

includEd Learning

Independent Specialist Education Provider



CHILD-ON-CHILD ABUSE POLICY

→ Policy Aims and Objectives

Child-on-child abuse can take various forms and include serious bullying, relationship abuse, domestic violence, child sexual exploitation, harmful sexual behaviour, and/or gender-based violence. This form of abuse occurs when there is any kind of physical, sexual, emotional or financial abuse or coercive control exercised between young people. It includes bullying, cyberbullying, sexual violence, harassment and sexting.

It should be recognised that the behaviour in question is harmful to both the perpetrator (who is the young person) and the victim. Behaviour may be intimate or non-intimate.

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 (DFE 2022) includes the following statements:

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

All staff should be clear as to the school's or college's policy and procedures with regard to child on-child abuse and the important role they have to play in preventing it and responding where they believe a child may be at risk from 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 child-on-child abuse they should speak to their designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy).

It is essential that all staff understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between children, many of which are listed below, that are 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.

Child-on-child abuse is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying);
- abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (sometimes known as 'teenage relationship abuse');
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse);
- sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault; (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence);
- sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse;
- Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party;
- consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or video (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery);
- upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress, or alarm, and
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element).

Some of these behaviours will need to be handled with reference to other policies in school such as the behaviour policy, anti-bullying policy, child protection policy and online safety policy. This policy concentrates on child on child abuse in the context of sexual harassment and sexual violence.

Children need to know how to report concerns and know that they will be listened to and supported. These include

- Procedures to minimise the risk of child on child abuse
- How allegations are recorded, investigated and dealt with

- Clear processes as to how victims, perpetrators and any other children affected will be supported
- Recognition of the gendered nature of child-on-child abuse but recognising, that all forms of this behaviour are unacceptable and will be taken seriously;

CONTINUUM MODEL OF SEXUAL BEHAVIOURS BY CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Professionals should consider a child/young person's behaviour to be harmful if:

- Occurs at a frequency greater than would be developmentally expected
- Interferes with child/young person's development
- Occurs with coercion, intimidation or force
- Is associated with emotional distress
- Occurs with coercion, intimidation or force
- Repeatedly recurs in secrecy after intervention by caregivers

(Chaffin, Letourneau and Silovsky 2002)

Simon Hackett (2010) has proposed a continuum model to demonstrate the range of sexual behaviours presented by children and young people, from those that are normal, to those that are highly deviant:

Normal	Inappropriate	Problematic	Abusive	Violent
Developmentally expected	• Single instances of inappropriate sexual behaviour	• Problematic and concerning behaviours	• Victimising intent or outcome	• Physically violent sexual abuse
Socially acceptable	• Socially acceptable behaviour within peer group	• Developmentally unusual and socially unexpected	• Includes misuse of power	• Highly intrusive
Consensual, mutual, reciprocal	• Context for behaviour may be inappropriate	• No overt elements of victimisation	• Coercion and force to ensure victim compliance	• Instrumental violence which is physiologically and/or sexually arousing to the perpetrator
Shared decision making	• Generally consensual and reciprocal	• Consent issues may be unclear	• Intrusive	• Sadism
		• May lack reciprocity or equal power	• Informed consent lacking, or not able to be freely given by victim	
		• May include levels of compulsivity	• May include elements of expressive violence	

SPOTTING THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS:

- Absence from setting or disengagement from setting activities
- Physical injuries
- Mental or emotional health issues
- Becoming withdrawn
- Lack of sleep
- Alcohol or substance misuse
- Changes in behaviour
- Inappropriate behaviour for age
- Abusive towards others

The issue facing professionals is that these characteristics will often make the young person more visible, whilst those without any of the characteristics above may be less likely to come into contact with professionals. For example, when a young person goes missing from care (even for a small amount of time) the professional network will know about it, whilst if a young person regularly returns home later than their curfew their parents may not necessarily tell anyone. It is therefore important to look at interlinking factors and not isolated incidents.

