UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

Sibling Sexual Behaviour: Practitioner Mapping Tool

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Introduction

This resource is designed to support practitioner thinking when planning support and interventions for families affected by problematic sibling sexual behaviour (SSB). Throughout this document, we have chosen to refer to 'behaviour' rather than sibling sexual abuse as it is important to recognise that harmful sexual behaviour exists as a continuum and not all inappropriate or problematic behaviour may necessarily constitute abuse.

This resource is based on the findings of research with children and families impacted by SSB, and the practitioners supporting them, conducted as part of the National Project on Sibling Sexual Abuse across the University of Birmingham, the University of West England and Purple Leaf (the preventative wing of the West Mercia Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre). The tool has been designed to be used in conjunction with Yates and Allardyce (2021) Sibling Sexual Abuse: A knowledge and practice overview published by the Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse.

Across the research carried out by King-Hill et al, 2022; McCartan et al, 2022; Yates and Allardyce, 2021, some key findings emerge:

▪ For many practitioners, SSB presented a significant point of professional anxiety. This was largely due to a lack of specific training and information.
▪ SSB must be considered within the context of the whole family, not just the individual child who has harmed or been harmed.
▪ Support available to children and families affected by SSB was found to be sporadic across the country, and professional responses were varied, leaving some families without the services they needed.
▪ Specific consideration of relevant services available within the locality is needed to ensure effective intervention
▪ A reflexive approach to professional responses is required due to the complex and sensitive nature of SSB.

As such, this resource was developed to support practitioners in providing comprehensive support for children and families affected by SSB through detailed 'mapping' of concerns and information.

Allardyce., S. and Yates, P., (2023) Centre of Expertise in Child sexual Abuse: Sibling Sexual Abuse and Behaviour Resource. https://www.csacentre.org.uk/knowledge-in-practice/practice-improvement/sibling-sexual-abuse/.

King-Hill, S., Gilsenan, A., Beavis, J., & Barrie, R. (2022). Assessing Sibling Sexual Abuse in Children and Young People. University of Birmingham: RCEW National Project on Sibling Sexual Abuse.

McCartan, K., Anning, A., & Qureshi, E. (2022). The impact of sibling sexual abuse on adults who were harmed as children. University of the West of England Bristol: RCEW National Project on Sibling Sexual Abuse.

Yates, P., & Allardyce, S. (2021). Sibling sexual abuse: A knowledge and practice overview. Retrieved March 12, 2023, from https://www.csacentre.org.uk/sites/csa-centre-prodv2/assets/File/Sibling%20sexual%20abuse%20report%20-%20for%20publication.pdf.

Who is this for?

This resource is for social workers and other frontline practitioners who work with children and families and may encounter cases involving sibling sexual behaviour. It is designed to **support and organise professional thinking** when responding to such concerns.

How and when should this resource be used?

This resource should be used when sibling behaviour that is inappropriate, problematic or abusive has been identified in your work with children/young people and their family, before any safety planning and intervention decisions have been made. **It is not designed to assess the nature of sibling sexual behaviour and does not replace any statutory assessments required.** This tool is designed to help you think about what support is helpful for the whole family. Before using this tool, please thoroughly review the training slides available on the webpage. For further information on assessing the nature of sibling sexual behaviour please see the CSA centre resource on sibling sexual behaviour and abuse (Allaryce and Yates, 2023).

This resource should **NOT** be used with the children/young people or their families, but rather by professionals to support and organise practitioner thinking in cases where harmful sibling sexual behaviour may be present. It can be used independently, with colleagues or during supervision to enhance practitioner confidence in supporting children and families impacted by SSB. If your organisation feels there is a need for further assessment and more comprehensive training with regard to cases of SSB, we recommend Purple Leaf's resources and CPD opportunities and the professional development courses offered by the CSA Centre. Specific consideration should be given as to how this resource works alongside existing processes and requirements within your organisation.

