

# Some key issues in working with pre-pubescent children with sexual behaviour issues



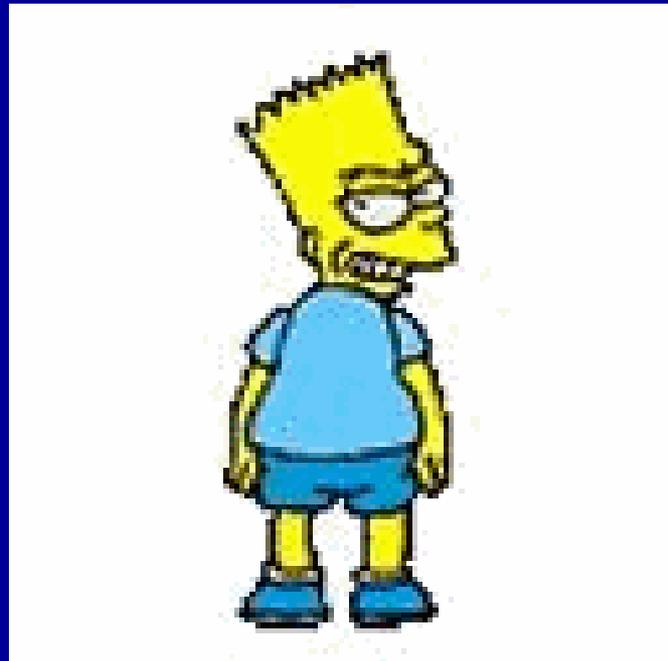
RGT Training & Consultancy

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# I hope to...

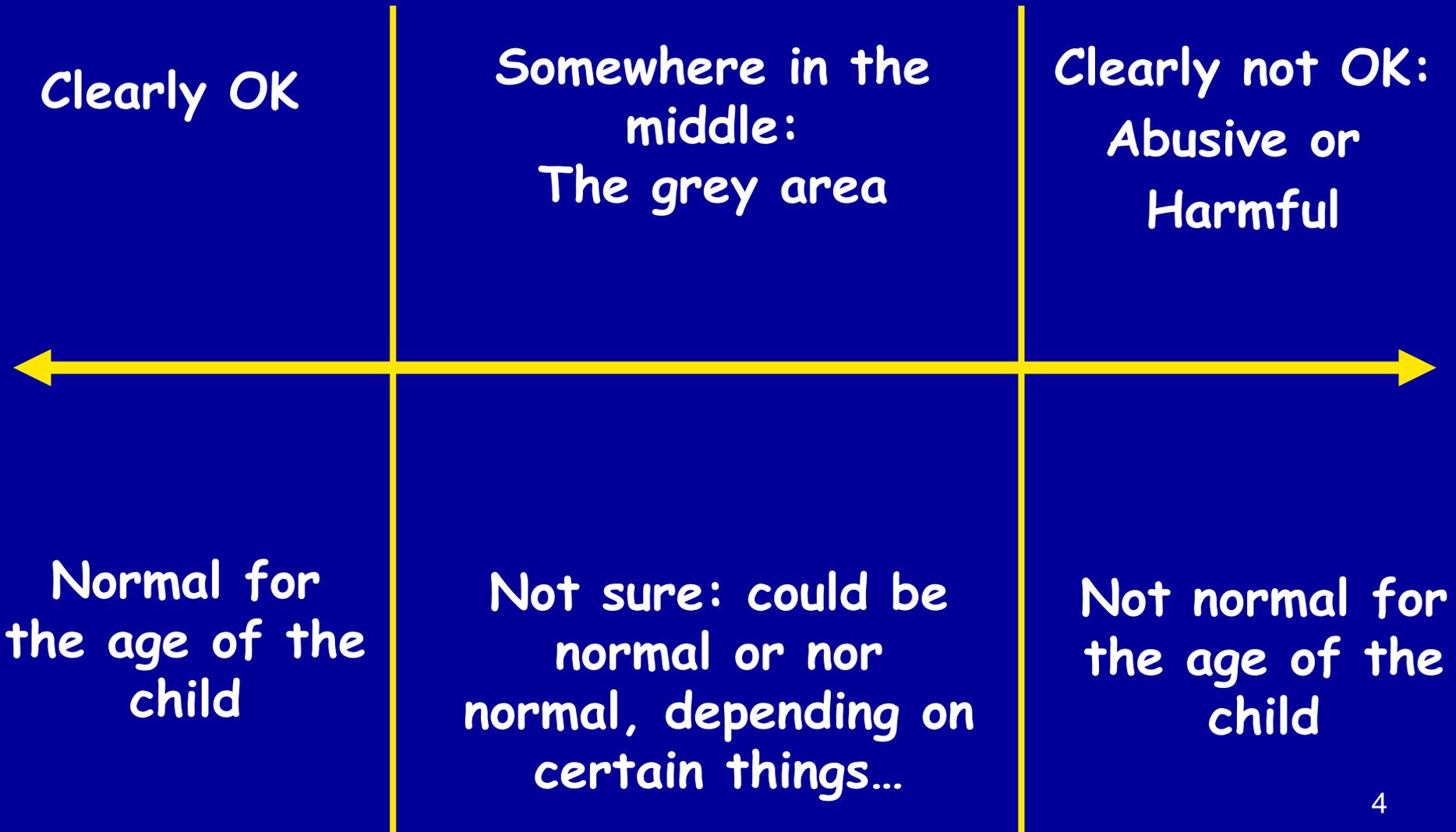
- Identify some issues and dilemmas in defining what is age expected and what is of concern
- Explore causes and aetiology
- Consider what needs are being met via the behaviour
- Highlight some key issues in assessment and intervention
- Identify some facts and myths
- Eat some unhealthy cake during the coffee break

