Assessing sexual behaviours in children and young people

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Link to publication on Research at Birmingham portal

Table 1: Unified criteria of the Traffic Light Tool (Brook, 2013).

Green	Representative of safe and healthy psychological and physical development and require a response positively to reinforce the behaviours. The TLT emphasises that expression of sexuality via sexual behaviour is a naturally evolving process and that the presentation of green behaviours should be utilised as an opportunity for positive reinforcement and as an avenue for providing additional education and support. (Brook, 2013)
Amber	Behaviours that are outside of the parameters of being healthy and safe and may be indicative of harmful sexual behaviour, Recommended action when behaviours that fall within the amber category emphasise the need for gathering information about the individual, their behaviour and the context in which the behaviour has taken place. The initial recognition of amber behaviour may be the first steps in an intervention process and the TLT refers professionals to their own internal safeguarding practices for which action to take. Brook (2013) emphasise that, whilst it is important for professionals to take action when amber behaviours are displayed, the emphasis appears to be on information gathering and monitoring to assess the next steps, rather than immediate intervention.
Red	Red behaviours are defined as being conclusively outside healthy and safe parameters, with some, but not all being illegal, and are harmful to the individual and potentially those around them. The TLT advises that immediate action and intervention is required when a red is presented. Emphasis appears to be upon gaining guidance from current legislation, policies, guidance, risk to the young person or others and the context in which the behaviour takes place. It advises that internal safeguarding policies are followed and that this behaviour cannot be ignored or solely monitored and that action needs to take place. (Brook, 2013)

Categories and specific behaviours

The following age related specifications in tables 2, 3, 4 and 5 are taken directly from the TLT (Brook, 2013).

Commented [JA1]: This needs to be referenced under each Table.
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Table 2: Age category 0-5

Green	Amber	Red
Holding or playing with own genitals	Preoccupation with adult sexual behaviour	Persistently touching the genitals of other children

Attempting to touch or curiosity about other children's genitals	Pulling other children's pants down/skirts up/trousers down against their will	Persistent attempts to touch the genitals of adults
Attempting to touch or curiosity about breasts, bottoms or genitals of adults	Talking about sex using adult slang	Simulation of sexual activity in play
Games for example mummies and daddies, doctors and nurses	Preoccupation with touching the genitals of other people	Sexual behaviour between young children involving penetration with objects
Enjoying nakedness Interest in body parts and what they do	Following others into toilets or changing rooms to look at them or touch them	Forcing other children to engage in sexual play
Curiosity about the differences between boys and girls	Talking about sexual activities seen on TV/online	

Table 3: Age category 5-9
(Brook, 2013)

Green	Amber	Red
Feeling and touching own genitals	Questions about sexual activity which persist or are repeated frequently, despite an answer having been given	Frequent masturbation in front of others
Curiosity about other children's genitals	Sexual bullying face to face or through texts or online messaging	Sexual behaviour engaging significantly younger or less able children
Curiosity about sex and relationships, for example differences between boys and girls, how sex happens, where babies come from, same-sex relationships	Engaging in mutual masturbation Persistent sexual images and ideas in talk, play and art use of adult slang language to discuss sex	Forcing other children to take part in sexual activities Simulation of oral or penetrative sex
Sense of privacy about bodies		Sourcing pornographic material online
Telling stories or asking questions using swear and slang words for parts of the body		

Table 4: Age category 9-13
(Brook, 2013)

Green	Amber	Red
Solitary masturbation	Uncharacteristic and risk-related behaviour, e.g. sudden and/or provocative changes in dress, withdrawal from friends, mixing with new or older people, having more or less money than usual, going missing	Exposing genitals or masturbating in public
Use of sexual language including swear and slang words		Distributing naked or sexually provocative images of self or others
Having girl/boyfriends who are of the same, opposite or any gender		Sexually explicit talk with younger children
Interest in popular culture, for example fashion, music, media, online games, chatting online	Verbal, physical or cyber/virtual sexual bullying involving sexual aggression	Sexual harassment
need for privacy	LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) targeted bullying	Arranging to meet with an online acquaintance in secret
Consensual kissing, hugging, holding hands with peers	Exhibitionism, e.g. flashing or mooning	Genital injury to self or others
	Giving out contact details online	Forcing other children of same age, younger or less able to take part in sexual activities
	Viewing pornographic material	Sexual activity e.g. oral sex or intercourse
	Worrying about being pregnant or having STIs	Presence of sexually transmitted infection (STI)
		Evidence of pregnancy

