



# Safer Seven

On: Child Sexual Abuse



## Definition

Child Sexual Abuse involves forcing or enticing a young person or child to take part in sexual activities. It includes contact and non-contact abuse. The abusive sexual activity may involve trickery, coercion, threats and/or aggression. Child Sexual Abuse can happen anywhere and may be online or in person.

When supporting a child disclosing sexual abuse, it is imperative to respond confidently and be aware of the local pathway of support. The child should receive a consistent response, keeping them safe and ensuring a holistic response to their needs and any identified risks.

## Respond

Practitioners taking a disclosure or supporting a child disclosing sexual abuse should offer a safe, confidential space, belief and promote choices where possible. Safeguarding risks may limit some options but a sensitive approach, revisiting your agency policy/protocols & explanation of the processes can also help the child's sense of control & understanding.

A child may not disclose abuse and can feel shame & guilt, as it is common for children to feel they are to blame for the abuse. Therefore, it is important to look out for indicators of sexual abuse.

## Indicators of Sexual Abuse

- Frightened when with someone they know
- Language or sexual behaviour you wouldn't expect them to know
- Nightmares or bed-wetting
- Sexually transmitted infections or pregnancy
- Becoming withdrawn, emotionally flat, disinterested and isolated
- Becoming hyperactive or aggressive
- School problems – poor attendance and/or poor school work, behaviour
- Alcohol or drug use

## How perpetrators can conceal their abuse

Perpetrators of sexual abuse are known to groom children, family members and even professionals, and being a menacing individual can keep people from asking too many questions as well as keeping victims quiet by invoking fear.

Professionals must exercise professional curiosity when working with these children and their families and seek guidance from their safeguarding lead or manager if there is a suspicion something is not quite right.

## Acute Support

SARC (Sexual assault referral centre) provide immediate, & specialist support to children/families. It is vital that the holistic needs of a child are considered by a forensic clinician who can provide expert advice. Provide children & their families accurate information on the SARC, the support available and the benefits of attendance. Children have a choice regarding attendance, and they will never be made to comply with any part of an examination they feel uncomfortable with.

For more details visit: <https://horizonsarc.org.uk/>

## Procedures

Consider when/where the incident happened and if anyone remains at risk. Contact the Police on 999 /101 if necessary. For all child cases contact MASH on 01384 814398. Inform the child (or parent/caregiver if safe to do so for the child) of the specialist immediate/acute support and aftercare support available & make relevant referrals. For all child cases contact the relevant SARC for expert health and forensic advice from a forensic clinician – regardless of nature of abuse or time elapsed.

Consult the [Regional Child Protection Procedures for West Midlands](#) for more information.

## Further information:

- Online Safety [eLearning](#)
- Sexual Behaviours Traffic light tool [eLearning](#)

Visit our Learning Zone to see our selection of briefings and more [HERE](#)

Web: <https://dudleysafeguarding.org.uk/>

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