Harmful sexual behaviour prevention toolkit

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, and support as well as practical tips to prevent harmful sexual behaviour and provide safe environments for families.

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Who are we?

We are **The Lucy Faithfull Foundation**, a child protection charity dedicated to preventing child sexual abuse. We work closely with frontline workers such as police officers, social workers and education staff to ensure that children are as safe as they can be.

We run the confidential **Stop It Now! helpline**, which is a safe space for anyone with concerns about child sexual abuse and its prevention.

We also provide a range of services for organisations, professionals and the public, including risk assessments and interventions, expert training, specialist consultancy and public education.

Our **Parents Protect website** has information and advice on how to keep children safe online and offline.

Find out why preventing harmful sexual behaviour is important to us all

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What is the challenge?

Child sexual abuse is an important public health issue, and parents, carers and families have a vital role to play in keeping children safe.

Children and young people are most likely to be at risk of sexual abuse within their family and community.[1] But not all sexual abuse is carried out by adults.

It is hard for us to think about children and young people sexually abusing other children and young people, and it isn't always easy to tell the difference between abusive and normal sexual behaviours in children. Children, particularly in younger age groups, might engage in such behaviour without knowing that it is wrong or abusive. That's why it can be more accurate to talk about harmful sexual behaviour rather than abuse.

Harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) is a term used to describe sexual actions that are outside what is safe for a young person's stage of development. It includes actions that can harm either the child or young person themselves, or another person. It can include:

- frequently and intentionally accessing age-inappropriate sexual material online
- using inappropriate language
- undertaking mutual sexual activity they are not ready for with peers
- sending and receiving illegal images
- sexual interactions where there are significant power differences, lack of consent, or with force or threats
- engaging in abusive or sexually violent sexual behaviour online or offline.

What does research tell us?

- **Under 18s are responsible for at least a third of recorded sexual offences against children and young people in the UK.[2]**
- **Boys in early adolescence, around the time puberty starts, tend to display the most harmful sexual behaviour [3,4,5] although younger children and girls do sometimes engage in these behaviours too.**
- **Girls tend to be over-represented amongst the victims of harmful sexual behaviour.[1,3,5,6]**
- **Those with learning disabilities and autism also tend to be over-represented amongst young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour.[3]**
- **Around half of young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour have experienced sexual abuse themselves.[3]**
- **The vast majority of young people do not persist with these behaviours into adulthood.[7]**

Parents and carers need to be able to consider the risks their own children and young people might pose to others, both online and in person, and to be alert to the signs of harmful sexual behaviour that children and young people display.

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Why is this an issue right now?

This is especially important during the extraordinary times of the coronavirus pandemic where many families have to isolate together in lockdown conditions. Families, both adults and children are spending more time online; this has been vital to stay connected to family, friends and loved ones, and has been positive for people's mental health. Unfortunately, there remains some risks to being in a closed environment with some family members, and also to being online, especially for children and young people.

Parents and carers might be worried about how much time their children and young people are spending online, what they are doing, and who they are connecting with. Some might be worried about older children spending a lot of time alone in their rooms or younger children engaged in more unsupervised playtime. Parents and carers might be wondering if their children and young people are completely safe, and what they can do to protect them better.

Ofcom has recently reported that online use has increased dramatically since coronavirus has forced everyone to stay at home. Adults in the UK are thought to be spending more than a quarter of their waking day online, and there has been a surge in services such Zoom as people try to stay connected, and the use of sites such as Snapchat, YouTube, Instagram and TikTok are being used by almost all older children aged 8-15.

Concerns about these platforms include children and young people accessing harmful and age-inappropriate content and receiving unwanted sexual messages. The Internet Watch Foundation have reported that they have blocked at least 8.8 million attempts by UK Internet users to access videos and images of children suffering sexual abuse during lockdown.

Since we know that a third of those who have engaged in abusive or harmful sexual behaviour are themselves under the age of 18, it is important for parents and carers to consider whether their own children and young people could be responsible for engaging in any of these behaviours either in person or online.

The government's measures to respond to the coronavirus pandemic have put increased pressures on families, especially where parents are juggling work commitments alongside their children's educational and welfare needs. This could mean that unsupervised play, both in person and online may have increased, and young people might be spending more time alone online. Parents and carers need to be mindful of the behaviours their children are engaging in, both with siblings for example, or online - whether that be inappropriate touching, or creating harmful online content, such as sending indecent messages.

By giving parents and carers the right information and support, they can be equipped to address any concerns they might have, and take positive steps to prevent harmful sexual behaviour from happening in the first place.

