Islington Safeguarding Children Partnership Protocol for Schools
Managing Child-on-Child Sexual Violence, Abuse and Harassment in Education Settings

This Protocol has been produced by the Islington Safeguarding Children Partnership, London Borough of Islington, primary and secondary head teacher representatives from Islington schools, the North Central Borough Command Unit of the Metropolitan Police and North Central London Clinical Commissioning Group.

After reading through this document and looking at the procedure chart, if you have any queries, or require further advice about the processes you should be following, please email iscp@islington.gov.uk.

Further information and resources are available from Safety planning in education: A guide for professionals supporting children following incidents of harmful sexual behaviour (csacentre.org.uk) including signposting to specialist support organisations.

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1. Introduction

All children have a right to be safe from abuse. Safeguarding children is a responsibility shared by everyone in contact with children. This Protocol sets out the procedures for recognising and responding to sexual abuse, exploitation and harmful sexual behaviour, including online abuse and exploitation for children under the age of 18 years in any educational settings in Islington including those working in early years, maintained and independent schools, academies and further education colleges.

This Protocol should be read in conjunction with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, particularly Part five: child-on-child sexual harassment and sexual violence, and PG42. Sexual Abuse London Safeguarding Children Procedures. It applies to all signs, reports and concerns of harmful sexual behaviour, child-on-child sexual harassment and sexual violence, including incidents outside the school or college premises and/or online. All staff should maintain an attitude of "it could happen here".

This Protocol has considered the Ofsted's Review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges published on 10 June 2021 and the recommendations for schools, following the Everyone's Invited campaign.

This Protocol must be used by all schools in Islington to inform procedures, policy making and training.

Hereafter the term 'child' or 'children' will be used to refer to children and young people under the age of 18 years. The term 'school' will be used to refer to schools, settings and colleges and 'parent' will refer to parents and carers.

Language

Avoid using minimising or blaming language about any of the children involved. It may take time to establish the facts of what has taken place, and it is important to maintain a non-judgemental stance in relation to every child, while acknowledging the feelings of all parents.

Some guidance still uses the words 'victim' and 'alleged perpetrator', but it is important to recognise that both are vulnerable children and that schools should think very carefully about terminology, especially when speaking in front of children.

Key Definitions

Sexual Violence and Abuse

Child sexual abuse[1] involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Child Sexual Abuse includes Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB).

[1] Keeping Children Safe in Education

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Child sexual exploitation[2] is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity:

a) in exchange for something the child who was harmed needs or wants, and/or
b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the person who harmed or facilitator.

The child who was harmed may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur using technology.

Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB)

Harmful sexual behaviour is developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour displayed by children which is harmful or abusive[3]. This can include:

- Using sexually explicit words and phrases
- Inappropriate touching
- Using sexual violence or threats
- Full penetrative sex with other children or adults

Children who develop HSB may harm themselves and others[4]

Harmful sexual behaviours in young children may be (and often are) a symptom of their own abuse or exposure to abusive practices or materials and/or adverse childhood experiences. Early help can be particularly useful to address non-violent harmful sexual behaviour and may prevent escalation of sexual violence. Schools should work closely with the Islington Safeguarding Children Partnership and be aware of the range of support available to children who are children who have harmed or children who have caused harm. Advice should be sought from CSC, the Police and specialist sexual violence services:

- Rape Crisis or The Survivors Trust for details of the nearest centre.
- NICE for advice on developing interventions working with families and multi-agency working.
- CSnetwork.org.uk for a range of resources to support schools to address harmful sexual behaviour
- The Anti-Bullying Alliance guidance for schools about Sexual and Sexist Bullying.
- Centre for Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse
- Lucy Faithfull Foundation | Preventing Child Sex Abuse
- How to manage incidents of harmful sexual behaviour | NSPCC Learning

Schools can use the Contextual Safeguarding Network's Beyond Referrals - Schools (csnetwork.org.uk) to assess their whole school approach.

[2] DfE Child Sexual Exploitation – Definition and Guide for Practitioners
[3] Hackett, S (2014) Children and young people with harmful sexual behaviours. London: Research in Practice
[4] NSPCC/Hackett Harmful Sexual Behaviours Framework

- Professor Hackett and the NSPCC developed the HSB framework[5] covering essential elements of developing and delivering an integrated and effective HSB service for children and families which includes a guide on prevention, identification and early assessment. This framework can be used to understand the range of sexual behaviours presented by children, from those that are developmentally normal, to those that are abusive or violent, and to:

- Understand healthy sexual development and distinguish it from harmful behaviours
- Assess and respond appropriately to sexual behaviours in children
- Make decisions about safeguarding children
- Consider the level of intervention needed to disrupt the behaviours

Upskirting

The Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019, commonly known as the upskirting act, is when someone takes a picture or an image under a person's clothing (not necessarily a skirt) without their permission or knowledge, with the intention of obtaining sexual gratification, or cause the child who was harmed humiliation, distress or alarm. Anyone of any gender can be a child who was harmed.

Low Level Concerns v High Level Concerns

Hackett (2010) has proposed a continuum model to demonstrate the range of sexual behaviours presented by children, from those that are developmentally normal, to those that are abusive or violent. Intervention may be needed to address behaviours that fall into any of the following categories on the continuum:

- Normal behaviours are described as developmentally expected, socially acceptable, consensual, mutual, reciprocal and where there is shared decision making.
- Inappropriate behaviours are described as single instances of inappropriate sexual behaviour, socially acceptable behaviour within a peer group, where the context for the behaviour may be inappropriate and where behaviours are consensual and reciprocal.
- Problematic behaviours are more likely to occur in younger children and may be defined as behaviours involving sexual body parts that are developmentally inappropriate or potentially harmful to the child or others. Reasons for this include learning disabilities, mental health problems, trauma, anxiety and curiosity.
- Abusive behaviours involve coercion or manipulation. Where there is also a power imbalance, the child who was harmed cannot give informed consent and the behaviour can cause physical or emotional harm.

Sexual consent means giving permission for the act to take place. This can be through verbal or non-verbal communication. It can include the right to say no at any point or change their mind.

The legal age to have sex in the UK is 16 years old. The law is there to protect children and not to prosecute under 16s who have mutually consenting sexual activity. Sexual contact without consent is illegal, regardless of age. The Sexual Offences Act 2003 states that children under the age of 13 cannot consent to any type of sexual activity.

Section 10.3 states

[5] Hackett, S, Branigan, P and Holmes, D (2019) Harmful sexual behaviour framework: an evidence-informed operational framework for children and young people displaying harmful sexual behaviours, second edition, London, NSPCC.

'Sexual activity with a child under 16 is also an offence. Where it is consensual it may be less serious than if the child were under 13, but may nevertheless have serious consequences for the welfare of the young person. Consideration should be given in every case of sexual activity involving a child aged 13-15 as to whether there should be a discussion with other agencies and whether a referral should be made to children's social care.'

