



PEER-ON-PEER ABUSE POLICY

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Attendance Policy
- E-Safety Policy

KEY STAFF:

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Senior Leadership Team
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Rationale

The Governors, Senior Leadership Team, and all staff and volunteers at Newbridge High School are committed to the prevention, early identification and appropriate management of peer-on-peer abuse (as defined below) both within and beyond the School.

Aims

- believe that in order to protect children, we should
 - a. be aware of the level and nature of risk to which our students are or may be exposed, and put in place a clear and comprehensive strategy which is tailored to their specific safeguarding context; and
 - b. take account of contextual safeguarding to preventing and responding to peer-on-peer abuse;
- regard the introduction of this policy as a preventative measure, and do not feel it is acceptable merely to take a reactive approach to peer-on-peer abuse in response to alleged incidents of it;
- recognise national and increasing concern about this issue, and wish to implement this policy in order to ensure that our students are safe; and
- encourage parents to hold us to account on this issue, so that if their child is feeling unsafe as a result of the behaviour of any of their peers, they should inform us so that we can ensure that appropriate and prompt action is taken in response.

Principles

This policy:

- sets out our strategy for preventing, identifying and appropriately managing peer-on-peer abuse.
- applies to all Governors, Senior Leadership Team, staff, volunteers, and visitors. It is reviewed annually, and updated in the interim, as may be required, to ensure that it continually addresses the risks to which students are or may be exposed.
- is the School's overarching policy for any issue that could constitute peer-on-peer abuse. It relates to, and should be read alongside, our *Child Protection Policy* and any other relevant policies including, but not limited to, *Anti-bullying, E- safety, Behaviour, Attendance*;
- does not use the term 'victim' and/or 'perpetrator'. This is because our School takes a safeguarding approach to all individuals involved in allegations of or concerns about peer-on-peer abuse, including those who are alleged to have been abused and those who are alleged to have abused their peers, in addition to any sanctioning work that may also be required for the latter. Research has shown that many children who present with harmful behaviour towards others, in the context of peer-on-peer abuse, are themselves vulnerable and may have been victimised by peers, parents or adults in the community prior to their abuse of peers;
- is compliant with the statutory guidance on peer-on-peer abuse as set out in *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (September 2019);
- should, if relevant according to the concerns/allegations raised, be read in conjunction with the DfE's advice on *Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Between Children in Schools and Colleges* (May 2018), and any other advice and guidance referred to within it, as appropriate;
- should be read in conjunction with the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Safeguarding Board Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, and any relevant Practice Guidance issued by it.

Section I: Understanding peer-on-peer abuse

What is peer-on-peer abuse?

For these purposes, peer-on-peer abuse is any form of physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse, and coercive control, exercised between children and within children's relationships (both intimate and non-intimate).

Peer-on-peer abuse can take various forms, including: serious bullying (including cyber-bullying), relationship abuse, domestic violence, child sexual exploitation, youth and serious youth violence, harmful sexual behaviour, County Lines exploitation and/or gender-based violence. These types of abuse rarely take place in isolation and often indicate wider safeguarding concerns. For example, a teenage girl may be in a sexually exploitative relationship with a teenage boy who is himself being physically abused by a family member or by older boys. Equally, sexual bullying in schools and other settings can result in the sexual exploitation of children by their peers. For young people who are in abusive relationships, what may appear to be a case of domestic violence may also involve sexual exploitation. Children's experiences of abuse and violence are rarely isolated events, and they can often be linked to other things that are happening in their lives and spaces in which they spend their time. Any response to peer-on-peer abuse therefore needs to consider the range of possible types of peer-on-peer abuse set out above and capture the full context of children's experiences. This can be done by adopting a Contextual Safeguarding approach and by ensuring that our response to incidents of peer-on-peer abuse takes into account any potential complexity.

What is Contextual Safeguarding?

This policy encapsulates a Contextual Safeguarding approach, which:

- is an approach to safeguarding children that recognises their experiences of significant harm in extra-familial contexts, and seeks to include these contexts within prevention, identification, assessment and intervention safeguarding activities;
- recognises that as children enter adolescence they spend increasing amounts of time outside of the home in public environments (including on the internet) within which they may experience abuse; and
- considers interventions to change the systems or social conditions of the environments in which abuse has occurred. For example, rather than move a child from a school, professionals could work with the school leadership and student body to challenge harmful, gendered school cultures, thus improving the pre-existing school environment.

How prevalent is peer-on-peer abuse?