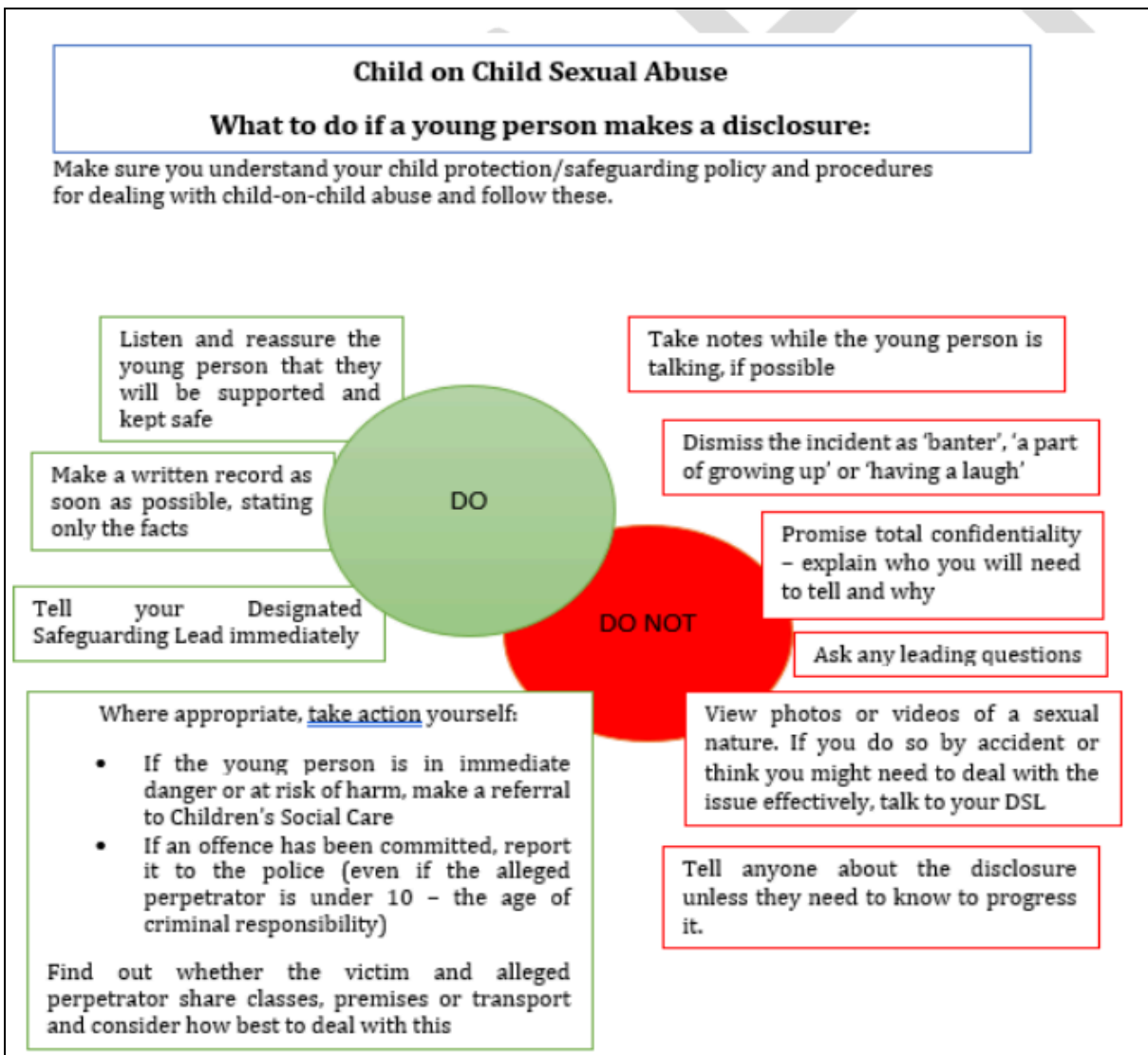
WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- **Create an environment based on equality and informed choice** allowing young people to know their rights, what to do if they are unhappy with something and what it means to give true consent.
- **It could happen here** – staff having the attitude to believe that is happening in your setting even without disclosures.
- **Understand your local community** and the context in which young people in your setting are growing up.
- **Ensure young people know the risks** – talk about child-on-child abuse in an age-appropriate way. Create opportunities for young people to weigh up risks and recognise that sometimes this means they will take risks we as adults and professionals disagree with. Our role is to be influencing young people to be making the healthiest long-term choices and keeping them safe from harm in the short-term.

- **Check young people have safe relationships** – in their family, with their peers and with your staff. Create the environment where it is OK to talk, even about the most difficult things.
- **Ensure that children & young people and staff know how to report** a concern, allegation or incident appropriately, (for children this should include, where, appropriate, the means to report anonymously.)