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Tips on how to create a safe environment for your children and young people

1 Open communication

- **Communicating openly with your children about a wide range of topics**, including healthy relationships and staying safe can start from a young age.

- **Taking some time each day to ask how your children are, whether there is anything on their mind, or anything they would like to talk about**, can help children and young people to open up and communicate better. This could be when you say good night each night or when they get home from school.

- **Children and young people need to be able to trust you enough to reach out to you when things go wrong, or if they are worried about something.** Fostering this from an early age will help your child know that you love and care for them even when they have made mistakes, and this may make it more likely that they would come to you when they are troubled.

- **Talking provides an opportunity to help your children understand what makes a safe and loving relationship, and to know what makes it unsafe and unhealthy.** If no one helps them understand the difference, they will find it difficult to develop the skills to know if they are a victim or the one causing harm.

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2 Create a safe environment and respond to concerns

- **Creating a home environment that is calm, where adult relationships are modelled in a healthy, loving way** will help teach children and young people to respect others.

- **Reducing stress and conflict in the home can create a more stable environment** where children are less likely to engage in harmful behaviours.

- **Young people need to feel like someone has their back even when things go wrong.** You can correct your child's behaviour while also showing how much you love and care for them.

- **Expect that your children will make mistakes, you can guide them back on the right path.**

- **It is important that your child knows you are always there to support them in life** if ever they find themselves worried or pressured by anyone or any situation. This can give them confidence to come to you at any time without fear of being judged.

- **When children come to you with concerns about what they may have experienced, seen or done**, it is important to help them put things right and make positive changes.

- **It is okay to seek support if you are unsure how to respond.** The Stop It Now! helpline advisors are there to support and guide you - **stopitnow.org.uk/helpline**

- **Being overly restrictive of your children's internet use or responding to concerns by banning all technology can put them off coming to you with concern in the future.** Instead, help your children by talking them through their concerns, helping them to navigate difficulties and setting realistic and healthy boundaries around their internet use.

- **Creating positive rules that the family understands and stick to can prevent harmful behaviours**, for example keeping certain doors open, requiring privacy when bathing or changing clothes, charging devices in the kitchen overnight, playing in spaces that can be observed.

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3 Providing education

- **Children and young people will naturally have questions about sex and relationships as they grow up and start to mature.** They might want to seek these answers out online, so making sure that they have access to reputable sources to find these answers is important, as well as knowing that they can talk to you. Starting these conversations off when then are young can make it easier to support your children's healthy sexual development. This toolkit points to some really helpful resources.

- **Whilst your children's knowledge of technology might be better than yours, you do know how to initiate and maintain relationships.** You can help your children to develop a healthy suspicion of others and help them understand 'red flags', for example, someone who tries to get them to break the law, do things they don't want to do, or isolate them from their friends and family.

- **You can educate yourself on understanding the dangers and risks related to child sexual abuse and harmful sexual behaviour, both online and offline.** Understanding what this is, how it happens, and knowing some of the signs and indicators can help you become more aware of the behaviours you see within your own home, and addressing them if necessary.

- **When talking to your child about these issues, it is important to include information about risks, consequences, and the law.** Using interactive resources available online to explore these issues in age appropriate ways with your children can reinforce their understanding.

See resources

4 Balancing rights and responsibilities

- **You can help your children to understand their rights and responsibilities, especially when they are online.** Encouraging them to think about how they can be kind online and reassuring them you will be there if they need any help. It is important to remember that a child is never responsible if an adult grooms and manipulates them online.

- **Respecting young people's privacy, especially as they move into adolescence whilst still supporting and encouraging them, helps them take responsibility for their own behaviours.**

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Tips on how to talk to your children and young people about sex, relationships, consent, the law and staying safe

1 Sex and relationships

- **Start talking to your children from a young age about relationships, and staying safe.**

- **Think about what messages you want to convey to your children about sex, and sexuality.**

- **Consider how you conduct your own relationships and what messages young children in your life are learning from your behaviours.** Children will take in more from actions and behaviours that they see, than from what they are told, especially if these messages are inconsistent.

- **Think about using age appropriate interactive resources that help children and young people learn** about sex, relationships, consent, the law and staying safe. There are lots of helpful resources recommended in this toolkit.

- **Children will be naturally curious about sex and relationships as they start to develop and mature, and will have questions that they might feel embarrassed to ask you as their parent or carer.** You can make sure your children know about reputable sources online where they can get accurate and up-to-date information about these issues.