Research suggests that peer-on-peer abuse is one of the most common forms of abuse affecting children in the UK. For example, more than four in ten teenage schoolgirls aged between 13 and 17 in England have experienced sexual coercion (Barter et al 2015). Two thirds of contact sexual abuse experienced by children aged 17 or under was committed by someone who was also aged 17 or under (Radford et al 2011)

When does behaviour become problematic or abusive?

All behaviour takes place on a spectrum. Understanding where a child's behaviour falls on a spectrum is essential to being able to respond appropriately to it.

Sexual behaviours

As the NSPCC explains "children's sexual behaviours exist on a wide continuum, from normal and developmentally expected to highly abnormal and abusive. Staff should recognise the importance of distinguishing between problematic and abusive sexual behaviour. As both problematic and abusive sexual behaviours are developmentally inappropriate and may cause developmental damage, a useful umbrella term is harmful sexual behaviours or HSB. This term has been adopted widely in the field, and is used throughout the NSPCC's and Research in Practice's Harmful Sexual Behaviour Framework, as well as this policy.

For the purpose of the NSPCC's and Research in Practice's Harmful Sexual Behaviour Framework, and as adopted in this policy, harmful sexual behaviours are defined as "Sexual behaviours expressed by children...that are developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful towards self or others, or be abusive towards another child...or adult". Newbridge High School has adopted the Leicestershire County Council guidance for schools working with children and young people who display harmful sexual behaviour (appendix 1).

Staff should always use their professional judgment and discuss any concerns with the DSL. Where an (alleged) incident involves a report of sexually harmful behaviour, staff should consult Keeping Children Safe in Education (Sept 2018) Part 5: child on child sexual violence and sexual harassment.

Other behaviour

When dealing with other alleged behaviour which involves reports of, for example, emotional and/or physical abuse, staff can draw on whether it:

- is socially acceptable
- involves a single incident or has occurred over a period of time
- is socially acceptable within the peer group
- is problematic and concerning
- involves any overt elements of victimisation or discrimination e.g. related to race, gender, sexual orientation, physical, emotional, or intellectual vulnerability
- involves an element of coercion or pre-planning
- involves a power imbalance between the child/children allegedly responsible for the behaviour and the child/children allegedly the subject of that power
- involves a misuse of power

How can a child who is being abused by their peers be identified?

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

Signs that a child may be suffering from peer-on-peer abuse can also overlap with those indicating other types of abuse (please see our *Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy* for indicators of abuse, and *Keeping Children safe in education, Sept 2019*) and can include:

- a. failing to attend school, disengaging from classes or struggling to carry out school related tasks to the standard ordinarily expected;
- b. physical injuries;
- c. experiencing difficulties with mental health and/or emotional wellbeing;
- d. becoming withdrawn and/or shy; experiencing headaches, stomach aches, anxiety and/or panic attacks; suffering from nightmares or lack of sleep or sleeping too much;
- e. broader changes in behaviour including alcohol or substance misuse;
- f. changes in appearance and/or starting to act in a way that is not appropriate for the child's age;
- g. abusive behaviour towards others.

Abuse affects children very differently. The above list is by no means exhaustive and the presence of one or more of these signs does not necessarily indicate abuse. The behaviour that children present with will depend on their particular circumstances. Rather than checking behaviour against a list, staff are trained to be alert to behaviour that might cause concerns, to think about what the behaviour might signify, to encourage children to share with them any underlying reasons for their behaviour, and, where appropriate, to engage with their parents/carers so that the cause(s) of their behaviour can be investigated. Where a child exhibits any behaviour that is out of character or abnormal for his/her age, staff should always consider whether an underlying concern is contributing to their behaviour (for example, whether the child is being harmed or abused by their peers) and, if so, what the concern is and how the child can be supported going forwards.

Are some children particularly vulnerable to abusing or being abused by their peers?

Any child can be vulnerable to peer-on-peer abuse due to the strength of peer influence during adolescence, and staff should be alert to signs of such abuse amongst all children. Individual and situational factors can increase a child's vulnerability to abuse by their peers. For example, an image of a child could be shared, following which they could become more vulnerable to peer-on-peer abuse due to how others now perceive them, regardless of any characteristics which may be inherent in them and/or their family. Peer group dynamics can also play an important role in determining a child's vulnerability to such abuse. For example, children who are more likely to follow others and/or who are socially isolated from their peers may be more vulnerable to peer-on-peer abuse. Children who are questioning or exploring their sexuality may also be particularly vulnerable to abuse by their peers.