It will always be necessary to refer to CSC/Police cases of sexual activity involving children under the age of 13, because this is a serious offence and indicates a risk of significant harm to the child. A strategy discussion will be held to discuss the appropriate next steps.

Sexual activity with a child under the age of 16 is also an offence. Where it is consensual it may be less serious than if the child were under 13 years but may nevertheless have serious consequences for the welfare of the child.

In all cases of problematic, abusive and violent activity involving a child aged 13 to 15 a referral should be made to CSC. In cases where the behaviour is deemed to be inappropriate, there should be a discussion with the CSC Referral and Advice team as to whether a referral should be made. The London Safeguarding Children Procedures[6] state:

'Under the Sexual Offences Act, penetrative sex with a child under 13 is classed as rape. Where a practitioner is concerned that a child is involved with penetrative sex, or other intimate sexual activity, there will always be reasonable cause to suspect that a child, whether girl or boy, is suffering or is likely to suffer Significant Harm'

The younger the child, the more sexual activity will be a matter of concern. Where the situation is an emergency, the Police must be contacted. If this involves penetration activity and this comes to the attention of the school, this is a crime that should be recorded as such, and CSC and the Police involved in the referral. A referral to CSC in these circumstances will trigger a strategy meeting which will consider the following:

- If the concerns do not meet the threshold for CSC intervention, it may be stepped down to early help (Bright Futures) or the Targeted Youth Service.
- If the child is in need - CSC will determine what services they should provide and continue an assessment under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989.
- If the child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm - CSC will initiate a S47 child protection investigation.

Sexual activity involving 16/17-year-olds, even if it does not involve an offence, may still involve harm or a risk of harm. Schools should still bear in mind the considerations and processes outlined in this Protocol in assessing whether harm has been suffered and should seek advice or share information as appropriate. If the behaviour is inappropriate but not thought to be abusive, the school may wish to speak to the parents to devise a consistent strategy to manage the behaviour, eliminate any harm and consider a referral to the Children's Services Contact Team for social, emotional and/or mental health support.

[6] PG44. Sexually Active Children

[7]It is an offence for a person to have a sexual relationship or sexual communications with any child under the age of 18 if they hold a position of trust[8] in relation to them. Any disclosure of an offence in relation to the person in a position of trust must be referred to the LADO and the Police.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature by a child towards another child that can occur online and offline. Sexual harassment violates a child's dignity, makes them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated and creates a harmful, hostile or offensive environment.

2. Legal Responsibilities of Schools

Schools have a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children at their school and, as part of this duty, are required to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State. This includes Keeping children safe in education 2026: September 2026, Working Together to Safeguard Children, the London Safeguarding Children Procedures and the school's own safeguarding procedures.

Schools are required by law to have a behaviour policy in place and measures to prevent all forms of bullying. Relationship and sex (RSE) education must be taught in maintained primary and secondary schools. Statutory guidance is available: Relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education guidance. Schools must have a clear policy in place that has been consulted on with parents.

Human Rights

Schools should be aware of their obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 that would make it illegal to act in a way that is incompatible; being subject to sexual violence or sexual harassment may breach any or all of these rights, depending on the circumstances.

Equality Act 2010

The equality duty supports good education and improves pupil outcomes. The Equality Act must be followed by all schools, by not unlawfully discriminating against pupils because of their sex, race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy or sexual orientation, specifically important in the context of this Protocol is support regarding their sex, sexuality and gender reassignment.

Positive action can be taken where it is proportionate to do so, to address disadvantages affecting one group e.g. supporting girls where there is evidence they are disproportionately impacted by sexual violence or sexual harassment. It is important to consider that boys can also be harmed and may find it more difficult to report. This relates to all forms of sexual harm.

The Public Sector Equality Duty[9] is a legal requirement for governing bodies, head teachers, special educational needs co-ordinators and staff at all maintained primary and secondary schools, including academies, free schools, and Pupil Referral Units in England.

3. A Whole School Approach

A whole school approach is where school leaders create a culture where inappropriate language, sexual harassment and online sexual abuse are not tolerated, and where they identify issues and

[7] Sexual Offences Act 2003 (legislation.gov.uk)
[8] Sections 21 & 22 Sexual Offences Act 2003
[9] Public Sector Equality Duty for Schools

intervene early to better protect children. They should assume that sexual harassment and online sexual abuse are happening in their setting, as incidences often go unreported.

The CSA Centre's whole-school approach should be used alongside statutory guidance to strengthen leadership, staff knowledge and confidence, prevention, early identification, response and ongoing support. Schools should review how their culture, curriculum, policies, recording, supervision and partnership working enable all staff—not only safeguarding leads—to recognise possible sexual abuse and respond compassionately.

Respectful relationships, well-being and safeguarding should be at the heart of the school ethos, touching upon all aspects. "Whole school approaches emphasise the need for prevention that includes multiple activities within schools and targets multiple stakeholders, including pupils, staff and parents." This approach should first be agreed and promoted by the senior leadership team and governing body and thereafter involve everyone in the school including all the staff, children, adult students and parents.

Schools should regularly reflect on the effectiveness of their approaches using the Beyond Referrals Self-Assessment Toolkit. The farrer--co-safeguarding-peer-on-peer-abuse-policy-toolkit includes a policy template and guidance which should be used by schools. These resources will help to identify the key issues needed to develop their own policy, procedures and approach.

Schools also complete an Annual Safeguarding Report to Governors which is based on S175 Education Act 2002 – the purpose of this is to self-assess their safeguarding and online safety procedures and in doing so minimise the risk of harm to pupils and where there are concerns they should be acted on and remedied without delay.

In addition, schools are required to complete a self-assessment audit every 3 years based on Section 11 of the Children Act 2002 which includes safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and address key parts of this Protocol. Upon completion of the audit, schools will have a concise document to evidence outcomes to governing bodies, including strengths and a school action plan to address any developments necessary.

School child protection policies should include a statement which makes clear there should be a zero-tolerance approach to abuse, that it should never be passed off as 'banter', 'just having a laugh', 'part of growing up', or 'boys being boys'. This can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours and an unsafe environment for children.

KCSIE 2026 requires schools and colleges to recognise the preventable and potentially escalating nature of child-on-child abuse. Leaders should ensure early signs, behaviours and indicators are identified and addressed, including misogyny and incidents at times of heightened risk around the school day, such as immediately after school. The response must safeguard and support all children involved.

Training and Development

Schools should ensure that staff (and governors where relevant), receive appropriate training to

- Recognise and respond to the use of inappropriate language
- Better understand the definitions of sexual harassment and sexual violence including online abuse

- Identify early signs of child-on-child sexual abuse and knowing how to respond to disclosures (all professionals in school settings should have a DBS check and be trained in safeguarding)
- Consistently uphold standards in their responses to sexual harassment and online sexual abuse
- Teachers must teach high quality PSHE (personal, social and health education), including relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) in line with statutory requirements and receive high quality training for delivering RSHE
- Schools should be assured that anyone coming onto their premises are trained in safeguarding and DBS checked.
- Include equality and diversity training for teachers and support staff which explicitly includes content on gender equality and violence against women and girls.
- Recognise the escalatory nature of misogyny; identify and challenge concerning behaviour early; understand that child-on-child abuse is preventable; and recognise times and locations of heightened risk, including immediately after school.

