



Responding to Children's Sexual Behaviours Framework



August 2026
Version 2 (External)

“Leah and I are delighted that Goodstart will be using the Layered Continuum and that your workforce have found this to be a useful tool. The framework looks great, easy to read and really practical.”

Amanda Paton

Deputy Director - Practice, Australian Centre for Child Protection.

Professor Leah Bromfield

Director and Chair of Child Protection, Australian Centre for Child Protection and 2025 Australian of the Year for South Australia.

“I think you have done a marvelous job in collecting together a very helpful resource for your staff and I am glad you worked with Leah and Amanda and their revised layered continuum which is considered best practice at present.”

Emeritus Professor Kerryann Walsh

Queensland University of Technology.

“Great work, it looks like a really useful document.”

Professor Daryl Higgins

Director, Institute of Child Protection Studies, Australian Catholic University.

“I really like that you have stepped out how staff can respond in the moment and then also ongoing responses (next steps) – I think this is helpful.”

Tim Hawes

Service Manager, Violence Abuse and Neglect, Hunter New England Local Health District.

“Thank you for providing the opportunity to go over this great resource, you and your team have done an amazing job and will really impact the industry.”

John Cardamone

Educator, Speaker, Survivor.

“Love the layout, easy to understand and follow.”

“Great resource with the indicators of safe and unsafe.”

Goodstart National Reference Group

“This is such an important prevention initiative. The resource is very well presented and accessible. Thank you for the opportunity to review.”

Karen Flanagan AM

National Executive Director - Therapeutic Services, Australian Childhood Foundation.

Introduction

Children display sexual behaviours from birth as part of appropriate and typical development and their sexual behaviour exists along a continuum influenced by developmental stage, family environment, exposure to sexual content and broader social and cultural factors (Paton & Bromfield, 2024). This framework helps teachers and educators, working with young children from birth to school age to distinguish between safe, developmentally appropriate sexual behaviours and unsafe sexual behaviours and guides appropriate, effective responses.

Children who display unsafe sexual behaviours must be considered first and foremost as children, with the same rights to care, support and opportunities for belonging as any other child (Hackett et al., 2019). Responses should address safety and supervision with empathy and support for healthy development.

The way teachers and educators respond to a child's behaviours and engage with their family – using non-judgemental, informed and sensitive approaches – can significantly influence willingness to access to support and successful intervention. Recognising that children's sexual behaviour is dynamic and context dependent, this practical tool promotes awareness, prevention and effective responses to support children's healthy development and safety.

This framework is based on the contemporary research and tools developed by Amanda Paton and Professor Leah Bromfield (2024), Professor Simon Hackett's (2010) continuum of understanding sexualised behaviours and on the work of Dr. Toni Cavanagh Johnson (2015).

We developed this framework to reflect the Goodstart vision, purpose and guiding principles. We thank those who have provided their knowledge and expertise in developing these materials with us.



Using this framework

When teachers or educators observe a child engaging in sexual behaviour, it can be difficult to determine whether the behaviour is developmentally appropriate or cause for concern. Our perceptions are shaped by our own experiences, culture and beliefs, making critical reflection essential (Paton & Bromfield, 2024 p. 13). Many adults may feel uncomfortable and respond based on personal beliefs or emotions, which can affect the support that children and their families receive (South Australian Department of Education [SADOE], 2026). This framework provides clear, consistent guidance to help teachers and educators respond appropriately and, when necessary, collaborate with other professionals to best support children and families.

Teachers and educators also have a responsibility to “**look, do, tell**” and prevent, identify and respond to child abuse, neglect and harm. If you see something, if you hear something, you must act in the moment and then say something. Use this framework to respond appropriately to children’s sexual behaviour.