Research suggests that peer-on-peer abuse may affect boys differently from girls, and that this difference may result from societal norms (particularly around power, control and the way in which femininity and masculinity are constructed) rather than biological make-up. Barriers to disclosure will also be different. As a result, schools need to explore the gender dynamics of peer-on-peer abuse within their settings, and recognise that these will play out differently in single sex, mixed or gender imbalanced environments.

Section 2: A whole school approach

How can the School raise awareness of and prevent peer-on-peer abuse?

The Newbridge High School actively seeks to raise awareness of and prevent all forms of peer-on-peer abuse by:

- Educating all Governors, Senior Leadership Team, staff and volunteers, students, and parents about this issue. This includes:
 - training all Governors, Senior Leadership Team, staff and volunteers on the nature, prevalence and effect of peer-on-peer abuse, and how to prevent, identify and respond to it. This includes
 - a. Contextual Safeguarding;
 - b. the identification and classification of specific behaviours; and
 - c. the importance of taking seriously all forms of peer-on-peer abuse (no matter how low level they may appear) and ensuring that no form of peer-on-peer abuse is ever dismissed as horseplay or teasing.
 - educating children about the nature and prevalence of peer-on-peer abuse.
 - engaging parents on this issue by:
 - a. talking about it with parents, both in groups and one to one;
 - b. asking parents what they perceive to be the risks facing their child and how they would like to see the School address those risks
 - c. encouraging parents to hold the School to account on this issue.
- ensuring that all peer-on-peer abuse issues are fed back to the Care and Guidance/Pastoral Team (including DSL) so that they can spot and address any concerning trends and identify students who may be in need of additional support. This is done by way of a weekly staff meeting (Pastoral Briefing- Mondays and Wednesdays, 8.30am) at which all concerns about students (including peer-on-peer abuse issues) are discussed;
- challenging the attitudes that underlie such abuse (both inside and outside the classroom);
- working with Governors, Senior Leadership Team, all staff and volunteers, students and parents to address equality issues, to promote positive values, and to encourage a culture of tolerance and respect amongst all members of the School community;
- creating conditions in which our students can aspire to and realise safe and healthy relationships;
- creating a culture in which our students feel able to share their concerns openly, in a non-judgmental environment, and have them listened to; and
- responding to cases of peer-on-peer abuse promptly and appropriately.

Multi-agency working

Newbridge High School actively engages with its local partners in relation to peer-on-peer abuse, and works closely with, for example, children's social care, and/or other relevant agencies, and other schools. The relationships Newbridge High School has built with these partners are essential to ensuring that we are able to prevent, identify early and appropriately handle cases of peer-on-peer abuse. They help us:

- a. to develop a good awareness and understanding of the different referral pathways that operate in its local area, as well as the preventative and support services which exist;
- b. to ensure that our students are able to access the range of services and support they need quickly;
- c. to support and help inform our local community's response to peer-on-peer abuse;
- d. to increase our awareness and understanding of any concerning trends and emerging risks in our local area to enable us to take preventative action to minimise the risk of these being experienced by our students.

Section 3: Responding to concerns or allegations of peer-on-peer abuse

General Principles

It is essential that all concerns/allegations of peer-on-peer abuse are handled sensitively, appropriately and promptly. The way in which they are responded to can have a significant impact on our environment.

Any response should:

- include a thorough investigation of the concerns/allegations and the wider context in which they may have occurred (as appropriate);
- treat all children involved as being at potential risk - while the child allegedly responsible for the abuse may pose a significant risk of harm to other children, s/he may also have considerable unmet needs and be at risk of harm themselves. We will ensure a safeguarding response is in place for both the child who has allegedly experienced the abuse, and the child who has allegedly been responsible for it, and additional sanctioning work may be required for the latter;
- take into account:
 - that the abuse may indicate wider safeguarding concerns for any of the children involved, and consider and address the effect of wider contexts - such as the child's/children's peer group (both within and outside Newbridge High School); family; the School environment; their experience(s) of crime and victimisation in the local community; and the child/children's online presence. Consider what changes may need to be made to these contexts to address the child's/children's needs and to mitigate risk; and
 - the potential complexity of peer-on-peer abuse and of children's experiences and consider the interplay between power, choice and consent. While children may appear to be making choices, if those choices are limited they are not consenting;
 - the views of the child/children affected. Unless it is considered unsafe to do so (for example, where a referral needs to be made immediately), the DSL should discuss the proposed action with the child/children and their parents and obtain consent to any referral before it is made. The School should manage the child/children's expectations about information sharing, and keep them and their parents informed of developments, where appropriate and safe to do so.

What should you do if you suspect either that a child may be at risk of or experiencing abuse by their peer(s), or that a child may be at risk of abusing or may be abusing their peer(s)?