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2 Pornography

- **Speak with your child about sexualised content online, including pornography, particularly as they move towards adolescence.** The reason for this is that many children and young people are exposed to this kind of content, and some may actively seek it out. This could involve talking in an age-appropriate way about what pornography is, why people look at it, what the dangers can be in looking at it, as well as how it differs from real-life relationships.

- **Use reputable resources that help young people understand what healthy sexual relationships look like.**

- **It is illegal to show pornographic material to anyone under 18**, but helping them make sense of what they may have already seen is really important.

- **Talk to your child about how they feel about online sexual content they have seen**, find out what it means to them, whether they value it or not and whether there are other ways to meet their needs.

- **Some young people turn to pornography to learn about sex, as it is so easily accessible.** Encourage them to instead visit websites to explore sex and relationships for themselves, such as **Brook**.

- **Inform yourself about what type of sexual images are illegal and explain the consequences of accessing illegal sexual material.**

- **Learn about pornography addiction.** This might be helpful if your child has been viewing pornography regularly and is saying that they don't know how to stop.

See resources

Remember to give your child privacy as they grow into an adolescent so they have the space to explore and learn about their own body and their own sexual needs.

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Tips on helping children and young people navigate the online world safely and positively

1 Online social worlds

Remember that young people's online and offline social worlds are often enmeshed and cannot be easily separated.

- **Promote the benefits that technology can bring to relationships** and recognise that this might be the primary way that young people communicate with each other, for example, through Snapchat and WhatsApp messaging.

- **There may be social pressures to engage in sexualised behaviours online within relationships which could be problematic or illegal online**, but if they were engaged in offline this would be considered normative and fine. For example, sending nude images might be considered by young people to be normal, but being in possession of or sending any nude pictures of anyone under the age of 18 is illegal. Talk about these issues with young people and make sure they are aware of the law and the consequences.

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2 Online behaviour

To prevent negative behaviours online, it is important to teach your child how to be kind online in all sorts of scenarios. Key messages for your child could include:

- **Don't join in just to fit in.**

- **What you say online can really hurt someone**, or make the person feel good.

- **Watch out for your friends**, and stand up for them online just like you would offline.

- **Don't reply to a message from someone if you don't want to.**

- **You deserve to feel safe online.** Talk to someone you trust if you are worried about something done or said online, or it just seems weird.

- **It is your right to take a break from online communications** – it'll all be there still when you choose to tune back in.

- **Discuss the following topics with your child:**
  - Why are people more unkind online – is it because they don't see the reaction?
  - How can we create a kinder community?
  - What do you think is appropriate behaviour online?

See resources

3 Be curious about your child's world

Be curious about who is in your child's online world, in the same way you are curious about who they spend time with offline.

- **Ask your child about who they are chatting to.**

- **Who do they feel good after talking to?**

- **Who leaves them feeling down?**

- **How do they decide who to talk to and what would they do if they don't want to talk to someone?**

- **Are they having any problems with friends online that they'd like some advice on?**

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④ Help them make good choices

Help your child know they have a choice about who they talk to, and they can change their mind. If things get weird or speaking someone doesn't make them feel good, they have a right to distance themselves. Talk to your child about their options, and help then recognise how they can exercise their choice about who they connect with online. Even when the other person seemed to be really friendly to begin with.

- **Sometimes this is about leaving a specific conversation.**

- **Sometimes this is about reducing how much they talk to that person.**

- **Sometimes this is about "unfollowing" or "unfriending" someone.**

- **Sometimes this is about "blocking" someone.**

- **Or muting a conversation so you don't see what they say.**

See resources

⑤ Keeping all lines of communication open

It is important to keep lines of communication open with your children, and make sure they know they can come to you with their worries. However, this can sometimes feel too hard. Talk to your child about where else they could go for help and support. Do they have other trusted adults they could talk to? Do they know about the organisations that are there for them? Show them the **Childline** or **Kooth** websites, so they know where they are if they need them.

- **If you or your child are worried about something that has been said through social media,** they can report the person or post to the social media platform. Ask them what sort of thing they might want to report in the future.

- **Ask your children if they know how to report something on social media.** If they say yes, get them to show you, if not then its an opportunity to learn together. For a 'how to' guide for different websites, check out this information on **Thinkuknow**.

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6 Making a report

CEOP help and give you advice and you or your child can make a report directly to them if something has happened online which has made them feel unsafe, scared or worried. This might be from someone they know in real life, or someone they have only ever met online. They take all reports seriously and we will do everything they can to keep you safe. Some of the things children and young people have reported to CEOP include:

- Someone online has asked me to send them nude images

- I shared a nude image with someone online and they are threatening me

- I did something that I was embarrassed about on webcam and someone has turned nasty towards me

- Someone I don't know is asking me to live-stream and do things I don't want to do

- Someone online kept asking me to meet them face-to-face and I feel pressured by them

- Someone online was talking to me about sex and it made me feel uncomfortable

- Someone online is putting pressure on me to do things I don't want to do

- Someone I met in an online game keeps trying to talk to me privately

As well as making a report, the **CEOP Thinkuknow website** has information and advice to help if something has happened to your child online.

