

Children and Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB)

Advice for Staff

1. When information or a referral is received into Gateway which indicates that a child has acted in a sexual way - towards another child or adult or on a self-directed basis.

Consideration must to given to a number of factors:

- Gather as much detail about the sexual act/behaviour and context and reason for referral.
- Would the behaviour fall within the norm or not be expected of that age group?
- Is there a power imbalance in terms of age, size, ability and capacity to consent?
- Is there an identifiable victim, including online victims?
- Is there an immediate risk to the safety of the child or others?
- Are there other concerning factors, for example; preoccupation with sexual matters or pornography; previous concerns of a sexual nature; involvement of an adult of concern; poor parental boundaries; a sexualised home environment; domestic violence; neglect; CSE?
- Consider the referral in a gender neutral manner to ensure that the same approach is taken with males and females in assessing HSB.
- Consider making a referral to Gateway and seeking a consultation with the local specialist HSB service as a priority.

2. Defining Harmful Sexual Behaviour

“There is no single definition that adequately covers the wide range of young people who have sexual behaviour problems or for the diversity of these behaviours. ‘Sexually abusive’ behaviour is mainly used to indicate sexual behaviours that are initiated by a child or young person where there is an element of manipulation or coercion (Burton *et al.*, 1998) or where the subject of the behaviour is unable to give informed consent. By contrast, the term ‘sexually problematic’ is more often used to refer to sexual activities that may not include an element of victimisation but may interfere with the development of the child demonstrating the behaviour or which might provoke rejection, cause distress or increase the risk of victimisation of the child,” (Hackett, 2015)

The important distinction here is that while abusive behaviour is by definition also problematic, problematic behaviours are not necessarily abusive, (Hackett, 2004).

As both ‘abusive’ and ‘problematic’ sexual behaviours are developmentally inappropriate and may cause developmental damage, a useful umbrella term is ‘harmful sexual behaviours’.” (Hackett, 2015)

3. Tools and Resources which may be of assistance in consideration of the above

Hackett's (2010) A continuum of children and young people's sexual behaviours

This is a useful tool for initial determination of where a referred behaviour falls into on this continuum. Normal and Inappropriate HSB normally requires either no intervention or a short piece of educative work as do the lower level problematic behaviours. High level problematic behaviours, abusive and violent all usually require a full assessment and intervention which can be provided, where appropriate, by local HSB service.



Brooke Traffic lights: <https://www.brook.org.uk/our-work/category/sexual-behaviours-traffic-light-tool>.

This tool helps explain what is normal, concerning and harmful sexual behaviour across the age ranges of 0-18. This is not an assessment tool but a guide.

Lucy Faithfull Foundation: Stop it Now: <http://www.stopitnow.org.uk/>

This site gives advice on concerns regarding young people's sexual behaviour and how to manage this. It also includes guides for parents and the young person themselves.

The 4 Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) Services in the region can be contacted for advice at any stage on referrals received to Gateway:

Southern and Western Trusts – NSPCC Turn the Page Service
02820441690

Western Trust - Moving On Service
02871314070

Northern Trust - Making Changes Project
02894481750

Belfast and South Eastern Trusts - Aim to Change Service
02895980002
aimtochange@setrust.hscni.net

(The referral process and criteria for each service is included in Appendix One of this document.)

Child Care Centre

This provides a service for victims of sexual abuse but would be appropriate to consider for referral received in relation to children under the age of 10 as they are considered to be Sexually Reactive children – i.e. Reacting to something they have directly experienced or been exposed to. Contact Number: 02890 244903.

Regional Forensic CAMHS Service

This service provides advice and consultation on HSB cases where there are forensic and mental health issues. Contact Number: 02891854623.

4. Decision making in relation to cases involving a concern about HSB.

- Does a referral need to be made to the PSNI?

As required under the Joint Protocol Procedures or the Sexual Offences (N.I.) Order 2008.

- Does the referral raise child protection concerns?

Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People 2016 (revised August 2017)

This is an important reference document, providing the overarching policy framework for safeguarding children and young people and is a key text for all those involved in safeguarding children and young people. In particular we recommend staff to reference Chapter 7 that

addresses many new and emerging issues plus links to other key documents. The following areas are addressed within this document:

- Specific Forms of Abuse. For example Honour Based Violence, Abusive Images of Children, Forced Marriage;
- Children and Young People with increased vulnerabilities. For example Children with Disability, Private Fostering, Domestic Violence;
- Children and Young People's Behaviour. For example Peer Abuse, Self-Harm, Bullying.

- Family Support Response

Including assisting parents managing problematic behaviour and offering educative work to the young person, if the behaviour is not assessed to meet the criteria for a referral to the HSB services.

- Case closure

After consideration of all factors, the behaviours are considered to be normative and do not require any further service input.

- Safety Planning

Within the home, community, including social activities, and school and any other environment where there is a potential risk. This needs to include the supervision of the young person, parental responsibility and protects the young person from further allegations and other people from the risk of experiencing HSB. The HSB services can be contacted to assist with safety planning and their ongoing reviews, even if the case does not meet the criteria for the HSB service to become directly involved.

- Does the case meet the threshold of being harmful sexual behaviour and therefore warrants a referral to the appropriate HSB service for your Trust ?

See above for contact details.

Appendix One

NSPCC Turn the Page (HSB) Service Referral Criteria for Southern and Western Trusts:

- Service offered for children/young people aged 5-17 who have displayed problematic or harmful sexualised behaviour
- Referrals are telephone based and require UNOCINI
- Younger children - a consultation will be offered to determine the most appropriate service/input
- Aim Under 12 and Aim 3 used as Assessment Model
- Ongoing Social work involvement for duration of NSPCC case work. Social Services and NSPCC will work in partnership to ensure all child protection and safeguarding issues addressed
- Families encouraged to seek legal advice re: consent for service in respect of any criminal complaint
- If YJA involved NSPCC will work in partnership to ensure service is co-ordinated and meeting the needs of the child/young person
- Therapeutic intervention can be offered if directed by Assessment
- Service is voluntary
- A parent/carer service Safe Homes if deemed appropriate can be offered alongside therapeutic intervention

Aim To Change (ATC) Referral Criteria

Belfast and South Eastern Trusts:

Children aged 10 - 17 years old. (17 year olds will be considered on a case by case basis)

Harmful Sexual Behaviour Displayed

Ongoing Social Work Involvement for the duration of ATC assessment and intervention

Child and family have agreed to undertake the work with ATC as this occurs on a voluntary basis.

ATC involvement is subject to the stage of PSNI investigation and , in conjunction with PSNI, will be decided on a case by case basis.

Referrals for children with a Learning Disability or ADS will have to be considered on a case by case basis, depending on the severity of their condition and capacity to undertake the work with ATC

Aim To Change (ATC) Referral Process

Belfast and South Eastern Trusts:

Contact made with the service to determine if referral criteria are met

Referral Form fully completed by Referrer (SW / YJA) and forwarded by email to: AimToChange@setrust.hscni.net

ATC will liaise with PSNI, where appropriate, re. the stage of their investigation and appropriateness of ATC commencing engagement

Referral Meeting held with referrer and any other appropriate professional currently involved to complete initial case formulation