If a student is in immediate danger, or at risk of significant harm, a referral to children's social care and/or the police should be made immediately. Anyone can make a referral. Where referrals are not made by the DSL, the DSL should be informed as soon as possible that a referral has been made (see Safeguarding Policy and Procedures).

If a member of staff thinks for whatever reason that a child may be at risk of or experiencing abuse by their peer(s), or that a child may be at risk of abusing or may be abusing their peer(s), they should discuss their concern with the DSL without delay so that a course of action can be agreed. If a child speaks to a member of staff about peer-on-peer abuse that they have witnessed or are a part of, the member of staff should listen to the child and use open language that demonstrates understanding rather than judgement.

How will the School respond to concerns or allegations of peer-on-peer abuse?

The DSL will discuss the concerns or allegations with the member of staff who has reported them and will, where necessary, take any immediate steps to ensure the safety of the child/all children affected. DSLs should always use their professional judgement to determine whether it is appropriate for alleged behaviour to be dealt with internally and, if so, whether any external specialist support is required. In borderline cases the DSL may wish to consult with children's social care (Social Services advice line) and/or any other external agencies on a no-names basis to determine the most appropriate response. Where the DSL considers or suspects that the behaviour in question might be abusive or violent on a spectrum (as opposed to inappropriate or problematic), the DSL should contact children's social care immediately, and in any event within 24 hours of the DSL becoming aware of it. The DSL will discuss the allegations/concerns and agree on a course of action, which may include:

A - Manage internally with help from external specialists where appropriate and possible

Where behaviour between peers is abusive or violent (as opposed to inappropriate or problematic), scenarios B, C or D should ordinarily apply. However, where support from local agencies is not available, the

School may need to handle allegations/concerns internally. In these cases, the School will engage and seek advice from external specialists (either in the private and/or voluntary sector).

B – Undertake/contribute to an inter-agency early help assessment, with targeted early help services provided to address the assessed needs of a child/children and their family

These services may, for example, include CAMHS, a specialist harmful sexual behaviour team, and/or youth offending services.

C – Refer child/children to children's social care for a section 17 and/or 47 statutory assessment

As a matter of best practice, if an incident of peer-on-peer abuse requires referral to and action by children's social care and a strategy meeting is convened, then the School will hold every professional involved in the case accountable for their safeguarding response, including themselves, to both the child who has experienced the abuse, and the child who was responsible for it, and the contexts to which the abuse was associated.

D – Report alleged criminal behaviour to the Police

Alleged criminal behaviour will ordinarily be reported to the Police. However, there are some circumstances where it may not be appropriate to report such behaviour to the Police. All concerns/allegations will be assessed on a case by case basis, and in light of the wider context.

Peer-on-peer abuse toolkit

Individual risk and needs assessment (see pastoral folder on google drive)

Where there is an incident of peer-on-peer abuse, we will carry out a robust risk and needs assessment in respect of each child affected by the abuse. These risk assessments will:

- i. assess and address the nature and level of risks that are posed and/or faced by the child;
- ii. engage the child's parents and draw upon local services and agencies to ensure that the child's needs are met in the long-term. Consider whether any targeted interventions are needed to address the underlying attitudes or behaviour of any child; and
- iii. be reviewed at regular intervals in light of the child's on-going needs to ensure that real progress is being made which benefits the child.

If at any stage the child's needs escalate, the DSL should contact children's social care to determine the appropriate course of action.

Sanctions

Newbridge High School will consider whether a sanction may be appropriate for any child/children involved – any such action should address the abuse, the causes of it, and attitudes underlying it.

Sanctions may sometimes be appropriate, including

- a. to ensure that the child/children take(s) responsibility for and realise(s) the seriousness of their behaviour;
- b. to demonstrate to the child/children and others that peer-on-peer abuse can never be tolerated; and
- c. to ensure the safety and wellbeing of other children. However, these considerations must be balanced against the child's/children's own potential unmet needs and any safeguarding concerns.

Before deciding on appropriate action we will always consider its duty to safeguard all children from harm; the underlying reasons for a child's behaviour; any unmet needs, or harm or abuse suffered by the child; the risk that the child may pose to other children; and the severity of the peer-on-peer abuse and the causes of it.

Newbridge High School will, where appropriate, consider the potential benefit, as well as challenge, of using managed moves or exclusion as a response, and not as an intervention, recognising that even if this is ultimately deemed to be necessary, some of the measures referred to in this policy may still be required. Exclusion will only be considered as a last resort and only where necessary to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the other children in the School. Engaging in Fair Access Panel Processes to assist with decision-making associated to managed moves and exclusions can also be beneficial. Disciplinary interventions alone are rarely able to solve issues of peer-on-peer abuse, and we will always consider the

wider actions that may need to be taken, and any lessons that may need to be learnt going forwards, as set out above and below.