Table 5: Age category 13-17

(Brook, 2013)

Green	Amber	Red
Solitary masturbation	Accessing exploitative or violent pornography	Exposing genitals or masturbating in public
Sexually explicit conversations with peers	Uncharacteristic and risk-related behaviour, e.g. sudden and/or provocative changes in dress, withdrawal from friends, mixing with new or older people, having more or less money than usual, going missing	Preoccupation with sex, which interferes with daily function
Obscenities and jokes within the current cultural norm		Sexual degradation/humiliation of self or others
Interest in erotica/pornography		Attempting/forcing others to expose genitals
Use of internet/e-media to chat online		Sexually aggressive/exploitative behaviour
Having sexual or non-sexual relationships	Concern about body image	Sexually explicit talk with younger children
Sexual activity including hugging, kissing, holding hands	Taking and sending naked or sexually provocative images of self or others	Sexual harassment
		Non-consensual sexual activity
Consenting oral and/or penetrative sex with others of the same or opposite gender who are of similar age and developmental ability	Single occurrence of peeping, exposing, mooning or obscene gestures	Use of/acceptance of power and control in sexual relationships
		Genital injury to self or others
	Giving out contact details online	Sexual contact with others where there is a big difference in age or ability
Choosing not to be sexually active	Joining adult- only social networking sites and giving false personal information	Sexual activity with someone in authority and in a position of trust
		Sexual activity with family members
	Arranging a face to face meeting with an online contact alone	Involvement in sexual exploitation and/or trafficking
		Sexual contact with animals
		Receipt of gifts or money in exchange for sex

Table 6: The Traffic Light Tool Training Session

Task	Action
01. Introduction	Describe the purpose of the sexual behaviours traffic light tool, and how it works.
02. Group agreement	Produce a list of statements which participants agree to follow during the session/ programme. Create a positive atmosphere within the group, where participants feel happy to share their opinions.
03. Safeguarding and the law quiz	Determine if facts around safeguarding young people and the law are true or false.
04. Values continuum	Clarify how their own values impact on making decisions using the tool. Describe how their own values impact on making decisions using the tool.
05. Demonstration and use of the toolkit	Demonstrate using the tool appropriately. Describe the purpose of the tool. Describe the benefits of the tool. Explain the importance of a common language in relation to developmental and harmful sexual behaviours.
06. Scenarios and carousel	Demonstrate responding to a range of situations/sexual behaviours in all categories. Identify if a situation is red, amber or green on the tool.
07. Action planning	Create an action plan for how and when they will use the tool and how it relates to their local safeguarding procedures.
08. Closure and Evaluation	Evaluate the training.

Table 7: Coding

Conceptual	The codes linked directly to the Kirkpatrick Model levels of evaluating training. These levels were then broken down further as advised by Kirkpatrick and coded as Attitude, Knowledge and Skills
Pre-Ordained	Codes were pre-defined using the RQ as a basis.
Descriptive	Open coding was used to explore that data and highlight any emerging themes that were not directly linked to the pre-ordained or conceptual codes.

(based upon advice by Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick, 2006; Cohen et al 2008; Robson, 2001; and Bryman 2015)