Sexual behaviour;  
What is normal, what  
is of concern?



# A Continuum of Sexual Behaviours

(Hackett, 2001)



# Key Characteristics

Age expected	Of concern	Abusive / Harmful
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mutual</li> <li>• Consensual</li> <li>• Choice</li> <li>• Exploratory</li> <li>• No intent to cause harm</li> <li>• Fun / humorous</li> <li>• No power differentials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not age appropriate</li> <li>• One off incident or low key touching over clothes</li> <li>• Peer pressure</li> <li>• Spontaneous – unplanned</li> <li>• Self directed;</li> <li>• no intent to harm, level of understanding, accept responsibility</li> <li>• Other children irritated or uncomfortable but not scared &amp; able to tell</li> <li>• Parents / carers concerned, supportive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposes /touches genitals of others with <b>force</b></li> <li>• <b>forces</b> others to play sex-related games</li> <li>• <b>chronic</b> exposing /porn</li> <li>• Sex explicit talk with pupils of <b>lower age/power</b></li> <li>• makes sexually <b>explicit</b> proposals / <b>threats</b></li> <li>• <b>repeated</b> simulation of intercourse with dolls, peers, with clothing on</li> <li>• simulating intercourse with clothes off</li> <li>• oral, vaginal or anal penetration</li> <li>• inflicts genital or anal <b>injury</b></li> </ul>

# Sexual; Behaviour in Pre-pubescent Children

Age expected	Of concern	Abusive / Harmful
<p><b>0-4</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Touch/rubs own genitals</li> <li>• Pokes breasts / Looks at / shows off genitals</li> <li>• 'Interest in toilet function</li> <li>• pretend play - 'mummies &amp; daddies', 'dr &amp; nurses'</li> <li>• Objects into openings but stops if pain</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• exposing genitals of peers</li> <li>• plays sexual "games", <b>despite being told not to</b></li> <li>• peeks at others in toilet, <b>despite being told not to</b></li> <li>• <b>persistent</b> fascination with nude pictures</li> <li>• sexually explicit talk with peers (adult level)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• exposing genitals of peers</li> <li>• plays sexual "games", <b>despite being told not to</b></li> <li>• peeks at others in toilet, <b>despite being told not to</b></li> <li>• <b>persistent</b> fascination with nude pictures</li> <li>• sexually explicit talk with peers (adult level)</li> </ul>
<p><b>5-12</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sporadic, private masturbation</li> <li>• Increase in 'sex' play</li> <li>• Kiss, touching, showing,</li> <li>• Ask questions about periods, pregnancy, sex</li> <li>• Increased sexual or language / dirty jokes</li> <li>• Simulating intercourse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>preoccupied</b> with masturbation</li> <li>• Touches genitals in public <b>despite being told not to</b></li> <li>• sex behaviour to adults</li> <li>• simulates intercourse with clothing on</li> <li>• <b>preoccupied</b> with sexual themes (esp aggressive )</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>preoccupied</b> with masturbation</li> <li>• Touches genitals in public <b>despite being told not to</b></li> <li>• sex behaviour to adults</li> <li>• simulates intercourse with clothing on</li> <li>• <b>preoccupied</b> with sexual themes (esp aggressive )</li> </ul>

