

# Workshop: **Safety planning in education**

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

19 June 2024

# What we will cover in this session

The context for schools with regards to harassment and abuse between pupils

To introduce *Safety planning in education – A guide for professionals supporting children following incidents of harmful sexual behaviour*

To consider some quick-fire case examples, influencing factors and characteristics

To consider the additional needs and vulnerabilities for some children

# Looking after yourself

Sexual abuse can be difficult to think about and talk about. Thinking about it and talking about it will affect us all in **different ways**, at **different times**.

It is important that we...

- Be aware of the feelings and experiences of other delegates
- Be kind to ourselves (personally and professionally)
- Respect each other's learning journey

*School and college staff are particularly important, as they are in a position to identify concerns early, provide help for children, promote children's welfare and prevent concerns from escalating*

**Keeping children safe in education (2023)**

# More than one in ten children has been sexually abused by the age of 16



... or approximately 3  
children in every Year 11  
class

# The idea within wider context

## Idea

Emerged through our conversations with social workers and Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs).

## Momentum

- Me too
- Everyone's invited
- Increased media interest
- Ofsted & Estyn thematic reviews (2021)
- Education response to recommendations
- Anxiety, from education practitioners, that they do not have the skills to deal with this issue

Friday, 16 Sep 2022

Also see  
**FEWEEK**

**SCHOOLS WEEK**

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News

**A tenth of England's schools and colleges named on Everyone's Invited website**

Samantha Booth  
© 10 Jun 2021, 10:40  
More from this author

See discussion

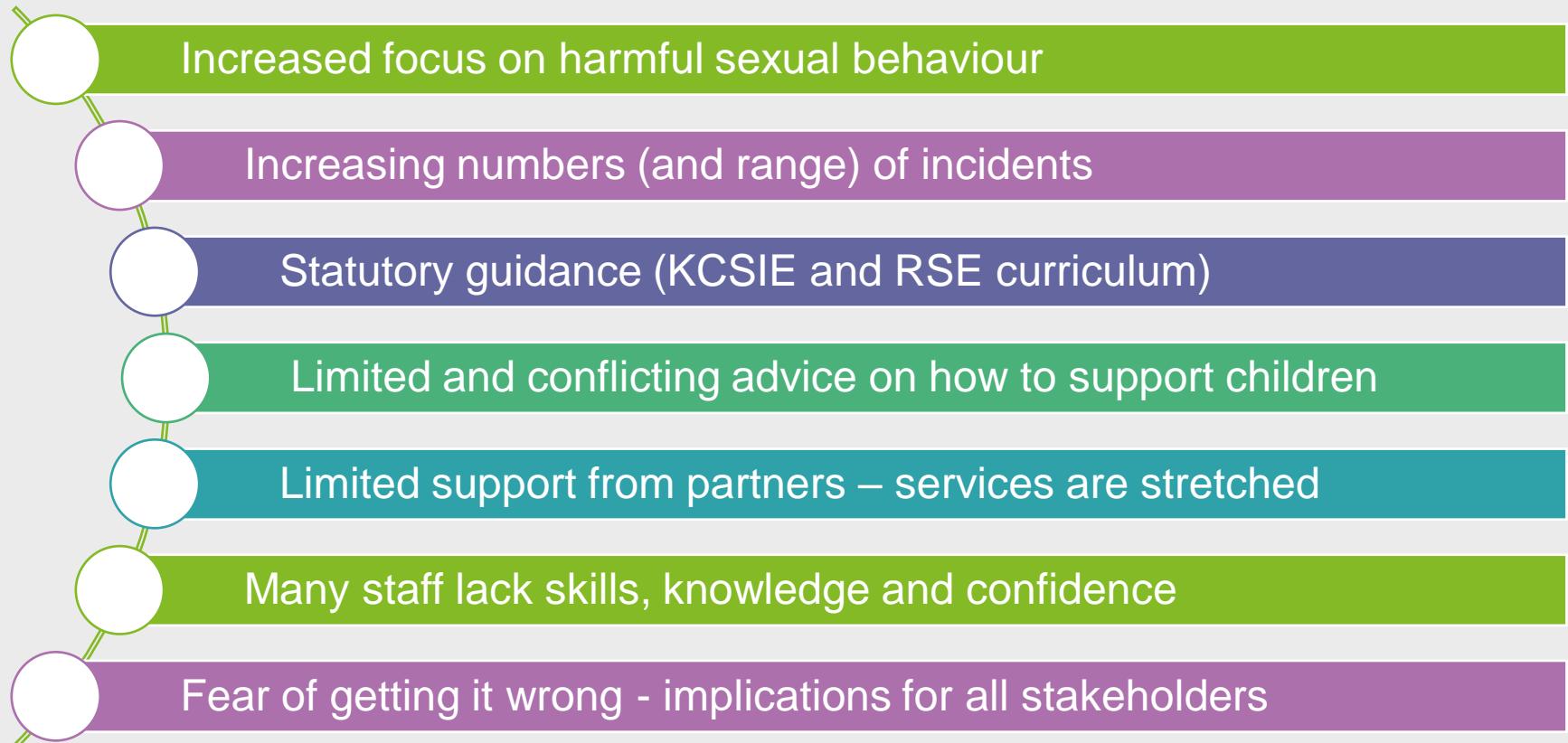
# Ofsted: Review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges (2021)

