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**Safeguarding Policy**

**Including Harmful Sexual Behaviour**

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**1.0 Policy Statement**

At Syon Manor College (SMC) the safety of the students we support is our highest priority. We are committed to ensuring that our children and young people are always effectively safeguarded whist under the College’s supervision. This policy sets out the College’s duty to safeguard any child or adult at risk who is part of SMC. The College does not act in loco parentis (in place of a parent) for any student; however, in legal terms we recognise the duty to safeguard the welfare of children and adults at risk, as defined in the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006. The College recognises that some adults may have an appointed representative (e.g. mental health advocate, legal/enduring power of attorney) present for any meetings regarding safeguarding.

This Policy and Guidance should be read alongside the following:

* SMC Anti-Bullying Policy
* SMC Positive Behaviour Management Policy
* SMC Mental Health and Wellbeing
* SMC Safer Recruitment Policy
* SMC Data Protection Policy
* SMC E-Safety Policy
* SMC Social Media Policy
* SMC Child and Young Person Exploitation Policy
* SMC Anti-Radicalisation Policy
* SMC Complaints Policy
* The College's description and guidance of the role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead.

1. **What is Abuse?**

All staff should be aware of indicators of abuse and neglect (see below), understanding that children and young people can be at risk of harm inside and outside of the College, home and online. Exercising professional curiosity and knowing what to look for is vital for the early identification of abuse and neglect so that staff can identify cases of children and young people who may be in need of help or protection.

All College staff should be aware that abuse, neglect and safeguarding issues are rarely standalone events and cannot be covered by one definition or one label alone. In most cases, multiple issues will overlap with one another.

All staff, but especially the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and all Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (DDSLs) should consider whether children/young people are at risk of abuse or exploitation in any situation. Extra-familial harms take a variety of different forms and children/young people can be vulnerable to multiple harms including (but not limited to) sexual abuse (including harassment and exploitation), domestic abuse in their own intimate relationships (teenage relationship abuse), criminal exploitation, serious youth violence, county lines, and radicalisation.

All staff should be aware that technology is a significant component in many safeguarding and wellbeing issues. Children/young people are at risk of abuse and other risks online as well as face to face. In many cases abuse and other risks will take place concurrently both online and offline. Children/young people can also abuse other children/young people online, this can take the form of abusive, harassing, and misogynistic/misandrist messages, the non-consensual sharing of indecent images, especially around chat groups, and the sharing of abusive images and pornography to those who do not want to receive such content.

In all cases, if staff are unsure, they should always speak to the DDL or a DDSL.

* 1. **Indicators of Abuse and Neglect**

**Abuse:** a form of maltreatment of a child/young person. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child/young person by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical as well as the impact of witnessing ill treatment of others. This can be particularly relevant, for example, in relation to the impact on children/young people of all forms of domestic abuse. Children/young people may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children/young people may be abused by an adult or adults or by another child or children.

**Physical abuse**: a form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child/young person. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child/young person.

**Emotional abuse**: the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child/young person such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child’s emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child/young person that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child/young person opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or ‘making fun’ of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child’s/young person’s developmental capability as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning or preventing the child/young person from participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children/young people frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children/young people. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child/young person, although it may occur alone.

**Sexual abuse:** involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving violence, whether or not the child/young person 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/young people in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children/young people 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/young people. The sexual abuse of children by other children is a specific safeguarding issue in education and all staff should be aware of it and of the college’s policy and procedures for dealing with it (detailed in point 2.3)

**Neglect:** the persistent failure to meet a child /young person’s basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child’s/young person’s health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy, for example, as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once someone is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to: provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment); protect a child/young person from physical and emotional harm or danger; ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child’s/young person’s basic emotional needs.

**2.2 Peer-on-Peer Abuse**

Peer-on-peer abuse is any form of physical, sexual, verbal, emotional or financial abuse, or coercive control exercised between children, and within children’s relationships (both intimate and non-intimate), friendships, and wider associations. It applies to children and young people who demonstrate behaviour outside of their normative parameters of development (this includes but is not exclusive to abusive behaviours).

All staff must recognise that children can be capable of abusing other children of similar and different ages, vulnerable to abuse by other children and that it can happen both inside and outside of college, online and offline. Such abuse is taken as seriously as abuse perpetrated by an adult and will not be tolerated. Syon Manor College has a zero-tolerance approach to abuse, and it should never be passed off as “banter”, “just having a laugh”, “part of growing up” or “boys being boys” as this can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours and an unsafe environment for children.

A contextual safeguarding approach will be taken to understand, and respond to, any occurrences of child-on-child abuse, recognising that children and young people who display harmful behaviours must be seen as vulnerable themselves.

SMC is committed to ensuring the prevention, early identification and appropriate management of child-on-child abuse. Where such abuse is identified, the DSL must be informed, the incident recorded on the College’s secure internal safeguarding database, Sleuth. Child protection procedures must be followed and any incidents of sexual violence must be reported to the police. All children and young people who have been affected by the situation will be supported, with wider risks being considered and addressed.