Anyone can report a suspected online sexual abuse images to the **Internet Watch Foundation**. Make sure your child knows they can do this, if they come across a sexual image where it looks like someone in the image is under 18.

THINK U KNOW

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Tips on how to deal with any behaviour from your child that is concerning you

1 Learn to read the signs

Think about looking at resources that help you understand what is considered appropriate and normal behaviour for the age and stage of development of your child, and which behaviours might be considered more concerning.

Learn to recognise the signs of harmful sexual behaviour, for example, these could include:

- Seeking the company of younger children or spending an unusual amount of time with them.

- Taking younger children to a 'secret place' or playing 'special games.'

- Insisting on hugging or kissing a child who does not want to be kissed or hugged.

- Showing anxiety or reluctance to be with a specific child or children.

- Frequently using aggressive sexual language about others.

- Showing sexual material to younger children.

- Making sexually abusive telephone calls.

- Sending or sharing sexual images.

- Sharing alcohol or drugs with other children.

- Viewing indecent images of children, or increasing the amount of pornography they are watching.

- Exposing their genitals to others.

- Forcing sex on others.

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2 Not all sexual behaviour involving young people is problematic

This can be a concerning and confusing topic, but not all sexual behaviour involving young people is problematic and they have a right and a choice in how to sexually express themselves. Behaviour is likely to be normative if:

- **It is between young people of a similar age and developmental stage**

- **It is voluntary**

- **It is mutual**

- **It is limited in type and frequency**

- **It is balanced by curiosity about other things**

- **It is light-hearted and spontaneous.**

It is worth considering who the behaviour is problematic for, as some behaviours are normal but can make a parent or carer feel uncomfortable or embarrassed because it is sexual in nature. If this is the case, consider the need for your child to learn about sex in a healthy way, as well as how to express themselves sexually in a safe way.

If the behaviour is normal for the child's age and stage of sexual development, this might still provide an opportunity to talk to your child, to teach them and to explain what is appropriate.

If the behaviour becomes more worrying, this might be an opportunity to explain more fully what is wrong with this behaviour. You should monitor the behaviour to see if it persists and you might want to provide your child with extra support.

If the behaviour is very worrying and more serious then you need to make sure that you are very clear about what the behaviour is and why it is wrong, ask your child to stop engaging in this behaviour and perhaps seek some advice, for example from the **Stop It Now! helpline on 0808 1000 900**, or from a childcare professional such as a health visitor, a GP or a social worker.

See resources

What does the law say?

With penetrative sexual activity the young person must be able to understand and give informed consent - children under the age of 13 years old are not capable of giving consent to sexual activity in UK law.

Professionals may want to consider whether a child's sexual activity raises any specific safeguarding issues.

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3 How to talk about worrying behaviours

When you talk to your child about any worrying behaviours, the following can help:

- Making sure you stay calm.

- Making sure you have plenty of time.

- Speaking to your child somewhere private, where you are alone and away from other family members.

- Asking your child whether anything is troubling them and listening to what they say.

- Providing reassurance that you are there for them, that they can talk to you and that you are not judging them.

- Explaining why you feel their behaviour is worrying you, and what the consequences of their behaviour can be.

- Deciding together what you are going to do to make some changes, and making sure your response is proportionate to what has happened. Refer to resources such as the Family Safety Plan from Parents Protect.

- Redirecting your child to safe activities.

- Monitoring and supporting your child.

- Re-visiting things if the problematic behaviours persist or get worse.

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Useful organisations to help families, parents and carers, and their children and young people

The Lucy Faithfull Foundation
lucyfaithfull.org.uk

We are a child protection charity dedicated to preventing child sexual abuse. We work closely with frontline workers, and professionals such as police officers, social workers and education staff to ensure children are as safe as they can be. We provide a range of services for professionals including assessments, interventions and training, and can provide in-person support to the public and over the phone through the helpline below.

Stop It Now! UK and Ireland helpline 0808 1000 900
stopitnow.org.uk

Our confidential helpline, website and campaign give advice to anyone with concerns about child sexual abuse and its prevention. We help parents worried about a child or young person's behaviour, and professionals who work with children and families.