In this document, you will find:

- Information about the Continuum
- A Layered Continuum for understanding sexual behaviours
- Appropriate or harmful behaviours across the ages
- Adult responses to behaviours across the Continuum
- Next steps for the whole team



Understanding and Working Through the Continuum

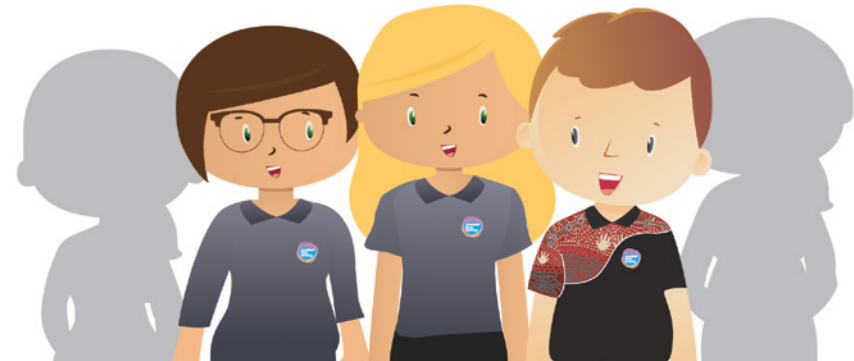
“The Layered Continuum comprises five steps, which should be explored one by one in sequential order. Each step will add a level of detail and deeper understanding of the behaviour and context in which it occurs. Working through the steps can also help you to consider what underlies the behaviour and what the impact of that behaviour may be on those involved. The Layered Continuum will help you to come to an understanding (or assessment) of two distinct but related concepts: the level of harm caused by the behaviour and how concerned we are about the behaviour continuing” (Paton & Bromfield, 2024, p. 10).

The continuum should be used in a layered manner where:

- adults working with children start with the sexual behaviour which they have encountered and consider this in terms of a child’s developmental age and stage, physically, psychologically, socially, sexually and cognitively (SADOE, 2026). Whilst this won’t necessarily change the harm caused (particularly when involving another child) it may impact the level of concern you have regarding a specific behaviour and therefore responses.
- adults working with children should look outwards and consider the social and environmental context within which the behaviour occurs and through relevant cultural and/or religious lenses (Paton & Bromfield, 2024). Whilst this won’t necessarily change the harm caused (particularly when involving another child) it may impact the level of concern you have regarding a specific behaviour and therefore responses; and
- adults working with children should also look inwards to consider their own ‘positionality’ or the lens with which they are viewing or observing the behaviour and whether this is impacting the seriousness with which they are viewing the behaviour (Paton & Bromfield, 2024). Considering both the professional and personal self, reflect on any potential bias or predetermined perspective which you bring to this review.

Once this level of assessment is complete, additional factors must be considered, including:

- the dynamic created when another child is involved in the behaviour, specifically regarding ages of the children, respect, mutuality and consent (SADOE, 2026).
- children’s emotional experience and response surrounding the behaviour for both the child displaying the behaviour and others impacted (Paton & Bromfield, 2024); and
- the pattern of the behaviour over time (SADOE, 2026).
- remember that children who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours are not the same as adult perpetrators of sexual abuse and it is important we respond to them in developmentally appropriate, supportive and non-punitive ways.