The Curriculum and an Open Culture

A robust safeguarding culture, where the use of inappropriate language, sexual harassment and abuse are not tolerated, requires engagement and collaboration at all levels. A carefully planned PSHE curriculum that reflects the DfE's Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education guidance must also include time for open discussion of topics that children find particularly difficult e.g. consent and sending of 'nudes'.

In Islington, we recommend that all schools teach RSE as part of a comprehensive PSHE (personal, social, health and economic) education curriculum. The Health and Wellbeing Team can be contacted HealthandWellbeing@islington.gov.uk is funded in Islington to support schools with this important curriculum area.

Strong leadership and consultative dialogue can help direct the values, a clear vision, behavioural expectations and the culture of the school. It is also important to promote a culture where speaking out about abuse is encouraged and supported to enable disclosures to be made, a key barrier in education settings. Children should be taught how to raise a concern, to make a report and what is likely to happen. All staff should have professional curiosity and speak to the designated safeguarding lead if they have concerns about a child[10]. Schools should consider seeking support from external organisations where appropriate.

Involving pupils in shaping the culture and ethos of the school can promote healthy relationships. Keeping Children Safe in Education states that schools should teach children about safeguarding, including how to stay safe online Teaching Online Safety in Schools as part of a broad and balanced curriculum, Education for a Connected World (publishing.service.gov.uk). The information in paragraph 132 of Keeping Children Safe in Education includes a One Stop Hub in relation to national guidance on teaching about relationships, sex and health and further guidance on teaching safeguarding. Schools can access additional, bespoke, support on this through the Health & Wellbeing Team within Islington's School Improvement Service.

Online safety should be integrated into safeguarding, curriculum, behaviour and staff training. Schools should address the risks arising from mobile and smart technology, social media, pornography, online sexual harassment, image sharing and the use of artificial intelligence to create, alter or distribute sexualised content. Filtering and monitoring arrangements should be reviewed

[10] Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024, paragraph 16

regularly, understood by relevant staff and balanced with children's access to age-appropriate safeguarding education and opportunities to report concerns.

The school behaviour policy and pastoral system should underpin a clear set of values and standards to be upheld and demonstrated throughout all aspects of school life. The behavioural approach should reinforce a culture where sexual abuse and harassment is not tolerated and should also include sanctions. Together with a PSHE programme, which includes RSHE delivered through the whole curriculum in an age-appropriate and child-focused way, this should address, both on and offline:

- Healthy and respectful relationships
- Respectful behaviour
- Consent
- Gender roles, stereotyping, and equality
- Body confidence and self-esteem
- Prejudiced behaviour
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment are always wrong
- Addressing cultures of sexual harassment

If the behaviour involves more than one child or a group, this may be addressed through PSHE lessons. Children may be affected by issues discussed in lessons. School staff should identify and speak to relevant children, especially those who they know may have been directly impacted by issues covered in the lessons and those with adverse childhood experiences. As they may find the content challenging, suggest trusted adults they could approach after the lesson to talk more about the content

The NSPCC has developed a series of bilingual resources[11] to support the use of the PANTS resources for schools and teachers | NSPCC Learning in the classroom. The resource allows adults to have simple, age-appropriate conversations with children about being safe and speaking out about anything that worries them.

4. Embedding Values of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Inequalities and discrimination can increase the frequency of child-on-child abuse. Children may experience child-on-child abuse because of their cultural background, gender or socio-economic status. Statutory guidance states that staff should be aware that girls are more likely to be harmed and boys more likely to cause harm, but that it can also affect boys, children with learning difficulties or disabilities and LGBTQ children.

Research suggests that an open and supportive school culture which is underpinned by values based on equality, diversity and inclusion conveys a caring environment to children and staff that improves reporting rates. This will also increase children's sense of belonging and reduce levels of peer aggression and violence.

Children from diverse cultural backgrounds can get involved in misunderstandings and peer pressure that can lead to an increased risk of abuse. Schools can support children to navigate these differences by creating safe spaces to discuss identity, peer pressure and consent and how cultural difference may impact their understanding on how they should behave.

[11] https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/schools/pants-teaching

Schools can ensure children are aware of different ways in which they can share concerns by prominently displaying posters, giving them safe spaces, visual process maps and providing a trusted adult from their own background/gender can help provide them with a language they can use, and this can encourage reporting.

5. Misogyny, Misandry and Sexism

Misogyny – a dislike for, contempt of or belief in the inferiority of women, has no place in our society, our schools or in the lives of our children. It can begin in the early years, influenced by the home environment. If these beliefs are unchallenged at home, at school and beyond, they can become embedded. The impact of sexism on all children can be significant and hinder personal and social development.

Misogyny or sexism can manifest itself through overt sexual bullying to casual sexist comments which some seek to trivialise as humour. Both boys and girls, and both men and women, can be the perpetrators of such behaviour, albeit by females to a lesser extent. Overall, women and girls are more likely to be the targets of sexist behaviour.

Misandry refers to the dislike of, contempt for, or ingrained prejudice against men. In the context of safeguarding children, it is important to ensure that safeguarding policies and practices are free from any form of bias, including misandry, to protect the welfare of all children effectively.

Schools should be wholly gender inclusive and be committed to the development of more consistent, coherent approaches to the promotion of gender equality and towards tackling the problem of sexual harassment and bullying of young women and girls, young men and boys or anyone who may be judged as failing to 'conform' to gender or sexual 'norms'.

Policy and practice

School policies should be precise in language and specifically address issues related to gender equality and violence against women with clear procedures on addressing them. Analysis of data by gender, exclusions, attendance, attainment, referrals to other agencies, applications for Education, Health & Care Plans, will inform policy and practice and identify inadvertent discrimination.

Operation Encompass

Operation Encompass is a vital initiative in Islington aimed at supporting children who are exposed to domestic abuse. When the police attend an incident of domestic violence where children are present, they notify the designated safeguarding lead at the child's school by 9.00 am next school day. This ensures that the child receives timely and appropriate support from trained staff.

By providing early intervention and support, Operation Encompass helps mitigate the long-term impacts of domestic abuse on children, ensuring their safety and well-being. Maintained schools and academies in Islington participate in this programme to enhance their safeguarding measures and support vulnerable children effectively.

The School Ethos

All stakeholders (children, parents, staff, and governors) should be given an opportunity to contribute to the school's vision and values which should be consistent with a commitment to gender equality.

