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Managing Allegations of Peer-to-Peer Abuse

Part of the BYO Safeguarding and Protection Policy Suite

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Introduction

This guidance is part of Britannia Youth Organisation's (BYO) Safeguarding Framework as part of our commitment to keeping children, young people and adults at risk safe from abuse. It should be read in conjunction with:

- Safeguarding Policy Framework
- Child Protection Procedures
- Adult Safeguarding Procedures
- Managing Allegations about Staff and Volunteers
- Code of Behaviour Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Digital Safeguarding Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Complaints Policy

Framework Integration: This policy complements procedures for managing allegations against staff and volunteers outlined in our **Managing Allegations about Staff and Volunteers policy** and works alongside general behaviour management through our **Code of Behaviour Policy**.



1. Purpose & Scope

These procedures set out how to manage allegations of peer-to-peer abuse between BYO service users, including children, young people, and adults at risk. This policy applies to incidents that occur:

- During BYO activities and programmes
- During BYO-organised trips or events
- Involving BYO service users outside of direct BYO activities where there may be ongoing safeguarding implications
- In digital spaces related to BYO activities

BYO recognises that peer-to-peer abuse can take many forms and will take into account information received from internal and external sources.

Important Distinctions

- Peer-to-peer abuse (covered by this policy) serious harmful behaviour between service users
- General behaviour management covered by Code of Behaviour Policy
- Bullying addressed through Anti-Bullying Policy (may escalate to this policy)
- Staff/volunteer concerns covered by Managing Allegations about Staff and Volunteers



2. What is Peer-to-Peer Abuse

Peer-to-peer abuse occurs when a child, young person, or adult at risk is abused by another child, young person, or adult at risk. This includes but is not limited to:

Types of Peer-to-Peer Abuse

Physical abuse: Hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm **Sexual abuse**: Inappropriate sexual behaviour, sexual harassment, sexual assault, or exploitation

Emotional abuse: Persistent emotional maltreatment, humiliation, or intimidation

Online abuse: Cyberbullying, sharing inappropriate images, online harassment, or exploitation through

digital platforms

Financial abuse: Theft, fraud, or exploitation of money or possessions

Discriminatory abuse: Abuse based on protected characteristics including race, gender, disability, sexual

orientation, or religion

Harmful Sexual Behaviour

Harmful Sexual Behaviour requires particular attention and includes:

- Age-inappropriate sexual knowledge or behaviour
- Problematic or concerning sexual behaviour
- Sexually harmful behaviour that may constitute a criminal offence
- Sharing of sexual images or content
- Sexual exploitation or coercion

Digital Considerations: Online peer-to-peer abuse is addressed through our **Digital Safeguarding Policy** alongside this policy.

Bullying vs. Abuse: Serious or persistent bullying may escalate to peer-to-peer abuse. See our **Anti-Bullying Policy** for initial response to bullying behaviours.



3. Recognition and Response

Immediate Documentation Requirements for Peer-to-Peer Incidents

All peer-to-peer abuse incidents must be documented using the BYO Safeguarding Case Report Form immediately upon identification. This ensures:

- Comprehensive evidence collection for potential police investigation
- Professional standard documentation for multi-agency working
- Legal protection for the organisation and appropriate response
- Consistency in handling serious peer-to-peer incidents

When to Complete Safeguarding Case Report Form for Peer-to-Peer Incidents

The form must be completed for all incidents where:

- 1. A service user has been harmed or may be harmed by another service user
- 2. There are concerns about sexually harmful behaviour between service users
- 3. A service user has possibly committed a criminal offence against another service user
- 4. Behaviour indicates ongoing risk to other service users or the wider community
- 5. **Serious bullying** that involves power imbalances or potential for significant harm
- 6. Digital abuse including cyberbullying, sharing inappropriate images, or online exploitation
- 7. Financial exploitation between service users
- 8. Discriminatory abuse based on protected characteristics

Distinguished from general behaviour management:

- Minor behavioural incidents managed through Code of Behaviour Policy do not require the form
- Low-level bullying addressed through Anti-Bullying Policy may not require the form initially
- When in doubt, complete the Safeguarding Case Report Form the DSL can determine appropriateness

Reporting Contact Details

Primary Contacts

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): Joshua William Hall

Mobile: 07925 328 728

Email: joshuahall@britanniayo.com

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL): Hassan Alexander Kingsley

Mobile: 07597 874 222

Email: hassankingsley@britanniayo.com



Emergency Situations

Emergency: If there is immediate risk of harm, contact 999 first, then notify the DSL/DDSL immediately.