Aims

- To encourage consideration of the whole family and context.
- To bolster safeguarding planning.
- To allow space to record detailed information and organise practitioner thinking.
- To support effective multi-agency working.
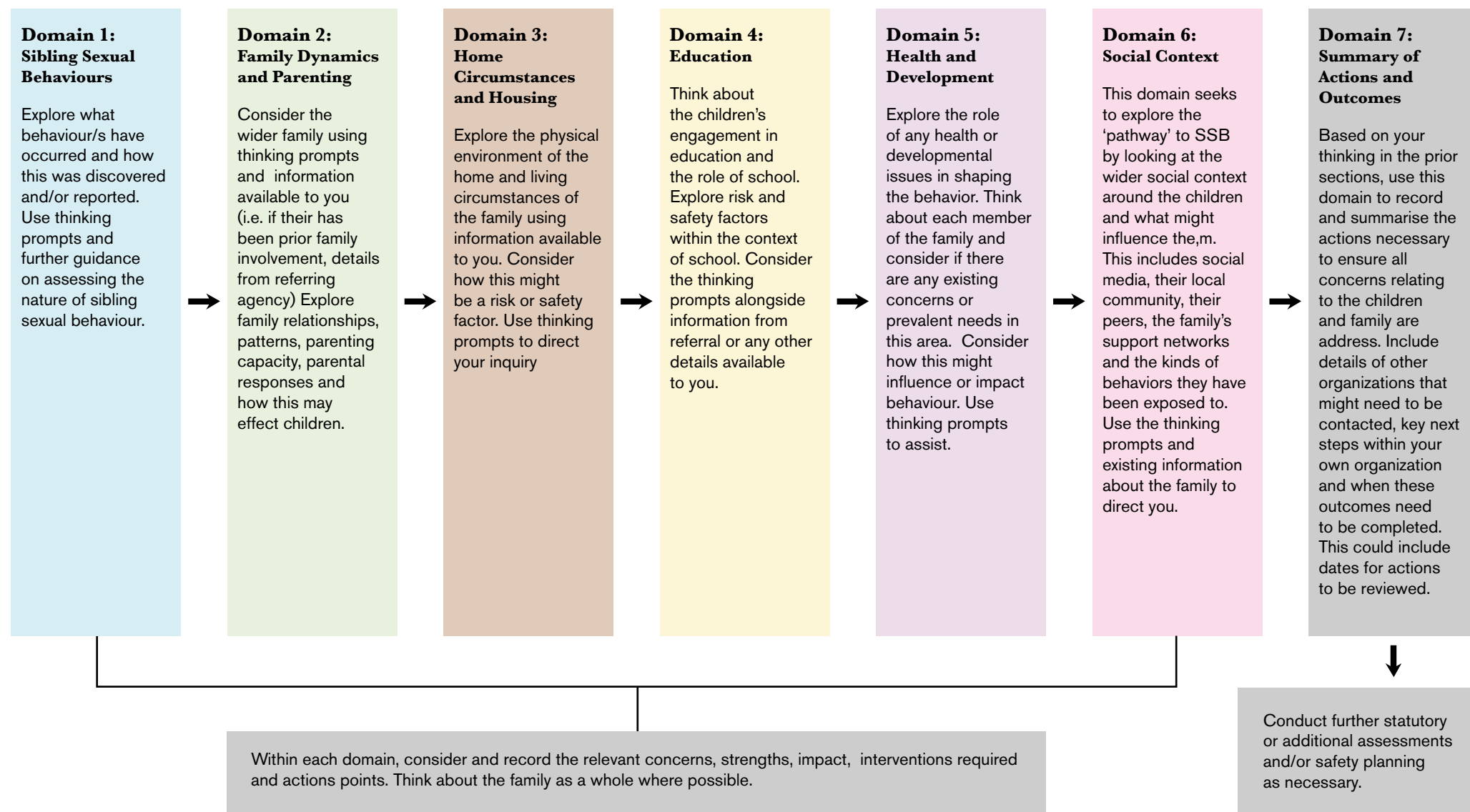- To support reflexive practitioner approaches.

Guidance

This resource draws on the 'Signs of Safety' planning framework, which is used within many forms of child protection work, and has been tailored based on research findings to account for the specific needs of children and families affected by sibling sexual behaviour and abuse. In order to create a holistic overview of the child and family, this resource is split into six different domains. For each domain, you will be prompted to note relevant concerns, strengths, impact and any support or interventions needed. An example of this structure is shown on the next page, with some broad thinking prompts. For each domain, consider the whole family, including children who have harmed and children who have been harmed, other siblings/children in the family and extended family members (step-family, grandparents etc.).

Each section contains suggested thinking prompts, these are by no means exhaustive and each area of family life must be considered in full. For further guidance on the issues that should be considered within in each domain please see Yates and Allardyce (2021) Sibling Sexual Abuse: A knowledge and Practice Overview and the CSA Resource on sibling sexual abuse (Allardyce and Yates, 2023).

Sibling Sexual Behaviour Mapping Tool Workflow

Work through each domain alone or with a colleague

Domain 1:
Sibling Sexual Behaviours

Explore what behaviour/s have occurred and how this was discovered and/or reported. Use thinking prompts and further guidance on assessing the nature of sibling sexual behaviour.

Domain 2:
Family Dynamics and Parenting

Consider the wider family using thinking prompts and information available to you (i.e. if their has been prior family involvement, details from referring agency) Explore family relationships, patterns, parenting capacity, parental responses and how this may effect children.

Domain 3:
Home Circumstances and Housing

Explore the physical environment of the home and living circumstances of the family using information available to you. Consider how this might be a risk or safety factor. Use thinking prompts to direct your inquiry

Domain 4:
Education

Think about the children's engagement in education and the role of school. Explore risk and safety factors within the context of school. Consider the thinking prompts alongside information from referral or any other details available to you.