Any existing gender stereotyping of both girls and boys from early years through to further education should be eradicated. Equality of opportunity for both girls and boys should be reflected in:

- classroom resources
- assigning of roles and responsibilities
- class groupings
- regular and open discussion with children on issues related to gender equality e.g. use of language which is derogatory towards women, violence against women and the influence of pornography in relation to these issues
- The use of assemblies to focus on some of these issues
- Consistent attitudes of both female and male staff across the school
- Open discussions with children in relation to conventional attitudes towards gender
- Peer to peer anti-sexism education
- Discussions with children in relation to subject choice - consider how misogyny and misandry as gender stereotyping may be impacting on subject choice and take steps to tackle this
- The curriculum and explicit exploration of the topic within Religious Education, English, History, Drama, PSHE and Art
- The tackling of gender issues as they relate to body image, size, self-esteem and confidence through health and wellbeing and learning designed to address gender equality, the media's portrayal of women and human trafficking
- Cross curricular work highlighting violence against women 16 Days of Action Against Domestic Violence from 25 November – 10 December and International Women's Day in March
- Visits from the Police Safer Schools Officers to highlight the seriousness of sexual bullying, misogynistic abuse on social media and violence against women and girls
- Engagement with parents and governors to understand and support the school's approach

6. Response and Intervention – getting the support and protection they need

Schools are key to the effective response to child-on-child sexual abuse, exploitation and HSB and are part of the wider context of a multi-agency approach. Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) should take a leading role and make decisions on a case-by-case basis with the support of children's social care (CSC), the police and other agencies as required. DSLs should receive support e.g. protected time in timetables to liaise with the local safeguarding partnership.

Sometimes we rely too heavily on children to verbally disclose, but children may not find it easy to talk about their experiences of abuse. They may show signs, behave or act in ways that they hope adults will notice and react to. Direct reports may not always be made e.g. a friend may make a report, a member of staff could overhear something suggesting a child has been harmed or a child's behaviour may indicate something is wrong or a child may find particular issues within PSHE difficult. Staff should not wait to be told; they should act on concerns immediately.

How the school responds initially is incredibly important as it can encourage or undermine the confidence of future victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment to report or come forward.

Schools should use the Beyond Referrals Self-Assessment Toolkit which gives further details about the key features of an effective multi-agency approach to preventing and responding to HSB and includes the following:

- Student engagement guidance
- Hotspot mapping guidance
- Student survey guidance and webinar
- Parent survey guidance and template
- Reviewing safeguarding and behaviour logs

As part of the school's response, it is essential that all children who have been harmed are reassured that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A child who has been harmed should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor should they ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.

Children may communicate sexual abuse indirectly, gradually or through changes in behaviour, emotions, relationships or physical presentation. Staff should notice patterns, remain professionally curious and create repeated, safe opportunities for the child to communicate. A child does not need to make a clear verbal disclosure before safeguarding action is taken.

Managing a Disclosure

- Listen carefully and think about the immediate needs of the child who has been harmed and the child who has harmed
- Consider the nature and severity of the behaviour as soon as possible after the incident
- Reassure the child who has been harmed that you are taking them seriously, that you will support them and keep them safe
- Do not promise confidentiality
- Do not stop them while they are recalling events
- Use open ended questions and limit to those needed to take immediate action
- While managing a disclosure from a child, [12]It is important to note that whilst leading questions should be avoided, staff can ask children if they have been harmed and what the nature of that harm was
- considering the best way to make a record of the report. Best practice is to wait until the end of the report and immediately write up a thorough summary. This allows the staff member to devote their full attention to the child and to listen to what they are saying. It may be appropriate to make notes during the report (especially if a second member of staff is present). However, if making notes, staff should be conscious of the need to remain engaged with the child and not appear distracted by the note taking. Either way, it is essential a written record is made.
- If making notes, staff should be conscious of the need to:
    - Remain child focused by avoiding Adultification bias within child protection and safeguarding and using the child's language
    - Use descriptive language regarding the incident and the child's presentation
    - remain engaged with the child and not appear distracted by the note taking. Either way, it is essential a written, comprehensive record is made, recording the time, date, place, and people present.

[12] Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 para 477

- Avoid using victim-blaming language e.g. do not make the child feel responsible for the harm they have experienced
- Refer the matter to the DSL immediately. The DSL should decide, with children's social care and/or the police where relevant, when and how each child and their parent or carer should be spoken to, so that immediate safety is addressed without compromising a statutory or criminal investigation.

In line with the CSA Centre's communication guidance, staff should be calm, warm and attentive; acknowledge how difficult it may be to talk; use the child's own words; avoid expressions of shock, disbelief or blame; and explain what will happen next. Ask only questions needed to clarify immediate safety and safeguarding action. Do not investigate, repeatedly question the child or require them to repeat their account unnecessarily. Keep the child informed and continue to offer opportunities to talk after the initial conversation.

NSPCC Helpline

There is an NSPCC Helpline, an email address and a report abuse online form:

- 0808 800 5000
- help@NSPCC.org.uk
- report abuse online form.

To support anyone involved in incidents of sexual harassment and abuse in education settings. Schools should promote and remind children about the support available and to use whatever means the school chooses/has available to do so.

Children with Additional Needs

Children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) are three to four times more likely to be abused and neglected than other children and significant barriers can exist to their safeguarding and wellbeing. This includes being more at risk of child-on-child abuse and sexual abuse.

They face both additional and specific risks and barriers to their protection including:

- Attitudes and assumptions such as a reluctance to believe disabled children are abused, minimising the impact of abuse and attributing indicators of abuse to a child's impairment without an exploration of possible causes or underlying reasons
- Barriers to the provision of support services that lead to the disabled child and their family being isolated
- Impairment-related factors such as dependency on several carers for personal assistance, impaired capacity to resist/avoid abuse, communication impairments and an inability of the child to understand what is happening or to seek help
- A skills gap such as an inability to communicate with the disabled child and respond to their individual needs in a child protection context, inappropriate application of thresholds

Schools should be aware of the additional needs SEND children may have that could mean they are more vulnerable to abuse and/or less able to speak out if something isn't right, particularly if they:

- have additional communication needs
- do not understand that what is happening to them is abuse
- need intimate care or are isolated from others

- are dependent on adults for care.

It is important for staff who work with children with additional needs to understand children's communication needs and attend training in relation to this.

Some children may not have the capacity to know that they are being abused e.g. they may not have the skills required to identify when a friendship or relationship is unhealthy or recognise coercive relationships.

Children with SEND can be given additional support including reducing environmental stimuli and using:

- Simplified language
- An additional adult or learning mentor to provide support
- Prompt cards with symbols, photographs or pictures
- Social stories
- Technology-assisted devices

Vulnerable Groups

A variety of groups of children with disabilities are considered particularly vulnerable with children with mild to moderate learning difficulties the most at risk, together with those with more severe learning difficulties and communication difficulties. Girls and boys, children who are LGBTQ+, those from different communities and children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are also considered particularly vulnerable due to their different social understanding.