**% of girls and boys who said these things happen 'a lot' or 'sometimes'**

	Boys	Girls	Children
Unwanted touching	24	64	44
Feeling pressured to do sexual things they did not want to	27	68	47
Sexual assault of any kind	38	79	58
Unwanted or inappropriate sexual comments	55	80	55
Rumours about sexual activity	53	81	67
Sexist name calling	74	92	83

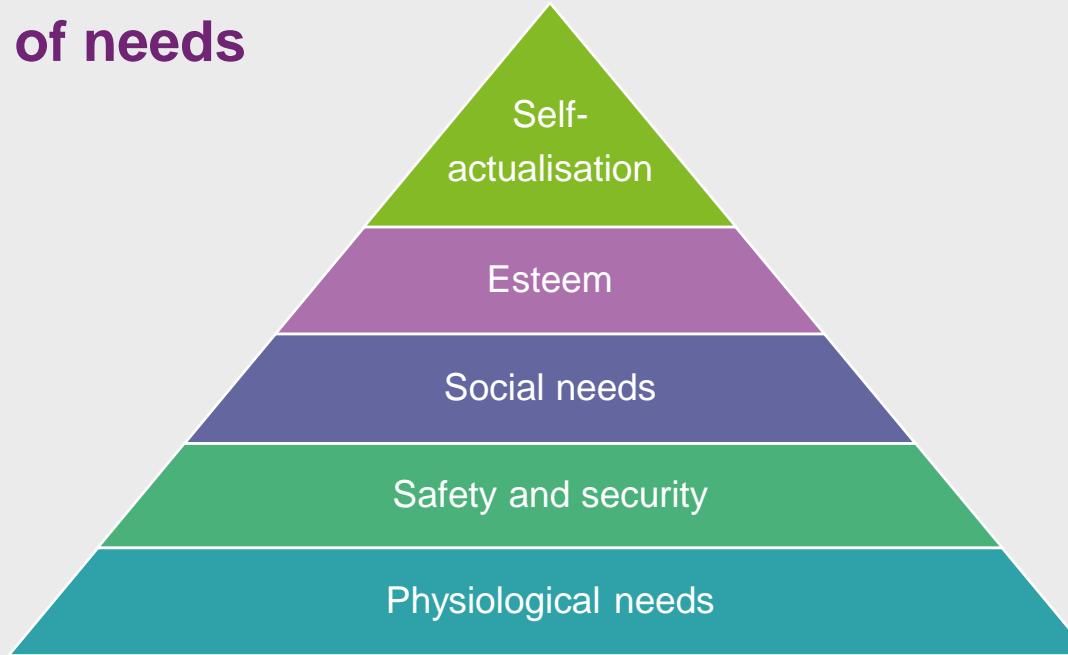
# Challenges for schools

# The challenges for schools

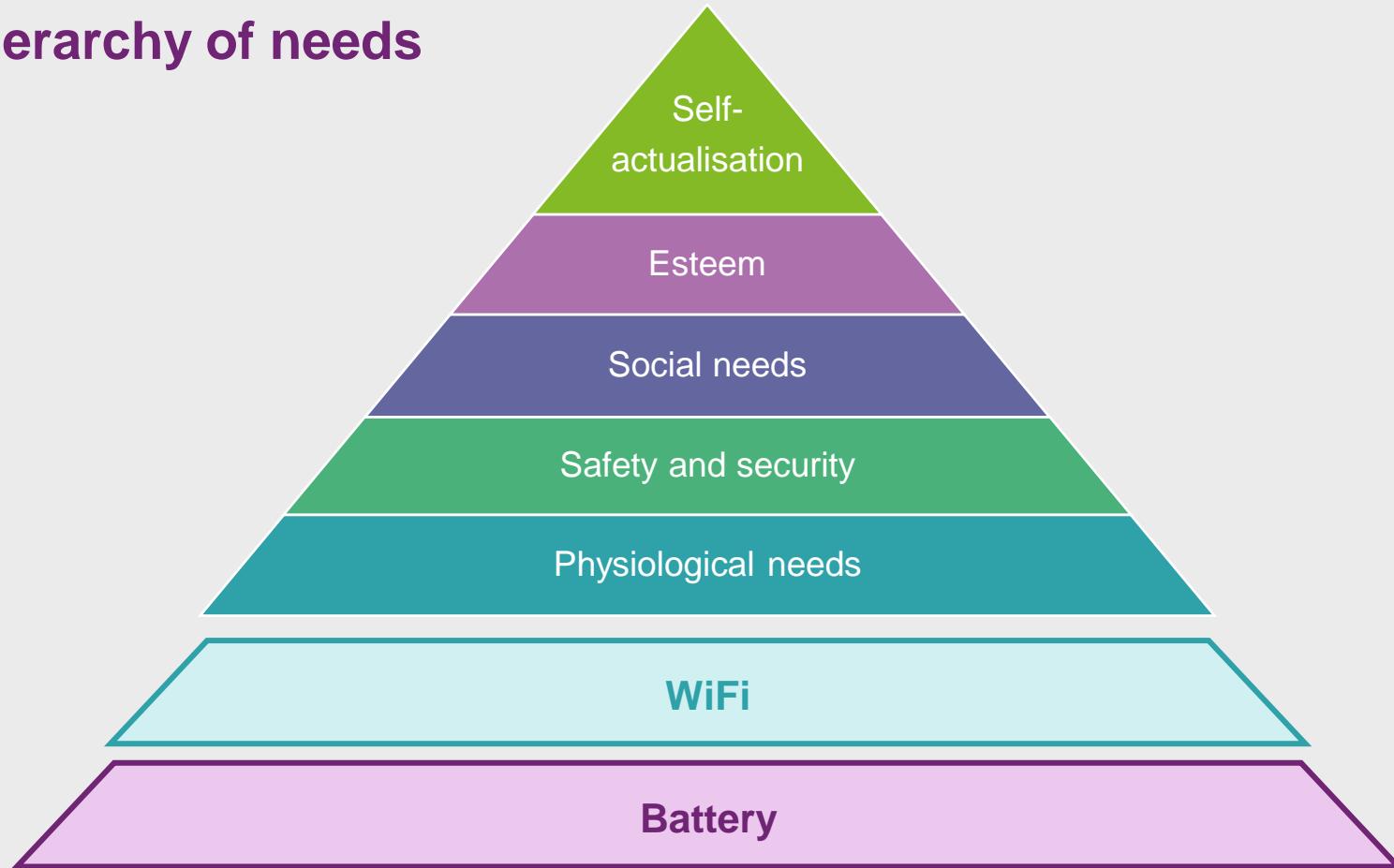


- Increased focus on harmful sexual behaviour
- Increasing numbers (and range) of incidents
- Statutory guidance (KCSIE and RSE curriculum)
- Limited and conflicting advice on how to support children
- Limited support from partners – services are stretched
- Many staff lack skills, knowledge and confidence
- Fear of getting it wrong - implications for all stakeholders

# Hierarchy of needs



# Hierarchy of needs



**“Given the changing context in which children and young people use social media – with Wi-Fi and mobile data now enabling internet access away from home and adult supervision – it is a challenge to determine what are developmentally ‘normal’ as opposed to ‘problematic’ online behaviours.”