# Sexual Behaviour & Disability

## Key dynamics

- Difficulties engaging in social communication
- Problems understanding how others think or feel
- Lack of imagination / perspective taking
- Ritualistic patterns, compulsivity and impulsivity
- Reduced opportunities for social interaction, modelling and peer experimentation
- Problems in learning and developing appropriate sexuality via practice & experimentation

## Common problems

- Touching private body parts
- Removing clothes in public
- Masturbating in public areas
- Touching others inappropriately
- Discussing inappropriate subjects
- Looking up shorts, skirts, dresses or down shirts
- Obscene gestures
- Non-consensual hugging
- Inappropriate remarks and suggestions that have sexual connotations
- Echolalic repetition of sexual terms

# Initial Assessment – Key questions

## For all sexual behaviours

- What did the referrer actually see, hear or was told
- Context (where, when, who was present)?
- What preceded the behaviour?
- How did the adult's react / respond?
- What were the reaction of the child when found out?
- Persistent? Did it stop when discovered?
- Any history of the child's sexual behaviour & play?
- Was the behaviour age appropriate?
- What else is going in the child's life (e.g. stress, changes in family, transition, incidents, and relationships)?
- What are the referrer's fears / concerns / explanations?
- Access to any sexual imagery or adult sexual behaviours?



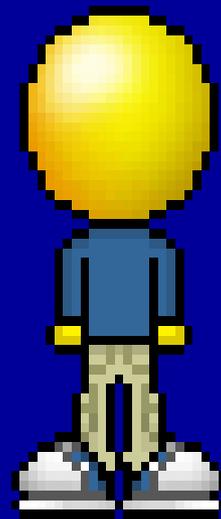
# Initial Assessment - Key questions

Where other children are involved you should also seek:

- What took place or was reported? Context?
- How was the behaviour revealed?
- Power differences between children? Mutual?
- Nature of the children's relationship?
- Was overt aggression used or implied?
- Was the behaviour planned or spontaneous?
- Did the child attempt to ensure secrecy?
- Effects on the other child?
- Has the behaviour changed over time
- Access to any sexual imagery or adult sexual behaviours?
- Info about other child & their family
- Any concerns about child being abused. If so by whom?
- Is the behaviour age appropriate?



# How & why do children develop sexual behaviour problems



# Possible Causes of Sexual Behaviour problems

- Experiencing sexual abuse
- Exposure to sexual imagery
- Living in homes with sexualised environment
- Living in homes with little or no physical, sexual or emotional privacy
- Experiencing physical abuse
- Neglect, poor parental care, domestic violence, loss
- Child used to meet parent's emotional needs
- Multiple Trauma - emotional abuse, neglect attachment problems, loss & loneliness, sexual & physical abuse

# Typology for Prepubescents (Gil & Cavanagh-Johnson)

<b>Group I</b> Sex Play / exploration	<b>Group II</b> Sexually Reactive	<b>Group III</b> Extensive Mutual Sexual Behaviours	<b>Group IV</b> Children who Abuse
Natural & healthy curiosity, exploration, experiment- ation TV, videos etc	Sexual abuse emotional abuse, traumatic sexualisation History familial abuse Sexual atmosphere in home	Sexual, physical or emotional abuse. Neglect, poor attachment, loss, discontinuity of care,	As II & III Pairing sex / anger/anxiety / aggression Carers with unmet needs Poor boundaries Sexualised environment <sub>1,2</sub>