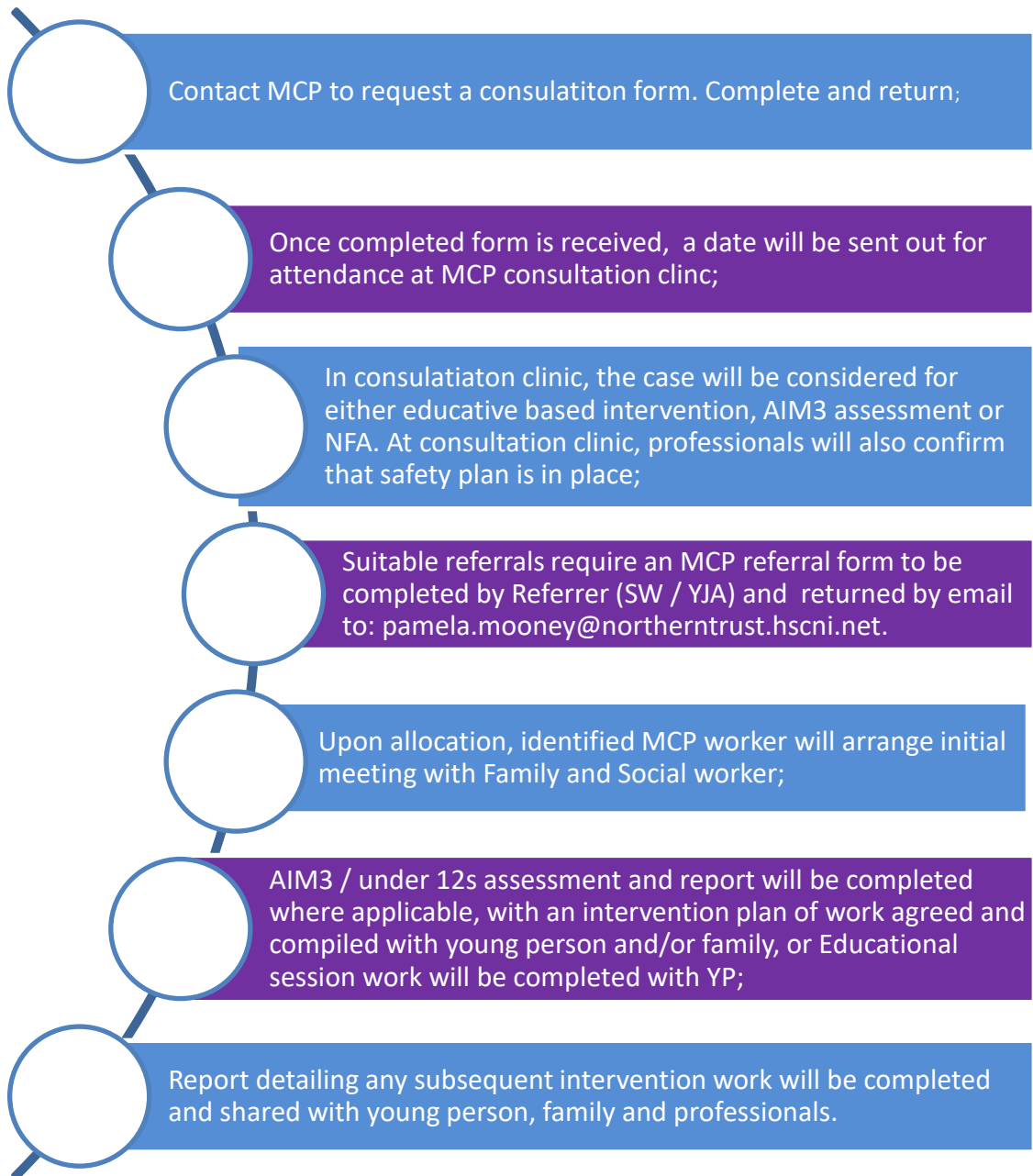
ATC Meeting held with Family and field social worker

Assessment Stage Report provided to the Family and Referrer at conclusion

Intervention Stage report provided to family and referrer at conclusion of ATC involvement and ATC will attend Court and Trust meetings and provide reports as required

