

## **SECTION 10.15 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO SEXUALLY ABUSE OTHERS**

### **10.15.1 Introduction**

- a) These procedures are based on the increased awareness and knowledge about the incidence of child sexual abuse committed by young people under 18 years of age.
- b) The procedures are compatible with the law and the introduction of the '*Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their families*' (Department of Health) and *ASSET*, which is more offence-focussed (Home Office).
- c) The purpose of the procedures is to provide a clear operational framework within which the processes of assessment, decision-making and case management can take place. It requires a collaborative approach between child welfare and criminal justice agencies which ensures that no one agency will embark upon a course of action that has implications for others without appropriate consultation.
- d) In acknowledgement of the importance of this co-ordinated, multi-agency approach, the Greater Manchester local authorities and Greater Manchester Police are committed to implementing the Procedures and Assessment Framework developed by the AIM project (Assessment, Intervention and Moving on). These procedures are based on the principle that the welfare of children is paramount and the primary objective of undertaking work with young people who abuse others is to prevent future victims.

### **10.15.2 Principles**

- a) Work with children and young people who abuse others must recognise that such children are likely to have considerable needs themselves, and also that they may pose a significant risk of harm to other children.
- b) The needs of the children and young people who sexually abuse should be considered separately from the needs of their victims.
- c) Evidence suggests that children and young people who abuse may have suffered considerable disruption in their lives, been exposed to violence within the family, may have witnessed or been subject to physical or sexual abuse, have problems in their educational development and may have committed other offences. Such children and young people are likely to be children in need, and some will in addition be suffering from, or at risk of, significant harm and may themselves be in need of protection.
- d) The reasons why young people sexually abuse are multi-faceted and to explore these further, a full risk assessment and an assessment of need must be carried out in every case.
- e) Children and young people who abuse others should be held responsible for their abusive behaviour.

- f) Work with adult abusers has shown that many of them began committing abusive acts during their childhood or adolescence. It is not possible to be predictive regarding which children and young people are likely to continue their abusive behaviour into adulthood. It is, therefore, necessary to address **all** episodes of abusive behaviour.
- g) Early and effective, intervention with children and young people who abuse others may play an important part in protecting children, by preventing the continuation or escalation of abusive behaviour.
- h) Wherever possible, young people who sexually abuse have a right to be consulted and involved in all matters and decisions that affect their lives. Their parents have a right to information, respect and participation in matters that affect their family.

### **10.15.3 Recognition of abuse by a child or young person**

- a) Exploration during childhood is a normal part of development, and it is important that those working with children and families develop an understanding of age appropriate sexual behaviour.
- b) In assessing a child or young person who abuses another, relevant considerations include:  
The nature and extent of the abusive behaviour. In respect of sexual abuse, there are sometimes perceived to be difficulties in distinguishing between normal childhood sexual development and experimentation and sexually inappropriate or aggressive behaviour. Expert professional judgement may be needed within the context of knowledge about normal child sexuality.
  - The context of the abusive behaviours, including the nature of the relationship between the children/young people, difference in age between the victim and alleged abuser, absence of consent, exploitation and whether the alleged abuser had authority or responsibility for the victim, secrecy, coercion, bribery or violence.
  - The child's development, and family and social circumstances.
  - The need for services, specifically focusing on the child's harmful behaviour as well as other significant needs.
  - The risk to self and others, including other children in the household, extended family, school, peer group or wider social network.
- c) A risk is likely to be present unless the opportunity to further abuse is ended, the young person has acknowledged the abusive behaviour and accepted responsibility, and there is agreement by the young abuser and his/her family to work with relevant agencies to address the problem.
- d) It is also important that whilst responding to all incidents we do not over-react to the presenting situation as this can have long term consequences for the child, e.g. becoming ashamed about their sexuality.

#### 10.15.4 ASSESSMENT

- a) The AIM handbook contains practice guidelines for undertaking AIM assessments, an outline for the report and a consent form which parents / carers should be asked to sign to indicate their agreement. Training in relation to completing the assessment is co-ordinated via the AIM project in order to promote consistent practice across the authorities using the AIM model.
- b) Four assessment models are available and it is important to use the model appropriate to the young person's situation. The initial Assessment models are as follows:
- Children under 10 with problematic sexual behaviour
  - Young people who sexually abuse
  - Parents / Carers of young people / children with sexually problematic behaviour
  - Young people with intellectual disabilities who present problematic / harmful sexual behaviours
- c) Where an AIM assessment is completed in the context of criminal proceedings the AIM assessment report may serve one of the two purposes:
- In the context of a young person whose offence is not serious enough to go straight to court it can be used during a 28 day bail period in order to make recommendations to the police regarding appropriate disposal of the case
  - In the context of a young person who goes to court immediately it can be used as the basis of a pre-sentence report
- In either eventuality the outcome of the AIM assessment provides a recommendation to the police or court in order for a final decision to be made, but the assessors will not be the final decision makers, as to the outcome for the young person
- d) Where an AIM assessment is completed in the context of problematic sexual behaviour outside of criminal proceedings (particularly relevant for those under 10 or with a significant intellectual disability), the outcome should inform any necessary intervention plan including a possible child protection response as outlined in section 5 of the Safeguarding Children Handbook.

