



# Breakaway

## Guideline on children's development of sexual feelings

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### Policy Summary:

Regulations 6, 11, 12, 19, 20, 33, 34, 40 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2015



A hands-on approach to help children in Slough be  
..... Safe, Secure and Successful

All children experience different feeling and anxieties when their bodies are preparing for puberty and developing whilst going through the different stages of puberty.

As parent/cares we must try to remain positive, calm and supportive at all times

All children will share different behaviours signs and ways of discovering their bodies when reaching puberty.

All children need to feel supported and not judged.

They need reassurance that this is a normal development process and that it is natural and normal to feel different during this period as their bodies change due to excretion of hormones and testosterone levels.

### **Staying safe and appropriate behaviour**

#### **Staying safe**

You could use a social story to describe a situation where another person may act inappropriately towards them person and how and where they can tell someone about it, eg a parent, teacher, key worker.

#### **Kiko and the hand the underpants Rule**

We use the autism-specific version of The Underwear Rule, which gives the children on the autism spectrum guidance on how to keep them safe from abuse

#### **Private/public**

While we are talking to the children about puberty and sex, we may also need to provide some guidelines about the difference between public and private:

- who they can talk to about any concerns they have;
- which rooms are private and which are public;
- that they should only undress or masturbate in a private room (e.g. their own bedroom);
- that people should always knock on a bedroom door before entering (you will need to make sure that everyone who visits your home is aware of this rule).

#### **Masturbation**

We must be prepared to talk about masturbation with the child so that they do not develop any anxieties about what they are doing.

We must reassure them that masturbation is a normal activity.

It is important that the child knows how to clean themselves if necessary after masturbation. We will supply tissues/wet wipes or an appropriate towel.

We will encourage the child with support to wash their hands after masturbation.

### **Physical changes**

#### **Explaining physical development**

We will use visual supports to explain the basics of development, such as:

- photos – we could show the child photos of themselves as a baby and toddler, and of them later as they grow older and at different ages, to help your child to understand about when puberty happens in a person's life
- a body outline, labelling all of the body parts, and highlighting how each part will change, and talking about what fluids come from each part – sweat, tears, urine, semen, menstrual blood, vaginal discharge.

Encourage your children to feel positive about these changes by talking about some of the advantages of being an adolescent and adult, e.g. you can make your own decisions about how to have your hair cut, you can vote – whatever will appeal to your child.

#### **'Inappropriate' behaviour**

It is often non-autistic individuals who have decided this behaviour is inappropriate. Autism affects a person's ability to understand what is considered to be socially appropriate behaviour and to imagine what other people might feel or be about to do. A behaviour might have a very significant and specific meaning for them which isn't 'just being rude' or sexually motivated.

For example, if an autistic person touches or brushes against a particular woman's breasts every time they meet, this could be because:

- this is a routine action they have developed to work out what mood that person is in today, finding it difficult to glean this from a person's facial expressions and body language
- they like the reaction they get – the shock on the person's face, or the verbal response which follows
- they got sensory stimulation the first time they brushed against the woman's body, and want to repeat this
- they may be curious about what that part of a person's body feels like and are acting on an impulse.

- If a person on the autism spectrum kisses someone unexpectedly, this could be because they have seen two people kissing on the television and think the other person will react the way the person they saw being kissed reacted.

#### **Behaviour diaries**

- Completing a behaviour diary, which records what is occurring before, during and after the behaviour could help you to understand the purpose of the behaviour.
- A diary may be completed over a couple of weeks or longer if needed. This may be difficult to do if the behaviour is particularly unpleasant for the individual or those around them but it is an important stage in understanding and trying to solve the behaviour. Please note that while it is understandable that the immediate reaction to a person's behaviours could be negative and comprise feelings of shock or alarm, a calm reaction and level tone should be maintained if at all possible.

#### **Social stories and comic strip conversations**

Using a social story or comic strip conversation could help you to discover how the person viewed the situation and to describe what they should have done in that situation, e.g. "we greet people by shaking their hand"

#### **Sensory issues**

Because of the child's sensory issues, they may be worried about the idea of hugging or kissing in future relationships. Reinforce that when it comes to relationships, they should only do what they are comfortable with.