The importance of language and sensitive communication:

It is important to be mindful that this is a sensitive and emotive subject. Not everyone who has been subjected to sexual assault would see themselves, or want to be described as, a victim and that the word perpetrator can imply a finding of guilt. Professionals must use language very carefully, especially when speaking with children and their carers. We must ensure that all children are considered in a child focused way.



CONTEXTUAL SAFEGUARDING AND POWER DYNAMICS

It is important to recognise that young people are vulnerable to abuse in a range of social contexts as they form different relationships in their neighbourhoods, education setting and online and these can feature violence and abuse which is often hidden to adults. Peer influence and pressure is a major factor in decisions made by young people to join groups. Keeping Children Safe in Education highlights the importance of awareness of factors across an educational setting's local community, so they understand where young people are living, who they come into contact with and the dynamics at play.

Understanding the power dynamic that can exist between young people is very important in helping to identify and respond to child-on-child abuse – there will be a power imbalance, and this may be due to age or status; abusers can be younger than their victims – social or economic – and the perpetrator in one situation may be the powerless victim and what is driving the behaviour before taking sanctions.

A thorough investigation of the concerns should take place to include any wider contexts which may be known. However, the victim should always be made to feel safe and actions will need to be taken to separate the victim and perpetrator and ensure that the abuse is now allowed to continue. The issues of the interplay between power, choice and consent should be explored with young people

Prevention

As a school we have a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment.

As part of our bespoke PSHEC curriculum we educate the pupils on healthy relationships including:

- Healthy and respectful relationships;
- What respectful behaviour looks like?
- Consent;
- Gender roles, stereotyping, and equality;
- Body confidence and self-esteem;
- Prejudiced behaviour;
- That sexual violence and sexual harassment is always wrong; and
- Addressing cultures of sexual harassment.

As a school we have access to the Healthy Schools Curriculum and training offer, which is used accordingly to support staff training and education for pupils.

All classroom display safeguarding and signposting information so pupils are aware of how and who to report any concerns, allegations or incidents appropriately.

All staff have Level 1 safeguarding certificate, DSL's have Level 3 training, and all pupil wellbeing leads have completed Brook Harmful Sexual Behaviour training.

Responding to Alleged Incidents of sexual violence and sexual harassment

- The school will take all reports seriously and will reassure the victim that they will be supported and kept safe.
- Staff will not promise confidentiality as the concern will need to be shared further (for example, with the DSL and social care) staff will however only share the report with those people who are necessary to progress it.
- A written report will be made as soon after the interview as possible recording the facts as presented by the child. These may be used as part of a statutory assessment if the case is escalated later. This will be recorded on CPOMS.
- Where the report includes an online element the school or college will follow advice on searching, screening and confiscation. The staff will not view or forward images unless unavoidable and only if another member of staff (preferably the DSL) is present.
- The DSL will be informed as soon as possible.

Risk Assessment

When there has been a report of sexual violence, the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) will make a dynamic risk and needs' assessment. The risk and needs' assessment should consider:

- The victim, especially their protection and support;
- The alleged perpetrator
- All the other children (and, if appropriate, adult students and staff) at the school or college, especially any actions that are appropriate to protect them;

Responding effectively to a concern

- Follow the school's safeguarding policy.
- Understand that not all instances of concern or alleged child on child sexual violence and sexual harassment will require a specialist service (e.g. police, social work, Early Help) for both parties; but if in doubt, the school should contact the Advice and Guidance Service for a focused conversation regarding the harmful sexualised behaviours; being mindful of background information that may identify patterns of behaviour, and advice on next steps (which may include a social work assessment).
- Report any suspected crimes directly to the police for consideration. In these circumstances, it is essential that practitioners do not ask any leading questions, and take detailed, verbatim notes of any conversations they do have with the young person/people to minimise the possibility of jeopardising or interfering with a criminal investigation. This should be done in parallel with a conversation with children's social care and which may lead to a strategy meeting.
- Consider what immediate and on-going support arrangements all of the young people involved will need – including risk assessment (s) and safety plan (s) which are sustainable given the further enquiries may take time.
- Monitor the support and actions taken.
- Review and reflect after the event to identify any learning or changes to be implemented to the RSHE curriculum.

