

Peer on Peer Abuse Policy

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1. Introduction

Hatton Academies Trust gives absolute priority to its statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in its academies and aims to foster a culture where safeguarding and child protection are embedded in policy and practice within all Trust academies.

The Trust also recognises its additional legal responsibility to protect every student's right to an effective education and additionally;

- to have in place a behaviour policy which prevents all forms of bullying
- to teach sex and relationship education in secondary school settings
- to act in accordance with the European Convention on Human Rights Article 3¹, Article 8² and Article 14³
- to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between different groups with protected characteristics.

The statutory guidance document "Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021 states that "All staff should be aware of systems within their school or college which support safeguarding and these should be explained to them as part of staff induction. This should include the child protection policy, which should amongst other things also include the policy and procedures to deal with peer on peer abuse".

This policy is also written with due regard to the Department for Education (DfE) advice document "Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between children in schools and colleges" published in September 2021 and the statutory DfE guidance "Working Together to Safeguard Children".

It is essential that all staff and directors of the Trust receive regular training, support and information to enable them to fulfil our collective responsibility to safeguard children in our care and to ensure that education of children plays a key role in the prevention of peer to peer abuse.

2. Policy Aims

Children and young people may harm each other in different ways which could be categorised as peer on peer abuse. This policy will identify the varying forms of abuse and provide clear guidance to staff on how to identify and report concerns, and what action to take with reported allegations received.

The policy will identify ongoing training requirements for staff and directors.

3. Links to other policies

The following policies within the Trust should be read in conjunction with this policy:

- Trust Child Protection Policy and Procedures
- Trust Safeguarding Handbook

¹ Article 3: the right to freedom from inhuman and degrading treatment

² Article 8: the right to respect for private and family life including a duty to protect individuals' physical and psychological integrity

³ Article 14: requires that all rights and freedoms are protected and applied without discrimination

- Academy Anti-bullying policy (including cyber-bullying)
- Academy Behaviour policy
- Trust Online Safety Policy

It is required that leadership teams within Academies monitor this form of abuse and work across the Trust to develop age-specific strategies for the prevention of sexual violence and harassment between children.

It is also essential that front-line staff have clear guidance to follow in the event of any reported allegation of sexual violence and sexual harassment between children.

It is paramount that all students in Trust academies must be made aware of the processes to follow to raise any concerns or make a report.

4. Identifying Abusive and Harmful Behaviour

Abusive behaviour can happen to any pupil in a school setting and may be perpetrated by a child of the same or different sex. Pupils are vulnerable to abuse by their peers. Such abuse should be dealt with as seriously as abuse by an adult and must be subject to the same child protection procedures.

Trust staff must not dismiss abusive behaviour witnessed or reported as a normal interaction between young people, nor should staff develop high thresholds of acceptance before taking action. It is essential that all staff understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between peers, many of which are listed below, that are actually abusive in nature. Downplaying certain behaviours, for example dismissing sexual harassment as "just banter", "just having a laugh", "part of growing up" or "boys being boys" can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours, an unsafe environment for children and in worst case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it.

All staff should understand, that even if there are no reports in their schools or colleges it does not mean it is not happening, it may be the case that it is just not being reported. As such it is important if staff have any concerns regarding peer on peer abuse they should speak to their DSP (or deputy).

It is more likely that girls will be victims and boys' perpetrators, but this is not the case and the Trust ensures that all staff know that peer on peer abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously and acted upon.

Alongside any incident of Peer on Peer Abuse, there will often be other signs that matters are not as they should be. For example, drug use, alcohol, truanting, and sexting put children in danger. Peer on peer abuse (see below) can also be a sign or a manifestation of abuse e.g. bullying, violence, sexting, and sexual assaults.

Staff must be aware that abuse (physical and verbal) can take place in online form (e.g. through misuse of social media and technology). This form of abuse may take place during or outside of school hours, however all reports of this form of abuse should be treated seriously regardless of when it occurs.

Staff should be aware of the vulnerability of children and young people who have been victims of violent crime (for example mugging), including the risk that they might respond to their own abusive experience by abusing younger, weaker or vulnerable children and young people.

All staff should also be aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation.

