centre for youth & criminal justice

What do we know about harmful sexual behaviour?

Carole Murphy

Practice Development Adviser, CYCJ

CYCJ Theory of Change

Children & young people flourish

Practice and policy improvements

Practice Development

Advice, peer support, consultancy support, trying out initiatives, guidance, toolkits, training, supporting change projects

Research

New knowledge, synthesising research evidence, evaluating initiatives, supporting evidence use

Knowledge Exchange

Capturing knowledge, promoting sharing, disseminating, improving access & accessibility, integrating forms of knowledge

centre for youth & criminal justice

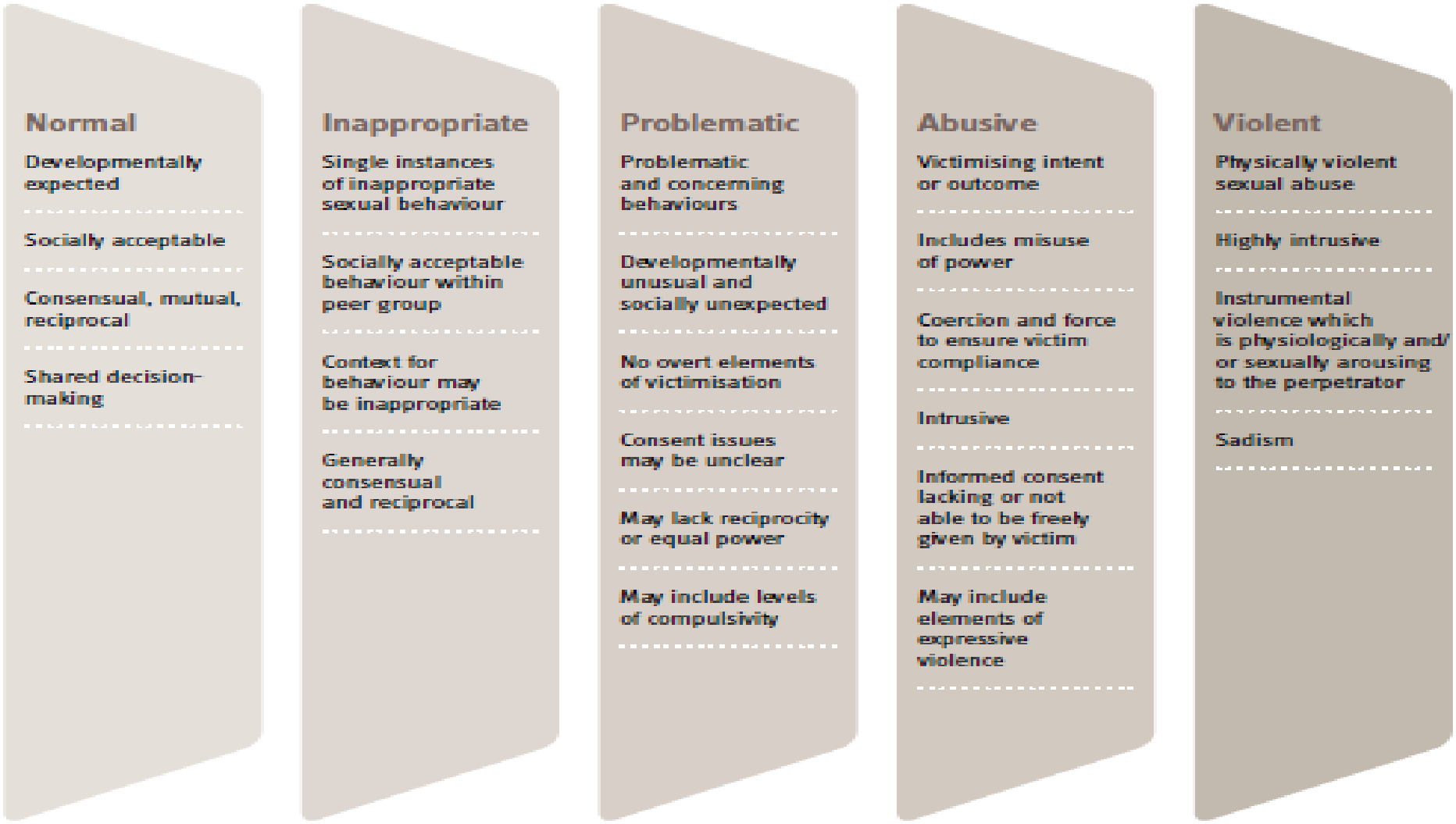
Key questions

- What is harmful sexual behaviour (HSB)?
- How common is HSB?
- Why do children / young people engage in HSB?
- How do we prevent and reduce HSB?

centre for youth & criminal justice

What is HSB?