Safeguarding and teaching PSHE, including RSHE to children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is crucial because these children are, more vulnerable both offline and online to abuse, bullying, exploitation, and other issues because of their SEND.

Children with SEND may need extra support to ensure they are safeguarded from peer pressure and coercion.

Sexual Behaviours in Children with Disabilities

Impairments in social awareness and interaction for children with disabilities interferes with their judgement on what behaviours they display in public or private places. On some occasions they may display behaviours that appear to be sexualised. Some examples which may be presented are:

- Touching private body parts
- Removing clothes in public
- Masturbating in public areas
- Touching others inappropriately
- Discussing inappropriate sexual subjects
- Looking up shorts, skirts, dresses or down shirts
- Sexualised gestures
- Non-consensual hugging and consensual hugging
- Inappropriate remarks and suggestions that have sexual content
- Echolalic repetition of sexual terms
- Perseveration on sexual topics

Schools are expected to follow the council policy and seek advice and support relating to effective strategies to manage any sensory-seeking behaviours such as those described above by contacting the special schools in the borough or the Disabled Children's Social Work Team on Tel: 0207 527 3366 or via email DisabledChildren.Team@islington.gov.uk.

Camden and Islington Young People Sexual Health Network (CAMISH) can provide free relationships and sex education programmes and support to children with special educational needs and disabilities. They can work with individuals or small groups. Please see their website for more information.

Managing disclosures for children with additional needs

It's important that schools create a clear process for disclosures that all staff are aware of and emphasise identifying a trusted adult children can speak to if they have concerns or questions.

If a child makes a disclosure during the lesson, ensure that it is dealt with immediately by someone who knows them well (pupils with learning difficulties may not be able to retain the information until the end of the lesson).

Use photographs of school staff members alongside their names, to reinforce the identity of people to whom children can talk to after the lesson if they have any concerns or worries.

'Disabled children (and severely disabled children even more so) may disclose less frequently, and delay disclosure more often compared to typically developing children. Disabled children are most likely to turn to a trusted adult they know well for help such as family, friend, or teacher'[13]

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 states that schools should ensure their child protection policy reflects the fact that additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse, neglect and exploitation in children with SEND, including:

- assumptions that indicators of abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's condition without further exploration;
- these children being more prone to peer group isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying) than other children;
- the potential for children with SEND or certain medical conditions being disproportionally impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs; and
- communication barriers and difficulties in managing or reporting these challenges.

School child protection policies should therefore reflect the above and to address these additional challenges, schools should consider extra pastoral support and attention for these children, along with ensuring any appropriate support for communication is in place.

[13] (Marchant et al. 2007; Briggs 2006; Hershkowitz et al. 2007; Marchant et al. 2008).' – NSPCC 'We have the Right to be Safe'

Immediate Response

Where a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer from harm, or is at immediate risk, a referral to CSC (and, if appropriate, to the Police) should be made immediately.

Part 5 KCSIE outlines the steps that should be followed once information has been received:

- Reassure the child that they are being taken seriously, supported and kept safe.
- The concern may arise through another person or persons; staff should not assume that someone else is taking responsibility. They should speak to the DSL and follow the safeguarding policy. The DSL should handle the information with sensitivity and with the support of CSC if required.
- The reports of the alleged sexual violence or sexual harassment may indicate it took place away from the school premises or online. The school's duty to safeguard remains the same and appropriate information sharing and multi-agency working will be particularly important.
- All staff should be trained to manage a report from a child (KCSIE, Part 1). This will include:
    - Being clear with children who have been harmed that they are believed and will be supported through hearing their voice, and
    - Responding to all children that describe experiencing sexual abuse or harassment
    - Using an interpreter when necessary
    - Not promising confidentiality – the report should be shared on a need-to-know basis to ensure its progression. The child who has been harmed must be made aware of the next steps and who will receive the information.
    - The person receiving the information from the child to recognise they are in a position of trust and should be supportive and respectful
    - Being non-judgmental, not asking leading questions and using open questions, where, what, when etc.
    - Remaining engaged with the child and writing a thorough summary immediately after the disclosure.
    - Only recording the facts as relayed by the child, not personal opinion
    - Where a concern involves nude or semi-nude images or videos, take a safeguarding approach in every case, whether the sharing appears consensual or is non-consensual. The response must be proportionate and consider the children's ages and development, the circumstances, and any coercion, exploitation, vulnerability or wider risk. Follow the current Searching, screening and confiscation in schools guidance; staff must not view, copy, print, share, store or forward images unless there is a clear safeguarding reason and this has been agreed with the DSL and, where appropriate, the police.
    - Where disclosures should be managed with two members of staff present (one the DSL).
    - Informing a DSL immediately afterwards.

The DSL should advise on the school's initial response and will consider:

- The wishes of the child who has been harmed and how they want to proceed
- The nature of the alleged incident, including considering whether a crime has been committed
- The ages of the children involved

- The developmental stages of the children involved
- Any power imbalance between the children e.g. is the child who caused harm significantly older, does the child who was harmed have a disability or learning difficulty?
- Whether it is a one-off incident or multiple incidents
- Whether there are ongoing risks to other children, adult students or staff
- Whether extra familial harm is a factor, consideration of sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation and serious youth violence
- The proximity of the child who was harmed and the child who caused harm and considerations (including the option of remote learning) regarding shared classes, sharing school premises and school transport
- The wider context: whether the behaviour occurred online or offline, involved a group, was targeted or repeated, reflects misogyny or other prejudice, indicates coercion or exploitation, or suggests a pattern affecting other children. Consider the best interests, safety, wishes and wellbeing of each child throughout, while recognising that the wishes of one child cannot override the school's duty to protect them or others.

The Risk Assessment/Safety Plan

An immediate, written (or electronic) risk assessment should be made by the DSL to consider:

- A safety plan to consider safeguarding, education and support for all the children involved
- All the other children (or adult students and staff) at the school and what actions will protect them
- Holding a safety planning meeting for each child who has been harmed and their parents to draft and agree content for the safety plan – having a plan in place as early as possible will benefit everyone involved
- An assessment of the physical environment considering the timing and location of the harmful behaviour. For example, if the incident happened in the school toilets, special toileting arrangements may need to be considered. Consider also times where they may be an increased risk of harm, such as their transportation to and from school, specific lessons e.g. PE, transitions, break times, before school, quiet times, break times, online etc and think of what measures can be put in place to minimise any risks in these environments. Check supervision arrangements in all these areas are robust.

Engagement with CSC and specialist services is important to ensure their risk assessments and safety plans are informing the school's approach and updating the school risk assessment as well as continuing to work collaboratively within the multi-agency network. The school risk assessment and safety plan can be shared with the Police and CSC. These will be key factors when considering the school's actions following a disclosure.

Review the safety plan regularly, until safety measures can be removed.