The alleged perpetrator is likely to have considerable vulnerability and unmet needs as well as posing a risk of harm to other children. It is likely that perpetrators will have suffered considerable disruption in their lives and may have witnessed or been subject to physical or sexual abuse. They may have committed other similar offences and may have problems with their educational development. They may therefore also be at risk of harm and in need of protection and any plans to reduce the risk posed by the perpetrator must take in account their own needs.

5. Types of Peer on Peer Abuse

There are many forms of abuse and this section will identify the majority of abusive behaviours but is not exhaustive.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, kicking, nipping, shaking, biting, hair pulling or otherwise causing physical harm to another person. There may be underlying reasons why a child harms another and it is important to understand why a young person has engaged in such behaviour, including the possibility of the harm being accidental, before considering the next action or sanction to be taken. This may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse.

Sexually Harmful Behaviour / Sexual Abuse

Sexually harmful behaviour includes incidents of inappropriate sexual language, touching, sexual assault, sexual violence and sexual harassment and inappropriate role play. This form of behaviour is not always contrived or with the intent to harm others.

Children who are victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment will likely find the experience stressful and distressing. This will, in all likelihood, adversely affect their educational attainment and will be exacerbated if the alleged perpetrator(s) attends the same school or college. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap, they can occur online and face to face (both physically and verbally) and are never acceptable.

Sexual harassment can include sexual comments (e.g. telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes or appearance or calling someone sexualised names), sexual jokes or taunting, physical behaviour (e.g. brushing up against someone, displaying pictures photos or drawings of a sexual nature), online sexual harassment.

Children with SEND and deaf children are 3 times more likely to be abused than their peers and their vulnerability should be protected and supported to the fullest extent.

Bullying

Bullying is unwarranted, aggressive and inappropriate behaviour among children that involves either a real or perceived power imbalance. The behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated over time. Both young people who are bullied and who bully others may have serious, lasting problems.

Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumours, attacking someone physically or verbally or based on their appearance or other characteristics, e.g. size, hair colour, gender, sexual orientation, religion, appearance and deliberately excluding someone from a group. This may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages bullying.

Staff are referred to each Academy's behaviour policy and Anti Bullying Policy.

Cyber-bullying

Cyberbullying is the use of phones, instant messaging, e-mail, chat-rooms or social networking sites such as Tik Tok, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter to harass, threaten or intimidate.

Staff should understand that cyber-bullying is a criminal act under the Malicious Communications Act 1988 which states that electronic communications that are indecent or grossly offensive, convey a threat or false information or demonstrate that there is an intention to cause distress or anxiety to a victim would be a criminal offence. This is also supported by the Communications Act 2003, section 127, which states that electronic communications which are grossly offensive or indecent, obscene or menacing, or false, used for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience, or needless anxiety to another could be deemed to be criminal behaviour.

If the behaviour involves the use of, taking or distributing indecent images of young people under the age of 18, this is also a criminal offence under the Sexual offences Act 2003. Over and above the immediate support that young people may require in these instances, the Academy must involve the Police to investigate these situations.

Staff are referred to the HAT Online Safety Policy

Sexting

Sexting occurs when someone sends or receives a sexually explicit text, image or video. This includes sending nude or semi nudes pictures, rude pictures or nude selfies. Pressuring someone into sending a nude picture can happen in any relationship and to anyone, whatever their age, gender or sexual preference. Once the image is taken and sent, the sender loses all control of the image and these images could end up anywhere. By having in their possession or distributing indecent images of a person under 18, young people may be committing offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

Staff are referred to the HAT Online Safety Policy

Initiation / Hazing

Hazing is a form of initiation ceremony which may be used to induct newcomers into a sports team, group or gang. Forms of initiation/hazing can vary from relatively mild rituals to severe and violent ceremonies. This practice is intended to create a bond between the newcomer and the existing members and is often deemed a rite of passage. Rituals often involve some form of humiliation, embarrassment, abuse or harassment.

Prejudiced Behaviour

The term prejudice-related bullying refers to a range of hurtful behaviour, both physically and emotionally, which causes the victim to feel powerless, worthless, excluded or marginalised, and which is connected with prejudices around belonging, identity and equality in wider society. Specifically, prejudices surrounding disability, special educational needs, ethnic, cultural or religious backgrounds, gender, home life (e.g. 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 a partner.

Upskirting

Upskirting general involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm. It is now a criminal offence.

