

An introduction to

Barnsley's Harmful Sexual Behaviour Pathway

17 June 2026

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Overview



Understand what is meant by harmful sexual behaviour in children and young people

Importance of an initial screening for early identification of concerns

Barnsley's HSB Pathway and how agencies work together

When and how to access Barnsley HSB Hub support

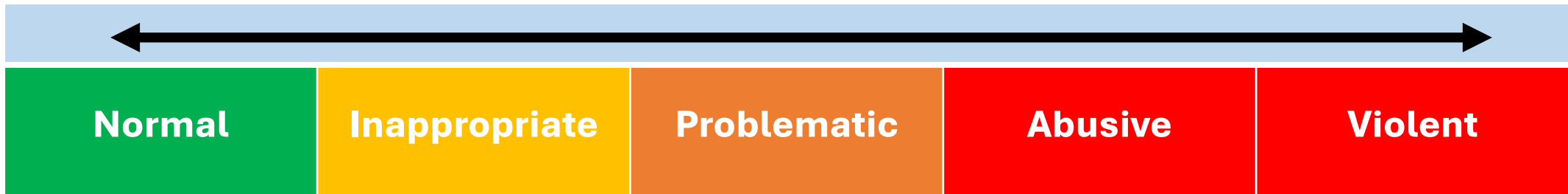


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What is harmful sexual behaviour?

“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)

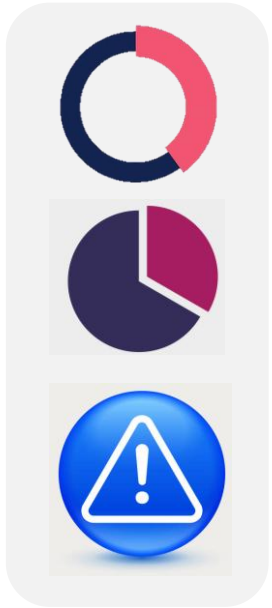


Why early identification matters

- Sexual behaviour can be an indicator of unmet needs, trauma, or vulnerability
- Early identification helps:
 - Reduce escalation
 - Avoid unnecessary criminal justice responses
 - Improve outcomes
 - Signals wider unmet needs



Context



- Child sexual abuse highly prevalent
- Substantial proportion caused by children and young people
- Child sexual abuse referrals – 40% HSB
- Two-thirds: at least one form of abuse or trauma
- One-third: clear evidence of CSA
- Recidivism: 5 - 15%



Role of health



- Multiple and complex needs
- Responsibility across agencies
- Multi-agency and multi-disciplinary holistic responses
- Context of HSB – broader developmental, health, wellbeing and protection needs
- Practitioner confidence to recognise, record, and respond

NICE guideline [NG55]

Sexual behaviour screening tool

All practitioners working with children should:

- Use an agreed sexual behaviour screening tool
- Record concerns clearly within assessments

Screening tools:

- Support professional judgement (they do not replace it)
- Help distinguish between developmentally expected and atypical sexual behaviours (for the child's age and stage of development)
- Inform next steps within the HSB Pathway



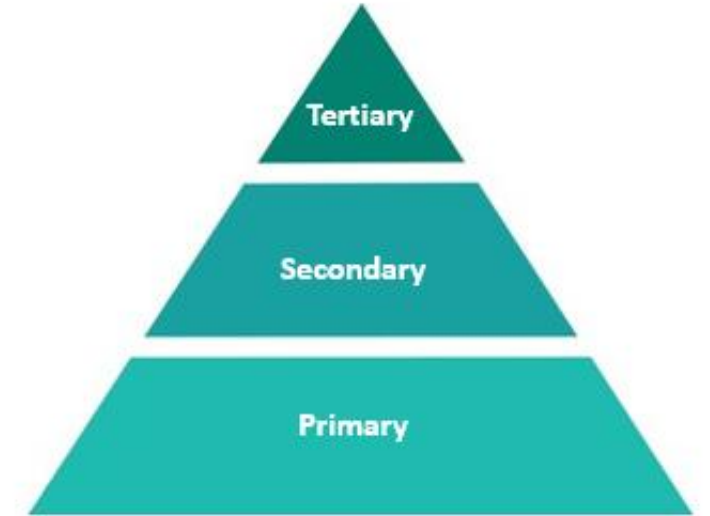
What is Barnsley's HSB Pathway?