# Ask yourself - which needs are being met through their behaviour?

- Need of sexual info
- Boredom or loneliness
- Curiosity
- Sexual excitement
- learnt behaviour
- A need for affection
- A need for power
- A need to understand what has happened to them or what they saw
- Addiction to fear, power eroticism
- A way to remember the person who abused them
- Revenge

**Key task:** to help the child meet these needs in appropriate and non-abusive ways

# What helps?

Pre-pubescent children

# Treatment Focus Prepubescents

(Cavanagh-Johnson)

<b>Group I (Sex Play / exploration)</b>	<b>Group II (Sexually Reactive Behaviour)</b>	<b>Group III (Sexualised Behaviour)</b>	<b>Group IV Sexually Coercive Behaviour</b>
<p>Info, advice &amp; education of children &amp; parents re what is normal &amp; of concern &amp; advice on boundaries</p>	<p>Victim /trauma- focused work.</p> <p>Parallel support &amp; education of parents.</p> <p>Behaviour plan to modify behaviours.</p>	<p>As group 2. Also....</p> <p>Attachment / re-parenting work</p> <p>Ensuring child's needs met in more appropriate ways.</p>	<p>As group 2 &amp; 3. Also ....</p> <p>Intensive work with carers / child</p> <p>Prevention &amp; risk reduction work</p>

# Key intervention needs

## Sex specific needs

- Age-appropriate sex education.
- Learning simple rules about sexual behaviour & physical boundaries
- Teaching about OK and Not OK touch; Good & bad secrets
- Teaching the inappropriateness of their sexual behaviours.
- Help to name, identify and express emotions.
- Learn strategies to help control different emotions
- Basic sexual abuse prevention/safety skills.
- Increase understanding of their abusive behaviours & patterns

## Broader needs

- Identifying unmet needs and helping them meet these in non-sexual ways
- Raising self esteem
- Enhancing empathy (according to age)
- Anger control
- Self-protection work
- Sex education
- Victim work (on child's own experience of victimisation)
- Loss and grief
- Work with caregivers (see next slide)
- **Promoting attachment** (probably the most important)

# Focused Work with caregivers

- Developing a Safety Plan.
- Advice on supervision, risky situations & risk management strategies.
- Info about normal & abnormal sexual play & exploration
- Strategies re privacy & sexual behaviour rules
- Info about what factors help maintain the problem
- Sex education & how to talk with child about sexual matters.
- Advice on how to respond to behaviour problems.
- How to help their child use self-control strategies
- Improving relationship with their child.
- How to guide child toward positive peer groups.
- Enhancing parental coping mechanisms.
- Enhancing parental support.

# Pre-pubescent with Sexual Behaviour

## Problems **Fact or Myth?**

Most children who have been sexually abused will develop sexual behaviour problems  
**Myth**



Children with SBP are seeking sexual stimulation & arousal  
**Myth**

All children with SBP are a risk to other children  
**Myth**

All children who have sexual behaviour problems have been sexually abused  
**Myth**

It's only boys  
**Myth**

They cannot be left at home with other kids  
**Myth**

They are likely to grow up into adolescent or adult sex offenders  
**Myth**

# Primary Prevention Issues:

- Providing info to carers & professionals on children's sexual development (healthy & problematic)
  - Creating an environment whereby carers & professionals can openly talk about sexual issues regards children
  - Integrating preventative care into school environments (e.g. issues such as boundaries, privacy, body awareness healthy relationships, respect, OK and Not OK touch)
- **Publicity / public awareness / debate**
  - **Parent Awareness Workshops**
  - **Accessible information Literature**
  - **Stop it Now Helpline**
  - **Training for professionals**

# Secondary Prevention :

- Confidential Helplines (Stop it Now!)
  - Improving the identification of worrying behaviours in children by carers, schools & others
  - Early intervention advice for schools and parents (what to say, boundaries, strategies)
  - Intervention with 'at-risk' children
- 
- Training of key professionals (social workers, teachers, health, community agencies)
  - Specific guidance & policies to be written on pre-pubescent sexual behaviour
  - Consultancy to local agencies to increase their confidence in working in this area

# Tertiary Prevention

- Increasing local therapeutic provision for the more concerning children (specialist workers) or consultancy to existing services with expertise in working with children
- Better and more informed assessment and intervention practice on this client group (currently ignored)
- **Question** - what local services would you be able to access to work with a pre-pubescent child with sexual behaviour problems & their family?

