

SAFEGUARDING

Peer-on-Peer Abuse

The Government guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education (2019)' states that abuse by pupils on other pupils is known as 'peer on peer' abuse. This may include, bullying, cyber-bullying, physical abuse, sexual violence and harassment and 'up-skirting', sexting, rituals, emotional and financial abuse. Specific instances may not be abusive in themselves, but they may be indicative of power or coercive control. Some children are exploited through threat, blackmail or violence.

Peer on peer abuse should never be dismissed as 'banter' or even an inevitable part of growing up. It can have a lifelong impact and may even lead to young people taking drastic harmful measures. Gender is an important aspect as girls are often affected more than boys. Children with SEN and disabilities are also more frequently abused by their peers.

Tackling peer on peer abuse needs to be a collective responsibility approach. Strategies to respond to peer on peer abuse include understanding the levels and type of risk, approaches to minimise the risks, and how sanctions and any further referrals are made. Support needs for those abusing the abused should also be identified.

Children who are affected by peer on peer abuse may show physical injuries, stop attending school, have poor mental health, show manifestations like headaches and stomach pains, drink alcohol, smoke or take drugs. Young people affected may begin to abuse others.

While sanctions for behaviour are important, so is how the abuser can be supported and this may also mean referring them to external agencies.

Keep communication open with your child and ensure that they know who they can talk to if they suspect a child is being abused by a peer or they feel they are the subject of peer on peer abuse.

If you suspect a child is being abused, talk to the NSPCC or Children's Services and get advice; do not keep that information to yourself.

Working together to keep our children safe.

Halina Rooney

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