Brook View School Safeguarding Policy - (3) Child on Child Abuse
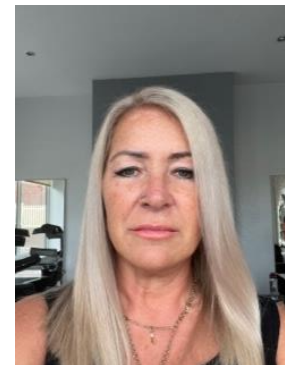
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Introduction

This policy is written in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) 2023 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023. It's aim is to give school / college staff a better understanding of Child on Child Abuse, signs to identify harm and how to respond.

Our Schools / colleges have a **zero-tolerance to abuse** it is not 'banter' 'having a laugh' 'part of growing up 'or 'boys will be boys'.

Even if no cases are reported, such abuse may be taking place and is not being reported. Staff remain vigilant and approach to abuse is 'it could happen here'.

All our schools/colleges work with others and promote a multiagency approach to ensure that students/pupils have the right intervention at the right time.

Wider Policies support this Child Protection Policy. All are numbered and sit alongside to create the school safeguarding policy.

1. Child Protection Policy
2. The Role of the DSL Policy
3. Child on Child Abuse Policy
4. Filtering and Monitoring Policy
5. Managing Low Level Concerns Policy
6. Absent from Education Policy
7. Schools Safer Recruitment Policy
8. Managing Contextual Risks to Children

Aims of this policy

The aim of this policy is to ensure that staff can understand:

- What Child on Child Abuse is
- The signs of a child who may be suffering
- Different categories of bullying
- Abuse in intimate personal relationships between children
- Physical abuse
- Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB)
- Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals
- How to respond to child on child abuse
- How allegations of child on child abuse will be recorded, investigated and dealt with
- Process on supporting victims, perpetrators and any other children affected

What is Child on Child Abuse?

Formally known as Peer-on-Peer Abuse, the Department of Education renamed this abuse to recognise the lack of power balance in the wording. The word 'peer' means equal to. This led people to believe that this abuse would exist between 2 people and did not consider the power imbalance between the perpetrator and victim. Factors such as children's ages, vulnerabilities, learning needs, family background are now considered. This means that within child on child abuse, both the victim and perpetrator's vulnerabilities should be considered.

The Department of Education (DfE) state:

"All staff should be aware that children can abuse other children (often referred to as child-on-child abuse), and that it can happen both inside and outside of school or college and online."

Child-on child abuse is the term chosen by the DfE and, by definition, it applies to abuse by one child of another child – regardless of the age, of stage of development, or any age differential between them.

The work of Professor Carlene Firmin on Contextual Safeguarding focuses on peer-on-peer abuse, which she defines as a narrower category of abuse between peers – ie abuse between children of the same or similar age, or stage of development, and during adolescence".

In that sense, peer-on-peer abuse is a sub-set of child-on-child abuse, of which practitioners should be aware. However, for the purposes of this resource, only the term child-on child abuse is used, as adopted by the DfE.

Signs that a child may be suffering

Common signs of abuse maintain the core list of indicators of child on child abuse. Below is a list, which is not comprehensive but are common signs that a child may be a victim of abuse.

- absence from school or disengagement from school activities
- physical injuries
- mental or emotional health issues
- becoming withdrawn – lack of self esteem
- lack of sleep
- alcohol or substance misuse
- changes in behaviour
- inappropriate behaviour for age
- harmful towards others

Staff should be aware that girls are more likely to be victims and boys more likely to be perpetrators but all abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously.

Bullying

There are many different ways a child can be harmed by another child. Staff need to be vigilant around areas such as cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying.

Cyberbullying is bullying with the use of digital technologies. It can take place on social media, messaging platforms, gaming platforms and mobile phones. It is repeated behaviour, aimed at scaring, angering or shaming those who are targeted.

Prejudice-based bullying is when bullying behaviour is motivated by prejudice based on an individual's actual or perceived identity; it can be based on characteristics unique to a child or young person's identity or circumstance.'

Discriminatory bullying is making or showing an unjust or prejudicial distinction between different categories of people such as:

- Age
- Disability

- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Race
- Sex
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation

Staff must follow the Safeguarding / Child Protection policy when they suspect a child is being bullied. Staff may have concerns, may be shown marks or bruising, or a child may disclose abuse. In each instance the process for managing concerns is clear in the policy.

Abuse in intimate personal relationships between children

Children, particularly in their teens will be exploring relationships and experience sexual feelings they may not understand. Relationships may be between 2 children who are different genders, the same gender, different ages or children from different schools.

The victim may struggle to come forward with their feelings as they may not be aware that their experience was not right. The victim may not be able to communicate the trauma they have faced or their vulnerabilities may impact their understanding of what has happened.

Likewise, the perpetrator may not understand that their actions had caused harm. The perpetrator may not fully understand the feelings they have or how to manage these. The perpetrator may themselves have vulnerabilities or a family history of domestic abuse and not understand the trauma they have caused.

Staff should understand or seek to understand the underlying factors beneath a child's disclosure of abuse and know how to respond.

Staff must follow the Safeguarding / Child Protection policy when a child makes a disclosure. They must also ensure this is reported to the DSL without delay.

Physical abuse

Children can also physically abuse one another. Training and resources often encourage staff to think of this in a domestic environment but staff must also consider things such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling or causing physical harm in a school environment.

All children irrespective of age or gender can be a victim or perpetrator to this. Staff must be vigilant to incidents where this occurs and follow the School Behaviour Management Policy.

Incidents must be reported to the DSL without delay and the DSL must consider patterns of incidents and consider whether a number of low-level incidents show a pattern where a child may be vulnerable to bullying or abuse.

Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB)

Harmful sexual behaviour includes a variety of sexual behaviours, which can range from the inappropriate use of sexual language to public masturbation, to the grooming and sexual exploitation of children and other vulnerable individuals.

These behaviours can include:

- Sexual violence and harassment
- Youth produced sexual imagery (Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos)
- Upskirting (taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission)
- Touching sexual body parts in public
- Removing clothing and public exposure
- Masturbating in public
- Touching sexual body parts of others (children and/or adults)
- Simulation of sexual activity during play
- Forcing other children to engage in sexual play
- Secretly arranging to meet online acquaintances.
- Sexually explicit talk with younger children
- Forcing other children (including those more vulnerable or younger) to engage in sexual activity
- Non-consensual sexual activity (such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves or engage with someone in a 3rd party)
- Sexual activity with someone in authority and in a position of trust
- Sexual activity with family members
- Involvement in sexual exploitation and/or trafficking
- Sexual contact with animals
- Receipt of gifts or money in exchange for sex

Staff should consider the needs of the children who access our schools. Staff should consider how our children develop physically and sexually in line with societal norms but consider the difference in their social and emotional understanding. For example, research suggests that young people with autism undergo normal physical development at puberty but the emotional changes and increasing sexual urges which accompany adolescence may be delayed or prolonged.

It is important for staff to consider that young people accessing our schools are most likely undergoing the same psychological sexual maturation as their peers, however, their emotional and social understanding may impact their behaviour.

If a child discloses or staff suspect that a child is displaying harmful sexual behaviour, they must notify the DSL immediately.

The DSL should consider:

- Has a crime been committed? Is police intervention required?
- Whether this is a safeguarding concern, does this need to be escalated to the Local Authority (MASH)
- Have parents/carers been informed?

- Has there been a pattern of this behaviour previously (either at school, home or in the community)
- Is there any known concerns linked to the family home that the DSL is aware of?
- Is anyone (including the child) at risk of immediate harm and require an immediate intervention?
- Have known risks been assessed and is a recurrence likely?
- What measures can be put in place to reduce the risk in future?

Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals

Hazing or initiation ceremonies refers to the practice of rituals, challenges, and other activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group. Hazing is seen in many different types of social groups, including gangs, sports teams and school groups.

The initiation rites can range from relatively benign pranks, to protracted patterns of behaviour that rise to the level of abuse or criminal misconduct. Hazing may include physical or psychological abuse. It may also include nudity or sexual assault. Staff need to be alert to such behaviour and act in line with the Safeguarding/Child Protection and Behaviour Management policies.

How to respond to child on child abuse

It is key that staff ensure there are systems in place for children to confidentially report abuse. Students/pupils can speak to staff and know that their concerns will be shared with the right people and escalated to the DSL.

Create a healthy, safe environment based on equality and informed choice allowing children and young people to know their rights and responsibilities, what to do if they are unhappy with something and what it means to give true consent.

Staff and students should treat each other with respect and understand how their actions affect others.

Staff and students should feel able to openly discuss issues that could motivate child on child abuse.

Make it clear that your setting has a zero-tolerance whole-setting approach i.e. harmful behaviours will not be passed off as 'banter', 'just growing up', etc.   Issues that might later provoke conflict should be addressed early. Ensure that your reporting systems are well promoted, easily understood and easily accessible and have the confidence of children and young people. Staff should recognise that even if there are no reported cases of child on child abuse, such abuse may still be taking place and is simply not being reported.

Understand your local community and the context in which children and young people at your setting are growing up.

Ensure children/young people know the risks – talk about child on child abuse in an age-appropriate way. Create opportunities for children/young people to weigh up risks

and recognise that sometimes this means they will take risks we as adults and professionals disagree with. Our role is to be influencing children/young people to be making the healthiest long-term choices and keeping them safe from harm in the short-term.

Ensure staff understand the impact of child on child abuse on children/young people's mental health as well as the additional needs/vulnerabilities of children/young people with special educational needs or disabilities; those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender; and/or those who have other perceived differences

Check children/young people have safe relationships – in their family, with their peers and with your staff. Create the environment where it is OK to talk, even about the most difficult things.

Spot the signs and know what to do – use the checklists above along with your setting's safeguarding procedures and be confident to raise child on child abuse as a possibility.

Allegations of child on child abuse

All will be passed to the DSL immediately. All staff must ensure that any allegations of child on child abuse are recorded.

The DSL will ensure that allegations are investigated and dealt with in line with the School Child Protection Policy.

Abuse that involves or is believed to involve sexual assault and violence must always result in multi-agency response.

Process on supporting victims, perpetrators and any other children affected

As well as supporting and protecting the victim, school staff and external professionals need to consider whether the perpetrator could be a victim of abuse and also have experienced abuse. Perpetrators may also be in danger of being subjected to abuse post an allegation.

Peer pressure can be huge for children and young people and there will be times when the abuse, in whatever form it takes, looks consensual. This is another reason why a multi-agency approach is needed, potentially involving both social care and the police, in order to ensure investigations are properly carried out.

In situations where the children or young people are in the same class or even school, risk assessments should be put into place, to safeguard both parties, these should consider how best to keep the two parties apart whilst at school and also whilst travelling to and from school.

If the allegation involves rape and/ or assault by penetration, then the statutory guidance states that the perpetrator must be removed from any shared classes. Guidance is clear that any separation arrangements must continue for as long as is necessary to make sure children are safe.

Consideration to where the alleged abuse took place must also be given and should include ways that this can be made safe/ mitigated. The DSL should consider this not only for their grounds and buildings but also if the abuse took place in a public space. Whilst the school cannot act on this alone, again the multi-agency approach can be vital here.

Review

This Policy was written on 08 November 2023. A review will be annually as a minimum.

However, subject to a significant safeguarding concern this policy and all other attached policies will be reviewed and monitored as part of a lessons learned review.

Written by:

This policy was written by Matt Nicholls – Head of Policy Children's Services, it was reviewed by Christina Leath – Group Safeguarding Director. This policy has been reviewed by the DSL of the School and agreed by the head of the Governance Board.