**

Key messages from research on harmful sexual behaviour in online contexts, CSA Centre

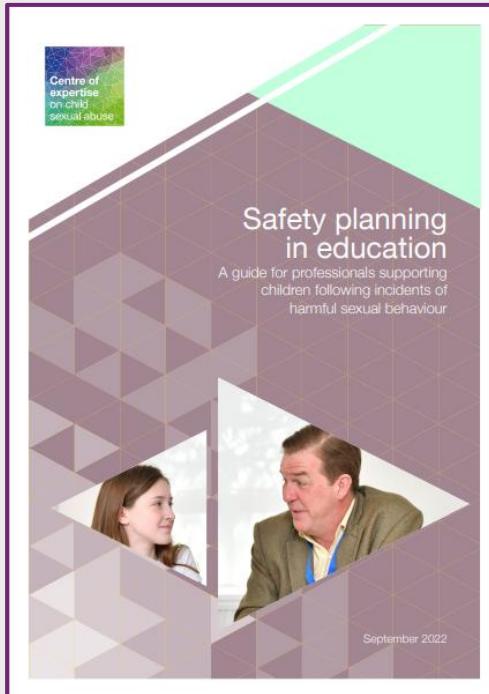
# Children's development can be influenced by technology

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Mimicking	Mimicking how adults use mobile devices
Engaging	Engaging appropriately with friends and family on devices
Entertaining	Using devices to entertain and distract themselves and others
Learning	Using devices to learn
Copying	Copying content they view – singing, dancing, games.

# Safety planning in education:

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



Practical support for those in education settings to respond to children's needs and safety when incidents of harmful sexual behaviour occur.

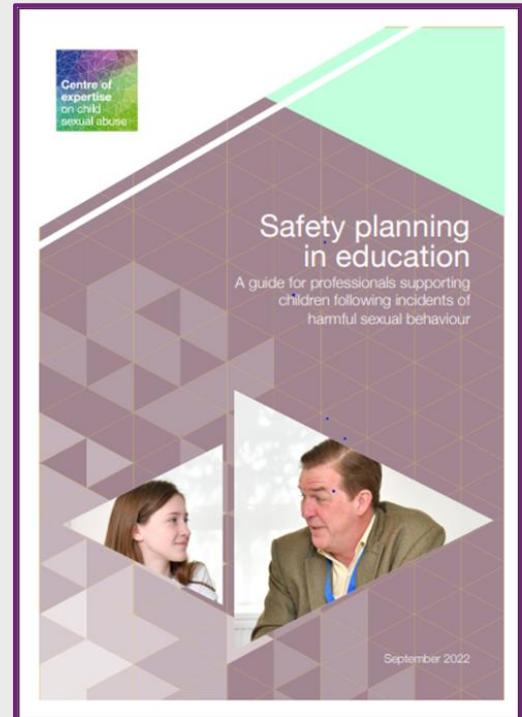
It is split into two:

**Part A** looks at the key actions for a school when an incident of harmful sexual behaviour has occurred, including a safety plan template for recording and reviewing arrangements.

