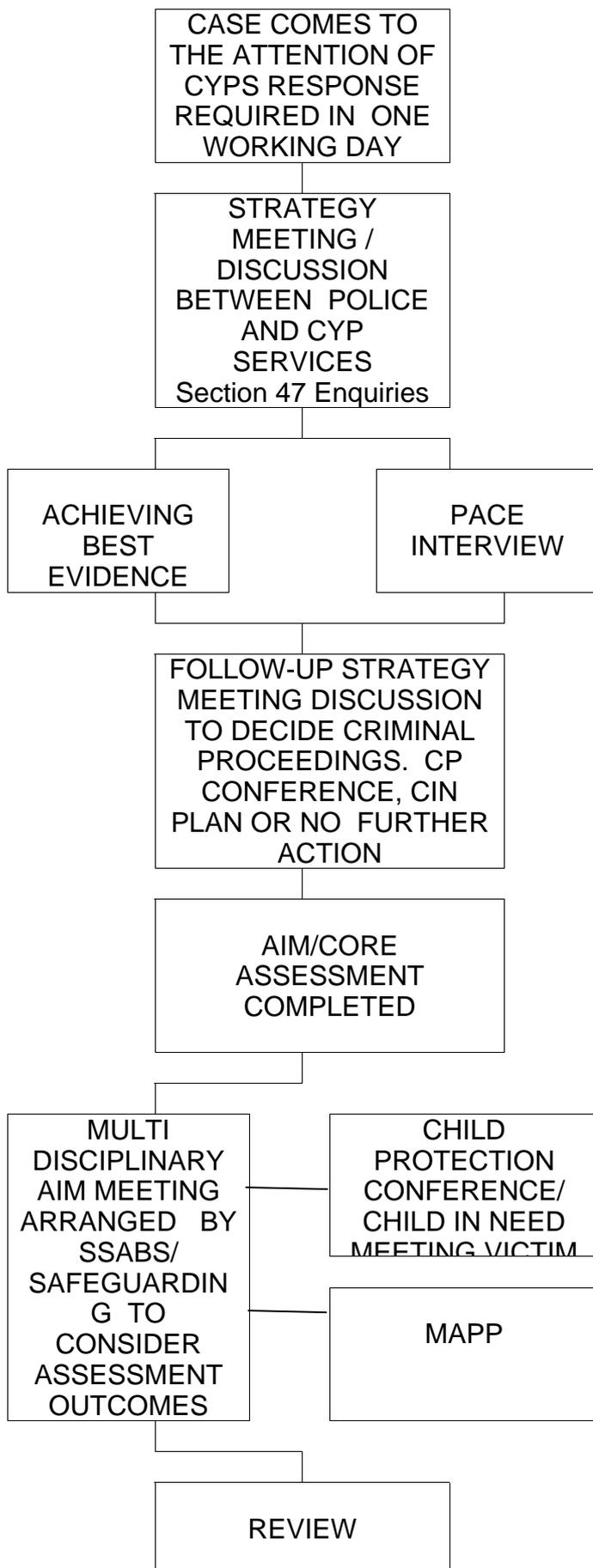
### 10 Steps to Assessment

In summary, wherever possible the assessors will adhere to the following 10 Steps of assessment:

1. The lead agency should contact the SSABS Manager to identify the assessors, the consultant, and a date for the completion of the report. The subsequent multi-disciplinary meeting for discussion of the report should be arranged in consultation with the area Safeguarding manager
2. The assessors should watch the DVD of the memorandum interview or read the victim statement.
3. Listen to any account given by the young person regarding their behaviour.
4. Read files and collate any information held by other professionals e.g. schools, social work reports
5. Use the AIM 2 assessment model to identify at this stage what is known/not known. (re: 4 domains)
6. Plan the interview with the young person and the parents/carers. Aim to fill in missing information and engage them in a process that prepares them for a helping service to be received.
7. Interview the young person.
8. Interview the parents/carers.
9. Use the assessment framework to draw conclusions around the young person's risk, strengths, needs, capacity to change and the degree of support parents/carers can provide.
10. Take the completed report to the multi-disciplinary meeting chaired by the Safeguarding Manager where roles, tasks and resources can be identified and agreed. Set a review date.

## Appendix 2

### Child Protection / Child in Need Route



### Criminal Justice Route