Stop It Now! Wales
stopitnow.org.uk/wales

We work with local authorities, safeguarding boards, the police, the Welsh Government, the voluntary sector and with families and communities to protect children from sexual abuse and harm. We give education sessions for parents, carers and professionals, and work with vulnerable or at-risk families.

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Stop It Now! Scotland

stopitnow.org.uk/stop-it-now-scotland

We work with parents, carers, concerned adults, professionals and organisations to help protect children from sexual abuse and harm in Scotland. Our ROSA – reducing online sexual abuse – project works with young people in Glasgow who are starting to get into trouble online and display harmful sexual behaviour. We can give support through our direct office phone number, and callers to the UK helpline are given the choice to speak to the Scotland team.

Parents Protect

parentsprotect.co.uk

Our Parents Protect website provides practical information and advice for all adults on how to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation, online and offline. The website includes a 30-minute learning programme aimed at answering parents questions and giving them information, advice, support, and facts to help protect children.

The Upstream Project

theupstreamproject.org.uk

Our Upstream Project website was developed for the public and professionals with support from the Scottish Government. It has up-to-date information about child sexual abuse and practical advice on how to prevent it.

Other useful organisations

NSPCC

nspcc.org.uk

NSPCC work to prevent abuse and help those affected to recover. Their website contains lots of information on what child sexual abuse is, and what to do if you suspect child abuse is taking place, and support and tips on how to keep children safe.

Childline

childline.org.uk

Childline is a confidential helpline for young people under the age of 19 to discuss with any issues they might be dealing with. They became part of the NSPCC in 2006 to help even more young people.

Kooth

kooth.com

Kooth is an online mental wellbeing community where young people can get free, safe, confidential and anonymous online support and counselling. Young people can join discussion boards and find information such as articles, and personal experiences as well as tips from other young people and the Kooth team.

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Young Minds

youngminds.org.uk

Young Minds is a UK-wide mental health charity committed to improving the lives and mental well-being of young people.

Marie Collins Foundation

mariecollinsfoundation.org.uk

Marie Collins Foundation is a UK charity that enables children who suffer from online sexual abuse and exploitation to recover and live safe, fulfilling lives.

Barnardo's

barnardos.org.uk

Barnardo's is a UK charity that works to support and protect children and young people facing a wide range of issues, including sexual abuse. They provide a range of services to help and support families and work closely with other organisations and professionals. They provide therapy and counselling services and have developed guides to help families understand child sexual abuse better.

CEOP

ceop.police.uk

CEOP The UK's National Crime Agency Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command is a law enforcement agency that works to help keep children and young people safe from sexual exploitation and abuse. Their website has information for parents and carers concerned about the way someone has behaved or communicated online, including advice on whether and how to report this CEOP.

Parent Info

parentinfo.org

Parent Info provides support and guidance for parents, including online safety tips and advice around sex and relationships. Parent Info is a collaboration between Parent Zone and NCA- CEOP.

Thinkuknow

thinkuknow.co.uk

Thinkuknow aims to empower children and young people aged 4-18 to identify the risks they may face online and to know where they can go for support. Thinkuknow is an education programme developed by the NCA-CEOP command.

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Internet Watch Foundation

iwf.org.uk

Internet Watch Foundation works internationally to make the internet a safer place. They have an online reporting tool where people can report child sexual abuse content.

Big Talk Education

bigtalkeducation.co.uk

Big Talk Education work to provide children and young people with high quality relationship and sex education, to help keep children and young people safe, healthy and happy. They work with schools across the UK with pupils aged 3 to 18 as well as their parents and teaching staff.

Brook

brook.org.uk

Brook is a national charity that offers both clinical sexual health services and education, and wellbeing services for young people. They produce easy to understand information supported by videos and examples from real life.

BISH UK

bishuk.com

BISH UK (Best In Sexual Health) has a website for young people over the age of 14 who are starting to think about sex and relationships. It provides lots of information and advice on a range of topics, including thinking about what is and isn't legal, and explores the importance of consent in sexual relationships.

The Reward Foundation

rewardfoundation.org

The Reward Foundation provides information about relationships and how these can be affected by the use of pornography.

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Helplines for parents, carers, children and young people

There are many helplines that can be used if parents, carers or children and young people speak to someone about these issues.