6. Action to be taken by all staff

All staff should have read through Section B5 of the HAT Child protections Policy and should read Part Four of the DfE advice: [Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Between Children in Schools and Colleges](#).

Although the types of abuse may have a different effect on the victim and perpetrator of the harm, and indeed, different staff may interpret different actions in different ways based on their own personal thresholds of what is unacceptable behaviour, the following steps must be followed to ensure the situation is clarified and the facts objectively established, before any decision on consequences or sanctions for the perpetrator of the harm.

It is essential that reports of peer to peer abuse are dealt with immediately and in a sensitive manner. This will ensure that the information gathered is fresh in young people's minds and more likely to establish the truth.

It is paramount that young people who have made a disclosure are taken seriously and reassured that they will be supported and kept safe. They should never be made to feel that they are causing a problem or be made to feel ashamed.

In all circumstances, the Trust's child protection policy and procedures should be followed for the management of all disclosures of child abuse, including peer to peer abuse.

It is necessary that all staff are trained in dealing with such incidents and it is the responsibility of the Principal of each Academy to ensure that training occurs on a

regular basis. Staff should not be prejudiced, judgemental, dismissive or irresponsible in dealing with alleged reports of abuse.

6.1 Initial Action to be taken by all staff in receipt of an allegation

It is essential that the designated senior person for child protection (DSP) in the Academy is aware of all allegations of peer on peer abuse. Staff should share with them their initial concerns and evidence using the Academy's referral process and they will guide staff on the most appropriate course of action.

Steps to take

The following steps must be undertaken by a DSP who has undertaken designated person safeguarding training.

Step 1: Investigate the Facts

If possible, managing reports with two members of staff present, (preferably one of them being the DSP or a deputy). However, this might not always be possible.

Speak to all children involved separately, gain a statement of the facts from them individually and use consistent language and open questions for each account (e.g. ask the young person to tell you what happened). Do not interrupt them unless to gain clarity with open questions e.g. when, why where, who.

Best practice is to wait until the end of the report and immediately write up a thorough summary. This allows the staff member to devote their full attention to the child and to listen to what they are saying. It may be appropriate to make notes during the report (especially if a second member of staff is present). However, if making notes, staff should be conscious of the need to remain engaged with the child and not appear distracted by the note taking. Either way, it is essential a written record is made.

Where the report includes an online element, being aware of [searching screening and confiscation advice \(for schools\)](#) and [UKCIS Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people](#). The key consideration is for staff not to view or forward illegal images of a child. The highlighted advice provides more details on what to do when viewing an image is unavoidable. In some cases, it may be more appropriate to confiscate any devices to preserve any evidence and hand them to the police for inspection.

Step 2: Consider the intent (begin to risk assess)

Consider whether the evidence suggests that this has been a deliberate or contrived situation for one young person to harm another.

Step 3: Deciding on a course of action (Designated Safeguarding Person only)

If from the information gathered the Designated Safeguarding Person believes that any young person is at risk of significant harm, a safeguarding referral to social services must be made immediately. Furthermore, where you believe that a crime has been committed, the Police must be contacted. It is essential to retain and preserve all evidence gathered in a secure place.

Social Services and the Police will then advise on next steps, which may include the interviewing of young people in school or they may wish to meet with parents.

In circumstances where social services feel that it does not meet their threshold criteria, then the DSP should consider whether that decision should be challenged with that individual or their line manager. If you agree with their view, then it will be left to the Academy to inform the parents.

Step 4: Informing parents

If, once appropriate advice has been sought from Police/Social services, there is agreement to inform parents then the DSP / Senior Leader must inform the parents as soon as possible, if the Police and Social Services have not already done so. If other agencies or services are not going to be involved, then you should share this information with the parents. Advice should be sought from relevant Trust or LA professionals as necessary.

In all circumstances where the risk of harm to the child is evident, then the Academy should encourage the young person to share the information. Where the child still does not wish to share this information with parents, and where the Academy can evidence that it is acting in the best interests of the young person, then parents should be informed.

It is advised that parents are informed face to face. Whilst more time consuming, the nature of abusive incidents can cause fear and anxiety for parents and a face to face meeting will provide more reassurance.

