



## Child on Child abuse

### Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) Part 1:

*The term 'Peer-on-Peer abuse' within the document has changed to 'Child-on-Child' Abuse. It outlines that KCSiE part 1 focuses on the welfare and protection of children and not adult peers in an education environment.*

Child on child abuse can sometimes be difficult to recognise in the early years, however it is essential that a child on child abuse policy and procedures are in place to keep all children safe from abuse or harmful behaviour in early years provision and that ALL staff understand the importance of ensuring children are listened to, considering their feelings when investigating incidents, whether reported or witnessed.

It is the role of the early years practitioner to ensure children are happy, safe and protected from mental and physical harm or distress while at the setting.

### Types and examples of child on child abuse that may occur in early years:

- **Physical abuse:** Biting, kicking, hair pulling, spitting, shaking, pinching
- **Sexual abuse:** Inappropriate sexual language, inappropriate touching or sexualised role play
- **Prejudiced behaviour** (physical or emotional): making someone feel they don't belong or worthless by name calling or deliberate exclusion, this could be around disabilities, SEND, ethnic, cultural or religious backgrounds, gender, sexual identity or home life

There may be reasons why a child engages in inappropriate behaviour towards another child, and in some cases the child instigating the behaviour is as distressed as the victim. It always helps to understand and clarify the situation before considering the action to take. Always consider the language used and the impact of the situation on children and their parents/carers.

Child on child abuse must be dealt with immediately and sensitively, involving staff who are trained and experienced in dealing with safeguarding issues.

Abuse should never be passed off as 'fun' or 'banter'. It must always be taken seriously and support, intervention and preventative measures put into place promptly to reduce the risk of further harm.

Staff must not be dismissive or judgemental, but must stay calm, investigating and gathering facts and information as soon as possible.

#### Further reading:

- Child on Child (Peer on Peer) Abuse Toolkit (Southampton City Council): [Child-on-Child \(Peer-on-Peer\) abuse toolkit](#)
- What to do if you're worried a child is being abused: [Child abuse concerns - guide for practitioners](#)
- [www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2)
- Southampton Safeguarding Children Partnership: <https://southamptonscp.org.uk/>
- [Safeguarding and welfare \(southampton.gov.uk\)](http://Safeguarding and welfare (southampton.gov.uk))
- NSPCC Guide: [Responding to children who display sexualised behaviour](#)

# Child on Child abuse in the Early Years

## A report of, or witness of, Child on Child abuse is raised

Incident to be dealt with immediately and sensitively by relevant member of staff

### Gather the facts

Speak to staff and children (dependent on their age/understanding) using open questions

Gather evidence (CCTV, behaviour charts, ABCC charts, observations)

Is this a one off or consistent behaviour?

Consider intent – was this accidental or intended to cause harm?

Are children and staff familiar with behaviour expectations?

Are parents managing behaviour at home, are there any issues you are aware of?

### Decide on course of action

Follow your setting safeguarding policy/procedures

In the case of significant harm, a safeguarding referral may be required

If a crime has been committed, the Children's Resource Service must be contacted

If appropriate, and in line with the safeguarding policy, parents of both the child displaying harmful behaviour and the victim must be informed – consider how this will take place

### Points to consider

The age of the child and whether they understood what they were doing

Was the incident in an open space or not visible to others – if not observed, is more supervision required?

### Follow up

Support for the child and/or family may be required, i.e. is the child copying behaviours experienced in the home?

Ensure the child displaying the harmful behaviour is aware of the distress caused and implement consequences for the behaviour, ie. restorative practice, apologising to the child they have targeted

Put additional supervision in place and protective strategies to ensure there is not a repeat of the harmful behaviour or incident

Where appropriate, seek support or advice from other professionals

### Preventative Strategies

A risk assessment may be required for significant or ongoing concerns. This may need to involve other agencies, family members and additional supervision from staff

Ensure strategies are in place and children are aware of expectations to prevent child on child abuse, rather than dealing with issues as they arise

Involve parents and encourage them to deal with behavioural issues in the home environment to ensure consistency at home and in the setting

### After care and support

It is essential that all children and their families feel supported and listened to – keep parents informed and updated on the situation and actions taken

Child on child abuse can be distressing for all those involved

Staff should consider all those affected, providing ongoing support, remaining professional at all times

**Staff involved may also require support and can contact the free Educational Psychology Team Telephone support line for advice and support by emailing: [Jackie.Holgate@southampton.gov.uk](mailto:Jackie.Holgate@southampton.gov.uk)**