Multi Agency Pathways

Manchester Safeguarding Partnership is committed to ensuring that our children and young people feel free and safe from sexual abuse, exploitation and harassment. The Partnership will ensure that any cultural patterns and themes are identified and responded to as well as providing effective support and intervention to safeguard individuals.

The partnership pathway will support schools and colleges in responding to any circumstances where children and young people need to be referred to Advice and Guidance Service, Social Care, Police or Health services.

The following guiding principles/responsibilities around safety and harm are to be considered:

- Consider the age and the developmental stage of the alleged perpetrator(s), the nature of the allegations and frequency of allegations. Any child will likely experience stress as a result of being the subject of allegations and/or negative reactions by their peers to the allegations against them.
- Where a child has been harmed, is at risk of harm, or is in immediate danger, schools and colleges should contact the Advice and Guidance Service (AGS) to discuss, seek advice and determine if children's social care involvement is needed.
- Where Advice and Guidance Service has advised that Children's services become involved, Children's social care will assess the situation and, where appropriate, they will inform the Police.
- Information will be screened to identify any element of risk. If the allegation is historical, the screening will consider any potential contextual current risk to a child.
- Any urgent safeguarding risks identified should be directly referred to the Police.
- Dependent on the circumstances and history this may trigger a s47 strategy meeting.
- Reports may also be made directly to the Police by victims, their guardians, or through a third-party professional. Where there is an identified current or potential risk to a child, the Police will share this information with District Safeguarding Teams and through the Domestic Abuse and Child Concern (DACC) meeting. Or alternatively through Children's social care through the AGS process as per MSP Safeguarding Procedures. A determination that a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm will trigger a Strategy Meeting under Section 47 Children Act 1989.
- The Police, in conjunction with partners, where necessary, will consider the proportionality of the response. Support (and sanctions) should be considered on a case by-case basis. The Children's-Crime Allocation Team (C-CAT) will be applied to all criminal investigations and the most appropriate investigator will be allocated according to an assessment of full circumstances and background.
- Any strategy should separately consider the needs of the alleged victim and the alleged perpetrator.
- All activity by school should be recorded on the school safeguarding system, CPOMS.

The role of the AGS and children's social care

- The Multi-Agency Advice and Guidance service (AGS) delivers a key service for children and families by providing a timely response when community partners and families seek guidance and share information in relation to safeguarding and child protection concern about a child/family – including child on child sexual violence and sexual harassment.
- There are certain situations that will always require the school to seek an urgent telephone consultation with AGS:
 - Where the allegation would clearly constitute a crime;
 - Where there is a suspected power imbalance between the parties (for example, an age gap of more than 2 years, or if 1 child has impairments/additional needs);
 - Where there is suspected or alleged exploitation, coercion, control or manipulation;
 - Where there is a suspicion of systemic, multiple or complex abuse;
 - School should be mindful to discuss all of the involved young people in their conversation with AGS (as there may be a different response for each involved young person).
- Generally speaking, the school should obtain consent from the young person's parents and the young person (where appropriate) before starting a conversation with AGS unless:
 - Obtaining consent would place the child at further risk; or
 - The alleged abuse is a crime and obtaining consent would jeopardise a potential Police investigation (i.e. if advised not to do so by the Police); or
 - lead to an unjustified delay in making enquiries about allegations of significant harm to a child
- In making a referral, it is important to be specific (i.e. "who?", "what?", "where?", "when?"). Ideally, the referral will be made by the person to whom the young person made the allegation (with support).
- The Advice and Guidance service social worker will triage the information and consider the needs of all of the young people involved before making individual decisions about next steps. It may be that both young people require social work; either/or require social work (for example, the alleged victim might not require social work assessment or intervention if their family are supportive and they have access to other services better placed to help them).The outcomes of AGS's screening can be:

- Advice to the referrer on safety planning, focused conversations or direct work that the referrer can undertake with the young person/year group;
- Signposting to resources or third-party agencies to conduct further work;
- Referral to the Early Help service for targeted intervention/family support (see section 10);
- Step-up to Social Work intervention.

The role of Early help

The Early Help Hub Triage Service is co-located with the locality based Advice and Guidance Services (AGS). Suitability for Early Help intervention will be decided once a referral to the AGS has been made, as above. Early Help and AGS will discuss the referral and consider the most appropriate course of action.