**Part B** focusses on broader practical advice such as how to communicate with children, and their parents, and an appendix with useful links and resources.

# Helping professionals identify what needs to be done

- 1 Consider the nature and severity of the behaviour
- 2 Speak with the children involved and their parents/carers
- 3 Manage communications about the incident, within & beyond the setting
- 4 Consider ongoing risks and potential responses
- 5 Hold a safety planning meeting for each child



**Harmful sexual behaviour:** “Sexual behaviours expressed by children and young people under the age of 18 years old that are developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful towards self or others, or be abusive towards another child, young person or adult.”

Hackett 2014

# What is harmful sexual behaviour?

Developmentally typical

Problematic

Harmful

Normal

Inappropriate

Problematic

Abusive

Violent

# Where does it come from?

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## Pathways to harmful sexual behaviour

Attachment difficulties

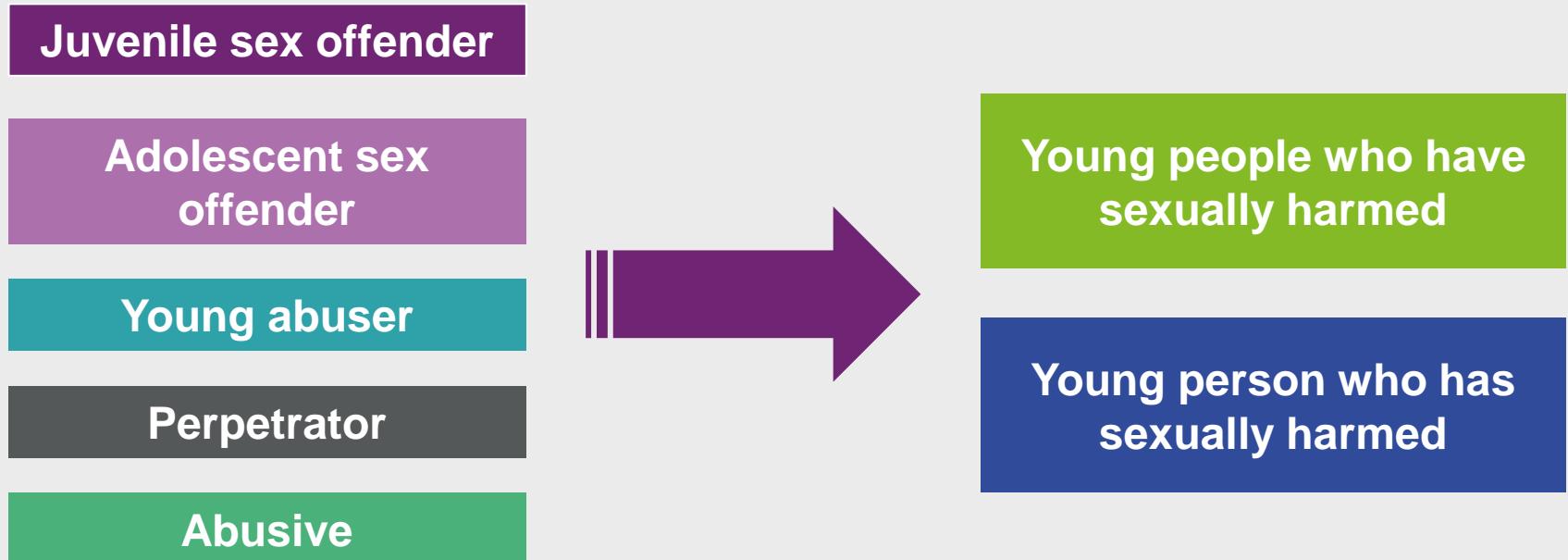
Trauma and abuse

Distorted sexual scripts

Emotional dysregulation

Cognitive distortions & anti-social  
beliefs

# Thinking about terminology



# Helping professionals understand how to help all children

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Understanding sexual behaviour

Speaking with the children, gaining their views to inform next steps

Speaking with parents, managing expectations and conflict

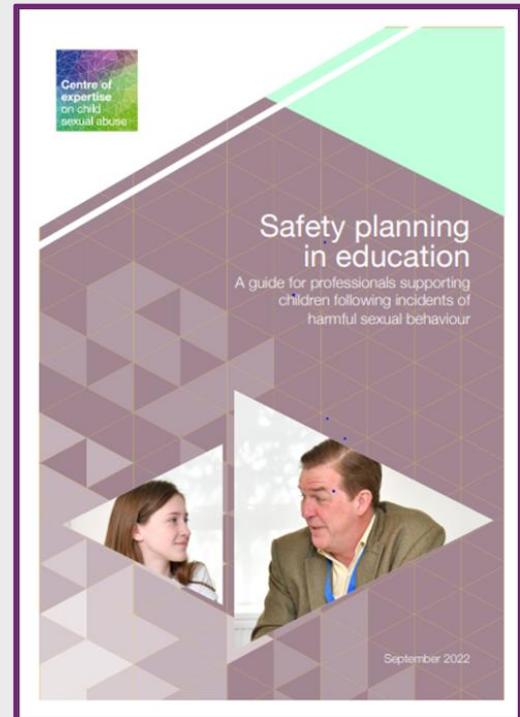
Managing communications about the incident, within & beyond the setting