Safety planning should be child-centred, proportionate and developed separately with each child and their parent or carer where safe to do so. It should set out the child's safety and support needs, their views and wishes, trusted adults, supervision and environmental arrangements, online and transport risks, education and wellbeing support, responsible professionals, review dates and how changes will be communicated. Plans should avoid placing the burden of managing risk on the child who has been harmed or unnecessarily disrupting their education. Review whenever circumstances change and record the rationale for continuing, changing or ending measures.

Actions following a Report/Disclosure

Schools will consider the following ways to manage any reports/disclosures of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment:

1. Manage internally – if it is assessed the children are not in need of early help or statutory intervention and it is a one-off incident, then for sexual harassment, it could be handled internally through the behaviour policy and pastoral support. The principle that it is never acceptable and will not be tolerated must be reinforced.
2. The initial stages of considering a disclosure or incident (or at any point during the management of a concern), can also include seeking advice from the children's social care referral and advice team 0207 527 7400.
3. Early help – If statutory interventions are not required, but a child may benefit from early help and support to address non-violent harmful sexual behaviour and to prevent the escalation of sexual violence.
4. A referral to CSC (and the Police where appropriate) – where a child has been harmed or caused harm to someone else, is at risk of harm or immediate danger. Parents should be informed unless there are compelling reasons not to (where to do so will put the child at additional risk). The school should work alongside and cooperate with the social worker and should not wait for the start of an investigation before protecting the child who was harmed and other children. Working closely with CSC will ensure actions taken do not jeopardise a statutory investigation. If CSC decide not to carry out an assessment, the school should be prepared to refer again (and/or use the ISCP Escalation Procedure) if they believe the child remains in immediate danger or at risk of harm. Other support mechanisms should be considered e.g. early help specialist and/or pastoral support.
5. Where a referral to CSC does not meet threshold, CSC may be able to help identify appropriate support for children, either through Bright Futures (Islington's early help service) or other services. This may include identifying direct work or appropriate interventions. This work could be offered by Bright Futures, the Targeted Youth Service or the school.
6. A report to the Police – usually in parallel with a referral to CSC. Where there is a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault, the initial action is a referral to the Police, even when the child who caused harm is under the age of ten. Parents should be told of the referral unless there are compelling reasons not to e.g. if informing the parent is likely to put the child at additional risk. The Police will advise on what information should be shared with staff and others, particularly the child who caused harm and the parents. The DSL should be aware of the Police Child Abuse Investigation Team (CAIT) local arrangements. If the Police do not take further action, the school should continue to engage with specialist support for both children.
7. Guidance and support can be obtained from ExploitationandMissing@islington.gov.uk (this includes support around peer group intervention).

All the scenarios above:

- Should be underpinned by the principle that sexual violence and sexual harassment is never acceptable and will not be tolerated, and
- All concerns should be recorded either written or in electronic format, as soon as possible after they arise.

Criminal Proceedings

If the school is informed of criminal proceedings, schools are expected to:

- Make records available to the Police
- Ensure they do NOT take statements, these will be taken by the Police

It is important that the DSL works closely with the Police (and other agencies) to ensure any actions the school takes do not jeopardise the Police investigation. Schools should ask the Police when they have any questions about the investigation. The Police will help and support the school as much as they can (within the constraints of any legal restrictions).

If the Police impose bail conditions restricting what a child can do and the contact they can have with other people, ensure you understand what these or any other legal orders mean. During this time school staff can still continue to support any child who is on bail to ensure they have access to remote education if necessary.

The initial stages of a Police investigation are usually prompt. You should collaborate closely with the multi-agency network. This may include the Local Authority Designated Officer, Specialist Social Worker, Safer Schools Officer, Youth Justice and any other relevant behaviour support service such as New River College Outreach Service.

The Police must ensure the outcome of any criminal proceedings and/or any decisions about prosecution is communicated to the school. The Local Authority must convene a strategy meeting in accordance with Chapter 1 Working Together to Safeguard Children to determine the child's welfare and plan rapid future action if there is reasonable cause to suspect the child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm:

'Whenever there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, there should be a strategy discussion involving local authority children's social care (including the residential or fostering service, if the child is looked after), the police, health, and other bodies such as the referring agency, education, early help, or other practitioners involved in supporting the child. This might take the form of a multi-agency meeting and more than one discussion may be necessary. A strategy discussion can take place following a referral or at any other time, including during the assessment process and when new information is received on an already open case.'

The Strategy Discussion

The purpose and requirements of a strategy discussion are set out in statutory guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children, Page 86 and the London Child Protection Procedures, Chapter 4. At a minimum, the following should be involved:

- A local authority social work manager
- A health practitioner
- A police representative
- Other relevant practitioners will depend on the nature of the individual case but may include:
    - the practitioner or agency which made the referral
    - the child's school or nursery
    - any health or care services the child or family members are receiving

All attendees should be sufficiently senior to make decisions on behalf of their organisation and agencies.

The tasks of the strategy discussion are to:

- Share available information
- Agree the conduct and timing of any criminal investigation
- Decide whether enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 must be undertaken and if so:
    - what further information is needed if an assessment is already underway and how it will be obtained and recorded
    - what immediate and short-term action is required to support the child, and who will do what by when
    - whether legal action is required
    - agree timescales for next steps should be based upon the needs of the individual child, and consistent with this Protocol and the London Safeguarding Procedures

No Further Action

If the Police decide not to investigate or their investigation does not result in a prosecution, it is important to remember that this does not mean the incident did not happen –the criminal threshold for proving a case is beyond reasonable doubt. You still need to understand what has happened and take action to minimise the risk posed by the child who caused harm.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead can ask the Police to share information obtained during their investigation – they have a duty to do so if it will avoid unnecessary harm to any of the children involved.

If a Child is Being Prosecuted

The Designated Safeguarding Lead should consult with the Police, CSC and Youth Justice to get advice on managing potential risks posed by the child. For example, is there a formal assessment as part of proceedings, and ask for any recommendations made.

The child should always be enabled to complete their education, whether within their original school environment or under alternative arrangements.

The Role of the Social Worker

- consider the children's welfare and safety, and identify any additional risk of harm
- decide what information should be shared with the children and their families (on the basis that information is not shared if this may jeopardise a police investigation or place the children at risk of significant harm)
- agree what further action is required, and who will do what by when
- record agreed decisions in accordance with local recording procedures
- follow up on agreed actions
- continue to work and support the families of both children

The Role of the Police

- discuss the basis for any criminal investigation and any relevant processes that other organisations and agencies might need to know about, including the timing and methods of evidence gathering
- lead the criminal investigation (local authority children's social care has the lead for the section 47 enquires and assessment of the child's welfare) where joint enquiries take place

Unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious reports

- All concerns, discussions and decisions made and reasons for decision should be recorded in writing
- DSLs should review records so that patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified and addressed
- If a report is determined to be unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious, the DSL should consider whether the child and/or person who made the report needs help, has been harmed by someone else, or is communicating another safeguarding concern. A referral to children's social care may be appropriate.
- If a report is shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, the school should consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the individual who made it as per their own behaviour policy.'[14]

7. Ongoing Response

Supporting the Child who was harmed

The child who was harmed should be safeguarded, and support offered, this will depend on the age and developmental stage, the nature of the allegations and potential risk of further harm. Schools should be aware that sexual assault can result in a range of health needs including physical, mental and sexual health problems and unwanted pregnancy.