Early Help can provide support (including signposting to external specialist services as appropriate and with parent's permission); particularly where non-violent sexual harassment has occurred. They can also work with the family to assist them with any other identified support needs.

Where Early Help are already involved with the child or young person, please inform the Early Help worker, but ensure that contact is made with Advice and Guidance Service (AGS) in the first instance.

Children's social care

- Where the Advice and Guidance Service recommend social work intervention and/or a multi-agency strategy meeting for either/both young people; the situation will be stepped-up to the Duty Team in the locality within which the child lives. Where the child already has an allocated social worker, that worker and their own line manager will undertake the further assessment work.
- The Duty Team Manager will allocate the Assessment to a social worker, who will become the lead professional in the multi-agency approach and co-ordinate further enquiries/assessments – which may include arranging a strategy meeting and inviting the relevant professionals if a decision is needed as to whether a Child Abuse Enquiry is required under section 47, Children Act 1989.

In the context of child on child sexual violence and sexual harassment, the social worker and team manager will use their professional judgement to make that decision based on:

- If the abuse clearly constitutes a crime; o If the abuse contains coercion or control; o If there is a power or authority imbalance (for example, if one child is older or has Special Educational Needs and Disabilities); and/or
- If there is a pattern or history of worrying behaviour
- The strategy meeting will determine whether there should be:
 - A Child Abuse Enquiry into the allegation pursuant to section 47 Children Act 1989 (either Jointly between Police & Social Care, or Single Agency by Social Care). which may include a referral for forensic examination at Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC). This will also trigger a detailed, holistic social work Child & Family Assessment;
 - A Child & Family Assessment to identify the support needs;
 - Further support from school or other services (which may include a referral to SARC for counselling support); or
 - No further action
- It is not uncommon for there to be a different outcome for the various parties in an allegation – for example, the alleged victim and their family may have a supportive and effective support network and not need further social care intervention; while the alleged perpetrator may require more assertive intervention to meet their unmet need and reduce the risk of repeated harmful behaviour.
- The strategy meeting will set out the specific details of the enquiry and actions for each individual agency to take. It should be held as soon as is practicable with the right people holding the right information to make the right plan. It is important that all of the relevant professionals (including – as a minimum - social care, education, health and the police) are able to attend having done sufficient preparation to be able to create a sufficient and workable plan for the investigation, while ensuring all of the young people are safe. The social worker and school must undertake interim safety planning if the strategy meeting cannot be convened immediately.
- Where there is a suspicion or allegation of exploitation, the social worker will invite a representative from the Complex Safeguarding Hub.

- Where a strategy meeting is not assessed as being necessary by children's social care, the allocated social worker will undertake a Child and Family Assessment, which will include liaison with the school and may involve the arrangement of multi-agency meeting(s).
- Where there is a Police investigation, the allocated Police Officer will take the lead in the investigation, (see point 12). In these circumstances, it is essential that practitioners do not ask any leading questions, and take detailed, verbatim notes of any conversations they do have with the young person/people to minimise the possibility of jeopardising or interfering with the criminal investigation.
- The social work assessment may conclude in the following ways:
 - On-going social work support or intervention via either Child in Need or Child Protection planning.
 - identifying specialist intervention if assessed necessary, including; the Complex Safeguarding Hub (where exploitation has been identified); or an AIM assessment completed by specially trained practitioners.
 - Step-down to Early Help planning with clear recommendations for further work; or
 - Advice, guidance and signposting on next steps and further work that can be completed by school

The role of the police

- 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. This particularly relates to what information should be disclosed to an alleged perpetrator(s) and their parents or carers. They should also discuss the best way to protect the victim and their anonymity (if appropriate). Ideally, the approach to be followed and the content of these conversations should be decided as a multi-agency and / or in a Strategy Meeting. If a report has been made directly to the Police they should, in the first instance, make contact with the school or college to formulate a strategy.
- Greater Manchester Police has specialist units that investigate child abuse. It is important for the Designated Safeguarding Lead (and their deputies) to make themselves aware of local arrangements.

The Child Protection Investigation Units (CPIU) are based on each area and they pick up investigations which are aligned to Children's Services boundaries. Each CPIU is led by a Vulnerability DI, two Detective Sergeants and a team of Detective Constables (including Trainees). The North CPIU is based at Central Park Police Station, the Central CPIU is based at Longsight Police Station and the South CPIU is based at West Didsbury Police Station. The CPIU's work closely with the District Safeguarding Teams (DST).