Assessing the risk of further harm & managing contact between the children

Including safety arrangements in the plan & when to phase these out

Managing incidents alongside a police investigation

Supporting children with special educational needs & disabilities



# Thinking about thresholds

Contextual factors to consider when thinking about behaviours

Age

Learning need

Patterns of behaviour

In an existing relationship

Number of other children involved

**And situational factors:**

Risky times

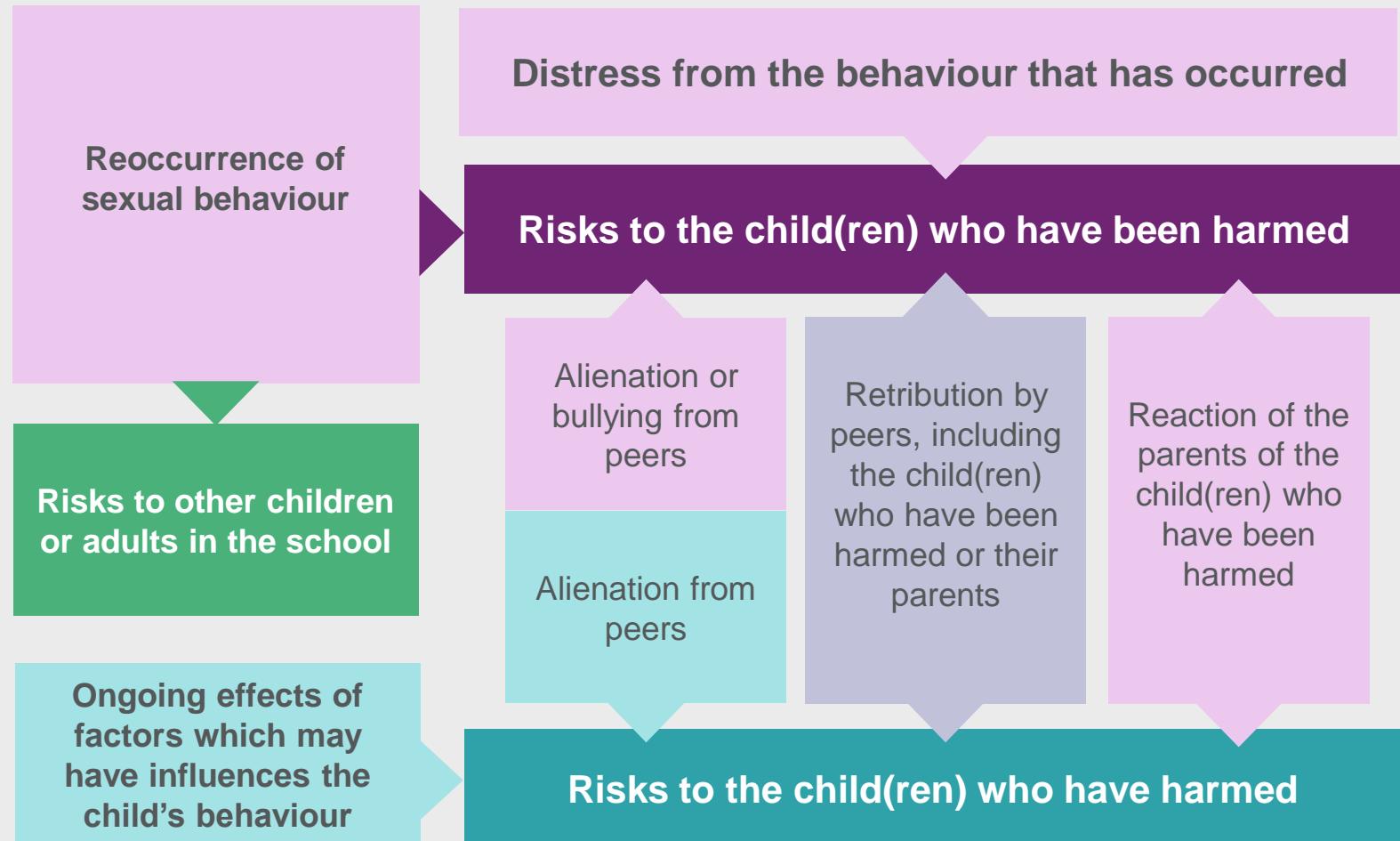
Risky places

# What might be the ongoing risks?

Before holding safety planning meetings for each of the children involved and their parents, **think about the issues that will need to be addressed.**

Consider the **risks in and around** the school environment to both/all the children involved, and to others.