A continuum of children and young people's sexual behaviours (Hackett, 2010)



Definition of HSB

"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" (NSPCC, 2016).

0 to 5 years | 5 to 9 years | 9 to 13 years | 13 to 17 years

Green behaviours

- solitary masturbation
- sexually explicit conversations with peers
- obscenities and jokes within the current cultural norm
- interest in erotica/pornography
- use of internet/e-media to chat online
- having sexual or non-sexual relationships
- sexual activity including hugging, kissing, holding hands

Amber behaviours

- accessing exploitative or violent pornography
- 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
- concern about body image
- aking and sending naked or sexually provocative images of self or others

Red behaviours

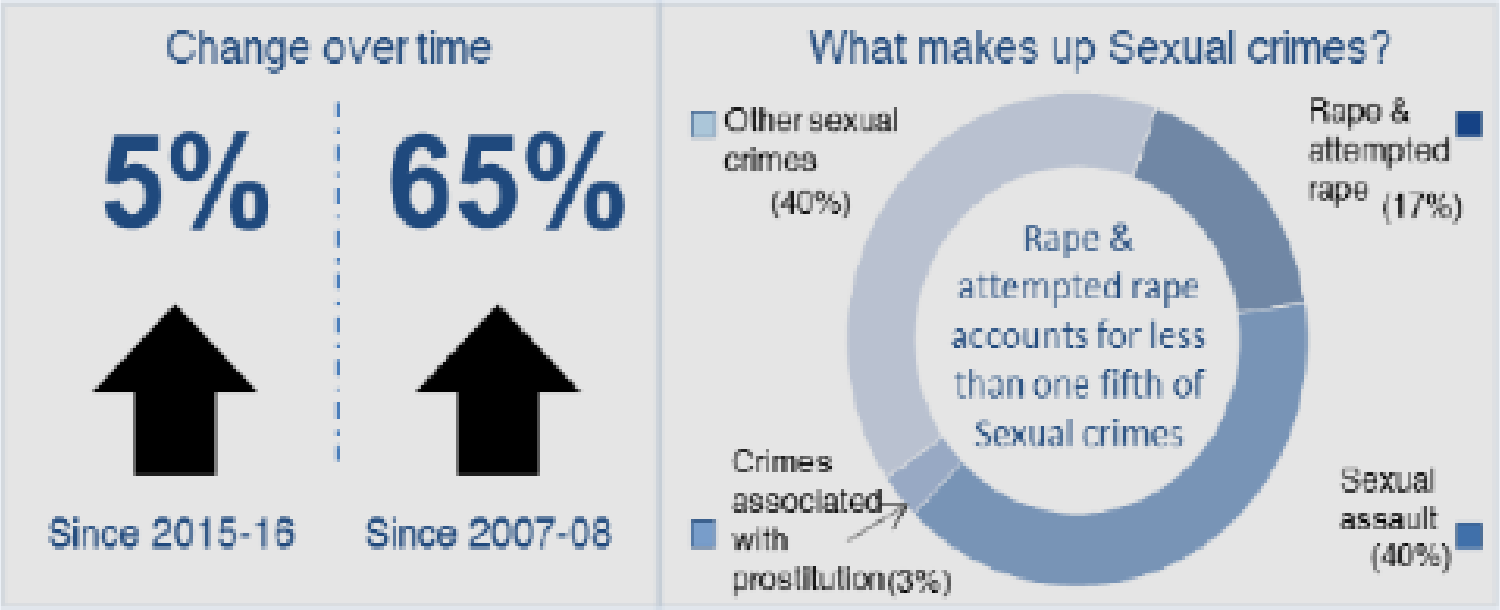
- exposing genitals or masturbating in public
- preoccupation with sex, which interferes with daily function
- sexual degradation/humiliation of self or others
- attempting/forcing others to expose genitals
- sexually aggressive/exploitative behaviour
- sexually explicit talk with younger children
- sexual harassment

Questions to consider

- Is the behaviour consensual for all children?
- Is it reflective of natural curiosity or experimentation?
- Does it involve children of a similar age or developmental ability?
- Is the behaviour occurring in a public or private space?
- Is it a cause for concern?
- Are other children showing signs of alarm / distress?

How common is HSB?

Group 2 – Sexual Crimes



How common is HSB by children?

School sex crime reports in UK top 5,500 in three years

By Claire Savage
5 Live Investigates

6 September 2015

Share

More than 5,500 alleged sex crimes in UK schools were reported to police in the last three years, BBC figures show.

How common is HSB by children with additional support needs?

Why do children engage in HSB?