#### 10.15.5 ASSESSMENT OUTCOMES

- a) The conclusions of the AIM assessment in relation to the levels of concern and strength will inform the outcome in terms of the perception of the seriousness of the incident and the level of risk presented by a young person. The most appropriate response to their circumstances can therefore be recommended.
- b) Following assessment it will be necessary to determine:
- The seriousness of the sexual behaviour / incident
  - What intervention / support is needed for the young person and their parents / carers
  - What protection issues exist in relation to other children / young people including siblings and how should these be managed.
  - Where the young person should be living

In criminal proceedings these issues will be determined in conjunction with the court. In other circumstances they will be determined through appropriate multi-agency processes as outlined in this procedure.

- c) Placement considerations for a young person will be based on the outcome of the assessment. The same principles apply whether a young person is at home or in alternative care provision:
- Full information in relation to the allegation, assessment and intervention recommendations should be shared with parents / carers including the potential level of risk presented by the young person
  - The potential risk to other children / young people at home, in the placement or likely to have contact must be assessed and a risk management plan established with parents / carers.
  - When considering alternative placements in foster or residential care the potential risks and impact across the group of children / young people should be carefully considered prior to the making of a placement, and necessary risk management plans established.
  - All discussions and plans should be recorded, and plans actively monitored.

#### **10.15.6 REFERRAL AND ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

- a) A referral may be made to either the Youth Offending Team or the Contact Centre at Houldsworth Mill if a young person is not known. If a young person already has a social worker, a referral should be made to that worker or to the Youth Offending Team depending on their age and circumstances.
- b) An initial discussion between the Youth Offending Team and Children's Social Care should occur within one hour of receiving the referral in order to agree the lead agency:
- Where a young person has been sent directly to court for sentencing, the Youth Offending Team will take the lead in recommending an AIM assessment and preparing a pre-sentence report. Children's Social Care will address any child protection issues.
  - In other circumstances for young people aged 10 plus, agreement will be reached as to the most appropriate lead.
  - For children under the age of 10, Children's Social Care will lead the assessment, and will seek a second worker from Children's Social Care or from CAMHS as the Youth Offending Team do not work with this age group. The Youth Offending Team should be kept informed of the outcomes of any assessments.
  - If immediate protective action is required Children's Social Care will take lead responsibility and initiate a S47 enquiry in line with the procedures in section 5
  - If a case is open to Children's Social Care the relevant service will be the lead agency if a Children's Social Care lead is agreed as the most appropriate.
- c) Appropriate assessors should be identified using the following principles
- At least one assessor must be AIM trained.
  - At least one assessor must hold a Social Work qualification
  - Assessment should be multi-agency; Youth Offending Team and Children's Social

Care where a criminal process is likely; Children's Social Care and community CAMHS for children under 10 or with intellectual disabilities; specialist involvement for very serious high risk cases

- Where no alternative exists to Children's Social Care workers may undertake an assessment where there are no criminal proceedings
- The Social worker for the young person should not be involved in the assessment in order to ensure it is objective.

d) In all cases where a young person who is suspected of sexually abusive behaviour comes to the attention of Children's Social Care, there should be a decision within one working day about the required response in line with procedures for initial assessment.

e) The initial strategy discussion in relation to an AIM assessment will be convened by the agreed lead agency. Its purpose will be to:

- Agree the need for an AIM assessment
- Identify the assessors and timescales for completion of the assessment
- Identify any child protection issues that need addressing via S47 including any immediate protection requirements
- Agree temporary risk management strategy based on the information available.

This initial strategy discussion may take the form of an agreement by telephone about agency responsibilities and action, or may be a multi-agency strategy meeting depending on the complexity of the situation. The outcome in terms of agreements should be recorded by the lead agencies involved and copies sent to the other agency and to the Safeguarding Children Unit within 7 days.

f) The lead agency should contact the Safeguarding Children Unit within those 7 days to book a date for an AIM strategy meeting in 4 weeks time. This meeting will then be convened by the Safeguarding Children Unit and chaired by a reviewing officer regardless of the age of the child / young person. A copy of the referral form and the invitation list should be sent to the Safeguarding Children Unit with the record of the initial strategy discussion / meeting. Relevant agencies to invite will include school, health, police, CAMHS, residential worker and others involved with the young person.

g) The purpose of the AIM strategy meeting chaired by the Safeguarding Children Unit will be to:

- Consider the conclusions of the AIM assessment and its recommendations
- Establish an appropriate plan addressing:
  - Intervention / treatment and support needs and who will be responsible for addressing these
  - A multi-disciplinary safety plan to safeguarding both the alleged perpetrator and any vulnerable young people
  - Appropriate information sharing with parents / carers
  - Recommendations within criminal proceedings where appropriate
  - A date to reconvene the meeting

h) A copy of the completed AIM assessment should be sent to the Safeguarding Children Unit two days before the meeting.

- i) The assessment should be shared with the young person and their parents before the strategy meeting has taken place.
- j) Minutes of the meeting will be circulated to those present and those with responsibility for action within 15 working days.
- k) Further strategy meetings to review the progress of the actions agreed and outcomes for the alleged perpetrator and other vulnerable young people will be convened and chaired by the Safeguarding Children Unit even if a case is no longer open to Children's Social Care.

### Flow Chart for Aim Assessment