# The safety planning template

Identified risk or concern	Actions required	Responsibility	Date for review	Additional information
----------------------------	------------------	----------------	-----------------	------------------------

**Contact between the children**

**Other arrangements in school**

**Other arrangements outside school**

# Some quick-fire case examples

# Using the continuum

**Ben is 6 years old – at school, during story time, he frequently sits on the mat with his hands down his pants.**



**Normal**  
**Inappropriate**  
**Problematic**  
**Abusive**  
**Violent**

# Using the continuum

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**Ben is 9 years old – he simulates sex with other pupils in his class, he uses sexualised language that is not congruent with his age.**



**Normal**  
**Inappropriate**  
**Problematic**  
**Abusive**  
**Violent**

# Using the continuum

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Ben is 13 years old – he approaches a group of girls on the playground, he has an erection and tries to push himself onto one of them. They all laugh.



Normal  
Inappropriate  
Problematic  
Abusive  
Violent

# Using the continuum

29

**Ben is 15 years old – he frequently excuses himself from class, enters the girls toilets and masturbates in a cubical.**



**Normal**  
**Inappropriate**  
**Problematic**  
**Abusive**  
**Violent**

# Using the continuum

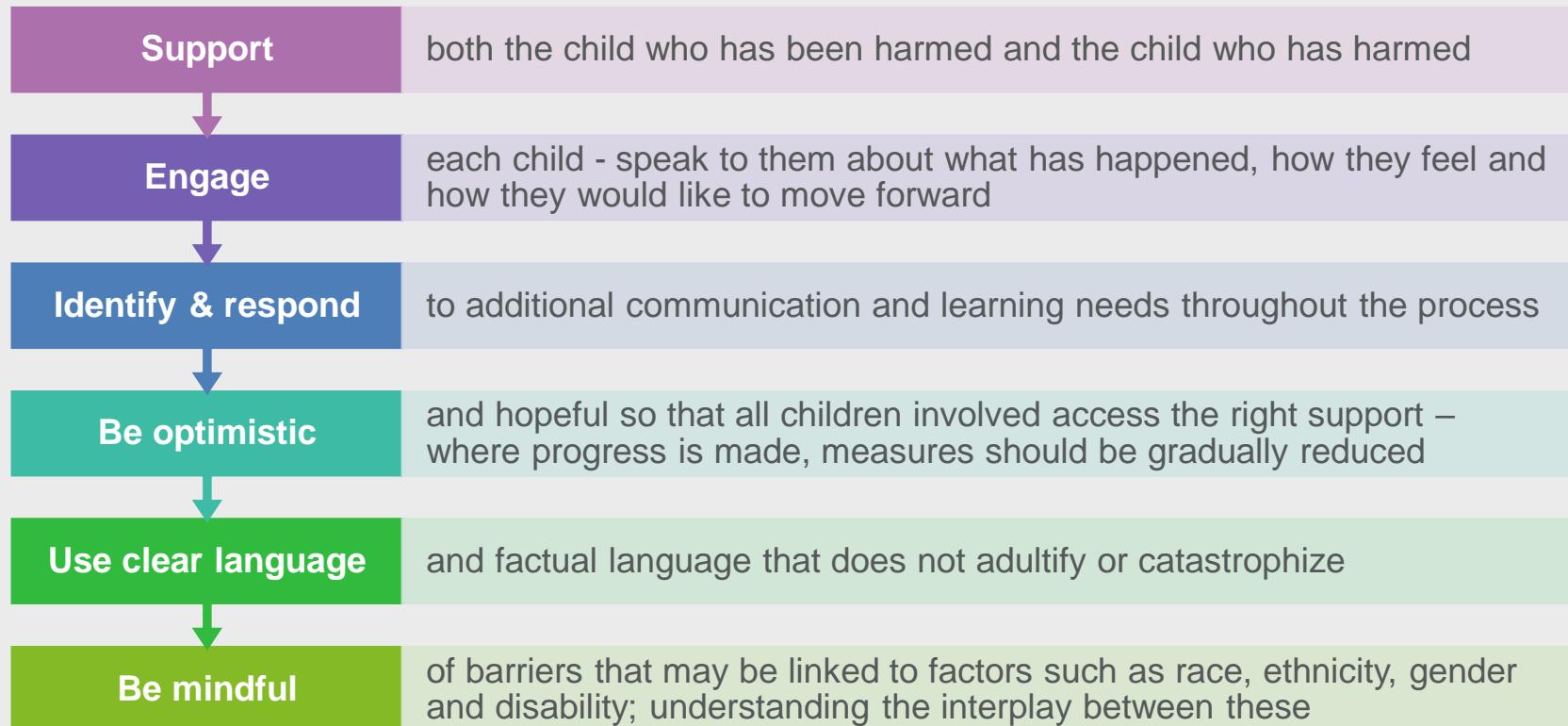
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**Ben is 15 years old – he notices a girl on her own in a classroom, he goes in and exposes himself to her. He stops her from leaving, this has happened before with the same girl.**



**Normal**  
**Inappropriate**  
**Problematic**  
**Abusive**  
**Violent**

# To help professionals to confidently:



**Contact between the children**

**Other arrangements in school**

**Other arrangements outside school**

## Arrangements to consider including in the safety plan.

- At the beginning of the school day. Meet, greet, transport.
- During the school day. Safe spaces, opt outs, transitions.
- When children continue to share the learning space.
- When children are not sharing the learning space.
- At less structured times. Lunch, breaks, clubs, supervision.
- Curriculum content, visits & other learning events.
- Mobile devices & social media. Supporting parents & carers.