- In some cases, it may become apparent that the Police will not take further action based on the information and evidence that they are presented or provided with. In these circumstances, it is important for the school or college to continue engaging with specialist support services for the victim and alleged perpetrator(s) as required.
- All concerns, discussions, and the rationale for decisions should be recorded in written or electronic format.
- All material that has been generated as part of a report should be retained to allow Police compliance with the obligations under the Criminal Procedures and Investigations Act 1996 (CPIA) should criminal proceedings be initiated. General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) considerations and confidentiality sharing agreements should also be complied with.
- Schools and colleges should not wait for the outcome (or even the start) of a Police investigation before protecting the victim, alleged perpetrator(s) and other children in the school or college

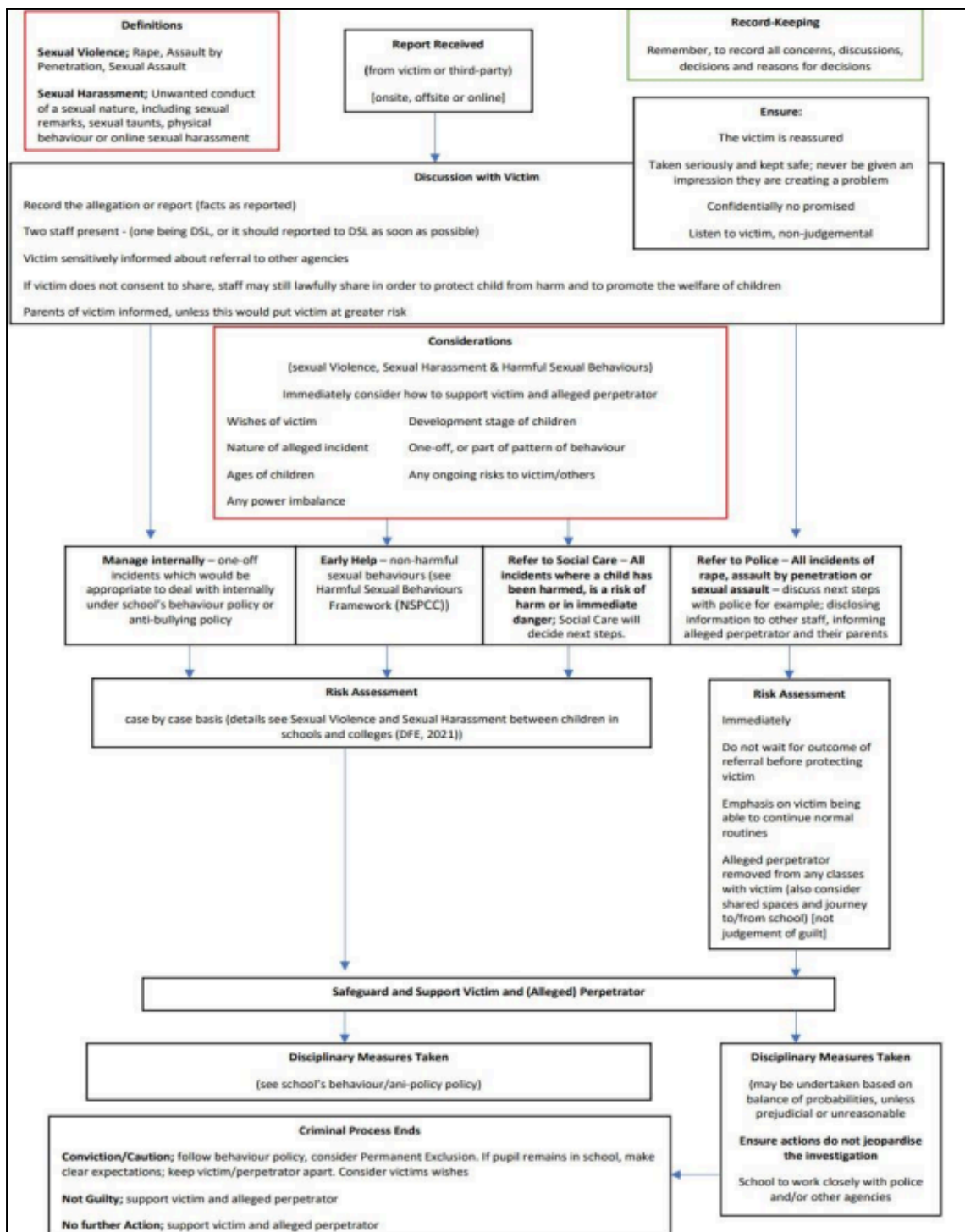
The role of Health

Schools should be aware that sexual assault can result in a range of health needs, including physical, mental, and sexual health problems and unwanted pregnancy. Children and young people who have experienced a sexual assault are able to access specialist NHS support from a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC). SARCs offer confidential and non-judgmental 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.

Referrals to SARC can be made by the police or as self-referrals (which are supported by education and school health).

Ultimately, any decisions when dealing with allegations, instances or concerns about sexual abuse are for the school or college to make on a case-by-case basis, with the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) taking a leading role, using their professional judgement, supported by other agencies, such as children’s social care and the police as required. (See KCSIE 2021)

Flowchart of Response



Helpline – Report Abuse in Education

The NSPCC helpline has provided an additional route for individuals seeking help and advice, which can strengthen and support the multi-agency responses already in place. From 1.4.21 The Department for Education (DfE) has commissioned a dedicated helpline, managed by NSPCC, to support and advise victims of sexual abuse in educational settings. The helpline will offer support to:

- All children and young people making current and non-recent allegations or reports of sexual abuse;
 - Any children or young people who want to talk about being involved or witnessing any incidents;
 - Any adults who have experienced non recent abuse;
 - Parents and carers who have any concern about their own or other children;
 - Professionals who work in schools and need support in this or related issues
- Young people and adults can contact the NSPCC helpline, Report Abuse in Education on 0800 136 663 or email help@nspcc.org.uk.