Schools should consider whether there is a power imbalance between child who was harmed and child who caused harm. The safety, needs and wishes of the child who was harmed should be paramount in any response and they should be able to continue in their normal routine. Schools should support them as follows:

- Continuing in their normal routine and make daily experiences as normal as possible
- Never making them feel they are a problem for making a report or made to feel ashamed
- Support offered should depend on the seriousness of the incident e.g. is it a one-off incident of sexualised name-calling or an allegation of rape?
- A referral to the Social & Emotional Mental Health Service via the Front Door 0207 527 7400 to access the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and other mental health services
- Rape Crisis Centre
- Internet Watch Foundation (to potentially remove illegal images)
- Work collaboratively with other boroughs where either the child who was harmed or the child who caused harm lives out of borough. If schools are dissatisfied with the response received, for example if the other borough refuses to engage unless a child has been permanently excluded, then the London Professional Conflict Resolution procedure should be followed.
- Children who have been harmed may disclose information piece by piece. They should be given opportunities to share concerns and offered ongoing support. A designated trusted adult can be offered to talk about their needs, ask the child who was harmed to choose someone.

[14] Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 para 414

Consider the trauma experienced by the child who was harmed and whether they find it difficult to maintain a full timetable – if so, alternative arrangements should be made e.g. a reduced timetable.

Long term arrangements may be needed to protect and support the child who was harmed. Schools should work with CSC and other agencies and do everything they can to protect the child who was harmed from bullying and harassment, because of the disclosure. CSC will make appropriate referrals to The Lighthouse, telephone: 020 3049 0010, email: thelighthouse.ask@nhs.net).

Transferring to another school

Alternative provision or a move to another school should be considered if either child continues to be at risk if they remain at the same school. A change of school should only be at the request of the child who was harmed or the child who caused harm, and following a discussion with the parents and should be expedited in the most appropriate and timely manner, for example via an Education, Health and Care Annual Review, Managed Transfer or ordinary in-year admissions application. In extraordinary circumstances where this becomes known following the allocation of a school place by the Primary Securing Education Board or Secondary Securing Education Board, a new school can be identified via Chair's Action. The application forms for the securing education board are stored on Islington CS with details of the process and dates of meetings:

Secondary Fair Access Panel Board

Primary Securing Education Board

Any transferring school should be made aware of any ongoing support needs including the safety plan and any identified risks. It is good practice to arrange a meeting between the DSLs of the two schools. The DSL should discuss this with the child who was harmed and parents and transfer the child protection file to the new setting within 5 days.

Supporting the Child who caused harm

Support and sanctions should be considered on a case-by-case basis. The child who caused harm may potentially have unmet needs as well as potentially posing a risk of harm to other children. Harmful sexual behaviour in young children is often a symptom of adverse childhood experiences.

Schools must carefully balance the need to provide the child who caused harm with an education, safeguarding support and implement any disciplinary sanctions. To do this, they must consider:

- The age and developmental stage
- The nature of the allegations
- The stress of being the subject of an allegation
- Any unmet needs
- Whether they pose a risk of harm to other children
- The school should take advice from the Children's Services Contact Team Referral & Advice (0207 527 7400), specialist sexual violence services and the Police.
- It is the responsibility of the DSL that if the child who caused harm moves to another educational setting, they are made aware of any ongoing support needs and where appropriate, potential risks to other children and staff.
- The DSL should also transfer the child protection file to the new setting within 5 days of the child transferring.
- When there is a criminal investigation and the Police have advised that schools cannot share any information with the child who caused harm, how to manage this can be discussed and agreed at the early strategy meeting that will include a representative from the school.

8. Record Keeping and Information Sharing

Effective information-sharing underpins joint working and is a vital element of work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

> *"The effective sharing of information between practitioners, agencies and organisations is essential for the early identification of need, assessment and service provision to keep children and young people safe"*[15]

Information sharing should therefore be a two-way process.

Schools should use robust record keeping, including the use of chronologies, to identify patterns and to aide early identification of concerns. Chronologies will help to identify a pattern of behaviour. Concerns may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern of harmful sexual behaviour or contextual harm.

Use the CSA Centre signs and indicators approach to build a fuller picture over time. Record the child's words and presentation, relevant emotional, behavioural and physical indicators, information about family and wider contexts, possible indicators in the behaviour of the person who may have caused harm, protective factors and any emerging patterns. Share relevant information securely, proportionately and promptly so that agencies can identify risk and coordinate support; record what was shared, with whom, when, why and the outcome.

Records should include[16]:

- a clear and comprehensive summary of the concern;
- details of how the concern was followed up and resolved;
- a note of any action taken, decisions reached and the outcome.

If in doubt about recording requirements, staff should discuss with the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy).

The records that are completed by the member of staff to whom a disclosure is made will need to be kept and provided as exhibits if there is a Police investigation. Staff will need to be aware that they may need to provide a statement to the Police.

Referring to other Agencies

Multi-agency early help will work best with engagement with parents. When a referral is being made to CSC, parents will usually be informed, unless there are compelling reasons not to (if informing a parent is going to put the child at additional risk).

Schools and statutory services should be proactive in sharing information as early as possible to help identify, assess, and respond to risks or concerns about the safety and welfare of children, either when problems first emerge or where a child is already known to children's social care.

The Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) do not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe and fears about sharing must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard a child. Schools can also share

[15] London Safeguarding Procedures CP9 Information Sharing Guidance
[16] Paras 66, 67 Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024

information without consent where there is a good reason to do so e.g. it will enhance the safeguarding of a child if shared in a timely manner or if to gain consent, would put the child at risk.

This is supported by the UK GDPR (Articles 6 and 9). The most relevant for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children are legal obligation (article 6(1)(c) and public task (article 6(1)(e).

Legal Obligation – Article 6(1)(c)

3.2.1. The processing of information is necessary for you to comply with the law – relevant legislation would include the Children Act 1989 and Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 which places duties on a range of organisations, agencies and individuals to ensure their functions, and any services that they contract out to others, are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children

Public Task Article 6(1)(e).

3.3.1. Where a specific task is carried out in the public interest which is laid down by law; or the processing is needed in the exercise of official authority (e.g. a public body's tasks, functions, duties or powers) which is laid down by law.

When a referral is being made to the police, the DSL should consult the police and agree what information can be disclosed to staff and others, in particular, the child who caused harm and their parents. They should also discuss the best way to protect the child who was harmed and their anonymity.

