

Peer-on-peer sexual abuse: what to do if a child makes a disclosure



Make sure you understand and follow our child protection policy and procedures for dealing with peer-on-peer sexual abuse. If you have any concerns about a child's welfare, act on them immediately - don't wait for a disclosure.

- ✓ Ask the child outright if they've been harmed and what the nature of the harm was
- ✓ Listen and reassure them that they will be supported and kept safe
- ✓ Reflect back, using their language
- ✓ Be mindful that some children may face additional barriers to disclosure because of their vulnerability, disability, gender, ethnicity and/or sexual orientation
- ✓ Remember that:
 - This may only be the first incident the child has reported
 - Trauma can impact memory, so the child may not be able to recall all of the details or timeline of the abuse
- ✓ Make a written record as soon as possible, stating only the facts
- ✓ Tell our designated safeguarding lead (DSL) urgently:
- ✓ Where appropriate, take action yourself
 - If the child is in immediate danger or at risk of harm, make a referral to children's social care
 - If an offence has been committed, report it to the police (even if the alleged perpetrator(s) is under 10). You can confiscate devices as evidence for the police, if the report includes an online element.
 - Find out whether the victim and alleged perpetrator(s) share classes, premises or transport, and consider how to keep them a reasonable distance apart while on the premises, including both before and after school

- ✗ Dismiss the incident as 'banter', 'part of growing up' or 'having a laugh'
- ✗ Ask leading questions
- ✗ Promise total confidentiality - explain who you will need to tell and why
- ✗ View photos or videos of a sexual nature
 - If you do so by accident or think you might need to in order to deal with the issue effectively, talk to our DSL
- ✗ Take notes while the child is talking, if at all possible
- ✗ Tell anyone about the disclosure unless they need to know in order to progress it

Key definitions

Peer-on-peer sexual abuse: when a child (anyone under the age of 18) commits an act of sexual violence or harassment against another child

Sexual violence: rape, assault by penetration, or sexual assault (intentional sexual touching)

Sexual harassment: unwanted conduct of a sexual nature – such as sexual comments, sexual jokes or taunting, physical behaviour like interfering with clothes, or online harassment such as sexting

Upskirting: taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission to obtain sexual gratification or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm

Sexual activity is an offence if:

- Person B (the victim) does not consent
- Person A (the perpetrator) does not reasonably believe that Person B consents

Someone consents if they:

- Agree by choice
- Have the freedom and capacity to choose