



Peer on Peer abuse, Bullying & Exploitation

What is Peer on Peer Abuse?

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



Peer-on-peer abuse can take various forms, including (but not limited to): serious bullying (including cyberbullying), relationship abuse, domestic violence and abuse, child sexual exploitation, youth and serious youth violence, harmful sexual behaviour and/or prejudice-based violence including, but not limited to, gender-based violence.

Online peer-on-peer abuse is any form of peer-on-peer abuse with a digital element, for example, sexting, online abuse, coercion and exploitation, peer-on-peer grooming, threatening language delivered via online means, the distribution of youth involved sexualised content, and harassment.

Luckily, lots of the above you will not have to worry about with your primary school aged children. Hopefully, for those of you that have older children, we hope this information will be useful.

What is Peer on Peer Abuse?

There are four key definitions of peer-on-peer abuse:



- Domestic abuse – young people who experience physical, emotional, sexual and/or financial abuse, and coercive control, in their intimate relationships, as well as family relationships.
- Child sexual exploitation – those under the age of 18 who are sexually abused in the context of exploitative relationships, contexts and situations, by a person of any age, including another young person.
- Serious youth violence – any offence of most serious violence or weapon-enabled crime, where the victim is aged 19 or younger, e.g. wounding with intent, rape, murder and grievous bodily harm.
- Harmful sexual behaviour – young people displaying sexual behaviours that are outside of developmentally ‘normative’ parameters.

For the purpose of this guidance, the term ‘child’ refers to any young person under 18 years old.

Primary school aged children

At primary school age, some forms of peer on peer abuse may occur.



For example, serious bullying (including cyberbullying) , sexualised language, and/or sexualised behaviour.

In addition, the response to concerns/allegations of peer-on-peer abuse will differ depending on the age of the child or children in question.

For example, the police will take a welfare rather than a punitive approach towards children aged under 10, which is the age of criminal responsibility in England and Wales.

Peer on peer abuse is defined as abuse between children and young people under the age of 18 years old.

Although most peer on peer abuse happen after the age of 11, children as young as 8 years old have been exposed to this kind abuse.

What is Bullying?

➤ **Bullying is.....**

➤ **The repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or a group by another person or group where the relationship involves an imbalance of power.**



Physical

Pushing, poking, kicking, hitting, biting, pinching etc.



Verbal

Name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, threats, teasing, belittling



Emotional

Isolating others, tormenting, hiding books, threatening gestures, ridicule, humiliation, intimidating, excluding, manipulation and coercion



Sexual

Unwanted physical contact, inappropriate touching, abusive comments, homophobic abuse, exposure to inappropriate films etc.



Online /cyber

Posting on social media, sharing photos, sending nasty text messages, social exclusion



Indirect

Can include the exploitation of individuals

Are any of these behaviours acceptable?

The short answer is NO!



As children grow up and experience the world around them, they may be exposed to the odd incident where another child might say something hurtful towards them, might talk about them behind their backs, make them feel uncomfortable in a social situation or physical hurt them, for example, hit them.

While these behaviours are not acceptable, hopefully they are rare in occurrence and are quickly resolved with the help of adults around them.

Younger children are better at asking adults for help but the older children are, the less likely they are to seek help. Indeed, they may not realise they are in potentially abusive situations.

It is all our responsibility, as adults, to ensure children feel empowered to speak up if they find themselves in situations they are unsure of or know that the way they are being treated by other children is harmful.

What makes a child vulnerable?

All children have the potential to be victims of peer on peer abuse and particularly from exploitation including sexual exploitation



Unfortunately, some children are at higher risk than others. These include:

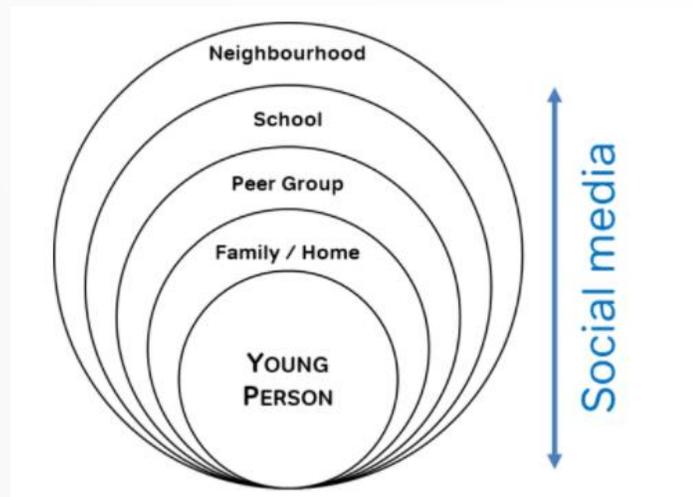
- ▶ Children with low self-esteem or self-confidence
- ▶ Lack of friends in the same age group
- ▶ Living in a chaotic or dysfunctional household (including parental substance misuse, mental health issues, parental criminality)
- ▶ History of domestic abuse
- ▶ History of neglect
- ▶ History of familial sexual abuse
- ▶ Has learning difficulties

What makes a child vulnerable?



- ▶ Unsure of their sexual orientation or unable to talk to their family about it
- ▶ Associating with young people who are being sexually exploited
- ▶ Homelessness
- ▶ Living in residential care or are a Young Carer themselves
- ▶ Experiences of loss or death

These are just some of the circumstances that may leave children vulnerable to abuse or exploitation – it is not exhaustive



Children can experience peer-on-peer abuse and exploitation in a wide range of settings, including:

- At school
- At home or in someone else's home
- In public spaces
- Online

Child Exploitation

How is child exploitation defined?



