

HSB AND CSE

What is harmful sexual behaviour?



Sexual behaviours expressed by children and young people under the age of 18 years that are developmentally inappropriate and may be:

- Harmful towards self
- Harmful towards others
- Abusive towards another child, young person or adult

Hackett, 2014

These harmful sexual behaviours include, but are not limited to:

- ▶ persistent or excessive masturbation
- ▶ forcing another young person to engage in sexual behaviour, including touching, kissing or simulating sex
- ▶ a lot of sexualised play with toys
- ▶ using sexually inappropriate language
- ▶ sexual knowledge that is too advanced for their age
- ▶ attempting to expose other people's genitals
- ▶ making sexually explicit threats
- ▶ strong interest in pornography
- ▶ creating and/or distributing sexual images (may also be an indicator of grooming)
- ▶ sexual harassment or sexual assault

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Hackett's (2010) continuum of child and young people's sexual behaviours can help to determine how concerning a child's behaviour is.

Normal	Inappropriate	Problematic	Abusive	Violent
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developmentally expected • Socially acceptable • Consensual, mutual, reciprocal • Shared decision making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single instances of Inappropriate Sexual Behaviour • Socially acceptable behaviour within peer group • Context for behaviour may be inappropriate • Generally consensual & reciprocal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problematic and concerning behaviours • Developmentally and socially unexpected • No overt elements of victimisation • Consent issues may be unclear • May lack reciprocity or equal power • May include levels of compulsivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victimising intent or outcome • Includes misuse of power • Coercion and force to ensure victim compliance • Intrusive • Informed consent lacking, or not able to be freely given by victim • May include elements of expressive violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physically violent sexual abuse • Highly intrusive • Instrumental violence which is physiologically and/or sexually arousing to the perpetrator • Sadism

Responding to HSB

Behaviour - Things to Consider..

- What is the nature of HSB (e.g. contact, online, harassment, penetrative, someone in the home, stranger etc.)
- What is the unmet need (e.g. what is driving the behaviour, is there a need to regulate, understand their behaviour.)
- What is the extent of HSB (e.g. one-off, multiple events, impulsive, planned, started pre-puberty etc.)
- Victim characteristics (e.g. relationship to victim, gender, younger/older, one victim or multiple, vulnerabilities)
- Is there sexual aggression and violence (e.g. power dynamics, coercive, physically aggressive etc.)
- What is their sexual knowledge, attitudes & interests (e.g. use of pornography, preoccupation with sexual content)

Your Reaction - Things to Consider...

- ▶ Don't jump to conclusions or assume what is causing the behaviour.
- ▶ Be curious - gather information to help understand context.
- ▶ Be honest - you don't have to be the expert.
- ▶ Clarify the limits of confidentiality.
- ▶ Don't use language that shames the child or victim blames such as using the word perpetrator or offender, instead use term's like 'displayed harmful sexual behaviours'.



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What is child sexual exploitation?

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), states;

“Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse that occurs when an individual or group attempts to or succeeds in coercing, manipulating or deceiving a child into contact or non-contact sexual acts:

a) in exchange for something including, but not limited to, money, gifts or accommodation or less tangible goods such as affection or status, and/or

b) for the financial advantage, increased status or other reward for the person/people exploiting the child.

A child over the legal age of consent may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual act appears consensual.”

Typical Models of child sexual exploitation

Inappropriate Relationships - Power over the young person physically, emotionally or financially

Boyfriend Model - Strikes up a relationship with the young person, may shower with gifts. Seemingly consensual relationship develops but later turns abusive. Victims are typically required to attend parties and have sex with multiple individuals.

Peer on Peer - Same age or close in age, everyone is under the age of 18.

Organised exploitation and trafficking- Forced or coerced into sex with multiple individuals, young people are often used to recruit new victims.

(*Puppet on a String*, Barnados 2011)

Who is vulnerable to child sexual exploitation?

Things that might cause a child or young person to be vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

(Shepherd & Lewis, 2017)