G

Leicestershire County Council

Guidance for Schools Working with Children and Young People who Display Harmful Sexual Behaviour

Identifying Harmful Sexual Behaviour

The NSPCC Information Briefing on “Children and Young People who display harmful sexual behaviour” acknowledges that in the first instance it can be very difficult to define what harmful sexual behaviour is primarily because sexual behaviour in young people and children can be seen on a continuum from mutually agreed experimentation, through to serious incidents such as sexual assault.

Children and adolescents commit between a quarter and a third of all sexual abuse coming to the attention of the child welfare and criminal justice systems in the UK (Hackett) 2013.

Research by Morrison (1999) has shown that harmful sexual behaviour needs to be understood in the context of early life and family experiences. The majority of children and young people exhibiting harmful sexual behaviour have been or are continuing to suffer from some form of abuse. They may use harmful sexual behaviour to experience having power or control over others, or they may use this type of behaviour as a means of finding comfort and/or pleasure. Again, research suggests that the younger the child/young person using harmful sexual behaviour the more likely that the child/young person is a victim of abuse and it is his or her way of responding to their own experience.

It is recognised that children and young people who use harmful sexual behaviour do not necessarily go onto become adult sexual offenders. However, Abel et. al (1985) suggests that 50% of adult sexual offenders admit to having started their sexual offending as adolescents. The most common age at referral was 15 years, though a third of all referrals related to children aged 13 or under. 38% of the sample were identified as learning disabled. Victims were usually known to the abuser but in 75% of cases were not related.

Expected, Need to Monitor and Concerning Sexual Behaviours

AGES	Green Behaviours (EXPECTED)	Amber Behaviours(MONITOR)	Red Behaviours (CONCERNING)
0-5 years	Intense curiosity about others' bodies and bathroom activities. Masturbation from infancy/pre-school continues as a self-soothing behaviour, generally are indiscreet. Behaviour is exploratory. May show genitalia to others in a curiosity seeing way. Games e.g. mummies and daddies, doctors and nurses. Children at this stage respond quickly to re-direction.	Preoccupation with -adult sexual behaviour -touching the genitals of other people Pulling down of other children's pants or trousers/skirts up against their will Talking about sex using adult slang Following others into toilets or changing area to look at them or touch them Talking about sexual activities seen on TV/Online	Persistently Touching genitals of other children Attempting to touch the genitals of adults Simulation of sexual activity in play Sexual behaviour between young children involving penetration with object Forcing other children to engage in sexual play
5-9 years	Feeling and touching own genitals Curiosity about other children's genitals Curiosity about sex and relations Sense of privacy about bodies Telling stories or asking questions using swearing and slang words for parts of the body	Questions about sexual activity which persist or are repeated frequently Sexual bullying face to face or through texts or online messaging Engaging in mutual masturbation Persistent sexual images and ideas in talk, play and art Use of adult slang language to discuss sex	Frequent masturbation in front of others Sexual behaviour engaging significantly younger or vulnerable children Forcing other children to take part in sexual activities Simulation or oral or penetrative sex Sourcing pornographic material online
9-13	Continue to touch and fondle their own genitals, evolving to masturbation. More secretive about self-touching/curiosity. Use of sexual language including swearing and slang words Having boy/girlfriends of same, opposite or any gender Consensual kissing, hugging, holding hands with peers	Uncharacteristic and risk-related behaviour e.g. sudden and/or provocative changes in dress, withdrawal from friends, mixing with new or older people having more or less money than usual, going missing. Verbal, physical or cyber/virtual sexual bullying involving sexual aggressions Homophobic targeted bullying Exhibitionism e.g. flashing Giving out contact details on line Viewing pornographic material Worrying about being pregnant or having STIs	Simulated intercourse. Putting objects inside self/others. Exposing genitals or masturbating in public. Distributing naked or sexually provocative images of self or others Sexually explicit talk with younger or vulnerable children Sexual harassment Arranging to meet with an online acquaintance in secret Forcing other children of same age, younger or vulnerable to participate in sexual activities Presence of STIs/pregnancy