Layered Continuum for understanding sexual behaviour

Descriptor	SAFE		UNSAFE		
			If you believe a child is at immediate risk, call 000. Mandatory reporting obligations apply. Concerning, Very Concerning and Serious/Extreme Behaviours are all considered Harmful Sexual Behaviours. This is because they can cause harm to either the child displaying the behaviours, or any other child involved.		
	Developmentally Appropriate	Developmentally Inappropriate	Concerning	Very Concerning	Serious/ Extreme
General description of the behaviour	The type of behaviour is expected for the child's developmental stage; it is seen as socially acceptable and aligned with community expectations. It is typically considered appropriate sexual expression and/or exploration.	Sexual behaviour is developmentally, socially, contextually and/or culturally inappropriate. Considered on the fringe of being developmentally acceptable. May be displayed as a single incident, or behaviour that is slightly outside developmental norms but readily accepted within a social peer group or set context. Inappropriate sexual behaviour can include developmentally appropriate behaviours that occur in situations or settings where they are not appropriate, especially in younger children.	Behaviour that is clearly outside developmental expectations. May also include developmentally inappropriate behaviours displayed as part of a pattern of behaviour. Regardless of context, the behaviour is generally socially unacceptable even within diverse peer or social groups.	This behaviour is clearly outside developmental expectations and is considered socially unacceptable. It is often intrusive and harmful to the child displaying the behaviours and/or others.	An extension of behaviours that are 'Very Concerning', 'Serious/ Extreme' behaviours may also include elements of physical violence, sadism, degradation and be highly intrusive and harmful to others.
Consent, mutuality, reciprocity and respect - for behaviours involving another child	The children involved have a shared understanding of the behaviour. The behaviour is mutual and reciprocal with no power differential or coercion.	The children involved have a shared understanding of the behaviour. Generally consensual, reciprocal and includes mutuality with no or minimal power differential. Possible self-induced pressure to fit in with peers.	May involve inequity in power, lack of respect or reciprocity for the other and limited mutuality. There may be differences in the understanding of the children involved regarding the sexual nature of the behaviour or gratification experienced.	Will likely include a lack of respect for the rights of the other child, inequity in power, disregard for the concept of mutuality and will often involve coercion or force, or involvement of younger children in sexual activity which they do not understand.	Often involves force, coercion, threats and deception with limited respect for the rights of the other children involved. The child displaying the behaviours may have developed or be developing a fixated sexual interest in younger children.

Note. Adapted from *Understanding Harmful Sexual Behaviours: A Layered Continuum* (p. 8), by A. Paton & L. Bromfield, (2024). University of South Australia, Australian Centre for Child Protection. Copyright 2024 by the University of South Australia. Adapted with permission.

Descriptor	SAFE		UNSAFE		
			If you believe a child is at immediate risk, call 000. Mandatory reporting obligations apply. Concerning, Very Concerning and Serious/Extreme Behaviours are all considered Harmful Sexual Behaviours. This is because they can cause harm to either the child displaying the behaviours, or any other child involved.		
	Developmentally Appropriate	Developmentally Inappropriate	Concerning	Very Concerning	Serious/ Extreme
Emotional experience and expression	Emotional experience and expression that is generally positive or neutral. May include displayed curiosity, giggling, laughter and joy in younger children and engagement or pleasure by adolescents.	May include positive, neutral, curious, or embarrassed emotional experience and expressions, particularly if the behaviour is exposed.	May include non-emotion, extreme or intense emotion, expressed internal conflict of emotions, or non-expected emotional responses. Can however be accompanied with complex feelings of guilt, remorse and/or shame, particularly where the child is aware the behaviour may not be appropriate.	May include non-emotion, extreme or intense emotion, expressed internal conflict of emotions, or non-expected emotional responses. An extension of emotions associated with those in the 'Concerning' group but with greater intensity. May display a lack of insight, care or empathy for the experience of other children involved. Distress may be more situated in the consequences of 'getting caught'.	May include non-emotion, extreme or intense emotion, expressed internal conflict of emotions, or non-expected emotional responses. Varies widely and is often related to the motivating and causal factors of the behaviour, though can include shame, anger and pleasure. There is likely to be a lack of care or empathy for the experience of any children harmed by their behaviours. As with very concerning behaviours, emotional response may be more situated in the consequences of 'getting caught'.
Pattern of behaviour	Pattern of the child's sexual expression has been developmentally appropriate.	Sexual behaviours displayed outside of appropriate contexts are typically one-off play/peer based. Child responds to redirection or explanation about appropriate context as required. Generally seen in early adolescence and adolescence as healthy experimentation or in pre-school aged children exploring their bodies. Often single incidents that can be shifted with minimal boundary setting, psychoeducation and/or redirection	May be a single incident but typically repeated and sometimes compulsive/driven behaviour.	Often repeated but not always compulsive, behaviour can sometimes be seen to 'escalate' in level and frequency over time. Likely to persist despite targeted redirection or intervention, sometimes in secret. May involve multiple children and occur across varied locations.	Behaviour is often persistent and accompanied by rigid or ingrained patterns of thought that have developed over an extended period. Behaviour is likely to continue without specialised therapeutic intervention and often persists in secret. Likely includes multiple children and varied locations.