Stop It Now! UK and Ireland helpline – 0808 1000 900

Our free, confidential and anonymous helpline for the public and professionals concerned about child sexual abuse and its prevention, including parents and carers worried about a child or young person with worrying sexual behaviour. We listen to callers and help them take action to protect children. Open Monday to Thursday 9am to 9pm and Fridays 9am to 5pm. We also have an anonymous secure messaging service for people who aren't ready to phone yet.

stopitnow.org.uk/helpline   contactus.stopitnow.org.uk

NSPCC helpline – 0808 800 5000

A free and confidential helpline for parents and carers concerned about a child, or professionals who are looking for information and guidance. Open Monday to Friday from 9am to 6pm, and from 9am to 4pm at the weekends. You can also submit on **online form** instead of calling the helpline.

Childline – 0800 1111

A helpline and message boards specifically for young people. For support, text 'Shout' to 85258.

Young Minds Helpline – 0808 802 5544

A helpline for parents who are supporting their children and young people with any mental health concern. This helpline is available Monday to Friday from 9.30am to 4pm.

Kooth – kooth.com

Free and anonymous online support for young people, through messages or live chats with counsellors to talk about anything that might be affecting their mental health.

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Useful resources developed to help parents, carers and young people

Resources to help understand what harmful sexual behaviour means

The Upstream Project - designed to help prevent child sexual abuse in Scotland. There is a section on harmful sexual behaviour, which explores what this is, what the consequences can be, and why some children engage in this behaviour. It helps parents and carers to think about what is appropriate behaviour for their own children and dispels some of the myths around child sexual abuse.

theupstreamproject.org.uk/learn/what-is-harmful-sexual-behaviour-2

theupstreamproject.org.uk/know/concerned-about-a-child-sexual-exploitation-cse--fact-vs-fiction

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What's the Problem? Parents Pack – a guide for parents and carers of children and young people who have got in trouble online. It explores different online behaviours that children and young people might be engaging in, such as sexting, accessing adult pornography, or viewing sexual images of children, and explains whether these behaviours could be illegal or not.

This guide provides ideas on how to have the often difficult conversations about these issues, and includes a family safety plan template to help families to address the issues and deal with them together.

parentsprotect.co.uk/if-your-child-get-into-trouble-online.htm

There is also a Scottish version which considers the aspects of the law that differ from England and Wales.

stopitnow.org.uk/stop-it-now-scotland/resources

Parent Info helps families to explore relationships and sex, including understanding abusive behaviours within a teenage relationship and what to do if you think your teenager is in one. There are links to teen friendly resources, and also links to guidance resources for parents.

parentinfo.org/article/spotting-abuse-in-teenage-relationships-0

Jonny Matthew works to help young people in crisis to recover. His website has information and links to useful resources for parents and carers, and a section on harmful sexual behaviour.

jonnymatthew.com/resources/harmful-sexual-behaviour-info

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Resources to help understand appropriate and inappropriate behaviour of children
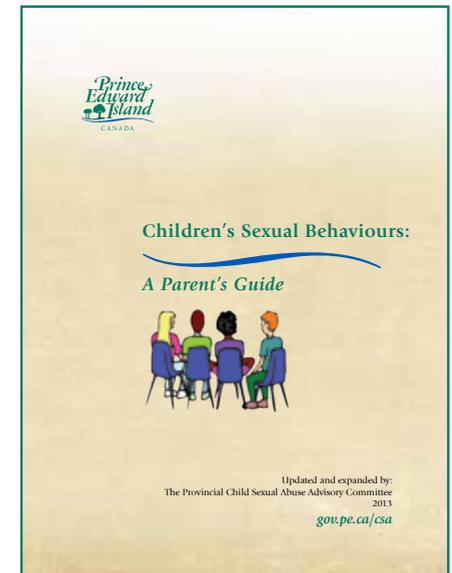
Continuum model – Professor Simon Hackett from Durham University is a safeguarding expert. He conducts research to further understand harmful sexual behaviour amongst children and young people and developed a continuum of harmful behaviours. Parents and carers can use this to help them think about the behaviour of their own children, so they can better understand behaviour that could be considered normal through to behaviour that could be considered highly deviant.

icmec.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Hackett-Continuum-of-Harmful-Behavior-Excerpted.pdf

Traffic Light Tools

These can help parents/carers and professionals to consider what is natural and expected behaviour for children and young people across different age ranges and stages of development, and what behaviours could be considered more worrying or concerning. They also explore what can be done to manage these behaviours to ensure that children and young people stay safe and develop in a healthy way.

