**Sexual Health and Relationships**

**REGULATIONS AND STANDARDS**

[**The Support Standard**](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2023/416/regulation/7/made)

**[Welfare standard](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2014/3283/schedule/part/3)**

**RELEVANT GUIDANCE AND INFORMATION**

[**Promoting the health and well-being of looked-after children Statutory guidance for local authorities, clinical commissioning groups and NHS England**](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/413368/Promoting_the_health_and_well-being_of_looked-after_children.pdf)

[**NHS Choices - Sexual Health**](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sexual-health/)

[**Family Lives - Teenagers and Sex**](http://www.familylives.org.uk/advice/teenagers/sex/)

**1. Provision of Information and Advice**

The staff supporting in the Homes must ensure that young people are supported to access suitable, good quality, up to date information, support and advice on matters relating to sexual health and relationships. This information should supplement what is provided through their educational setting. Any specific requirements must be incorporated into the child's Placement Plan.

**2. Puberty and Sexual Identity**

Staff supporting in the Homes must adopt a non-judgemental attitude towards young people, particularly as they mature and develop an awareness of their bodies and their sexuality.

Staff in the Home must adopt the same approach to young people who are confused about or wish to explore their sexual identity or who have decided to embrace a particular lifestyle (so long as it is not abusive or illegal).

Young people who are confused about their sexual identity or indicate they have a preference must be afforded equal access to accurate information, education, and support.

As necessary this must be addressed in Placement Plans.

**3. Pornography**

Young people are likely to be curious about sex and relationships and may search for online for pornographic or sexual material. It is important that staff in the Homes have an open discussion with young people about pornographic images and the impact that viewing these can have on young people and their own developing relationships. The NSPCC have produced comprehensive guidance for parents and carers on how to talk to young people about online porn and healthy relationships.

For more information, please see: [**Online porn - Advice on how to talk to your child about the risks of online porn and sexually explicit material (NSPCC)**](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/online-porn/).

**4. Sexual Activity in Homes**

When considering the placement (or ongoing placement) of young people, the manager must assess the risk of sexual relationships developing and should ensure strategies are in place to reduce or prevent these risks if they are likely to be exploitative or abusive.

Where children aged 16 - 18 are placed together with no identified risk of exploitative or abusive behaviour, the manager and the staff in the Home must monitor any developing relationships, and sensitively but positively discourage young people from engaging in sexual relationships with those they share a home with.

Overall, staff supporting in the Homes should be mindful of their duty to consider the overall welfare of young people, and this includes working to minimise risks and consequences of any sexual activity between young people living in the home. If there is any suspicion that a young person is engaging in illegal behaviour it must be discussed with the social worker.

When adults in the Home suspect young people are engaging in sexual relationships, they should:

1. Ensure the basic safety of all the young people concerned;
2. Notify the Registered Service Manager, who should notify/consult relevant social workers and consider reviewing the young person’s Placement Plan;
3. Record all events in the, relevant young person’s Daily Record.

If the incident is serious or persistent, the manager should be notified and consideration given to whether the incident is a Notifiable Event, see **Delegated Authorities and Notifiable Events Policy.**

**5. Contraception**

If young people in the home are engaging in sexual activity staff supporting in the Homes must take reasonable steps to support the young person to minimise the risk of pregnancy or infection. This could include facilitating contact with relevant agencies providing contraceptive advice, such as the Brook Advisory Service or local Sexual Health Services.

Matters of concern must be discussed with the social worker and addressed in Placement Plans.

**6. Pregnancy and Termination**

If a young person is suspected or known to be pregnant the manager and the staff in the Home should talk to the young person about who should be informed and what support the young person may require promoting their own and the unborn baby's welfare.

Under normal circumstances, the young person should be supported to tell their social worker and if appropriate parent(s) to collaborate with the young person in drawing up a suitable plan for the promotion of the welfare of the parent to be and the unborn child.

However, a young person may request that parent(s) and/or that the social worker is not informed.

In all cases where there are any concerns that the pregnant young person or the unborn child is suffering or likely to suffer Significant Harm, the manager must discuss it with the social worker with a view to making a Child Protection referral. In these circumstances it must be explained to the young person why her request for confidentiality cannot be agreed. See: **Safeguarding Children and Young People and Referring Safeguarding Concerns Policy.**

In cases where there are no Child Protection concerns, the young person should be encouraged to inform her social worker and parents. Where the young person is sixteen or above, however, a request to keep the pregnancy confidential from her parents may be respected.

See: **Consents and Delegated Authority.**

Where a young person wishes to terminate a pregnancy, the social worker must be notified/consulted with a view to providing advice, counselling, and support by suitably qualified independent counsellors.

If the termination goes ahead, the manager and the staff supporting in the Home must ensure that the young person’s privacy is protected, and any physical or emotional needs are addressed sensitively.

**7. Sexual Exploitation**

The following should be read in conjunction with relevant local information fro Doncaster:  [Child Sexual exploitation - Doncaster Safeguarding Children Partnership](https://dscp.org.uk/children-young-people/sexual-exploitation/)

Children who are placed in supported accommodation may have previously experienced sexual exploitation (whereby sex / sexual activity is exchanged sex for rewards, gifts, drugs / alcohol, accommodation and / or money). Some young people may continue to be exploited even when they are accommodated by the authority. Both boys and girls can be sexually exploited.

The manager and all staff supporting in the Homes must be alert to signs of sexual exploitation and should do all they can to create an environment which encourages young people to be open about their experiences and which offers them support.

Where there is any suspicion that a young person is being sexually exploited, it should be addressed in their Placement Plan.

Where young people living in the homes are being sexually exploited, their social worker must be notified, and the manager, must make a notification to Ofsted and the police. See **Delegated Authorities and Notifiable Events Policy**.

See also: **Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation Policy.**

**8. Sexually Transmitted Infections**

Also see: **Blood Borne Viruses (BBVs) Policy.**

If it is known or suspected that a young person has a sexually transmitted infection the manager and social worker must be informed and decide what measures to take.

The young person should be supported to make an appointment and attend the local Genito-Urinary Medicine Clinic, who will provide the young person with advice, counselling, testing and other support.

Only those immediate support staff of the young person who need to know will be informed of any suspicion or the outcome of any tests and the strategies or measures to be adopted.

Other young people in the home should only be informed if there is a direct risk to them; for example, if the infected young person deliberately attempts to infect them.

Before disclosing to any other agency or individual, the following criteria must be satisfied.

* The young person has given their written consent to the disclosure;
* The disclosure would be in the best interests of the young person;
* Those receiving the information are aware of its confidential nature.

**9. Masturbation**

It is accepted that masturbation is part of normal sexual behaviour, but young people must be positively encouraged to undertake such activities in private and in a manner, which is not harmful to themselves or other people.