# Discussion Topics

- What have you learnt so far?
- What are the key practice issues for you working with young children with sexual behaviour problems and their families?
- What worries or anxieties do you have about working with this client group?
- What questions do you have?

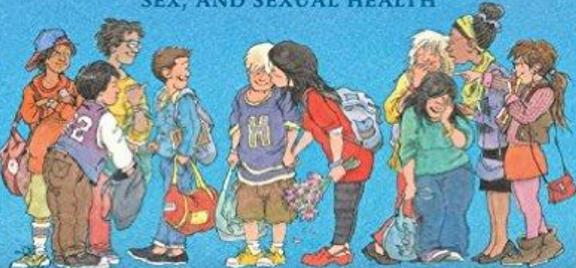
— OVER ONE MILLION COPIES IN PRINT! —

FOR AGE 10 AND UP

# Let's Talk About Sex

NEW EDITION  
20TH ANNIVERSARY  
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CHANGING BODIES, GROWING UP,  
SEX, AND SEXUAL HEALTH

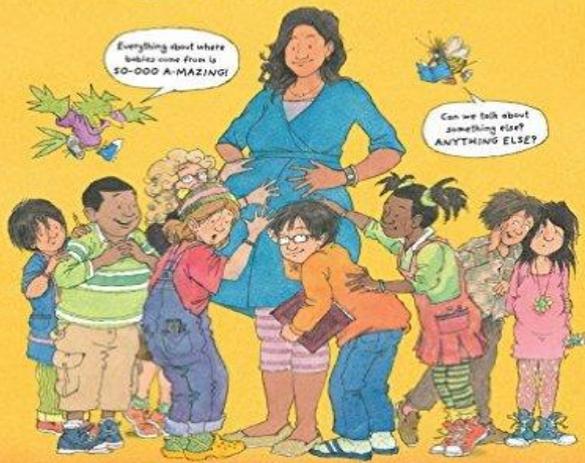


ROBIE H. HARRIS and MICHAEL EMBERLEY

FOR AGE 7 AND UP

# LET'S TALK ABOUT WHERE BABIES COME FROM

NEW EDITION  
17TH ANNIVERSARY  
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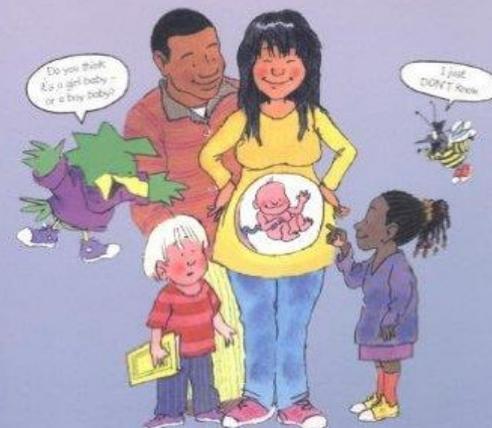
from the author and illustrator of *Let's Talk About Sex*

ROBIE H. HARRIS and MICHAEL EMBERLEY

"An essential and delightful history resource filled with accurate, comforting and positive information." Penelope Leach, Ph.D.

# Let's Talk

about Girls, Boys, Babies, Bodies, Families and Friends



Robie H. Harris illustrated by Michael Emberley

# An Exceptional Children's Guide to Touch

Teaching Social and Physical  
Boundaries to Kids



Hunter Manasco illustrated by Katharine Manasco

# Talking together...



... about growing up

A workbook for parents of children  
with learning disabilities

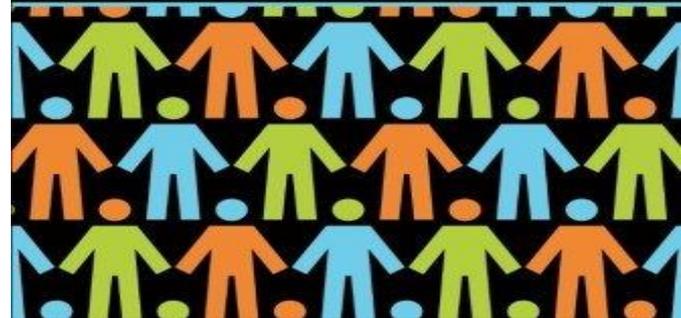
by Lorna Scott and  
Lesley Kerr-Edwards