Note. Adapted from *Understanding Harmful Sexual Behaviours: A Layered Continuum* (p. 9), by A. Paton & L. Bromfield, (2024). University of South Australia, Australian Centre for Child Protection. Copyright 2024 by the University of South Australia. Adapted with permission.

Appropriate or harmful behaviour across the ages

To support the application of the continuum, the following tables provide examples of young children's sexual behaviours and how to respond, including information on reporting requirements, team response, environmental and capability considerations. Responses must be considered in terms of contemporary evidence as it arises and does not remove the need for specialist consultation, particularly where the behaviour is considered harmful sexual behaviour.

CHILDREN AGED BIRTH TO THREE	SAFE		UNSAFE		
			Harmful Sexual Behaviours		
			If you believe a child is at immediate risk, call 000. Mandatory reporting obligations apply.		
			Concerning, Very Concerning and Serious/Extreme Behaviours are all considered Harmful Sexual Behaviours. This is because they can cause harm to either the child displaying the behaviours, or any other child involved.		
	Developmentally Appropriate	Developmentally Inappropriate	Concerning	Very Concerning	Serious/ Extreme
	- From birth, children will explore all their body parts equally, including the genitals; may include touching, holding, poking with fingers, pulling and unconscious self touch. - Play-based behaviour with others can include various games that involve children being naked, playing gender-based roles and make-believe games such as mums and dads, mums and mums, dads and dads; doctors and nurses; families; 'I'll show you mine if you show me yours.' - Children may also want to touch and/or look at the genitals of others around them in a natural curiosity as they work out how their bodies are the same and different. This is more common around bath and dressing time; they often enjoy being nude. - Language expression and jokes can include conversations about bottoms, breasts, vaginas, penises and general bodily functions.	- Regular self touch that can be redirected with little emotional impact on, or distress for the child. - Exposing themselves to others or seeking to look at other children's genitals outside play-based behaviour. Behaviour will usually dissipate with reinforcement of boundaries and redirection. - Seeking opportunities to follow adults and other children into private areas such as toilets, bathrooms and bedrooms when changing to see or touch their genitals, bottom, or breasts. - Touching the genitals of animals.	- Self touch that occurs often, even after redirection. - Play-based themes that are persistently sexual in nature and/or demonstrate adult sexual themes through language or play. - Seeking opportunities to watch others when undressing, in bathrooms or toilets. - Invading other children or adults private space to lift/move their clothing to see and/or touch their private parts or see their genitals, bottom, or breasts.	- Self touch that is compulsive and occurs often. A preference for this activity over others. Self touch that is rough or self-injury. - Play-based themes that are persistently sexual in nature even after redirection. Themes are simulated or demonstrated through play with other children or toys like dolls and bears, for example, simulating sex with or without clothes. - Persistent touching of others genitals and private parts and/or seeking opportunities to do so even after redirection. - Use of sexually aggressive and/or explicit language.	- Using force to engage other children in sexual activity regardless of the context of play (i.e., normal fantasy play). - Use of explicit sexual acts within play on other children, such as oral sex, self touch and penetration (penetration may be with finger/objects).

Note. Adapted from *Understanding Harmful Sexual Behaviours: A Layered Continuum* (pp. 32-33), by A. Paton & L. Bromfield, (2024). University of South Australia, Australian Centre for Child Protection. Copyright 2024 by the University of South Australia. Adapted with permission.