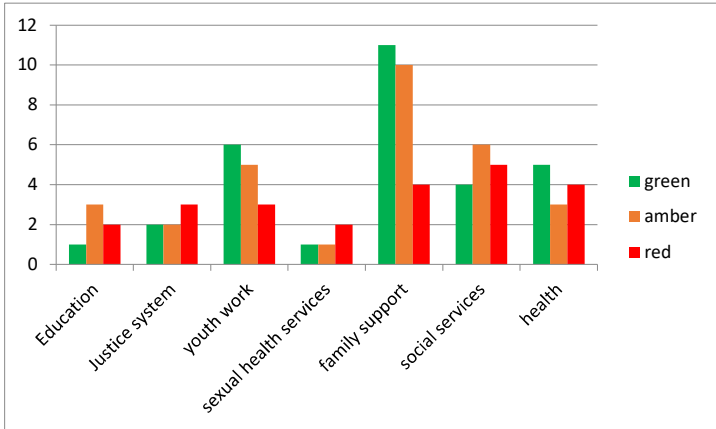**Table 8: Total number of responses from 436 participants received for Likert questions in phase one**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	No response
Training met expectations			2%	29%	68%	
Will be able to apply knowledge learned		0.5%	0.5%	21%	77%	1%
Were the training objectives identified**?**			1%	24%	69%	6%
Did the trainer meet the training objectives?				16%	83%	1%
Was the content organised and easy to follow?			1%	18%	80%	1%
The materials distributed were pertinent and useful			1%	16%	82%	1%
The trainers were knowledgeable and skilled in working with a group				9%	91%	1%
Adequate time was provided for questions and discussion		3%	4%	23%	69%	1%
Interaction was encouraged				11%	88%	1%

Table 9: Qualitative response: intention to apply learning

Main theme Use in practice	'As I am a CP social worker this is essential for good safe practice and I will be using the info and skills learned today' **(P58:P1)** 'Something that I can apply to my assessments and daily role' **(P234:P1)** 'Will use it with the young people /parents/carers that I work with - I will also use it in my risk assessment.' **(P335:P1)**
Subordinate theme Change current practice	'will combine with [omitted] safeguarding policies to change procedures to ensure all disclosures / behaviours are recorded and passed on' **(P227:P1)** 'make changes to support my team making correct decisions regarding categorising risk' **(P31:P1)**
Subordinate theme Signposting	'Use contents as sign posts for other school staff' **(P44:P1)**

	'Tool is useful, I will download the guidelines document, share with all staff to enable adequate signposting' **(P76:P1)**

Table 10: Types of behaviour experienced by role

Table 11: Verbatim examples of changes in relation to risk

Main Theme More clarity	'we put all of our volunteers onto the traffic light tool training as well, so it gives them a common place to work from and like we say, a lot of our volunteers have had different backgrounds, they might have been, some of them historically might have been through their own difficulties, so it gives you a good way of not going on a personal judgement and saying, well, actually, this is what it is, so yeah, its clarified risk for everyone really'. 'I think it's because when things are presented to you, you do get caught up in the details of things and like I said, the kind of, the toolkit almost gives that clarity'. 'I think there is a better understanding, absolutely and I think there's a common idea around what is risky and when a child is actually at risk, yeah'.
Main theme Multi-agency working [process]	'there's been a lot of awareness raising and training on risk from that particular team, you know, there's been a team set up in Cornwall to deal with that and this traffic light tool has been sort of introduced as part of that'

	'we've amended our risk policies as a result of being on the training and read through them and yeah, like I say, it's that information sharing that we have talked about a lot more.
Main Theme No change	'No, I don't think so, I think we've always been pretty hot on that [risk] and good on that, so sexual health wise, we still give the same advice and we do the same things'.

Table 12: Verbatim examples of category cross over

Categorised green behaviour (maps into Amber)
'I have dealt with a young person, aged 15, who is engaging in consensual sexual activity, but was not using any contraception' (age group 13-17) **(P8:P2)** **Parent support adviser**
'The child in question mentioned that a game had taken place in the playground, involving a group of children chasing each other and when caught, having to pull their pants down' (age group 0-5). **(P16:P2)** **Family support worker**
Categorised as amber behaviour (maps into Red)
'Students engaged in online grooming, sexual images being taken and posted online (13-17). **(P8:P2)** **Parent support adviser**
Female student groomed by older male into sending sexual images of herself (13-17). **(P17:P2)** **Designated safeguarding lead**
'A 12 year old female client who is very concerned about her body image and appearance and has been restricting her eating and purging as a result (9-13) **(P13:P2)** **Counsellor**
Categorised as amber behaviour (maps into Green)
'LGBT and sexuality issues have also been a significant part of the assessment of this person' (13-17). **(P11:P2)** **Consultant social worker**
'sexual behaviour discussed in drop ins during c card [condom]registration' (age 13-17) **(P54:P2)** **School nurse)**
'Parent sharing her concerns after a parenting group about her daughters attitude to her body'(age 9-13) **(P1:P2)** **Parenting and adult education learning lead**