"Children and young people with harmful sexual behaviours are a very diverse group and, in most cases, their sexual behaviours are merely one element of a range of predisposing experiences, underlying vulnerabilities and presenting problems in their lives. In many cases, children and young people are at the same time both perpetrator of abuse and victim of harm." (Hackett, 2014)

Vulnerabilities

How do we prevent and reduce HSB?

centre for youth & criminal justice

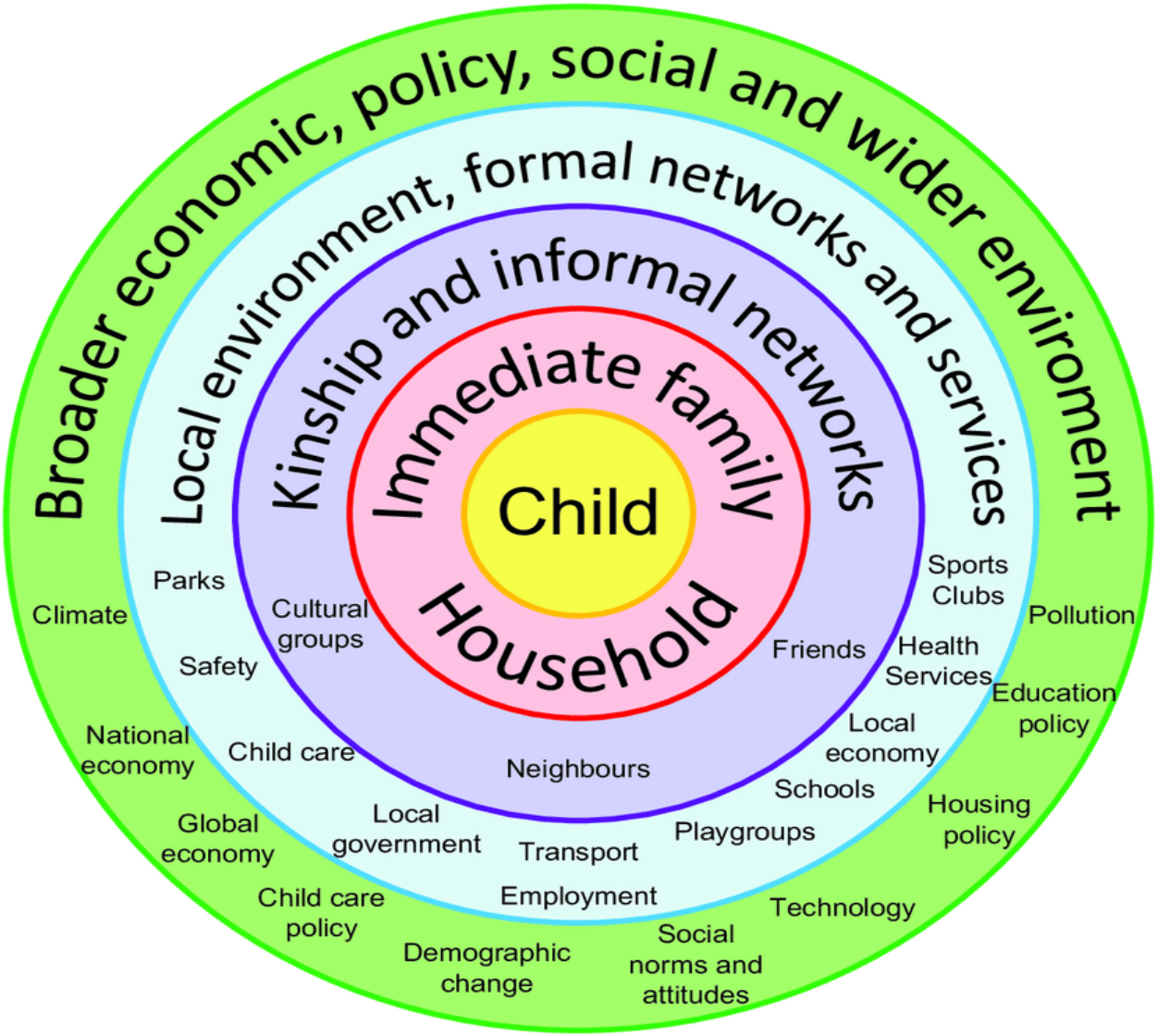
GOOD LIVES MODEL

My needs
Having fun
Achieving
Being my own person
Having people in my life
Having purpose and making a difference
Emotional health
Sexual health
Physical health

getting it right for every child

centre for youth & criminal justice

Wider than the individual



Public health approach

- Primary prevention – preventing potential HSB at a universal level
- Secondary prevention – concentrating prevention efforts on at risk individuals
- Tertiary prevention – interventions after HSB has occurred to prevent future HSB

How do we get it right for every child – some considerations?

- Language, labelling, stigma
- Mode of communication
- Ethical issues
- Developmentally appropriate processes
- Support through justice processes
- Individualised, holistic, systemic, collaborative interventions
- Collaborative partnership working
- Appropriately trained staff
- Environmental changes