Isolated from peers/social networks



Low self-esteem



Physical abuse by parent, carer and family member



Family history of alcohol or drug misuse



Breakdown of family relationships



Lack of positive relationship with a protective adult



Family history of mental health problems



Emotional neglect by parent or carer



Family history of Domestic and Family Violence



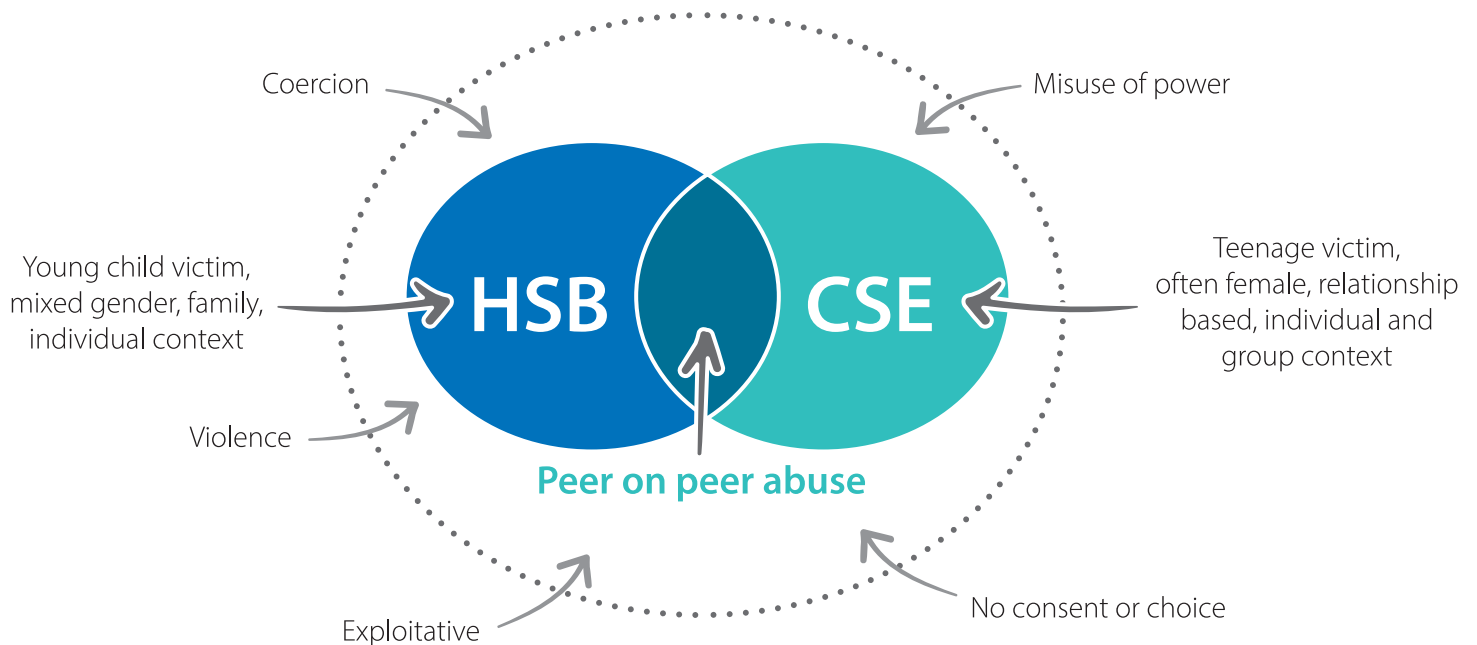
Unsuitable/ Inappropriate accommodation





CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION VS HARMFUL SEXUAL BEHAVIOURS

The fit of HSB and CSE in the context of wider child sexual abuse.



(Hackett, Holmes and Branigan, 2016)

Child Sexual Exploitation vs Harmful Sexual Behaviours

- CSE and HSB both have distinct elements but the potential for overlap.
 - It is important that we separate out HSB and CSE.
 - Understanding elements of exchange.
 - Understanding who has the power in the interaction.
 - Asking questions and understanding context.
- (SASS, 2025)

Responding - HSB and CSE

Context is crucial – Gather information about what is going on so you can identify the risk and respond promptly and appropriately.

Listen and support – Talk to the child or young person about your concerns and the potential harm in a developmentally appropriate way. Hear what they have to say.



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Report – Contact the relevant and appropriate services (Police, Child Protection etc,) to ensure safeguarding practices are implemented.

Additional supports – Find out what specialist services and supports are available in your area and consider connecting the young person or their family with them.

Encourage the child or young person to contact services such as Kids Helpline if they think it will be helpful **1800 551 800**

Together and if appropriate, develop a safety plan with the child or young person's input, to support the safety of themselves and others.

Reporting

If you believe a child is in immediate danger, or you have immediate concerns for the welfare of a child, call **000**

If you prefer to report in-confidence visit Crime Stoppers at www.crimestoppers.com.au or call **1800 333 000**.



eSafety Commissioner is Australia's independent regulator for online safety. They educate Australians about online safety risks and help to remove harmful content such as cyberbullying of children, adult cyber abuse and intimate images or videos shared without consent [Online safety | eSafety Commissioner](https://www.esafety.gov.au)



This resource has been developed in collaboration with Sexual Assault Support Service (SASS) and Project Paradigm.

**Sexual
Assault
Support
Service**

For non urgent enquiries, visit
www.sass.org.au