	SAFE		UNSAFE		
			Harmful Sexual Behaviours		
			If you believe a child is at immediate risk, call 000. Mandatory reporting obligations apply. Concerning, Very Concerning and Serious/Extreme Behaviours are all considered Harmful Sexual Behaviours. This is because they can cause harm to either the child displaying the behaviours, or any other child involved.		
	Developmentally Appropriate	Developmentally Inappropriate	Concerning	Very Concerning	Serious/ Extreme
CHILDREN AGED THREE TO SIX	- Play-based behaviour, with others can include various games that involve children being naked, playing gender-based roles and make-believe games such as mums and dads, mums and mums, dads and dads; doctors and nurses; families; 'I'll show you mine if you show me yours. - Children may also want to touch and/or look at the genitals of others around them in a natural curiosity as they work out how their bodies are the same and different. This is more common around bath and dressing time. Children often enjoy being naked. - Language expression and jokes can include conversations about bottoms, breasts, vulvas, vaginas, penises and general bodily functions. Children become more curious about gender, sexuality, where babies come from and other sexual-based concepts in this stage and ask caregivers a range of questions. - Children may begin to explore their own bodies and genitals with more purpose, which may include behaviour more akin to self touch.	- Regular self touch that can be redirected with little emotional impact/distress for the child. - Exposing themselves to other children or seeking to look at other children's genitals outside play-based behaviour. - Seeking opportunities to follow adults and other children into private areas such as toilets, bathrooms and bedrooms when changing to see or touch their genitals, bottom, or breasts. - Using language of a sexually explicit nature and/or including sexual themes in play such as open mouth kissing and intentionally touching private parts of the body. - Persistent nudity in contexts where this may be considered inappropriate even after they have been redirected. Touching the genitals of animals.	- Regular self touch that interferes with other activities, occurs within an inappropriate context or location (e.g., a public space), or persists after redirection. - Frequently exposing themselves (private parts of the body) in public or to other children. - Invading other children or adults' private space to lift or move their clothing to see and/or touch genitals, bottoms, or breasts. - Using language of a sexually explicit nature and/or including sexual themes in play or when interacting with others (such as open mouth kissing and fondling). - Persisting to touch or showing unusual interest in the genitals of animals even after redirection. - Intentionally accessing pornography and/or playing video games with violent or sexual content.	- Compulsive self touch that interferes with other activities, occurs within an inappropriate context/ location (e.g., a public space), is aggressive and/or self-injurious and persists after redirection. - Pursuing other children in an intimidating and/or aggressive manner to touch their private parts or engage them in sexualised behaviour. - Using language of a highly sexually explicit nature and/or simulating sexually explicit acts in or out of play, such as oral sex and anal or vaginal penetration. - Engaging significantly younger or more vulnerable children in sexualised behaviour. - Frequently watching pornography.	- Taking and/or sharing images of their own or another person's genital area, or other sexually explicit images. - Persistently using language of a highly sexual and explicit nature. - Taking photos of themselves or others' genitals or generally sexual images and/or sharing these types of images with others. - Frequently watching and/or showing other children pornography.

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Adult Responses to Behaviours Across the Continuum (Birth to Six Years)