Parents Protect - explore the behaviours of under 5 year olds and the behaviours of 5-11 year olds.

parentsprotect.co.uk/traffic-light-tools.htm

Brook - explores the age ranges 0-5 years, 5-9 years, 9-13 years, and 13-17 years. They also provide training to professionals in the use of this tool.

brook.org.uk/training/wider-professional-training/sexual-behaviours-traffic-light-tool/

The Canadian Government

- have produced this more detailed parent's guide to understanding children's sexual behaviours and explores how to respond effectively.

gov.pe.ca/photos/original/css_csbparentg.pdf

Prince Edward Island CANADA

Children's Sexual Behaviours:
A Parent's Guide

Updated and expanded by:
The Provincial Child Sexual Abuse Advisory Committee
2013
gov.pe.ca/csa

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Resources to help talk about healthy and unhealthy sexual behaviours, including the use of pornography

FPS – is a sexual health company. They have some helpful resources for parents and professionals alike. Parents are likely to find their book recommendations on talking to children of varying ages about sex, relationships and growing up to be particularly useful.

fpa.org.uk/relationships-and-sex-education/parents-and-carers

Family Lives - is a charity dedicated to supporting parents before they reach a crisis point that could result in abuse. They have resources related to speaking to adolescents about pornography.

familylives.org.uk/advice/teenagers/sex/porn

Big Talk Education - have developed different sets of Growing Up Safe Cards. These can help parents and carers to have proactive discussions about potentially risky situations and how to stay safe. Some of the topics cover issues such as sexual bullying, illegal behaviour, sexting, grooming, and pornography. These cards are particularly useful for younger children and those with learning disabilities. There are other resources available here that might be of interest.

bigtalkeducation.co.uk/products/primary-years-2-and-3-growing-up-safe-cards-set-2

Bish UK – has lots of web-based resources, designed for young people aged 14 and above. This is a helpful resource for parents to point their teenage children too, to answer questions they may have and help them make sense of what they may have seen online. Their online resources cover multiple themes that fit into what they describe as a "A guide to sex, love and you".

ishuk.com/porn

Safe4me - is a free education resource from Hampshire Police, which aims to provide information and resources to help educate, guide and support children and young people to keep safe. There is a specific section for parents, which covers particular issues such as anti-social behaviour, sexting and teen sexual harm advice.

safe4me.co.uk

The Reward Foundation – have a resource for parents and carers specifically related to dealing with internet pornography during the coronavirus pandemic.

rewardfoundation.org/free-parents-guide-to-internet-pornography

Brook – host a fantastic and easy to use website, which provides clear and positive messages about sex and relationships for young people. They cover a variety of topics such as contraception, body image, abuse and consent. A helpful resource to explore with young people and point them too as a trustworthy and reliable sex education resource.

brook.org.uk

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Resources to help children and young people think about what consent means within their relationships

Parents Protect – offers helpful book recommendations to help children understand their rights and the fundamentals of consent from an early age.

parentsprotect.co.uk/books-to-share-with-children.htm

Thames Valley Police - have a video which help explains consent in an easy and accessible way, using the analogy of a sexual consent being like asking if someone would like a cup of tea. Please note, there is brief use of bad language in the first 15 seconds of this video.

youtube.com/watch?v=oQbei5JGiT8&vl=en

Blue Seat Studios - have a video which helps explains consent for younger children.

youtube.com/watch?v=h3nhM9UlJjc

Safe4me - have some information about what consent is when thinking about sexual relationships.

safe4me.co.uk/portfolio/its-not-ok

BISH UK - provides lots of information and advice on a range of topics. They have a section which helps families think about sex in relation to the law, for example, what is legal and what is not. This resource also explores the importance of consent in sexual relationships.

bishuk.com/sex/consent-and-the-law

That's Not Cool – is a website providing young people with the tools to think about what is and what is not okay in relation to their digital relationships. It is aimed at young people who are aged 11 and over.

thatsnotcool.com

Pause Play Stop – is an interactive resource that parents and carers can use with their children and young people to help them understand and contextualise consent. They have a great quiz which parents can do alongside their adolescent children, which is sure to spark helpful discussions.

pauseplaystop.org.uk

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Resources to help think about internet safety and staying safe online and offline

Family Safety Plan – our family safety plan for families to work through together to implement safety measures. Available in English and Welsh.

parentsprotect.co.uk/family-safety-plan.htm

Thinkuknow have developed some home activity packs specifically for parents and carers during the Coronavirus pandemic. They will be releasing new activity packs each fortnight. The activity packs include simple 15-minute activities that families can do together to support their online safety at a time when they will be spending more time online.

thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/Support-tools/home-activity-worksheets

They also have advice and information to help parents and carers respond if their child or young person has sent a nude selfie online. This includes a video that can be watched with children and young people to help explore and understand the risks of this behaviour.

thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/articles/Has-your-child-shared-a-nude-selfie-subtitled