In all cases, those exploiting the child/young person have **power** over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources.

Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child or young person's limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability.

Child exploitation can happen between peers, it is not just adults that can exploit children. Indeed, it often starts with the child's peer group, introducing them to situations that, once in, the child will find it difficult, if not impossible, to walk away from without serious repercussions.

Research and evidence informs us that risks faced by young people during adolescence are more complex and wide-ranging than those faced by younger children and that young people during adolescence are more likely to be victims of multiple forms of risks.

Child Exploitation

This is more likely to happen outside of the home where adult supervision is absent.



Think about the places young people go to socialise. The local park, café, playground, shopping centre, social networking and gaming sites. All normal places that children and young people frequent and go to with their peers. But who are those peers and what are their influences.

The older children get, the less likely we are to know who they are “hanging out” with or interacting with, the less control parents have as to who their child is mixing with.



Grooming

When we think of grooming, we think of an adult tricking a child into situations that are risky, dangerous or illegal.



Unfortunately, children and young people are more likely to be groomed by their peers.

If we think about gang culture, county lines, youth crime, sexual exploitation, children and young people are usually introduced to this by their peers.

Quite often, the child is “in too deep” before they realise what has happened.

Their ‘friend’ has given them a mobile phone for free. What they don’t realise is that ‘payment’ for that phone comes later and at a price.

That bag of shopping they delivered to an address didn’t just contain milk and bread. They were ‘paid’ for delivering it. It wasn’t a generous gesture from their ‘friend’. Threats are now made if the young person tries to refuse, once they realise what was in the bag, to make another delivery.

She didn't like “being nice” to his friends, in a certain way, but if she didn’t, not only would the gifts stop but she knew he would hurt her. It’s ok though, he shows he loves her with his gifts....

What behaviours should we worry about?

Primary school children are less likely to display the following behaviours as these behaviours are more linked with adolescent behaviours.



However, as we have said, children as young as 8 have been identified as being vulnerable.

Knowing your child and what is 'normal' behaviour for them and their age and knowing how to spot possible signs are vital, in order to get support as early as possible.

Behaviours that may give cause for concern

- Absent from school or exclusion due to behaviour
- Staying out overnight with no explanation
- Receiving gifts from unknown sources
- Unaccounted for money/goods e.g. mobile phones/credit, drugs or alcohol
- Change in physical appearance
- Overtly sexualized dress
- Having a much older boy or girlfriend
- Associating with unknown adults; other sexually exploited children or vulnerable children
- Reduced contact with family, friends and other support networks
- Getting into cars with unknown adults or associating with known perpetrators
- Evidence of sexual bullying and/or vulnerability through the internet and/or social networking sites.
- Gang member or association with gangs
- Offering to have sex for money/other payment
- Regularly missing from home or care

What do we do in school?

From the moment your child walks through our gates we want them to feel safe and valued.

Our 9 habits encompasses the values we want our children to aspire to and we promote this through our Personal Development curriculum.

We believe that emotional intelligence is just as important as academic achievement.

Our PSHE curriculum equips children with relevant and meaningful content, which is supported through a strong emphasis on emotional literacy, building resilience and nurturing mental and physical health.

Across the school, children are becoming familiar with the Zones Of Regulation and learning how to manage their thoughts and feelings more productively – to be proactive rather than reactive.

We promote restorative ways of dealing with conflict and teach our children these skills to be able to resolve conflict when in a situation where an adult will not be there to support.

Children are reminded who their 'go to' adults are in school and are encouraged to speak to their adults about any worries they may have.

We also have a Learning Mentor and Mental Health First Aiders who provide additional support when needed.

We work closely with outside agencies and charities, such as Lives not knives and School Home Support, to provide child and family centered support.

We encourage parent participation wherever possible – it is vitally important that your child knows you are just as invested in their future success as they are.

Parent workshops, Parent Evenings, Reading Sessions with your child, that little chat or meeting with staff, attending parent events, lets your child know you care.

Newsletters to inform you of what is happening in school, which you can share with your child.

Enrichment activities in school and after school, to promote inclusiveness and broaden their life's experiences.

And much, much more!

Where to go for help and support

School

Please let us know if you have any concerns that your child may be being bullied or coerced in any way. Remember, some children find it difficult to say they are in a situation that makes them feel uncomfortable. If a situation has been going on for a while, or the child has behaved in a way you would view as unacceptable, they will be reluctant to disclose this for fear of the consequences or being judged.

Please remember, in these types of situations, they are just as much the victim!

Contact our Safeguarding Team for help, support and advice.
Email school office at : office@oasisryeland.org

Friends and family

Close friends and family can provide the support network you need to help your child navigate their way through difficult situations and lets them know they are not alone.

Sometimes children need another trusted adult outside of their immediate family who they can turn to for advise and support.

GP

Contact your GP if you are worried about substance misuse/abuse or sexual activity. Your GP can offer advise and support and signpost you to local support services. Sometimes we may need more help and support than our friends and family can prove.

**Call 999 if your
child is in
immediate danger
of harm!**



Further information and advice.

Childline Phone 0800 1111

www.nspcc.org.uk

www.mind.org.uk

www.youngminds.org.uk

www.talktofrank.com

www.nhs.uk

www.samaritans.org

www.barnardos.org.uk



There are lots more websites with specific information and advice to whatever your child may be facing. Please go search. Please get support.