<p>13-17</p>	<p>Masturbation continues. Some same gender sexual experiences and viewing of other's bodies, especially of the gender they are attracted to. Interest in pornographic materials. Sexual activity with peers, which includes, but is not limited to kissing, fondling. Use of internet – social media to chat online Consenting oral and /or penetrative sex with others of the same or opposite gender who are of similar age and developmental ability</p>	<p>Accessing exploitative or violent pornography Uncharacteristic and risk-related behaviour e.g. sudden and/or provocative changes in dress, withdrawal from friends, mixing with new or older people having more or less money than usual, going missing. Taking and sending naked or sexually provocative images of self or others Single occurrence of peeping or exposing Giving out contact details online Joining adult only social networking sites and giving false personal information Arranging a face to face meeting with an online contact alone</p>	<p>Sexual play with younger children, behaviour involves coercion, bribes, and threats. Pre-occupation/obsessive quality which interferes with daily function Exposing genitals or masturbating in public in attempting/forcing others to Sexual degradation/humiliation of self or others Sexual harassment Non- consensual sexual activity Use of /acceptance of power and control in sexual relations Genital injury to self or others Sexual contact with -others where there is a significant age/ ability difference - someone in authority and in a position of trust - family members -animals Involvement in sexual exploitation and/or trafficking Receipt of gifts or money in exchange for sex</p>
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(Adapted from: Brooke's Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Toolkit)

Evaluating sexual behaviour - children and young people with special needs

This checklist can help staff in educational settings make decisions about the sexual behaviour of children with special needs. It is adapted from the AIM Project guidance document produced by Carol Carson.

1. Type of sexual behaviour

Healthy	Complex to define due to nature of learning difficulty and gap between chronological and developmental age/stage
Problematic	Behaviours that are self-directed e.g. self-stimulation, compulsive masturbation, indiscriminate arousal. Behaviour includes non-penetrative contact, with young people targeted
Abusive	High level of compulsivity, fetish behaviour, frequent use of internet to obtain sexual images. Use of force/violence to secure compliance. Previous patterns of sexually aggressive behaviours

2. Context of behaviour

Healthy	Mutual, both parties free to engage and disengage
Problematic	Behaviour infrequent or isolated incident. Behaviour self-directed. Behaviour restricted to a specific setting
Abusive	Behaviour is planned or secretive; there are elements of threat, force or coercion. Previous concerns or convictions for sexual behaviour

3. Young Person's response

Healthy	Happy, comfortable, perhaps curious; may be embarrassed if found by adults
Problematic	Embarrassment or shame related to the behaviour. Is able to understand and retain the reasons why others feel the behaviour is problematic or abusive. Experiences consequences as significant or has some degree of awareness of consequences. Appears highly anxious or confused as to sexual development and/or sexual boundaries
Abusive	Unclear as to the consequences of sexual behaviour, or the consequences appear to have little meaning for them. Reject concerns expressed

4. Response of others

Healthy	Happy, comfortable, perhaps curious; may be embarrassed if found by adults
Problematic	Uncomfortable or irritated, but not fearful or anxious. Feel able to tell someone
Abusive	Uncomfortable, fearful, anxious, avoidant of the young person

5. Relationship between the young people

Healthy	There should be no significant differences in age or development which would suggest there is a power imbalance
Problematic	One or two particular young people targeted. Young person predominantly associates with children three or more years younger
Abusive	Evidence of targeting on the basis of perceived vulnerability. Clear power differences in the relationship. Young person has poor social skills or deficit in intimacy skills

6. Persistence of the behaviour

Healthy	Healthy interest in sexual behaviour, but it is not the sole focus of interest in the young person's life
Problematic	Responds to complaints by stopping or changing behaviour. Intervention has some impact but behaviours may continue
Abusive	Evidence of a high level of sexual compulsivity. Behaviours have persisted despite significant negative consequences

7. Other behavioural problems

Healthy	No other behavioural problems, healthy peer relationships
Problematic	No significant history of behavioural problems, generally positive relationships with peers. Access to others is well supervised. OR, young person is isolated in the community or has a very restricted lifestyle. Access to others is poorly supervised
Abusive	Concurrent diagnosis of significant mental health problems. Pattern of problematic sexual behaviours emerging in early childhood and continuing into adolescence. Viewed negatively in community due to sexual behaviours. History of fire setting. Long standing history of severely problematic or challenging behaviours

8. Background information known

Healthy	No significant family history. Parents have a positive view of young person's developing sexuality. Positive attachments with parents and carers. Young person has at least one positive friendship. Young person has access to social and leisure pursuits. Young person has access to appropriate sex education
Problematic	Family anxious about young person's developing sexuality and have inappropriate concerns. Family experiencing high levels of stress. Siblings have experienced sexual abuse
Abusive	Young person has experienced sexual, physical or emotional abuse or neglect. Violence in the household. Members of the family, including siblings, have a history of sexual offending. Poor or distorted sexual boundaries in the family. Patterns of discontinuity of care/poor attachments

What happens when a child or young person is suspected or identified as having used harmful sexual behaviour?

