

Child-on-child abuse

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Guidance for children and young people

How to recognise child-on-child abuse to prevent or deal with it if it happens.

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

Child-on-child abuse is when one child or young person causes harm to another. It can look like a lot of different things. These are some of them:



Bullying and cyberbullying

This is behaviour that is purposeful and repeated, and that is meant to hurt someone or make them feel sad or angry.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse could be hitting, kicking, pushing, etc. and are things that harm another person's body, maybe causing serious injury.

Sharing naked or almost naked pictures of someone

It is illegal to share naked images of someone under the age of 18 even with permission. Sharing images like this is abuse.

Forcing someone to do something sexual

This might include forcing someone to take a naked picture of themselves and send it to someone else. It could also include sexual acts that someone isn't comfortable with.

Forcing someone to do something dangerous or illegal

Someone might ask a peer to hurt someone else or themselves, or commit a crime like theft to prove that they can join a friend group or gang.

Sharing inappropriate images or videos

Sending someone violent or pornographic images or videos or other things they don't want to see is a form of abuse as it can be distressing for a lot of young people.

Harmful behaviour in a relationship or friendship

This could be between partners or close friends. The behaviour might make someone feel upset, unsafe or uncomfortable.

Sexual violence/harassment

This include sharing/taking sexual images, using sexual language, making gestures or touching inappropriately, or forcing someone into sexual situations.



What if you think you've victimised someone else?

Talk to someone you trust

It can be hard to take the first step in making things right, so talking to someone you trust can help you figure out what to do next.

Talking to counsellors through [Childline](#) or [The Mix](#) can also help if you don't want to speak to a parent or teacher.

Next steps

Depending on what kind of abuse it is, you may need to stop interacting with the person entirely. You may also be asked to apologise or might need to speak with the police.

Learn from your mistakes

Whatever you have to do, it's important to learn from the experience. Avoid repeating the same mistakes with someone else.

How to prevent and deal with child-on-child abuse

Keep online child-on-child abuse from happening using these tips.

Tip 1: Promote positivity online & off

From the comments you make on social media to how you interact with people in video games, positive interactions help people feel happy and safe online. That also means calling out or reporting behaviour that isn't so positive.

If you see bullying behaviours online or at school (even if you're not sure), help the victims by reporting it to a trusted adult or on the platform itself.

And think about your words before you comment or say them. How will the other person feel when they hear or read what you say and how does it reflect on you?



Tip 3: Stay in the know

Recognise what child-on-child abuse looks like so you can help stop it from happening. Anything that makes another young person feel uncomfortable or unsafe because of another young person could be child-on-child abuse.

Keep an eye out and report anything you think could be abusive.

Even if you have your doubts, it's better to report it and be wrong than ignore it and be right!



Tip 5: Speak out!

You have a powerful voice that can put an end to anything that makes you or someone else feel unsafe or uncomfortable.

Some people worry that no one will listen or that it will only make it worse, but keeping silent will make sure nothing ever gets better. So be sure to report everything -- big or small -- and *keep* reporting it.

Tell a trusted adult like a parent, carer or teacher. Or, if you don't feel comfortable talking to someone you know, you can call/text/message services like [Childline](#) and [The Mix](#) to speak with someone anonymous.

Tip 2: Know what healthy behaviours look like

Healthy behaviours make people feel good about themselves. And they make you feel good about yourself too!



Support people online by following, liking, commenting nice messages and playing video games together.

But think twice before commenting negative messages -- insults, spamming, things to put people down -- or before taking and sharing images without permission from the people in them (including strangers).

Would you want a random picture of yourself shared with people you might not know?

Tip 4: Create a safety net on your devices



All smartphones and apps have their own privacy and security settings. With a trusted adult, set these up to help you feel safe online.

Keep accounts private, turn off image-sharing settings like AirDrop and set your social feeds up so they only show content that you are interested in.

Learn how to report and block things that make you feel unsafe or uncomfortable.

Organisations that can help:

