



Child on Child Abuse Policy and Procedure

Introduction

Child on child abuse (formerly peer on peer abuse) is any form of harm caused by a child or by children to another child or children. It may include

- bullying,
- cyberbullying
- discriminatory/prejudicial behaviour
- abuse in personal relationships between children (Harmful Sexual Behaviour)
- domestic violence
- gender-based violence.

Children with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities can face additional safeguarding challenges. These can include;

- assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's disability without further exploration;
- being more prone to peer group isolation than other children;
- the potential for children with SEN and disabilities being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs;
- communication barriers and difficulties in overcoming these barriers.

The purpose of this policy is to explore the many forms of child-on-child abuse and include a planned and supportive response to the issues.

The following Wings South West policies should be read in conjunction with this policy:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy – within the Safeguarding Policy
- Internet Safety Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Behaviour Support Policy

This policy is supported by the key principles of the Children's Act 1989, Working Together To Safeguarding Children 2023, and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023.

Forms of child on child abuse

Physical Abuse - e.g. (biting, hitting, kicking, hair pulling)

Sexually Harmful Behaviour/Sexual Abuse - e.g. (inappropriate sexual language, touching, sexual assault)

Sexual Violence - Sexual violence refers to sexual offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003

Harmful Sexual Behaviour/Sexual Harassment - unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that can occur online and offline. Sexual harassment is likely to violate a child's dignity, and/or make them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment (KCSIE 2023).

Sexual harassment can include;

- sexual comments, such as; telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance and calling someone sexualized names;
- sexual 'jokes' or taunting;
- physical behaviour, such as deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone's clothes (it is important to consider whether such behaviour becomes sexual violence, and to consider the experience of the victim)
- upskirting – taking a picture under a person's clothing with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks. This is a criminal offence and must be reported.

- Online sexual harassment. This may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern which may include:
 - non-consensual sharing of sexual images and videos; displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature;
 - sexualized online bullying;
 - unwanted sexual comments and messages, including, on social media;
 - sexual exploitation; coercion and threats;

Bullying - Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms (for instance, cyber-bullying via text messages, social media or gaming, which can include the use of images and video) and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, special educational needs or

disabilities, or because a child is adopted, in care or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences.

Online bullying - Online bullying is the use of phones; instant messaging, e-mail, chat rooms or social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube or Twitter/X to harass, threaten or intimidate someone for the same reasons as stated above. If the behaviour involves the use of taking or distributing sexual images of young people under the age of 18 then this is also a criminal offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Students may require support in these instances, nevertheless Wings will have no choice but to involve the police to investigate.

Sexting (Youth Involved Imagery) - 'Youth Involved Imagery' refers to children themselves creating images, whether still photos or videos. Sexting is when someone sends or receives a sexually explicit text, image or video. This includes sending 'nude pics', 'rude pics' or 'nude selfies'. A judgement of whether something is 'decent' is both a value judgement and dependent on context. Pressuring someone into sending a nude picture can occur in any relationship, to anyone, whatever their age, gender or sexual preference. However, once the image is taken and sent, the sender has lost control of the image, and these images are in the public domain. By having in their possession, or distributing, indecent images of a person under 18 on to someone else, young people are breaking the law under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 even if they are unaware that these are offences.

Initiation/Hazing - hazing is a form of initiation ceremony which is used to induct newcomers into a group. There are different forms, from relatively mild rituals to severe and violent ceremonies.

Prejudiced Behaviour - The term prejudice-related bullying refers to a range of hurtful behaviour, physical or emotional or both, which causes someone to feel powerless, worthless, excluded or marginalized, and which is connected with prejudices around belonging, identity and equality in wider society – in particular, prejudices to do with disabilities and special educational needs, ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, gender, home life, (for example in relation to issues of care, parental occupation, poverty and social class) and sexual identity (homosexual, bisexual, transsexual).

Teenage Relationship Abuse - Teenage relationship abuse is defined as a pattern of actual or threatened acts of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse, perpetrated by an adolescent (between the ages of 13 and 18) against a current or former partner. Abuse may include insults,

coercion, social sabotage, sexual harassment, threats and/or acts of physical or sexual abuse. The abusive teen uses this pattern of violent and coercive behaviour, in a heterosexual or same gender relationship, in order to gain power and maintain control over the partner.

