

# Child-on-child abuse

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## Tips for teachers and schools

Supporting children and young people who may experience child-on-child abuse online or offline.

## What is child-on-child/peer-on-peer abuse?

Child-on-child abuse is when one child or young person causes harm to another, either in person or online. **KCSIE (Keeping Children Safe in Education)** references different forms of child-on-child abuse:

- Bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)
- Abuse in intimate personal relationships between children
- Physical abuse
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment
- Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images
- Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent
- Upskirting (taking a photo under someone's clothing without their permission)
- Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals.

## Those most vulnerable to child-on-child abuse

The **contextual safeguarding network** suggests that there are some groups of young people who are more vulnerable than others to child-on-child abuse:

- Children aged 10 and above
- Girls and young women are more likely to be victims than boys and young men – although boys and young men can be victims
- Black and minority ethnic children and young people are often under identified as having been harmed (victims) and over identified as having harmed others (perpetrators)
- Children and young people with intra-familial abuse history
- Children and young people living with domestic abuse
- Children and young people in care
- Children and young people who have experienced the loss of a parent, sibling or friend through bereavement



### Tip 1: Stay informed

Teachers and school staff should be aware of the different types of child-on-child abuse and have opportunities to talk about specific cases.

**The sharing of nude and semi-nude images is an important area for consideration.** This happens in the vast majority of schools, and research suggests it is a normal part of teenage sexual development and curiosity.

Schools should not adopt a 'one-size fits all' approach; there are many different motivations for the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes (see the **digital romance research from CEOP**) and so there should be different responses.

A school which has a **zero tolerance approach** (severe punishment for offenses, no matter how minor) is unlikely to get many pupils disclosing or reporting that images have been shared – whether consensually or by coercion. **Recent research** showed that 15% of young people did not report this because they knew the person involved.





## Tip 2: Report everything

It is important to report/log even the smallest concerns that you might have. Although it may appear insignificant, it could be crucial when seen as part of a bigger picture or a pattern of behaviour over a longer period of time. The DSL (Designated Safeguard Lead) will have the overview when many (indeed most) other staff will not.

## Tip 3: Take student reports seriously

Teachers and schools need to be supportive about any incidents that have taken place outside of the school setting and also adopt an “it could happen here” stance.

It is important to not dismiss child-on-child abuse as “banter” or “part of growing up” or “just having a laugh” or “boys being boys”. This is clearly highlighted in [KCSIE](#) and it is crucial that young people are not given the impression that this is the view of the school or staff. **Everyone should be clear that their concerns will be taken seriously.**



## Tip 4: Create a safe space

**It can be incredibly difficult for children and young people to talk about child-on-child abuse.**

As such, schools should make every effort to create safe spaces where young people can talk about what has happened to them.

Be clear about the process, don't make promises to keep what they tell you secret if there are safeguarding concerns but explain what will happen if someone discloses child-on-child abuse.

Some young people worry about reporting abuse because they don't understand the process. For example, they might worry if they report an image, members of staff at the school will need to look at the images. However, this is rarely likely to happen.

Help them understand the process to build confidence in reporting abuse they might experience from another child or young person.

## Tip 5: Keep pupils informed

Reporting routes are vitally important, and young people should be aware of what is available. As they get older, they are less likely to speak to a parent/carer or teacher and are more likely to try and deal with it themselves. Schools should clearly signpost possible reporting routes:



A [national reporting centre](#) (run by the UK Safer Internet Centre) designed to assist everyone over 13 in reporting harmful content online. Schools can also [install a button onto the school website](#) which links directly to the report harmful content site.



[Internet Watch Foundation](#) (UK Hotline) for reporting illegal content online like child sexual abuse images.



[Report Remove Tool](#) – this helps children under 18 to remove nude or semi-nude images that have been shared.



[The Mix](#) is an online support service for under-25s to call or message if they need to talk.