Step 5: Recording the Whole Incident

The DSP or Senior Leader should record all details of the incident on CPOMs and **the pro-forms in Appendix C3 and C4 found in the HAT Child Protection Policy.**

Other points to consider

a) What is the age of children involved

Consider how old the children are and any age difference between them. In relation to sexual exploitation children under the age of five (who may be learning toileting skills may show a particular interest in exploration). This should not be overlooked if other issues arise.

b) Where did the incident(s) take place?

Was the incident in an open, visible space to others? Were there witnesses or CCTV cameras in the vicinity? If not, is this an area where more supervision is required on the Academy premises.

c) What was the explanation by all children involved of what occurred?

Did all children involved give the same explanation? Do their stories corroborate? What is the effect on the young people involved? Is/are the incident(s) considered to be bullying (regular and repetitive). If their stories differ, what might the reasons for this be?

d) What is each of the children's understanding of what occurred?

Consider whether the young people know and understand what they are doing e.g. do they have knowledge of body parts, of privacy and that it is inappropriate to touch? Is the young person's explanation in relation to something they may have seen or heard

that has prompted this behaviour? Is the behaviour deliberate and contrived? If there is an age difference, is one child's understanding more mature than the other? Does the young person understand the impact of their behaviour on the other person?

Answers to the above questions are rarely clear cut. It is advised to seek support and advice from Children's Service Social Care if you are concerned or unsure as to whether or not there is any risk involved.

e) Repetition

Has the school had previous reports of similar/repeated behaviours for the young person. It must also be monitored whether the behaviour persists after the issue has been discussed and resolved.

Risk Assessment

When there has been a report of sexual violence, the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should make an immediate risk and needs assessment. Where there has been a report of sexual harassment, the need for a risk assessment should be considered on a case-by-case basis. A HAT risk assessment for incidents of sexual harassment, violence and abuse is available via your academy DSP.

The risk and needs assessment should consider:

- the victim, especially their protection and support;
- where there may have been other victims;
- the alleged perpetrator; and
- all the other children (and, if appropriate, adult students and staff) at the Academy, especially any actions that are appropriate to protect them;

Risk assessments should be recorded (written or electronic) and should be kept under review. At all times, the Academy should be actively considering the risks posed to all their children and students and putting adequate measures in place to protect them and keep them safe.

The DSP (or a deputy) should ensure they are engaging with children's social care and specialist services as required. Where there has been a report of sexual violence, it is likely that professional risk assessments by social workers and or sexual violence specialists will be required. The risk assessment is not intended to replace the detailed assessments of expert professionals. Any such professional assessments should be used to inform the approach taken by the Academy to supporting and protecting their children and students and updating their own risk assessment.

7. Options for the DSP to manage a peer on peer abuse report

It is important that you consider every report on a case-by-case basis. When to inform the alleged perpetrator will be a decision that should be carefully considered. Where a report is going to be made to children's social care and/or the police, then, as a general rule, the Academy should speak to the relevant agency and discuss next steps and how the alleged perpetrator will be informed of the allegations. However, as per general safeguarding principles, this does not and should not stop the Academy taking immediate action to safeguard their children, where required.

There are **four** likely scenarios to consider when managing any reports of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment. It will be important in all scenarios that decisions and actions are regularly reviewed and that relevant policies are updated to reflect lessons learnt. It is particularly important to look out for potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour. Where a pattern is identified, the DSP and/or Senior Leader should decide on a course of action. Consideration should be given to whether there are wider cultural issues within the setting that enabled the inappropriate behaviour to occur and where appropriate extra teaching time and/or staff training could be delivered to minimise the risk of it happening again.

Whatever the response, it should be under-pinned by the principle that sexual violence and sexual harassment is never acceptable and will not be tolerated. All staff working with children are advised to maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here'.