Non-emergency police: 101 for criminal matters requiring police involvement

Alternative Reporting

If unable to report directly:

- Use Whistleblowing Policy procedures for alternative reporting channels
- Contact Childline: 0800 1111 for young people needing support
- Contact NSPCC: 0808 800 5000 for professional advice

Alternative Reporting: If you feel unable to report through normal channels, see our Whistleblowing Policy for alternative options including anonymous reporting.



4. Initial Response and Risk Assessment

Immediate Documentation Protocol

Contact immediately and complete Safeguarding Case Report Form if:

- Someone is at immediate risk of harm
- There are signs of serious physical injury
- Sexual abuse is suspected or disclosed
- Criminal activity is suspected
- There is risk of further incidents

Specific Information Required for Peer-to-Peer Incidents

The Safeguarding Case Report Form must include:

Incident Details

- Exact description of what happened using witness accounts
- Location and timing of the incident(s)
- Whether incident was witnessed by staff, other young people, or reported later
- Any ongoing pattern of concerning behaviour between the individuals
- Power dynamics between the individuals involved (age, size, developmental differences)

Alleged Perpetrator Information

- Age and developmental level
- Previous concerning behaviour or safeguarding issues
- Current support needs and vulnerabilities
- Family circumstances and potential contributing factors
- Understanding of appropriate behaviour and boundaries
- Risk assessment for continued participation in activities

Alleged Victim Information

- Age and vulnerability factors
- Impact of incident physical, emotional, psychological
- Previous victimisation or safeguarding concerns
- Support needs and protective factors
- Views and wishes about reporting and intervention
- Safety planning requirements

Environmental Factors

- Supervision arrangements at time of incident
- How incident came to staff attention
- Other service users who may have witnessed or been affected
- Venue or activity specific risk factors
- Time of day and staffing levels



Decision-Making Process

Safeguarding Review Panel

If it is not clear whether the allegation meets the criteria for peer-to-peer abuse, advice and guidance must be sought through BYO's Safeguarding Review Panel consisting of:

- The DSL (or DDSL if necessary)
- Chair of Board of Directors
- One independent Board member
- External safeguarding advisor (when appropriate)

Immediate Safety Planning

The DSL will prioritise:

- 1. Safety planning: Immediate steps to protect all service users
- 2. Appropriate supervision: Ensuring safe supervision arrangements
- 3. Separation if necessary: Preventing further contact between parties if required
- 4. Evidence preservation: Securing physical and digital evidence
- 5. **Professional consultation**: Seeking advice from Children's Services, LADO, or police as appropriate



5. External Agency Involvement

When to Involve External Agencies

The DSL will determine when to involve:

Children's Services: For all allegations involving children and young people

Contact: Birmingham Children's Services MASH - 0121 303 1888

Adult Services: Where adults at risk are involved

Contact: Birmingham Adult Social Care - 0121 303 1234

Police: Where criminal offences may have been committed

Contact: 999 (emergency) or 101 (non-emergency)

LADO: Where the allegation involves organised activities or where staff response is in question

Contact: 0121 675 1669

Multi-Agency Working

BYO will work collaboratively with:

- Children's Services
- Police (where criminal investigation required)
- Educational establishments
- Health services
- Youth Offending Team (if applicable)
- Other relevant agencies



6. Parental/Carer Notification

When to Inform Parents/Carers

Parents/carers of all children and young people involved will normally be informed at the earliest opportunity, unless:

- It would place the child at additional risk
- It would compromise a police investigation
- Professional advice recommends otherwise
- Safeguarding concerns exist about the home environment

Recording Parental Communication in Safeguarding Case Report Form

All parental/carer communication must be documented including:

Notification Planning

- Decision-making process about when and how to inform parents/carers
- Consultation with Children's Services or police about timing
- Risk assessment of parental reaction and impact on children
- Coordination between families to prevent conflict or retaliation

Communication Records

- Date, time, method of communication with each family
- Who was present during conversations
- Information shared and any limitations on disclosure
- Parental reactions and responses to incident disclosure
- Support offered to families and children
- Follow-up arrangements and ongoing communication plans

Consent and Cooperation

- Consent given for investigation and multi-agency involvement
- Any objections or concerns raised by parents/carers
- Cooperation level with safeguarding processes
- Additional support needs identified for families
- Conflict between families and mediation requirements

Safeguarding Priority: Child protection considerations take precedence over parental rights to information.