	Applies to ALL sexual behaviours:	Developmentally Appropriate	Developmentally Inappropriate	Concerning	Very Concerning	Serious / Extreme
Immediate Response  LOOK  DO <td> • Remain calm and non-judgemental. Use a gentle, neutral, calm tone and use body language to avoid shaming and/or blaming the child/children. Avoid over-reacting as children take emotional cues from adults. Use strengths-based language when referring to children who have displayed concerning or harmful sexual behaviours, to avoid stigmatising or labelling children (Australian Children’s Education and Care Authority [ACECQA], 2026). • If you feel yourself getting upset or overwhelmed, or you need to move the child away from others, ask a colleague for help. • In the event of a verbal disclosure about sexual harm in a setting with other children present, protectively interrupt by acknowledging the child and redirecting (‘it sounds like you want to talk about this – let’s chat over here) then follow up in a safe space away from other children. Protective Interruption is a protective strategy from the Goodstart Feel Safe, Be Safe Protective Strategies Kit (Goodstart Early Learning, 2024). • If you feel yourself getting upset or overwhelmed, ask a colleague for help. Let them take over if you need to. You have an important role as a valued member of the team. Your role is to support children’s safety. • Support a colleague if they are unable or appear to be struggling to respond calmly or appropriately. • If a child is doing something that could hurt other children, move them apart so everyone is safe. Help the child to calm down by staying close and supporting them until they have calmed. • Gently interrupt the sexual behaviour. Use short, direct, calm messaging – Avoid shaming or punishing the child and children involved. • Reinforce body safety rules, by calmly responding – see Appendix A for possible scripts that you could use. • Redirect the children involved to an age-appropriate, safe, socially appropriate activity they choose and enjoy. • Check on any other children involved, including any who may have witnessed the behaviour. Provide immediate comfort, reassurance and support, ensuring their safety and emotional security. • Talk with the child (later/private) ‘I noticed that you did something with another child, it’s important that we talk about it’ Use open-ended questions to understand their perspective and any underlying reasons. Document the questions and the response. • Centre rules and expectations of behaviour can also be reinforced as needed. e.g. ‘clothes stay on to keep our bodies safe’ • Ensure that across all spaces, you have clear lines of sight of all children to enable effective supervision. • As soon as possible, factually document what was witnessed or disclosed. </td>	• Remain calm and non-judgemental. Use a gentle, neutral, calm tone and use body language to avoid shaming and/or blaming the child/children. Avoid over-reacting as children take emotional cues from adults. Use strengths-based language when referring to children who have displayed concerning or harmful sexual behaviours, to avoid stigmatising or labelling children (Australian Children’s Education and Care Authority [ACECQA], 2026). • If you feel yourself getting upset or overwhelmed, or you need to move the child away from others, ask a colleague for help. • In the event of a verbal disclosure about sexual harm in a setting with other children present, protectively interrupt by acknowledging the child and redirecting (‘it sounds like you want to talk about this – let’s chat over here) then follow up in a safe space away from other children. Protective Interruption is a protective strategy from the Goodstart Feel Safe, Be Safe Protective Strategies Kit (Goodstart Early Learning, 2024). • If you feel yourself getting upset or overwhelmed, ask a colleague for help. Let them take over if you need to. You have an important role as a valued member of the team. Your role is to support children’s safety. • Support a colleague if they are unable or appear to be struggling to respond calmly or appropriately. • If a child is doing something that could hurt other children, move them apart so everyone is safe. Help the child to calm down by staying close and supporting them until they have calmed. • Gently interrupt the sexual behaviour. Use short, direct, calm messaging – Avoid shaming or punishing the child and children involved. • Reinforce body safety rules, by calmly responding – see Appendix A for possible scripts that you could use. • Redirect the children involved to an age-appropriate, safe, socially appropriate activity they choose and enjoy. • Check on any other children involved, including any who may have witnessed the behaviour. Provide immediate comfort, reassurance and support, ensuring their safety and emotional security. • Talk with the child (later/private) ‘I noticed that you did something with another child, it’s important that we talk about it’ Use open-ended questions to understand their perspective and any underlying reasons. Document the questions and the response. • Centre rules and expectations of behaviour can also be reinforced as needed. e.g. ‘clothes stay on to keep our bodies safe’ • Ensure that across all spaces, you have clear lines of sight of all children to enable effective supervision. • As soon as possible, factually document what was witnessed or disclosed.					
 TELL	Applies to sexual behaviours that are:	Developmentally Inappropriate	Concerning	Very Concerning	Serious / Extreme	
	• If you believe a child is at immediate risk phone 000 • Consider whether the child displaying harmful sexual behaviour may have experienced sexual abuse, been exposed to inappropriate sexual practices, images, or other sexual content, or been subjected to physical or emotional abuse, neglect or domestic and family violence (NSW Government, Communities and Justice, 2017). • Consider whether the other children involved have experienced significant harm or are at risk of future harm. • Consider whether a notification to statutory child protection is required. Complete required mandatory reporting – if you are aware of, or reasonably suspect a child has been or is being abused or is a risk of abuse you must contact statutory child protection services and/or the police.					