Kate E. Reynolds

# SEXUALITY AND SEVERE AUTISM

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR PARENTS,  
CAREGIVERS AND HEALTH EDUCATORS



# Useful videos for children (via YouTube)

- **"It's your body. You're in Charge"** - educational video for young children about privacy, boundaries, secrets and good and bad touch (Sunburst media)
- **"If it happens to you: Dealing with abuse"** - about all forms of abuse (\*Sunburst media - trailer on you tube. But direct from Sunburst media)
- **"My Body belongs to me"** - cartoon about good and bad touch
- **"Tom's Secret"** - cartoon about CSA
- **"Komal. A film about child sexual abuse"** - (Indian cartoon in English)
- **"Jigsaw"** - on-line grooming / internet safety (8-10 yrs)<sup>24</sup>

# Safe places for your child to get info about sex & relationships

- **Childline**- website provides young people with information and advice about online porn.
- **Think U Know**- age appropriate advice for young people, with content from ages 5-7 up to 14+. Also for adults
- **Brook**- sexual health charity for young people under 25.
- **BBC Advice**- info from medical professionals, government charities etc.
- **The Site**- aimed at young people aged 16+. They offer "real world" advice on a range of subjects including sex and relationships, drink and drugs, and health

# Useful books & manuals

- AIM Resources: selection of manuals on assessment & intervention. Bromberg D & Donohue W (2014) 'Toolkit for working with juvenile sex offenders'
- Bonner, Walker & Berliner (2005) 'Treatment Manual of cognitive behavioural group therapy for children with sexual behaviour problems'
- Bateman J & Milner J (2015) 'Children and young people whose behaviour is sexually concerning or harmful'
- Cavanagh Johnson T (2004) 'Helping Children with Sexual behaviour problems: A Guidebook for Professionals and caregivers'
- Cunningham C. and McFarlane K 'When Children Abuse' Workbook
- Friedrich, W. (2007) 'Children with Sexual Behaviour problems; family based attachment-focused therapy'
- Gil & Shaw J (2013) ' Working with children with sexual behaviour problems'
- Hackett S (2014) 'Children and young people with harmful sexual behaviour'
- McCrory (2011) 'Treatment Manual for adolescents displaying harmful sexual behaviour'
- Walker L & Laughorne C (2016) 'Helping children to learn about safer sexual behaviour: A handbook'
- Hackett, S. (2001) 'Facing the Future. A guide for parents of young people have sexually abused',

# Experimental or Abusive?

- A 10 year-old girl asked a 5 year-old boy to go with her into the toilet at the childminder's house & asked to see his 'willie'. She reports, having seen male genitals on the Internet (advertisements for increasing the size of the penis) & wanted to see a real penis. When the boy said he did not want to take his trousers down, she asked him again & he did. There was no force, anger or yelling. She touched his penis with her hand & nothing else happened. There were no reports of any previous incidents. The girl lives with her mother & younger sister & is not known to social services. This info emerged in a casual way whilst he was having a bath & the boy has shown no sign of distress or fear of the girl & there have been no reported behavioural reactions.

# Services provided by RGT Training & Consultancy



- ✓ Assessment, intervention, training & consultancy on children & young people who have been sexually abused
- ✓ Assessment, intervention, training & consultancy on children and young people who display inappropriate or harmful sexual behaviours
- ✓ Training and consultancy on caring for children who have been abused or have worrying sexual behaviours
- ✓ Assessment, intervention and consultancy on adults who might pose a risk to children
- ✓ Post adoption support
- ✓ Therapeutic life story work