7. Investigation and Management

Safeguarding Case Report Form in Peer-to-Peer Investigations

The completed form serves multiple investigation purposes:

Multi-Agency Coordination

- Children's Services referral supported by comprehensive form documentation
- Police liaison where criminal activity is suspected
- LADO consultation where organisational response is questioned
- School coordination where incidents affect education settings
- Health services involvement for therapeutic support

Internal Investigation Management

- Evidence gathering and witness statement coordination
- Risk assessment development and ongoing review
- Safety planning for all service users involved
- Parental communication and consent management
- Service delivery adjustments and supervision enhancement

Ongoing Case Management Using the Form

The DSL will maintain the form as a live document throughout:

Investigation Progress

- External agency involvement and case reference numbers
- Investigation findings and evidence gathered
- Professional meetings and multi-agency discussions
- Risk assessment updates and safety plan modifications
- Outcome decisions and intervention planning

Support and Intervention

- Therapeutic support arranged for all parties
- Educational interventions about appropriate behaviour
- Family work and parental support
- Restorative approaches where appropriate and safe
- Ongoing monitoring and progress review



Internal Investigation

An internal investigation will be conducted by an appropriately trained professional who will:

- Gather facts and evidence objectively and thoroughly
- Interview relevant parties with appropriate support and safeguards
- Review policies and procedures to identify any systemic issues
- Make recommendations for action and improvement
- Coordinate with external investigations where applicable

Investigation Principles

Fair process: All parties treated fairly and with dignity **Child-focused:** Best interests of children paramount

Proportionate: Response appropriate to the severity of allegations **Timely**: Investigations completed without unnecessary delay

Thorough: All relevant evidence considered Documented: Clear records maintained throughout

Ongoing Risk Management

Throughout the process, BYO will:

- Regularly review and update risk assessments
- Implement appropriate safety measures for all service users
- Monitor the well-being of all parties involved
- Adjust service delivery as necessary to maintain safety
- Coordinate with external agencies on ongoing risk management



8. Special Considerations for Different Types of Peerto-Peer Abuse

Harmful Sexual Behaviour Documentation

Requires enhanced documentation in the Safeguarding Case Report Form:

- Detailed behavioural description without unnecessary graphic detail
- Age-appropriateness assessment of sexual knowledge or behaviour
- Consent and capacity considerations for all parties
- Previous sexual behaviour concerns or sexualised behaviour patterns
- Access to inappropriate sexual content or exposure to abuse
- Assessment of understanding about appropriate sexual behaviour
- Specialist consultation with sexual behaviour specialists or CAMHS
- Criminal justice considerations and police liaison requirements

Digital Peer-to-Peer Abuse Documentation

Special requirements for online incidents:

- **Digital evidence** preservation including screen-shots, messages, posts
- Platform involvement and reporting to social media companies
- Technical details of how abuse was perpetrated online
- Reach and impact of digital abuse (how many people saw content)
- Device security and access controls
- Digital footprint considerations and ongoing online presence
- Education needs about digital citizenship and online safety

Physical Violence Documentation

Comprehensive recording requirements:

- Injury assessment and medical treatment provided
- Witness accounts from multiple perspectives where available
- Weapon or object involvement in violence
- Precipitating factors and build-up to violence
- Self-defence considerations and provocation assessment
- Pattern of aggressive behaviour or escalation over time
- Risk of retaliation or ongoing conflict between parties



9. Support and Welfare

For Alleged Victims

- **Immediate safety** and protection measures
- Emotional support and counselling referrals
- Advocacy and representation as needed
- Regular welfare checks and communication
- Support to continue accessing appropriate services
- Long-term support planning

For Alleged Perpetrators

- Fair treatment throughout the process
- Appropriate support recognising they may also be vulnerable
- Access to specialist interventions if required
- Continued safeguarding as a potentially vulnerable person
- Educational support about appropriate behaviour
- Reintegration planning where appropriate

For Witnesses and Other Service Users

- Reassurance and support about safety measures
- Clear communication about what is happening (age-appropriate)
- Continued access to services where safe and appropriate
- Additional support if traumatised by events

For Parents/Carers

- Regular communication and updates
- Support and guidance on managing the situation
- Signposting to additional support services
- Information about their rights and the process

For Staff and Volunteers

- Support for those managing difficult situations
- Debriefing sessions after serious incidents
- Additional training if knowledge gaps identified
- Counselling support if traumatised by events



10. Outcomes and Interventions

Possible Outcomes

Following investigation, BYO may implement various measures including:

No further action: Where allegations are unsubstantiated

Restorative approaches: Where appropriate and safe for all parties **Additional support:** Enhanced support packages for those involved