Adult Responses to Behaviours Across the Continuum

Communicate with Families 	Applies to ALL sexual behaviours:	Developmentally Appropriate	Developmentally Inappropriate	Concerning	Very Concerning	Serious / Extreme
	• If the behaviour is developmentally appropriate, It is important to communicate with families to ensure consistent guidance at home and to address any concerns collaboratively. • Make notes beforehand to keep your conversation factually on track with what you have seen and/or heard. • Maintain confidentiality – do not disclose the names of any other children involved in the alleged incident or the name/s of the staff involved. • Keep your conversations short and simple, avoid speculating or filling in gaps in the information with opinions or possibilities. • If there's something you don't know, be honest and say you will try to find out • Explain what strategies you have in place at a centre level to proactively manage and respond to children's behaviours e.g. implementing intentional teaching strategies regarding protective behaviours, review of supervision procedures and engaging in additional training. • Be aware that this conversation may be highly emotive for some families (even when discussing safe, developmentally appropriate behaviours).					
	Applies to sexual behaviours that are:	Developmentally Inappropriate	Concerning	Very Concerning	Serious / Extreme	
	For developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviours, identify and offer age-appropriate local support agencies for children and families (ACECQA, 2026, p. 57).					



Adult Response (Next Steps)

Educators and Teachers responsiveness to children's sexual behaviours encompasses a comprehensive framework of prevention, identification, reporting and ongoing reflective practice. This approach integrates professional training, critical reflection, pedagogical strategies and environmental design to support healthy development and wellbeing while mitigating risks to keep all children safe and support healthy development. Responsiveness depends on ongoing assessment, including analysing behavioural patterns rather than isolated incidents and identifying environmental risks such as blind spots, quiet areas, or home corners where behaviours may occur.

Intervention and Support	Applies to ALL sexual behaviours: Developmentally Appropriate Developmentally Inappropriate Concerning Very Concerning Serious / Extreme
	• Foster environments where children feel safe and supported to ask questions and discuss concerns with trusted adults, for example, modelling respectful relationships, using correct names for private body parts and encouraging children to communicate their feelings and body boundaries assertively. • Use the Feel Safe, Be Safe Protective Strategies Kit to empower children with the knowledge they have the right to feel safe all the time and they can talk to a trusted adult about anything. • Continue to monitor the behaviour, document observations and implement support strategies. • Partner with families, offer appropriate resources and work on consistent approaches at home and in care, focusing on shared support. • Tailor communications and interventions to the family's cultural background and values. Ensure interventions do not compromise a child's rights. Seek translator support services if needed. • Regularly review and adjust strategies as the child's needs change. • Work collaboratively with allied health, family support and specialist services as needed for a holistic response.
Reflection and Observation	• Ensure staff are engaging in active and effective supervision practices and have the individual support they require. • Maintain effective team communication and safety within the team so individuals feel they can speak up. • Record incidents factually, without interpretation, noting context, language and responses and follow mandatory reporting procedures. • Participate in professional learning about children's sexual development. • Share critical reflections on children's sexual development in staff meetings as appropriate. • Understand the influence of personal experiences, values, and biases in understanding and misunderstanding children's sexual development. • Continue to implement and reflect on the implementation of the Feel Safe, Be Safe Protective Strategies Kit, identifying areas that require greater focus or intentional teaching.
Environmental Design	• Engage in regular review of your physical and online environments to reduce risks through supervision assessments, plans and maps to ensure visible and active monitoring, especially in high-risk spaces such as bathrooms or environmental areas where line of sight is impeded. • Consider visibility and design of the indoor and outdoor learning environments to ensure, ensure that there is clear line of sight across all spaces. • Reflect on how children are effectively supervised in all learning environments, including during nappy change and toileting routines. • Create, follow, monitor and review the Supervision Risk Assessment. • Consider changes to routines or rhythm adjustments and structure activities to minimise triggers and support healthy interactions. • Review your environments and spaces – are they inclusive and culturally safe, do they encourage children to feel safe and secure to discuss their concerns without compromising their right to privacy? • Ensure supervision risks and mitigation strategies are regularly communicated with the team including casual or agency staff.