• All concerns, discussions, decisions and reasons for decisions should be recorded (written or electronic).

a. Manage internally

- In some cases of sexual harassment, for example, one-off incidents, the Academy may take the view that the children concerned are not in need of early help or statutory intervention and that it would be appropriate to handle the incident internally, perhaps through utilising their behaviour and bullying policies and by providing pastoral support.

b. Early help

- The Academy may decide that the children involved do not require statutory interventions, but may benefit from early help. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life. Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help can be particularly useful to address non-violent harmful sexual behaviour and may prevent escalation of sexual violence.
- Multi-agency early help will work best when placed alongside strong policies, preventative education and engagement with parents and carers.
- Early help and the option to manage a report internally do not need to be mutually exclusive. They could be managed internally and seek early help for both the victim and perpetrator(s).

c. Referrals to children's social care

- Where a child has been harmed, is at risk of harm, or is in immediate risk of harm, academies should make a referral to local children's social care.
- At the referral to children's social care stage, the Academy will generally inform parents or carers, unless there are compelling reasons not to (if informing a parent or carer is going to put the child at additional risk). Any such decision should be made with the support of children's social care.
- If a referral is made, children's social care will then make enquiries to determine whether any of the children involved are in need of protection or other services.

- Where statutory assessments are appropriate, the Academy should be working alongside, and cooperating with, the relevant lead social worker. Collaborative working will help ensure the best possible package of coordinated support is implemented for the victim and, where appropriate, the alleged perpetrator and any other children that require support.
- Do not wait for the outcome (or even the start) of a children's social care investigation before protecting the victim and other children in the Academy. It will be important for the DSP (or a deputy) to work closely with children's social care (and other agencies as required) to ensure any actions the Academy takes do not jeopardise a statutory investigation. The risk assessment will help inform any decision. Consideration of safeguarding the victim, alleged perpetrator, any other children directly involved in the safeguarding report and all children at the Academy should be **immediate**.
- In some cases, children's social care will review the evidence and decide a statutory intervention is not appropriate. The Academy (generally led by the designated safeguarding lead or a deputy) should be prepared to refer again if they believe the child remains in immediate danger or at risk of harm. If a statutory assessment is not appropriate, the DSP (or a deputy) should consider other support mechanisms such as early help, specialist support and pastoral support.

d. Reporting to the Police

- Any report to the police will generally be in parallel with a referral to children's social care (as above).
- It is important that the DSP (and their deputies) is clear about the process for referrals and follow that process.
- Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, the starting point is that this must be passed on to the police. Whilst the age of criminal responsibility is ten, if the alleged perpetrator is under ten, the starting principle of reporting to the police remains. The police will take a welfare, rather than a criminal justice, approach.
- Where a report has been made to the police, the school or college should consult the police and agree what information can be disclosed to staff and others, in particular, the alleged perpetrator and their parents or carers. They should also discuss the best way to protect the victim and their anonymity.
- At this stage, the Academy will generally inform parents or carers unless there are compelling reasons not to, for example, if informing a parent or carer is likely to put a child at additional risk. In circumstances where parents or carers have not been informed, it will be especially important that the school supporting the child in any decision they take. This should be with the support of children's social care and any appropriate specialist agencies.
- All police forces in England have specialist units that investigate child abuse. The names and structures of these units are matters for local forces. It will be important that the DSP (and their deputies) is aware of their local arrangements.

- In some cases, it may become clear very quickly, that the police (for whatever reason) will not take further action. In such circumstances, it is important that the Academy continues to engage with specialist support for the victim as required.
- Whilst protecting children and/or taking any disciplinary measures against the alleged perpetrator(s), it will be important for the DSP (or a deputy) to work closely with the police (and other agencies as required), to ensure any actions the Academy take do not jeopardise the police investigation.
- If the Academy has questions about the investigation, they should ask the police. The police will help and support the school or college as much as they can (within the constraints of any legal restrictions)

Considering bail conditions

- From April 2017, the use of police bail has been dramatically reduced and will only be used when deemed necessary and proportionate in exceptional circumstances. Consideration will be given to less invasive options to safeguard victims and witnesses and the administration of justice. Therefore, it is less likely that a child attending school will be on police bail with conditions attached if there are alternative measures to mitigate any risk.
- In the absence of bail conditions, when there is a criminal investigation, early engagement and joined up working between the school or college, children's social care and the police will be critical to support the victim, alleged perpetrator and other children involved (especially potential witnesses). Where required, advice from the police should be sought in order to help the Academy manage their safeguarding responsibilities.
- The term 'Released Under Investigation' or 'RUI' will replace those previously on bail for offences in circumstances that do not warrant the application of bail to either re-attend on a particular date or to include conditions preventing activity or in some cases ensuring compliance with an administrative process.
- Where bail is deemed proportionate and necessary, the school or college should work with children's social care and the police to manage any implications and safeguard their children. An important consideration will be to ensure that the victim can continue in their normal routine, including continuing to receive a suitable education.