Educational interventions: Training on appropriate behaviour and relationships
Restricted access: Modified participation in activities with additional supervision
Suspended access: Temporary suspension from services pending further assessment
Permanent exclusion: Removal from services where ongoing risk cannot be managed

Referral to specialist services: For assessment and intervention **Criminal justice involvement:** Where criminal offences have occurred

Decision-Making Criteria

All decisions will be:

- **Proportionate** to the findings and risk assessment
- Focused on safeguarding and welfare of all parties
- Regularly reviewed and updated as circumstances change
- Clearly communicated to relevant parties
- **Documented** with clear rationale

Appeals Process: Decisions can be challenged through our Complaints Policy procedures.



11. Digital and Online Considerations

Online Peer-to-Peer Abuse

Special considerations for digital incidents:

- Evidence preservation screen-shots, messages, posts
- Platform reporting reporting to social media platforms
- **Device security** securing devices with evidence
- Digital footprint considering ongoing online presence
- Education about digital citizenship and online safety

Digital Safety: All online peer-to-peer abuse incidents are also addressed through our **Digital Safeguarding Policy**.

Sharing of Images

Particular attention required for:

- Sharing of sexual images criminal implications
- Humiliating images impact on dignity and well-being
- Identifying information privacy and safety concerns
- Viral content difficulty in controlling spread



12. Record Keeping and Information Management

Peer-to-Peer Safeguarding Case Report Form Management

The completed form serves as the comprehensive record for:

Legal and Criminal Proceedings

- Evidence base for potential criminal prosecution
- **Professional witness** statements and expert assessments
- Timeline documentation for court proceedings
- Multi-agency coordination and information sharing
- Victim impact assessments and ongoing harm evaluation

Educational and Therapeutic Planning

- Intervention planning based on documented needs and risks
- **Progress monitoring** and outcome evaluation
- Specialist referrals and professional involvement
- Safety planning and risk management strategies
- Restorative justice considerations where appropriate

Organisational Learning

- Policy development and procedure improvement
- Staff training needs identification
- Risk assessment enhancement for activities and environments
- Preventive measures and early intervention strategies
- Quality assurance and safeguarding effectiveness review

Documentation Requirements

Detailed records must be maintained including:

- Initial allegation and circumstances
- All actions taken and by whom
- Dates and details of all communications
- Risk assessments and reviews
- Investigation findings and decisions
- Ongoing monitoring arrangements
- Support provided to all parties

Storage and Access

- Secure safeguarding filing system with restricted access
- Confidentiality protection for all parties
- Data protection compliance as per Data Protection Policy
- Retention schedules for different types of records
- Access rights for those involved



Information Sharing for Peer-to-Peer Cases

Form information may be shared with:

- Children's Services for child protection assessment and intervention
- Police for criminal investigation where offences committed
- Youth Offending Team for diversion and intervention programs
- Educational settings for safety planning and support coordination
- Health services including CAMHS for therapeutic intervention
- Specialist services for harmful sexual behaviour or trauma support

Sharing protocols must ensure:

- Proportionate disclosure appropriate to each agency's role
- Consent considerations especially for older young people
- Confidentiality balance between parties involved
- Ongoing coordination between agencies without duplication
- Regular review of information sharing arrangements

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13. Communication Management

Internal Communications

- Staff briefings about safety measures (without breaching confidentiality)
- Board reporting on serious incidents and lessons learned
- Service user communications about safety and support
- Parent/carer updates where appropriate

External Communications

Carefully managed to:

- Protect privacy and dignity of all involved
- Prevent stigmatisation of individuals or groups
- Maintain confidence in BYO's services
- Comply with legal requirements and restrictions

Media Management

- Designated spokesperson for any media enquiries
- Legal advice on complex or high-profile cases
- Reputation management balanced with transparency
- Victim protection from unwanted publicity



14. Training Requirements for Peer-to-Peer Abuse Documentation

Specialised Training for Peer-to-Peer Cases

All staff must receive training on:

Recognition and Documentation

- Identifying peer-to-peer abuse versus normal conflict or behaviour
- Understanding developmental factors affecting behaviour assessment
- Documenting incidents objectively without bias or assumption
- Recognising complex dynamics in peer relationships

Evidence Preservation

- Digital evidence collection and preservation
- Physical evidence protection including injury documentation
- Witness statement coordination and child-friendly approaches
- Avoiding contamination of evidence through inappropriate questioning

Multi-Agency Working

- Children's Services referral processes and coordination
- Police liaison for criminal investigation matters
- Educational setting communication and safety planning
- Health service coordination for therapeutic support