Preventative Strategies

Wings South West recognises that child on child abuse can and will occur on any site even with the most stringent of policies and support mechanisms. Young people will therefore be supported to talk about any issues and share information with all staff. Staff will analyse any incidents to identify trends, patterns and any areas around the setting that may appear to be 'less safe'. Staff have access to regular CPD (Continuing Professional Development) and training to ensure a consistent approach to managing child on child issues.

Creating a Safe Environment to Share Concerns

Wings South West has an open environment where young people feel safe to share information about anything that is upsetting or worrying them. To enable such an open and honest environment it is necessary to ensure all staff feel confident and enabled to talk about issues and challenge perceptions of young people including use of inappropriate language and behaviour towards one another. It is vital that staff promote a zero-tolerance approach and do not dismiss issues as 'banter' or 'growing up' or compare them to their own experiences of childhood. It is necessary that staff consider each issue and each individual in their own right before taking action.

Involving Parents

Wings South West will work collaboratively with the Parents/carers of students and keep them informed about what child on child abuse is and how Wings South West will tackle it. This can help to alleviate any concerns and worries and create a joined-up approach.

Signposting is available to young people in the event that they don't feel confident raising an issue with staff.

Partnership Working

By working with other agencies, especially those involved with our students, Wings broadens its understanding of child-on-child abuse, and any known issues or trends. Wings actively refers any concerns/allegations of child-on-child abuse where necessary to children's social care and the police where appropriate.

Educating and Informing Students

Timetabled sessions in Tutor time will enable discussion with students about consent, what constitutes abuse and how to report it. Tutor time will also be used to respond sensitively to issues of abuse that arise within or outside the setting, and to reinforce a zero tolerance approach

Procedure (see Safeguarding Procedure)

All staff are alert to the well-being of children and young people and to signs of abuse, and will engage with these signs, as appropriate, to determine whether they are caused by child-on-child abuse. However, staff will be mindful of the fact that the way(s) in which children will disclose or present with behaviour(s) will differ as a result of their unique experiences.

If a disclosure is made to a member of staff, s/he will listen carefully and sensitively without prejudice and reflect back using the child's language. The staff member will reassure the child/young person that any allegations will be taken seriously, and the child/young person will be protected. Leading questions and promises of confidentiality will be avoided. Best practice is to wait until the young person has completed their report, and then to make a written record of the facts as presented. The report will not contain personal opinions of the staff member.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (or Deputy) will be informed immediately and will decide:

- Whether to inform parents or carers (if this poses no threat to the young person)
- Whether to refer the incident(s) to MASH or to deal with it internally.
- Whether a crime has been committed and whether to inform the police.

The DSL will carry out and record a written risk and needs assessment.

Referral to MASH and/or the Police – the DSL will work collaboratively with professionals and their advice will be followed. Wings staff will take immediate steps to safeguard the student(s) involved and if possible, to maintain anonymity. Separating the alleged perpetrator and the victim will be considered.

Managing the report internally

Where the allegation does not meet the Harm Threshold for reporting to MASH, Wings staff will carry out an investigation as quickly and sensitively as possible. The ongoing safeguarding of the victim is paramount. The DSL and another member of staff will gather information as soon as possible to get a true, accurate account of the facts around what has happened. The potential

of information being spread on social media will be taken into account. Informing parents or carers will be considered.

Note – every case is different and will be managed on its own merits with the safeguarding of the children/young people involved being paramount

Ongoing Response

Wings will ensure that following the incident the young people involved continue to feel supported and receive help even if they have stated that they are managing the incident. Feelings of remorse, regret or unhappiness may occur at a much later stage than the incident. Further disclosures may be made with time. Staff will therefore ensure that the young people do not engage in any further harmful behaviour either towards someone else or to themselves as a way of coping (e.g. self-harm), in which case regular reviews with the young people following the incident(s) will be put in place.

Whilst it poses a difficult balancing act, Wings will also seek to safeguard the perpetrator where possible. Disciplinary measures may be taken. Staff will be aware of the needs of other students and the families of those involved.

Staff may consider safety planning, which is a positive way of supporting a child who may benefit from a planned approach; this may be either the alleged victim or the alleged perpetrator. Safety plans support the child by considering the behaviours that may be risky and plan ways to manage triggers and to seek support from adults and peers.

Review of Circumstances

Following any incident of harm, Wings South West will consider if anything could have been done differently and if so what identified changes within the school/setting need to be put in place.

A much more detailed account of child-on-child abuse and how it should be recognized and managed is to be found in KCSIE 2023 Par 5 (p104)