Pedagogical Strategies	Applies to ALL sexual behaviours: Developmentally Appropriate Developmentally Inappropriate Concerning Very Concerning Serious / Extreme
	• Support children to feel comfortable to talk about their sexual development, body safety and to disclose concerns. Teach them about respect, dignity and safety from an early age. • Proactively embed learning through play and conversation using the Feel Safe, Be Safe Protective Strategies Kit activities and discussions about feelings, bodily autonomy, body boundaries, consent, persistence, telling a trusted adult if they feel worried or unsafe. • Provide scaffolds for social and emotional development by modelling respectful relationships, consent and assertive communication. • Provide individualised support and responses to a child’s trauma history.
Capability and team support	• Ensure all staff are aware of their reporting responsibilities, engage in regular training on recognising and responding to child abuse, neglect and harm (including grooming) and understand procedures for making a report. • Identify any gaps in individual or team knowledge or practice regarding child protection procedures, trauma-informed responses, or responding to children’s sexual behaviour. Review relevant materials and training available. • Ensure staff are aware of appropriate support agencies that can support families within the community. • Understand and undertake professional development about the difference between developmentally expected sexual behaviour and concerning or harmful behaviour. • Understand that children who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours are not the same as adult perpetrators of sexual abuse and respond appropriately. • Recognise that not all children who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour have been sexually abused. • Check on team members and offer support, including suggesting counselling if required. • Have open conversations as a team about making sure everyone feels safe, respected and comfortable to speak up, ask for help and take a break if needed. • Use team meetings to share simple break ideas—like stretching or mindful breathing—to help manage stress. Discuss how staff can request a break (“tap out”) and how colleagues will respond. • Regularly review Policies and Procedures to ensure all staff are up to date with current guidelines and legislative changes.

Self Care

The topic of child abuse, neglect and harm can be difficult or even distressing. If the issues discussed raise concerns or cause distress to you, and you think you may need someone to talk to, you can contact one of the services listed below:



13 11 14

Lifeline is a 24/7 telephone counselling and referral service across a range of support areas.
lifeline.org.au



1300 657 380

Blue Knot supports adult survivors of childhood trauma and abuse, parents, partners, family and friends.
blueknot.org.au



1800 551 800

Kids Helpline offers telephone and online counselling services for children and young people aged between 5 and 25 years
kidshelpline.com.au



1800 422 015

Support services for people with disabilities.
pwd.org.au



1800 737 732

24/7 National domestic, family and sexual violence counselling, information and support service.
1800respect.org.au



13 92 76

24/7 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Crisis Support for mob who are feeling overwhelmed or having difficulty coping.
13yarn.org.au



1800 497 212

24/7 Family support for LGBTQ+ parents, carers and children.
rainbowfamilies.com.au



1300 789 978

Free 24/7 telephone counselling support for men.
mensline.org.au

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www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf-child-safe-culture-guide
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Appendix A

Scripts that you could use to reinforce body safety rules ...

- 'Please keep your hands and feet to yourself'
- 'Private parts are just for you. They stay covered up.'
- 'Don't touch private parts. We must keep them safe.'
- 'It's ok to be curious, but we talk and ask questions, we don't touch.'
- 'Nik's penis is private. Those parts of our body are private, we don't touch other people's private parts and other people can't touch our private parts.'
- 'Boys and girls have different parts. Lets find a book about this we can look at together.'
- 'Those are important parts of our body, they are private and we must keep them safe.'
- 'Please stay in your own body space when you are playing with your friends.'
- 'Boys have a penis; girls have a vulva. They are important parts of our body, they are private and we must keep them safe.'
- 'I see you're interested in private parts; I have some books we can look at together.'
- 'It is not safe to _____. It is important that you/children are safe.'
- 'We have a rule to keep us safe, let's look at the rules together.'
- 'Nobody looks at, or touches your private parts without a good reason. Let's chat about when it is safe.'
- 'Our mouths are only for eating, breathing and keeping our teeth clean and protected'
- 'We wear pants in the playground/outside/in the classroom, let's go put some on.'
- 'It looks like Billie doesn't feel safe like that. Let's find a game Billie and you can play together that is safe.'
- 'Everyone needs to feel safe and be safe.'





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Acknowledgement of Intellectual Property

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