Supporting All Parties

- Trauma-informed approaches for both alleged victims and perpetrators
- Family communication and conflict management
- Ongoing safety planning and risk management
- Restorative approaches where appropriate and safe

Scenario-Based Training

Regular training includes:

- Case study analysis using anonymised Safeguarding Case Report Forms
- Role-play exercises in completing forms under pressure
- Multi-agency simulation exercises for complex cases
- Legal requirement updates and best practice sharing
- Quality assurance review of completed forms and learning opportunities



Staff and Volunteer Training

BYO ensures that:

- All staff and volunteers receive training on recognising and responding to peer-to-peer abuse
- Specialist training for those managing investigations
- Regular updates on best practice and legal requirements
- Scenario-based training to practice responses

Service User Education

- Age-appropriate education about healthy relationships and personal safety
- Consent and boundaries education
- Digital citizenship and online safety training
- Bystander intervention training
- Reporting mechanisms clearly explained

Parent/Carer Engagement

- Information about peer-to-peer abuse and prevention
- Warning signs to look out for
- How to support their child if affected
- BYO's approach to prevention and response



15. Learning and Development

Post-Incident Review

Following conclusion of each case, BYO will:

- Conduct a case review to identify learning opportunities
- Update policies and procedures as necessary
- Provide additional training where gaps are identified
- Share learning (anonymised) with the wider organisation
- Implement preventative measures to reduce future risks

Organisational Learning

May result in:

- Policy updates across the safeguarding framework
- Enhanced training programmes for staff and volunteers
- Improved risk assessment procedures
- Better support systems for service users
- Cultural changes to promote safety and respect



16. Quality Assurance and Monitoring

Peer-to-Peer Case Form Quality Review

The DSL conducts regular quality assurance including:

Form Completion Standards

- Comprehensive information gathering and documentation
- Objective recording without bias or inappropriate interpretation
- Evidence quality and admissibility considerations
- Timeline accuracy and chronological consistency
- Multi-agency coordination effectiveness

Outcome Monitoring

- Investigation effectiveness and evidence quality
- Support provision adequacy and impact
- Safety planning success and ongoing risk management
- Learning application from case outcomes
- Prevention effectiveness and early intervention impact

Continuous Improvement

- Policy updates based on case learning and outcomes
- Training enhancement addressing identified gaps or needs
- Procedure refinement for investigation and support coordination
- Resource allocation for effective case management
- Partnership development with external agencies and specialists

Effectiveness Monitoring

The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored through:

- Regular review of cases and outcomes
- Feedback from service users, parents/carers, and staff
- Consultation with external agencies and experts
- Annual policy review and update
- Performance indicators and trend analysis

Continuous Improvement

- Learning from incidents to prevent recurrence
- Best practice research and implementation
- Stakeholder consultation on policy effectiveness
- External reviews and inspections
- Benchmarking against other organisations

Annual review of all peer-to-peer Safeguarding Case Report Forms provides organisational learning and service improvement opportunities, ensuring that documentation standards continue to meet legal, professional, and safeguarding effectiveness requirements.



17. Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding Policy Framework
- Child Protection Procedures
- Adult Safeguarding Procedures
- Managing Allegations about Staff and Volunteers
- Code of Behaviour Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Digital Safeguarding Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Policy Priority: Where multiple policies apply, safeguarding must be paramount and the safety of children and adults at risk the first consideration.



18. Key External Contacts

Statutory Agencies

Birmingham Children's Services MASH: 0121 303 1888 Birmingham Adult Social Care: 0121 303 1234 Police Emergency: 999 Police Non-Emergency: 101 LADO: 0121 675 1669

Support Services

Childline: 0800 1111 NSPCC: 0808 800 5000 **Samaritans**: 116 123 **Relate**: 0300 100 1234 (relationship counselling)

Document Control

- This policy forms part of BYO's comprehensive safeguarding framework
- All staff receive training on recognising and responding to peer-to-peer abuse
- Regular reviews ensure procedures remain effective and compliant

This framework should be read as the foundation document alongside all other BYO safeguarding policies and procedures. For any queries about this framework, please contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

This policy has been approved by Hassan Kingsley, the Governor, and will be reviewed annually or following any significant incident or change in legislation.

Reviewed by:

Hassan Kingsley

Governor

Date: 11/06/2025

Next Review Date: 11/06/2026

This policy forms part of BYO's commitment to safeguarding and should be read alongside our complete Safeguarding Framework.

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