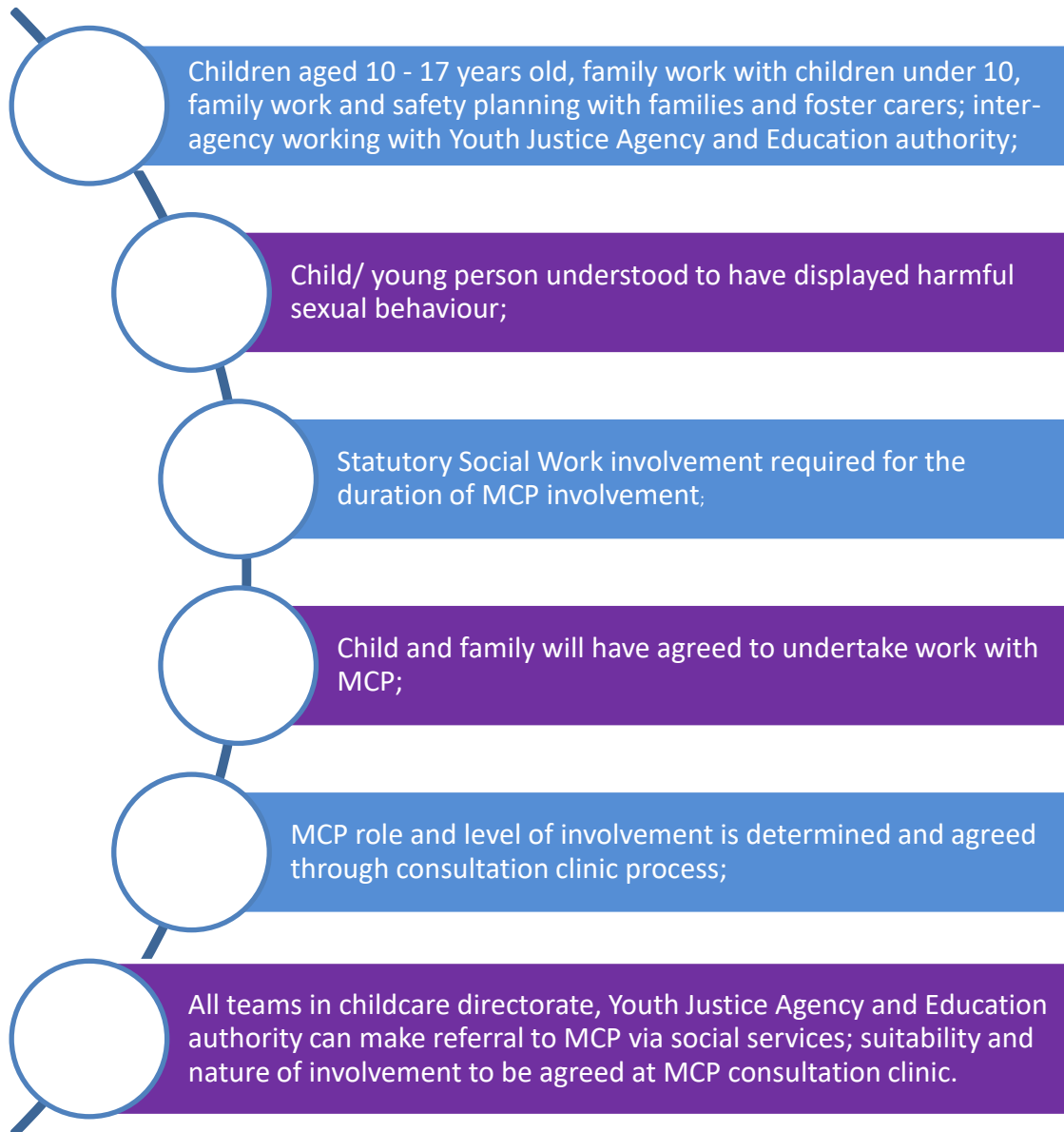
Northern Health Trust – Links Team

Making Changes Project - Referral Process



Northern Health Trust – Links Team

Making Changes Project - Referral Criteria



Moving on Therapeutic Service

Western Trust: Referral Process

Contact made with service to determine that the referral criteria are met

Referral form fully completed and forwarded by email

Liaison with PSNI re stage of their investigation and whether or not the work can proceed

Referral meeting takes place between the referrer, the field Social Worker and Moving On

Referral meeting held with young person and family/guardian

Assessment Stage Report provided to family and referrer at conclusion

Intervention Stage Report provided to family and referrer at conclusion of Moving On involvement and we will attend Trust meetings and provide reports as required

We will decide the most appropriate approach to be taken with each young person. This could include work being completed by a third party with our advice and support.