9. Working with Parents

Communication and Understanding

Share with the parents as much information as you think is appropriate without compromising the children who have been harmed. Use clear language, accepting that talk of HSB can be very difficult for the parents to hear. Keep to the facts and avoid being judgemental.

Parents may struggle to believe what you are telling them. Stay calm and give them time to assimilate the information you provide. Be prepared for them to express a range of emotions including denial or anger. Reassure them that you will work with them to ensure their child is safe and to ensure their child's education can continue as normally as possible.

The CSA Centre advises that a supportive, respectful and honest response to non-abusing parents and carers can strengthen the child's safety and recovery. Explain concerns and processes clearly, recognise that parents may experience shock, fear, anger, confusion or self-blame, and avoid language that blames them or the child. Involve them as protective partners unless doing so would increase risk or compromise an investigation, agree how they can support the child, and offer ongoing contact and signposting rather than treating communication as a single meeting.

Parents may be able to provide valuable information about the child's lived experiences and you may be able explore together whether there are any risks to the child within the family or in the community:

> *I appreciate this may be hard for you to hear, and I wonder if you can think of any reason why they might have behaved in this way?'*
>
> *'Are there any other behaviours that you are worried about?'*

You may need to explore the child's home life in some detail, and you may have concerns that the parents give the child unrestricted internet access, to establish whether anything at home or on the internet may have contributed to their behaviour.

The physical and online home environments

It is important you find out which adults and other children live in the home and consider whether the child may be at risk at home from sexual abuse, neglect, physical abuse, domestic abuse, parental substance misuse etc.

Find out what devices the child has access to at home, whether parental controls are set up and how often they are checked and the level of parental supervision or monitoring. Use the following to assess risks and provide advice:

- Do the parents discuss the child's social media profiles and content and have any steps been taken to minimise the use of technology?
- Have the parents noticed any change in the child's presentation after prolonged periods of time online?
- How much screen time is the child spending online (including gaming)? Is this supervised or monitored?
- Do the parents have an understanding of online harms or do they need support around this?
- Do they have concerns that their child's use of technology is placing them at risk from being harmed online or engaging in behaviour which may harm others? This includes the influence of pornography if the child is accessing this.

The London Safeguarding Procedures state that where parents are or can be a protective factor, it is important that:

- They are supported
- They are included in the assessment of the risk to their child and incorporated into the plans made to protect them
- They are kept informed about progress or lack of progress in relation to protecting their child
- That their concerns are listened and responded to
- That their knowledge and understanding of their child informs the assessment and planning.

Remember to discuss with the parents:

- How the school will support their child e.g. making a referral to a specialist agency, allocating a mentor, working on education about healthy relationships or safe touch. Let them know who will be responsible for each of these actions.
- How you can help support the parents – give them a contact phone number so they can have a direct link with a member of staff who knows the details of the situation and signposting them to further support.
- What the school will do next, using clear and accurate information
- That it is important they respect the confidentiality of all the children involved
- That you are working within the parameters of this Protocol and national statutory guidance.

Schools should make use of their websites when communicating with parents on safeguarding issues. In addition to the safeguarding and child protection policy, details of key staff members and the first steps parents should take if they have any worries concerning their child should be made

clear to them. Safeguarding newsletters, a safeguarding section on the website, coffee mornings on key themes, leaflets and e-messages are useful ways of updating parents on issues appropriate to their context, such as the risks relating to child sexual exploitation or online bullying. An inclusive approach to safeguarding and regular communications can make all the difference in engaging parents and improving relationships.

The Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and the Behaviour Policy should be clear, accessible, and understood by parents. Parents may find it difficult to cope with information about their child causing harm. Part 5 of Keeping Children Safe in Education contains support organisations and parents should be signposted to these.

Sharing Information with Parents

The school will usually engage with both the parents of all the children involved and should carefully consider what information is shared about each child.

Where they are not informed, it is especially important that the school is supporting the child in any decision they take, and this should be with the support of children's social care and any appropriate specialist agencies – see the section Strategy Discussion above.

The DSL should meet the parents of the child who was harmed with the child present to discuss what arrangements are being put in place to safeguard him/her and understand their wishes in terms of support they may need and how the report will be progressed. It should be decided on a case-by-case basis whether other agencies should also be present.

It is also good practice for the school to meet with the parents of the child who caused harm to discuss any arrangements that are being put into place that impact their child such as, for example, moving them out of classes with the child who was harmed and what this means for their education. The reason behind any decisions should be explained. Support for the child who caused harm should be discussed.

The child who was harmed should be given all the necessary support to remain in their school. This may not be possible and would depend on their wellbeing. Following a discussion with both sets of parents and at the request of the either child, alternative provision or a move to another school should be considered.

Managing Communications

When an incident is reported, it should not be communicated beyond the children involved and their parents. When it becomes more widely known, within and outside the school community.

After any incident, speak to the children involved including any witnesses to find out as much as possible about what has happened and how the children feel about it. If the incident has been witnessed by a member of staff:

1. Stop the behaviour – change the situation, stop, distract, change the environment. Separate the children and tell them to stop what they are doing.
2. Be curious with the child about their behaviour and tell that that it is not ok. Be specific and clear that what they did was wrong to help them understand they need to change or relearn their behaviour.
3. State the rules – tell them how expect them to behave, or repeat previously explained rules:

- 'The rule is ...'

- 'We expect everyone to respect each other's privacy, and that includes not touching each other on the genitals'

4. Enforce the rules – for younger children, re-direct or distract the child to more appropriate behaviour. End on a positive note and praise when they act in the way you suggest.

Flowchart for managing peer-on-peer sexual violence, abuse and harassment

Appendix 1

DSL receives concern of child on child sexual violence, abuse, harassment, whether face to face, online, in or out of school

Reassure child they are being taken seriously, will be supported and kept safe. Explain the next steps and who will receive the information in order to keep them safe

Signpost parents to NSPCC helpline and support organisations

Consider the wishes of the child and how they want to proceed

Consider any unmet needs of the child who harmed and consult with CSC

A **referral** should be made to CSC if a child has **suffered significant harm or is at risk of significant harm whether or not it is clear a crime** has been committed

Call CSCT for advice
Strategy discussion with CSC/Police – discuss and agree information sharing and what can be shared with children and families during an investigation

Could a crime have been committed?

Yes

Refer to CSC/Police

If CSC assess threshold not reached, Bright Futures Family/Early Help Service/TYS/School to carry out protective behaviours work with the child who harmed

No

Carry out a risk assessment to consider:

- Victim's safeguarding, education, support
- Child who harmed safety education, support
- All other children/adults at school and actions required to protect them
- The physical environment and site security
- Share with CSC/Police
- Frequency of reviewing assessment

Seek advice from the Police and specialist services about ways to protect victim

Not sure

Use Hackett's Continuum of Sexual Behaviours to categorise sexual behaviours and:

- Understand healthy sexual development
- Assess and respond appropriately to sexual behaviours
- Make a decision about safeguarding the child