Core principles:

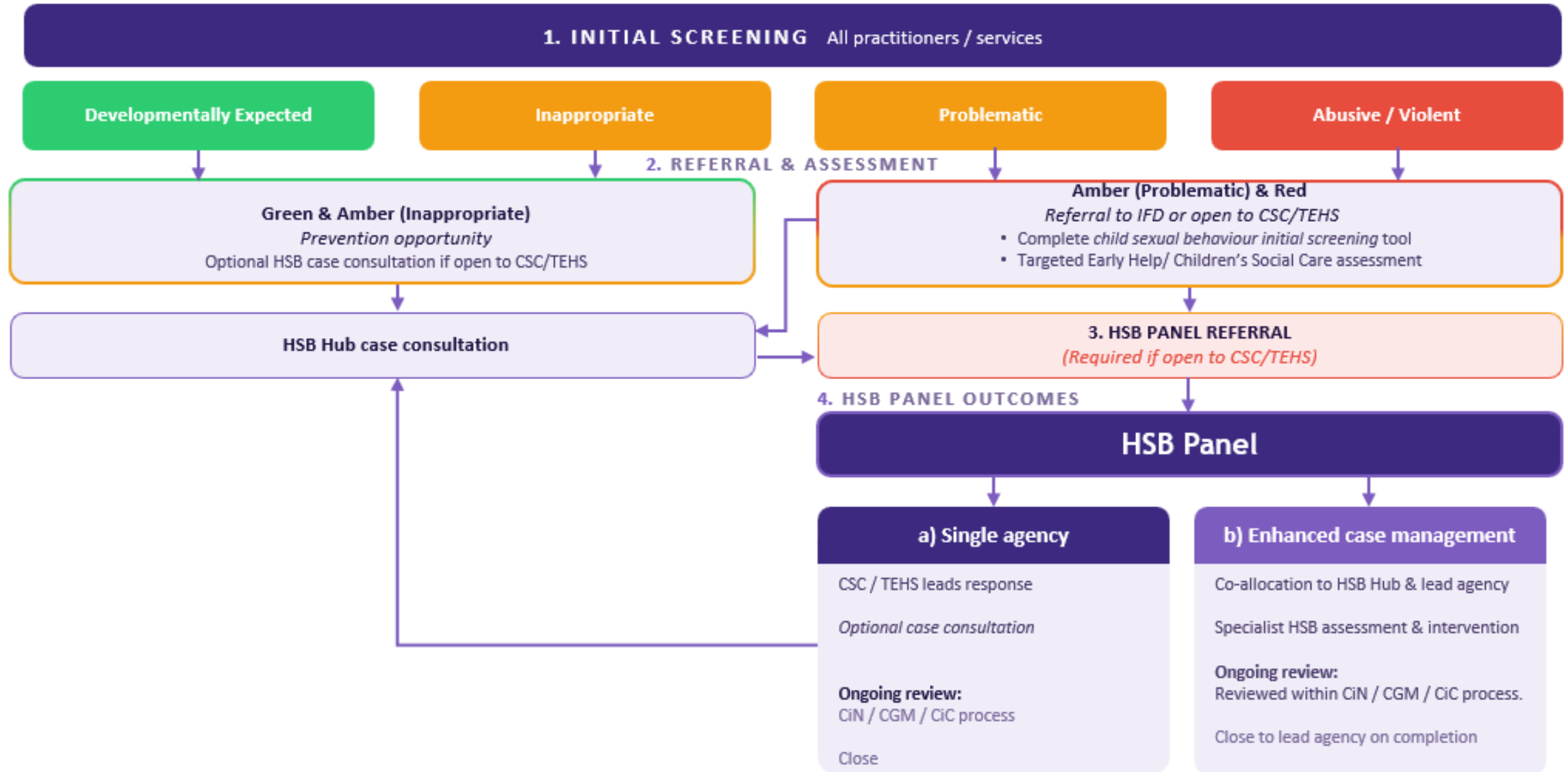
- A preventative, graduated response model
- Clear framework for early identification and responses
- Right response, right practitioner, right time

Responses to harmful sexual behaviour are:

- Integrated into existing services
- A shared multi-agency responsibility
- Most children and families continue to work with professionals they already know and trust



Barnsley HSB Pathway



Barnsley HSB Hub – specialist support

Hub-and-spoke model providing specialist advice, consultation, and enhanced case management

Support includes:

- HSB case consultation clinics
- HSB Panel
- Co-allocation for specialist assessment and intervention (where required)
- Training



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Barnsley HSB Panel

Specialist multi-agency forum for professionals to:

- Support practitioner decision making specific to harmful sexual behaviour
- Share relevant information
- Review screening decisions
- Provide recommendations on assessment, safety planning and intervention support

Who must be referred?

- Initial screening as problematic (amber) or harmful (red) sexual behaviours and;
- Child is open to Children's Social Care (*Getting risk help*) or Targeted Early Help Support (*Getting help / more help*).



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Further training

Learn Together, Lead Together Mini Session -
Barnsley harmful sexual behaviour pathway

Wednesday 23
September
8:30am to 9am
12pm to
12:30pm
4pm to 4.30pm

Microsoft Teams

Understanding, recognising and responding to harmful
sexual behaviour by children and young people

Tuesday 13
October
9:30am to
12:30pm

Microsoft
Teams



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