# The safety planning template

Identified risk or concern	Actions required	Responsibility	Date for review	Additional information
----------------------------	------------------	----------------	-----------------	------------------------

**Contact between the children**

**Other arrangements in school**

**Other arrangements outside school**

### **Speak to the child(ren) who have been harmed**

Record their account, offer reassurance that what happened was not their fault. Tell them you will also need to speak to other witnesses, if there are any. Ask them whether anything can be done immediately to support them (e.g. the company of a friend, or quiet time away from their peers). Gain their views about next steps.

### **Speak to any witnesses**

Record their account, reminding them to maintain discretion – this includes not speaking to others, even if they are encouraged to do so, and not sharing information via social media. Advise them what to do if others try to elicit information, or if they become aware of any unhelpful social media communication.

### **Speak to the parents of the child(ren) who have been harmed**

Reassure them about how the school is investigating/responding. If appropriate, agree alternative arrangements for their child to get home.

### **Speak to the child(ren) who have harmed**

Record their account of what has happened. Tell them what you need to do next. This may mean keeping them away from their peers or allocating them to another class.

### **Speak to any witnesses**

Record their account, reminding them to maintain discretion – this includes not speaking to others, even if they are encouraged to do so, and not sharing information via social media. Advise them what to do if others try to elicit information, or if they become aware of any unhelpful social media communication.

### **Speak to the parents of the child(ren) who have harmed**

Reassure them about how the school is investigating/responding. If appropriate, agree alternative arrangements for their child to get home.

# Children with additional needs

# Considerations for Ben's additional learning needs

Thinking about Ben as a young person with additional needs

- 1. What factors might be influencing his behaviour?**
- 2. How might these factors be addressed in the safety plan?**

# Thinking about Ben in the context of his additional needs

Some of these factors may be relevant to the safety plan response:

- Not meeting **expected developmental expectations** in line with peers
- More **comfortable** in the company of **younger children**
- **Disinhibited behaviours** & inappropriate touching
- A lack of awareness of **appropriate behaviour**, e.g. how to show affection to others
- Difficulties in **establishing and maintaining friendships** – will take risks and /or be encouraged by others
- Appropriate **Relationship & Sex Education** (RSE)
- **Expectations of adults** – high levels of supervision / relationships unlikely
- Influence of **pornography**
- Feelings of **isolation and loneliness**

# Children and young people with learning disabilities

Over-representation of young people with **learning disabilities** who exhibit harmful sexual behaviour.

Behaviour appears more **repetitive** and habitual in terms of victim choice, location and frequency



# Themes from research, and insights from children and young people

- Reminding children about the law when they report misuse of their images is unhelpful.
- Children and young people want us to respond proportionately to incidents of harmful sexual behaviour. What does the term **zero tolerance** mean and how do you communicate:
  - To children in your setting
  - To your colleagues
  - To your parents, carers and other stakeholders
- The impact of off and on-line harms is similar.
- Children exploring their gender are more likely to go online to find information, this can place them at greater risk of harm.
- Pornography is having a significant impact in terms of conditioning the attitudes and behaviours of some young people.

# Whole school approach

Does the school's culture & ethos support positive relationships between all members of the school community. – Leadership, management & governance

Is the school's engagement with pupils – underpinned by an understanding of child sexual abuse and trauma? – Staff development & resources

Are school staff equipped to take appropriate action to prevent, identify and respond to child sexual abuse. – Staff development – signs and indicators

How consistent is the school response to incidents of child sexual abuse – is it prompt, fair and consistent?

How well connected is the school with their community networks – contextual safeguarding

How are incidents recorded - is data analysed to inform practice?

The effectiveness of the curriculum to promote safe and healthy relationships. – Pupil engagement

# Reflection points

# Reflection points throughout the resource

## Reflection point

Many children who display harmful sexual behaviour have experiences of abuse (including physical or sexual abuse, or living in a household where there is domestic abuse) or other difficulties in their lives. It is important to consider what experiences the child may have had, and how these may have contributed to their behaviour.

If you have concerns that the child may be experiencing harm, you should make a referral to children's social care.

# Reflection points throughout the resource

## Reflection point

It may be helpful to pause briefly and think about **influences** on your understanding of the child's sexual behaviour. Might your understanding be different if the child were a different sex or age, for example, or if their ethnicity were the same as or different from yours?

## Reflection point

How do you feel about having conversations about harmful sexual behaviour? Is there anything you might find difficult? Chapter 1 of our **Communicating with Children Guide**  contains advice to help you.