Managing any delays in the criminal process

- There may be delays in any case that is being progressed through the criminal justice system. Do not wait for the outcome (or even the start) of a police investigation before protecting the victim, alleged perpetrator and other children in the Academy. The risk assessment will help.
- Whilst protecting children and/or taking any disciplinary measures against the alleged perpetrator, it will be important for the DSP (or a deputy) to work closely with the police (and other agencies as required), to ensure any actions the Academy takes do not jeopardise the police investigation.

The end of the criminal process

- If a child is convicted or receives a caution for a sexual offence, the Academy should update its risk assessment, ensure relevant protections are in place for all the children at the Academy and, if it has not already, consider any suitable action in light of their behaviour policy. If the perpetrator remains in the Academy as the victim, the Academy should be very clear as to their expectations regarding the perpetrator now they have been convicted or cautioned. This could include expectations regarding their behaviour and any restrictions the Academy thinks are reasonable and proportionate with regard to the perpetrator's timetable.
- Any conviction (even with legal anonymity reporting restrictions) is potentially going to generate interest among other children. It will be important that the Academy ensures both the victim and alleged perpetrator remain protected, especially from any bullying or harassment (including online).
- Where cases are classified as "no further action" (NFA'd) by the police or Crown Prosecution Service, or where there is a not guilty verdict, the Academy should continue to offer support to the victim and the alleged perpetrator for as long as is necessary. A not guilty verdict or a decision not to progress with their case will likely be traumatic for the victim. The fact that an allegation cannot be substantiated does not necessarily mean that it was unfounded. The Academy should discuss any decisions with the victim in this light and continue to offer support. The alleged perpetrator is also likely to require ongoing support for what will have likely been a difficult experience.

8. Next steps: support and intervention

The following principles are based on effective safeguarding practice and should help shape any decisions regarding safeguarding and supporting the victim.

- Consider the age and the developmental stage of the victim, the nature of the allegations and the potential risk of further abuse. Be aware that, by the very nature of peer on peer abuse, a power imbalance is likely to have been created between the victim and alleged perpetrator.
- The needs and wishes of the victim should be paramount (along with protecting the child) in any response. It is important they feel in as much control of the process as is reasonably possible. Wherever possible, the victim, if they wish, should be able to continue in their normal routine. Overall, the priority should be to make the victim's daily experience as normal as possible, so that the Academy is a safe space for them.
- Counselling or 1:1 mentorship support may be appropriate or the victim may wish to deal with the incident within the support of their family and friends. In either case, it is essential for the young person to continue to be monitored regularly and offered support in the future should they require it.
- The victim should never be made to feel they are the problem for making a report or made to feel ashamed for making a report.

- Consider the proportionality of the response. Support should be tailored on a case-by-case basis. The support required regarding a one-off incident of name-calling is likely to be vastly different from that for a report of rape.
- If the young person feels vulnerable then a risk assessment should be put in place whilst in school so that they have a named person to talk to and support strategies can be put in place.
- The Academy should be aware that many types of peer on peer abuse, for example sexual assault, can result in a range of health needs, including physical, mental, and sexual health problems and unwanted pregnancy.

8.1 Support pupils who have suffered sexual abuse

The following are all avenues of support that can be offered to pupils who have suffered sexual abuse:

- Children and young people that have a health need arising from sexual assault or abuse can access specialist NHS support from a Sexual Assault Referral Centre 113 (SARC). SARCs offer confidential and non-judgemental support to victims and survivors of sexual assault and abuse. They provide medical, practical, and emotional care and advice to all children and adults, regardless of when the incident occurred.
- Children and Young People's Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ChISVAs) provide emotional and practical support for victims of sexual violence. They are based within the specialist sexual violence sector and will help the victim understand what their options are and how the criminal justice process works if they have reported or are considering reporting to the police. ChISVAs will work in partnership with academies to ensure the best possible outcomes for the victim.
- Police and social care agencies can signpost to ChISVA services (where available) or referrals can be made directly to the ChISVA service by the young person or Academy. Contact details for ChISVAs can be found at Rape Crisis and The Survivors Trust.
- Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS)
- Rape Crisis Centre's can provide therapeutic support for children who have experienced sexual violence.
- Internet Watch Foundation (to potentially remove illegal images).
- NHS
- The specialist sexual violence sector can provide therapeutic support for children who have experienced sexual violence. Contact Rape Crisis (England & Wales) or The Survivors Trust for details of local specialist organisations. The Male Survivors Partnership can provide details of services which specialise in supporting men and boys.
- [Childline / IWF: Remove a nude image shared online](#) Report Remove is a free tool that allows children to report nude or sexual images and videos of themselves that they think might have been shared online, to see if they can be removed from the internet.