Domain 5:
Health and Development

Explore the role of any health or developmental issues in shaping the behavior. Think about each member of the family and consider if there are any existing concerns or prevalent needs in this area. Consider how this might influence or impact behaviour. Use thinking prompts to assist.

Domain 6:
Social Context

This domain seeks to explore the 'pathway' to SSB by looking at the wider social context around the children and what might influence the,m. This includes social media, their local community, their peers, the family's support networks and the kinds of behaviors they have been exposed to. Use the thinking prompts and existing information about the family to direct you.

Domain 7:
Summary of Actions and Outcomes

Based on your thinking in the prior sections, use this domain to record and summarise the actions necessary to ensure all concerns relating to the children and family are address. Include details of other organizations that might need to be contacted, key next steps within your own organization and when these outcomes need to be completed. This could include dates for actions to be reviewed.

Within each domain, consider and record the relevant concerns, strengths, impact, interventions required and actions points. Think about the family as a whole where possible.

Conduct further statutory or additional assessments and/or safety planning as necessary.

Theme	Concerns	Strengths and Current Support	Impact	Support/ Intervention Required	Action Points
Guidance example	*What concern was presented in the referral? Provide as much detail as possible from the information given.* *Be as specific as possible when describing what has occurred and the context in which they occurred.* *Reflect on your initial response and feelings about the information provided.* *Remember service users can request access to their case records.*	*What is currently working well in this area? What other agencies are already involved (if any)?* *What supportive networks are available – to the child and/or the family?*	*What has the impact of this concern been?* *If there is no current apparent impact, consider what the likely impact of this concern might be on the young person and their family members– physical or emotional?*	*What needs to change?* *How can this change be supported?* *Are you/your agency able to provide this internally?* *Who/What agency can provide this support in the local area? Consider scope for engagement with family, availability and access.*	*What needs to happen now to ensure support is actioned?* *Who needs to be contacted?* *What can you do now to ensure necessary interventions happen?* *When should this action/ plan be reviewed?*

Sibling Sexual Behaviour

What happened? Who was involved? What are the ages/dynamic between those involved? Where did it happen? How was the behaviour discovered? Has it happened more than once? How many times has it happened? How long has it been happening? What is the nature of the behaviour (inappropriate, problematic, abusive? See additional guidance), Consider the voices and experiences of both the child who has harmed and the child who has been harmed.

Concerns	Strengths and Current Support	Impact	Support/Intervention Required	Action Points

Family Dynamics and Parenting

Is there any evidence of inter-generational sexual abuse or domestic violence in the home? Has there been local authority or other services involvement with the family already? Why? What was the outcome? Are parents aware of concerns? Are parents able to keep child safe? – are there any issues around neglect or other child protection concerns? Has the child and family shown a willingness to engage with local authority/other organisations?

Concerns	Strengths and Current Support	Impact	Support/Intervention Required	Action Points

Home Circumstances and Housing

Who lives in the family household? Are there any extended family members, step-parents/siblings, or grandparents? Where does the child live most of the time? What is the family housing situation if known? Is it a flat or house? Rented, council or owned? Do the siblings share a bedroom? How many bedrooms are there? Is the home environment safe? Is the space physically safe? Are risky adults or those with convictions frequenting the home? How safe do other family members feel at home? Who sleeps where? Does anyone share a bed occasionally or all of the time?

Concerns	Strengths and Current Support	Impact	Support/Intervention Required	Action Points

Education

Are school aware of concerns? If so, which staff members? Is child attending school? What year are they in? Do their sibling/s attend the same school? Are there any known concerns in school – behavioural or academic? How is the school currently managing these concerns? Are there any safety plans in place at school? How how often or regularly do they attend school? Are any patterns of lateness or non-attendance? How are the school managing any concerns?

Concerns	Strengths and Current Support	Impact	Support/Intervention Required	Action Points

Health and Development

Does the child or their sibling/s have any additional needs i.e. learning disabilities? Are there any known health issues within the family? Are there any concerns regarding the child's physical or mental health? Is there a history of mental illness or substance abuse issues within the family? Has the child hit developmental milestones? Have any formal assessments for additional needs taken place?

Concerns	Strengths and Current Support	Impact	Support/Intervention Required	Action Points

Social Context

Does the young person have a peer-group/friendship group? What is this like? Are there concerns around internet/social media usage? Have they been exposed to inappropriate sexual material or behaviours? Have they been exposed to pornography? Are the family involved in their community (local area, religious community etc.)? What other agencies (if any) are the family or child currently involved with? How is that going? Does the family or child have a support network? Consider whether there are any social factors which have influenced the development of harmful behaviour – what influences are present in the children's lives?

Concerns	Strengths and Current Support	Impact	Support/Intervention Required	Action Points

Summary of Actions and Outcomes

Actions to be taken:	By whom?	By when?

*We hope this tool have given enabled you to develop a better picture of the children and family that you are working with and supported your initial thinking.
We would like to emphasise that this does replace a full statutory assessment, and more work may be necessary to develop a long-term safety plan for the children and family involved.

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