# An overview of the safety planning process

## Before the meeting

- Speak to the children involved, gain views about next steps, speak to witnesses
- Speak to parents, reassure them the school is investigating/responding
- Consider the nature and severity of the behaviour (think about additional risk and protective factors)

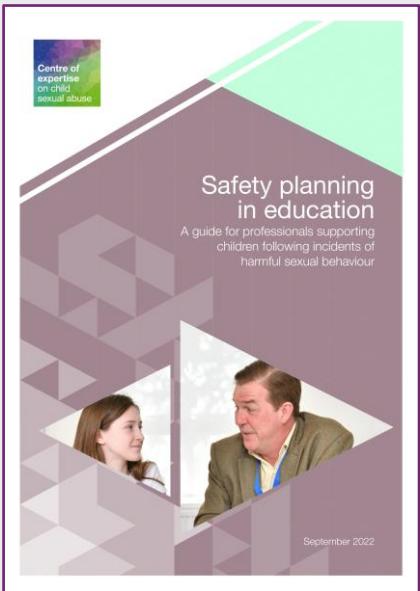
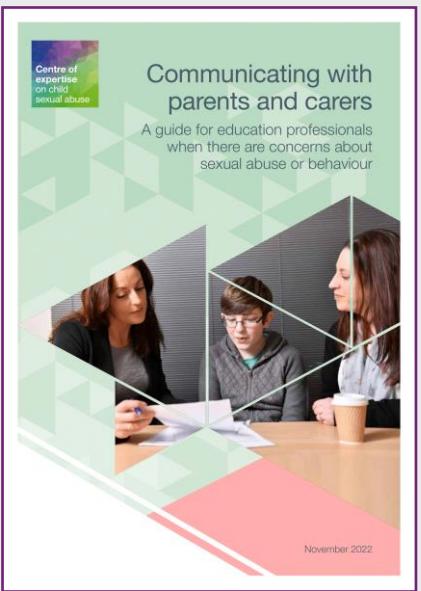
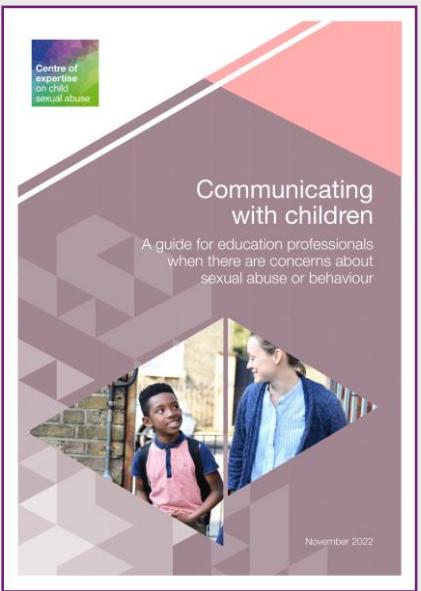
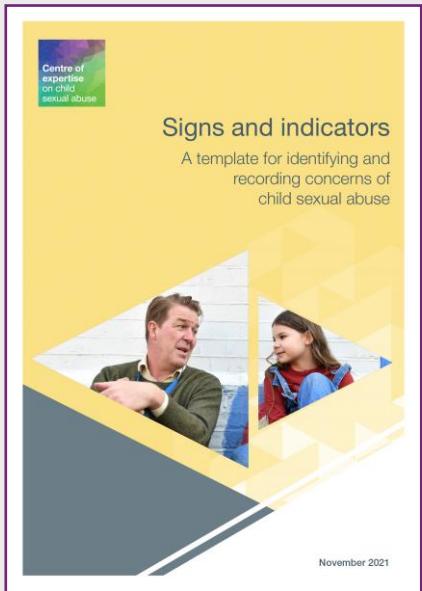
## During the meeting

- Think about the needs of all participants and how will they be met?
- Check everyone's understanding about next steps – repeat/break down information
- Agree actions (Who, what, when, how?)

## After the meeting

- Regularly review the safety plan with key parties
- Ensure everyone's views about progress have been gathered
- Think about how you will safely scale back and eventually close the plan

# Resources for education professionals



All resources are free to download on our site. With 12 short videos covering key themes:  
<http://www.csacentre.org.uk/knowledge-in-practice/practice-improvement/education-resources/>

# Key messages from research on children and young people who display harmful sexual behaviour

The vast majority of adolescents who display such behaviour are male, but it is rare for research or practice to focus on the significance of gender.

Most pre-adolescent children displaying harmful sexual behaviour have themselves been sexually abused or experienced other kinds of trauma or neglect.

There may sometimes be a link between viewing online pornography and subsequent harmful sexual behaviours.

Children and young people with learning disabilities are more vulnerable both to being sexual abused and to displaying inappropriate or problematic sexual behaviour

Most children and young people who display harmful sexual behaviour do not go on to sexually offend as adults.

# Any questions or feedback?

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## Tell us what you think

Remember to complete our post event survey to tell us what you thought about the CSA Centre Roadshow



# Thank you!

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