Police and Social Workers have a set way of dealing with allegations of harmful sexual behaviour by children.

They believe the allegations should be taken seriously. Everyone will need to work closely together to find out what happened.

It is important that a police investigation is completed and the victim supported. However, it is equally important to support and help the child who has been accused and their family to prevent further harm in the future.

This is what is likely to happen after concerns are raised:

A Social worker will explain to the parents and the person involved what is happening at each stage of the investigation.



It is known that the more the parents support their child and do the work asked of them the better the chances are of the young person doing well and not behaving in this way again.



A report is made to the police or social workers.



Police and Social Workers discuss the concerns and decide how to investigate them further.



The Police and Social Worker then usually interview the child or children. A decision will then be made as to whether the police should take action against the child accused.

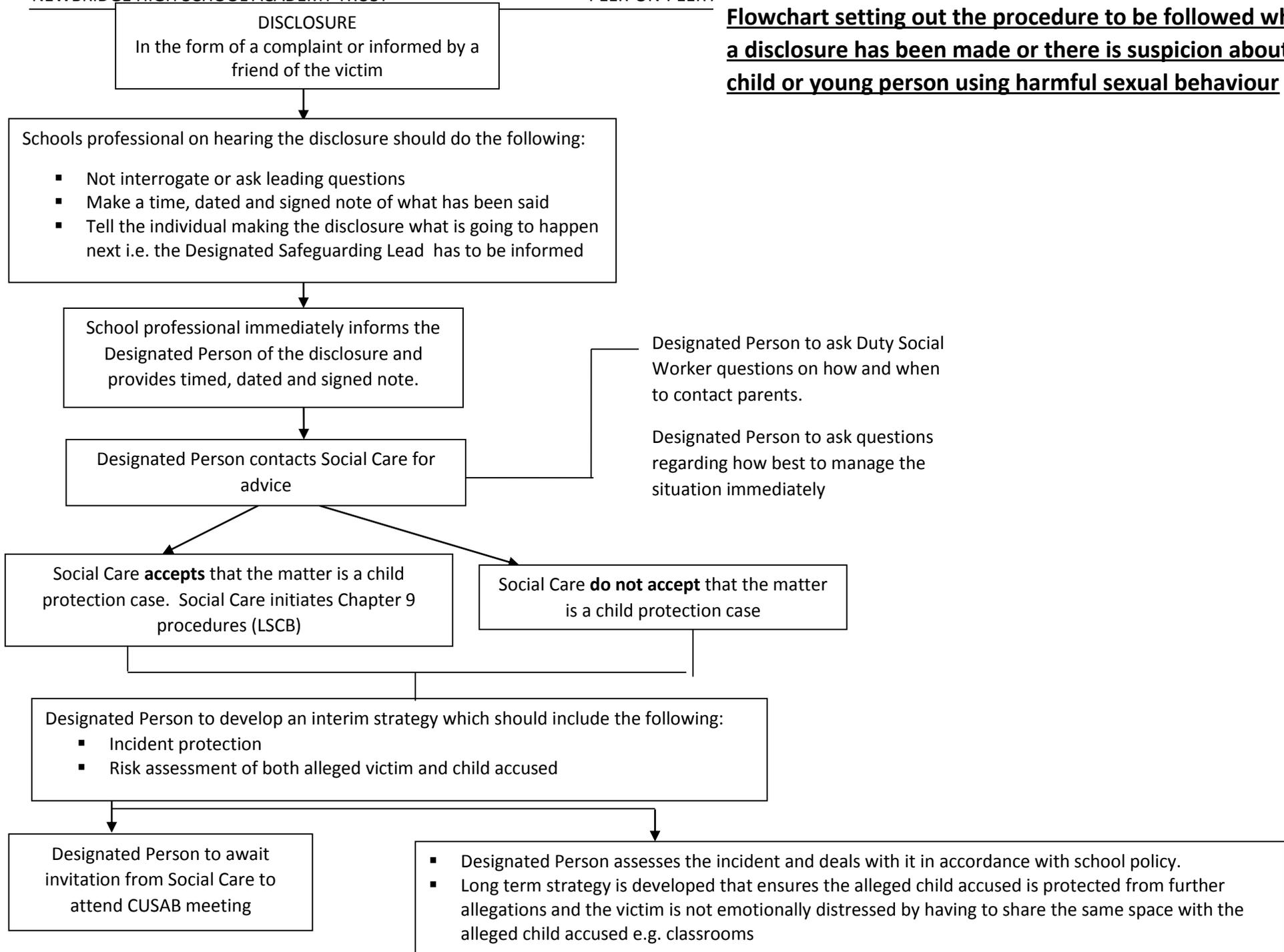


Social workers will then offer the child a chance to talk about anything that has happened in the past or anything else worrying them.