- [Childline](#) provides free and confidential advice for children and young people.

8.2 For the young person who has displayed harmful behaviour

It is important to understand why the young person has behaved in this way. They may be experiencing their own difficulties and may have been harmed themselves in a similar way, particularly in cases relating to Child Criminal Exploitation.

Please see Section B8 of the HAT Child Protection Policy for further details.

In such cases counselling or 1:1 mentoring may also be necessary. Particular support from identified services through an early help referral may be necessary and the young person may require support from family members.

Once the support required to meet the individual needs of the young person has been put in place, it is important that the young person receives a proportionate sanction for their behaviour. This may be in the form of restorative justice for example.

In cases of sexually harmful behaviour it may be a requirement for the young person to engage in one to one work with a particular agency. If there is any form of criminal investigation ongoing, then it may be that the young person cannot be educated on site until the conclusion of the investigation. In this case, arrangements for support and education off site will need to be provided.

A risk assessment should be undertaken of the young person's risk to others in the future. This may require a multi-agency response and the involvement of the young person and parents. Protective strategies or additional supervision may also be required if the young person feels at risk of engaging in further harmful behaviour.

In serious cases, a punishment such as exclusion or internal inclusion may be appropriate to allow the young person to reflect on their behaviour.

9. After Care

It is important that following the incident the young people involved continue to feel supported and receive help even if they feel that they are coping with the incident. Feelings of remorse or regret or unhappiness can surface at a later stage. It is therefore important to ensure that young people do not engage in further harmful behaviour as a coping mechanism (e.g. self-harm). Regular reviews with young people following incidents of peer to peer abuse are imperative.

10. Preventative Strategies

A key focus for effective safeguarding is to ensure that our children are aware of our procedures but also are prepared for events that may cause harm as much as possible.

Trust academies must focus on the development of appropriate strategies to prevent peer on peer abuse rather than relying on managing incidents in a reactive way as they occur. These will be shared and evaluated at Trust safeguarding meetings.

Academy staff must recognise that all types of abuse and peer on peer abuse can and will occur in their school regardless of the most stringent policy and support mechanisms.

Staff must recognise and manage the risks, implement strategies and talk about issues through training and information sharing sessions with other staff.

Academy staff should foster a culture of openness where young people feel confident to share information about anything that is worrying them. This can be strengthened with a strong and positive age appropriate PHSE / SMSC / RSHE curriculum (including relationships education in primary academies and Sex and Relationships Education in secondary academies) where children openly discuss issues with peers. The statutory RSHE guidance can be found here: [Statutory guidance: relationships education, relationships and sex education \(RSE\) and health education](#).

The DfE has produced a one-stop page for teachers on GOV.UK, which can be accessed here: [Teaching about relationships, sex and health](#). This includes teacher training modules on the RSHE topics and non-statutory implementation guidance.

The curriculum should include the following issues regarding peer and peer abuse:

- healthy and respectful relationships
- what respectful behaviour looks like
- gender roles, stereo-typing and equality
- body confidence and self-esteem
- prejudiced behaviour
- that sexual violence and sexual harassment is always wrong
- addressing cultures of sexual harassment

Academy leaders must foster a culture of openness and honesty among their staff to ensure the whole workforce feels confident and enabled to talk about issues and challenge perceptions of young people e.g. inappropriate language, prejudiced behaviour etc.

Academy leaders must put in place programmes for whole staff training and CPD around abusive behaviours and talking to young people to ensure that peer to peer abuse has a consistently high focus in staff minds and to ensure that concerns raised by young people are dealt with consistently.

Academy leaders should ensure that school councils are encouraged to actively participate in the development and review of 'rules of acceptable behaviour' which will aid the creation of a positive and consistent ethos in the school and one where all young people understand the boundaries of behaviour before it becomes abusive.