Vulnerable groups

Children with special educational needs

Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are three times more likely to be abused than their peers. Additional barriers can sometimes exist when recognising abuse in SEND children.

Children who are lesbian, gay, bi or trans (LGBTQI+)

Children who are lesbian, gay, bi, or trans (LGBT) can be targeted by their peers. In some cases, a child who is perceived by their peers to be LGBT (whether they are or not) can be just as vulnerable as children who identify as LGBT.

USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS

Advice and Guidance Service – AGS 0161 235 5001

Lisa Shaw, Bridgelea PRU - lisa.shaw@bridgelea.manchester.sch.uk

MSP manchestersafeguardingpartnership@manchester.gov.uk

Local Authority Designated Officers for Allegations -(LADO) - 0161 234 1214.

Greater Manchester Police – 101

NSPCC – 0800 136 663 / help@nspcc.org.uk

After receiving hundreds of contacts our Report Abuse in Education helpline will now stay open until the end of the year | NSPCC

References and useful documents:

Farrer & Co: Peer-on-peer abuse toolkit 2019

[addressing-child-on-child-abuse.pdf \(farrer.co.uk\)](#)

Keeping children safe in education 2021 (publishing.service.gov.uk)

[Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges (publishing.service.gov.uk)

[Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Working together to safeguard children - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](#))

[Working together to safeguard children - GOV.UK](#)

NSPCC Helpline: Report Abuse in Education

After receiving hundreds of contacts our Report Abuse in Education helpline will now stay open until the end of the year | NSPCC

NSPCC Understanding Harmful Sexual Behaviour

[After receiving hundreds of contacts our Report Abuse in Education helpline will now stay open until the end of the year | NSPCC](#)

NSPCC Child Development: Sexual Behaviour

[Sexual development and behaviour in children | NSPCC Learning](#)

Manchester Healthy Schools website

[Healthy Schools \(manchester healthy schools.nhs.uk\)](#)

Preventing and tackling bullying (publishing.service.gov.uk)

[Preventing and tackling bullying \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Teaching about relationships, sex and health - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](#))

[Teaching about relationships, sex and health - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](#))

[Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Advice and guidance | Equality and Human Rights Commission

[Advice and guidance | Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

[\(equalityhumanrights.com\)](#) Lucy Faithfull Foundation Harmful Sexual Behaviour

Prevention toolkit

[HSB-Prevention-Toolkit_MCH21.pdf \(stopitnow.org.uk\)](#)

Brook Traffic Light tool

[CPD: Brook Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool \(RSE\) Course](#)