A meeting is likely to be arranged to look at the needs of the victim and needs of the child accused. These may be separate meetings. The meetings are called either Child Protection Conferences or Multi Agency Assessment and Planning Meetings. Parents and children who are old enough to understand what is happening will be invited to these meetings. The meeting will plan the work needed to protect children and to prevent further abuse.

Flowchart setting out the procedure to be followed where a disclosure has been made or there is suspicion about a child or young person using harmful sexual behaviour



The response of schools to a child or young person using harmful sexual behaviour

Where a suspicion or concern has been raised by a member of staff within the school about a child or young person using harmful sexual behaviour, or details regarding such behaviour have come to the attention of the school as a result of an agency making contact, the challenges for schools remain the same, that of supporting any investigation being undertaken by Social Care/Police, as well as balancing the needs of the child accused and the needs of the 'victim'. Added to this, the school should also be seeking to minimise any risk from the child accused to other children or young people within in the school setting.

Managing the situation

The situation within the school needs to be managed in such a way that both the alleged victim and child accused can continue their education and the risk to other pupils within the school is sufficiently managed.

What support can a school provide to a victim of harmful sexual behaviour?

- Support of his or her emotional well-being;
- The need to feel safe;
- Provide an identified member of staff (not the same person who has been identified to support the child accused) who is able to offer pastoral care if or when he or she is feeling upset, worried or if he or she is feeling actively intimidated by the child accused's friends;
- Provide an identified member of staff who will take appropriate action in line with existing school policies in the event of bullying or intimidation is used as a means to silence the victim;
- Communication between school and his or her parents, and information about further sources or support.

What support can a school provide to a child accused of harmful sexual behaviour?

- Provide an identified member of staff that he or she can speak to (not the same person who is supporting the victim)
- Make school a "safe" place e.g. identify risky areas;
- Support his or her emotional well-being e.g. identify those situations in the child's or young person's life which can put the child or young person under pressure and act as a trigger for harmful sexual behaviour;
- Support the child or young person in taking responsibility for their behaviour e.g. not to collude or minimise the behaviour when offering support;
- Try to avoid shaming him or her;
- A managed move to another school may have to be considered if despite putting measures into place the risk to other pupils or to the child accused remain at an unacceptable level.

Where the victim is emotionally distressed and coming into contact with the child accused impacts on his/her emotional well-being then consideration should be given to excluding the child accused. Exclusion of the child accused should also be considered where there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the risk that he or she presents to other pupils cannot be effectively managed in the school environment.

Support Plans

A good Support Plan should include the following:

- Identification of any potentially “risky” situations ;
- Methods for monitoring the child or young person during periods that are usually unsupervised;
- Additional educational support e.g. session on positive relationships and boundaries;
- Identification of the support that parent(s)/carer(s) will provide to the child or young person;
- Duration of the Support Plan;
- Identified member or school staff that child or young person can approach if experiencing any difficulties in school

Children or young people known to have used harmful sexual behaviour

There will be occasions when schools will have been made aware of a child or young person who is known to have used harmful sexual behaviour. Where information regarding a child or young person has come from an agency such as the Police, Social Care etc, it is likely that a level of inter-agency work has already been established. In such circumstances the Designated Safeguarding Lead should make contact with the key professional responsible to discuss issues of risk management and how the school can best support the intervention programme.

Confidentiality

In all child protection work, the degree of confidentiality is governed by the need to protect the child. Confidentiality may not be maintained if withholding information may prejudice the welfare of a child. It is important to ensure that any information that is passed on is on a strictly need-to-know basis and therefore, concerns about a child or young person should not be a matter of common knowledge unless the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the adult that raised the concern originally, are involved.

In circumstances where a child or young person has used harmful sexual behaviour it is important that key people such as the Headteacher/Principal, Year Head and the teacher with the best relationship with the child or young person are made aware of the situation. The same key people hold true for the alleged victim of abuse.

Information regarding the alleged victim and/or child accused should not be a matter of common knowledge amongst teaching and support staff, nor pupils or parents. The issue of who needs to know should form a natural part of the Incident Protection Plan, the risk assessment and the Support Plan.

Clear guidance is in the LSCB Procedures:-

www.lrsb.org.uk