Internet Matters - directs parents and carers to credible information on how to keep children safe online. They have resources on online issues, such as inappropriate content, online grooming, and sexting.

internetmatters.org

NSPCC have resources to help talk to children and young people about staying safe online, and includes advice on setting up parental controls, sexting, online games and video apps, to help you understand the risks and keep your children safe.

nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety

O2 and NSPCC joined together to also provide some advice on how to keep children safe online.

o2.co.uk/help/nspcc

The UK Safer Internet Centre - provides online safety tips, advice and resources to help children and young people stay safe online. They explore some of the issues you may be facing, how to have conversations with your children, different safety tools and parental controls that can be used for social network sites. It also includes a parent's guide to technology and provides other links to resources for parents and carers.

saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers

saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers/resources-parents-and-carers

Safe Search Kids - provide various resources about staying safe online, including a guide for teenagers when using social media, and posting pictures online. The resources include tips for parents and carers to navigate these issues.

safesearchkids.com

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Wayne Denner - is an internet safety expert based in Northern Ireland, who regularly posts online information to parents and carers helping them think about safety measures that can be put in place.

waynedenner.com

Resources for parents and carers who have children or young people with disabilities

Children with additional support needs and disabilities, for example those who have difficulties understanding social situations or communicating to others, can be more vulnerable to sexual abuse.

They are three times as likely to experience sexual abuse than other children and young people, and some may have difficulty reporting their concerns or abuse. Many of the ways open for children, such as telephone helplines remain inaccessible for disabled children and young people. For some their sexual development may not be consistent with their emotional and social development, which could end up being expressed through inappropriate sexualised behaviour.

These are some organisations and resources that can help support parents who have children or young people with additional support needs or disabilities.

The Upstream Project - explores some of the signs that prevent us from recognising the signs of abuse, in particular focusing on those with learning disabilities and those on the autism spectrum.

theupstreamproject.org.uk/learn/abuse-of-children-with-disabilities

The National Autistic Society - is a UK charity for autistic people and their families. Their goal is to help transform lives, changes attitudes and create a society that works for autistic people. They have several resources which help to safeguard children and young people on the autism spectrum.

autism.org.uk/shop/products/books-and-resources/safeguarding-young-people-on-the-autism-spectrum

Cerebra - is a national charity helping children with brain conditions and their families discover a better life together. They publish a series of guides and factsheets to help families deal with any problems they may be facing. They have a guide which helps parents think about keeping children safe online.

cerebra.org.uk/download/learning-disabilities-autism-and-internet-safety

The NSPCC - have created a booklet for parents and carers to help them speak simply to younger children about staying safe from abuse.

nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/advice-and-info/underwear-rule-parents-learning-disabilities-english.pdf

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Resources for parents and carers to share with children and young people who are worried about their thoughts and feelings towards younger children

RSHP – Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood - offer a range of free online resources that help parents and carers talk to their children and young people, who have additional support needs or disabilities, about sex, sexuality, and relationships. These resources include workbooks, teaching packs, animations, photostories, videos and books.

rshp.scot/learners-with-additional-support-needs-asn/programmes-resources-to-support-learning

Stop It Now! UK and Ireland - provide an online resource for people worried about their own sexual thoughts towards children and young people. This is primarily aimed at adults but parents and carers may find some of the information is helpful for their older children if they too are struggling with these kinds of thoughts, or to inform themselves as protective parents.

stopitnow.org.uk

Help Wanted – is a new online resource which offers an anonymous course to help people who are concerns about sexual feelings towards younger children.

helpwantedprevention.org

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For confidential help and advice, please call our helpline on 0808 1000 900.

Our highly experienced helpline operators can give you practical advice and talk you through any complicated or difficult issues that you are facing right now. They will be able to help with the questions you will have about the behaviour of your child or family member.

The helpline is free and confidential. When you call, you don't have to give any identifying information such as your family name, address or telephone number.

If you'd rather not call, you can contact us through our confidential messaging service – details can be found on our website: stopitnow.org.uk

Your email address will not be displayed when you email, making the service confidential. Due to high demand, we can't offer an immediate response by email. If your enquiry is more urgent, please call the helpline.

**Confidential freephone helpline 0808 1000 900
Visit stopitnow.org.uk**

**For general enquiries call 01372 847 160
or email contact@lucyfaithfull.org.uk**

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How was this toolkit?

If you have used the toolkit, either as an organisation sharing this with parents and carers, or as a parent or carer yourself, please take a few minutes to follow the link below to help us evaluate the toolkit, so we can continue to offer the most useful and practical information.

surveymonkey.co.uk/r/V8HGPTR

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