For more information, please see the SMC Peer-on-Peer Abuse Policy.

**2.3 Vulnerable Groups**

It is important to always be aware that any child or young person can be at risk of child-on-child abuse and that abusers can be younger or older than their victims.

Research suggests some groups may be more at risk. The [Safeguarding Network](https://safeguarding.network/content/safeguarding-resources/peer-peer-abuse/) identifies the following as particularly vulnerable:

• Those aged 10 and upwards (although victims can be younger).

• Girls and young women are more likely to be harmed and boys and young men are more likely to have harmed.

• Black and minority ethnic children often under identified as having been harmed and over-identified as having harmed others.

• Young people with intra-familial abuse in their histories or those living with domestic abuse are more likely to be vulnerable.

• Young people in care and those who have experienced loss of a parent, sibling or friend through bereavement.

Students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are more at risk of abuse. Staff must be vigilant in monitoring those students who are more vulnerable. Any concerns must be reported immediately to the DSL and documented on Sleuth.

The fact that a child or a young person may be LGBT is not in itself an inherent risk factor for harm. However, children/young people who are LGBT can be targeted by other children/young people. In some cases, a child/young person who is perceived by other children/young people to be LGBT (whether they are or not) can be just as vulnerable as those who identify as LGBT. Risks can be compounded where children/young people who are LGBT lack a trusted adult with whom they can be open. It is therefore vital that staff endeavour to reduce the additional barriers faced and provide a safe space for them to speak out or share their concerns with members of staff.

**3.0 Abuse Involving Harmful Sexual Behaviour**

Staff must read the Harmful Sexual Behaviour Guidance included at Annex A. Further detailed information is provided  
<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1181955/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_2023.pdf>

KCSIE 2023 on:

• What sexual violence and sexual harassment constitutes.

• Important context to be aware of, including; what is consent, power imbalances, and developmental stages.

• Harmful sexual behaviour may be an indication that the perpetrator is a victim of abuse themselves,

• Related legal responsibilities for colleges.

• Advice on a whole college approach to preventing child on child sexual violence and sexual harassment.

• More detailed advice on responding to reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment, including safeguarding and supporting both the victim(s) and alleged perpetrator(s).

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children and/or young people of any age and sex, from primary through to secondary stage and into colleges. It can occur through a group of children/young people sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child/young person or group of children/young people. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap; they can occur outside of the college premises, and or online and face to face (both physically and verbally) and are never acceptable. All staff working with children/young people are advised to maintain an attitude of **‘it could happen here’**.

Whilst any report of sexual violence or sexual harassment should be taken seriously, staff should be aware it is more likely that girls will be victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment and more likely it will be perpetrated by boys. The importance of distinguishing between problematic and abusive sexual behaviour (Harmful Sexual Behaviour HSB) is recognised. Understanding where a child's/young person’s behaviour falls on a spectrum is essential to being able to respond appropriately to it.

The NSPCC defines HSB as: "Developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour which is displayed by children and young people, and which may be harmful or abusive (derived from Hackett, 2014) it may also be referred to as sexually harmful behaviour or sexualised behaviour… may be harmful towards self or others or be abusive towards another child…or adult."

The **Brook Traffic Light Tool** helps staff to identify, assess and respond appropriately to sexual behaviours. As a minimum, DSLs and Deputy DSLs should complete the Brook e-learning around Harmful Sexual Behaviours to develop their understanding and awareness.

[**https://www.brook.org.uk/training/wider-professional-training/sexual-behaviours-traffic-light-tool/**](https://www.brook.org.uk/training/wider-professional-training/sexual-behaviours-traffic-light-tool/)

Simon Hackett (2010) proposes a **Continuum Model of Behaviours** to demonstrate the range of sexual behaviours presented by children and young people, from those that are normal, to those that are highly deviant. However, assessing where behaviour fits on this continuum can be complex. It is important to place any child’s sexual behaviour within a developmental context and recognise the key differences between the motivations and meanings of such behaviours at varying stages of development.

All staff are to read the following document from the NSPCC regarding in partnership with Research in Practice, Durham University and the NHS regarding harmful sexual behaviour:

[**https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/media/1657/harmful-sexual-behaviour-framework.pdf**](https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/media/1657/harmful-sexual-behaviour-framework.pdf)

**3.1 Physical Abuse**

Physical assaults and initiation violence and rituals from students to students can also be a form of abuse or child-on-child abuse. Such behaviour will not be tolerated and if it is believed that a crime has been committed, report it to the DSL or DDSL. It is to be recorded on Sleuth and the incident reported to the police. The principles from the SMC Anti-Bullying Policy will be applied in these cases, with recognition that any police investigation will need to take priority.

Hackett’s continuum model can also be referred to in this context to assess where the alleged behaviour falls on a spectrum and to decide how to respond. This could include, for example, considering whether the behaviour:

• Is socially acceptable or is socially acceptable within the peer group

• Involves a single incident or has occurred over a period of time

• Is problematic and concerning

• Involves any overt elements of victimisation or discrimination e.g. related to race, gender, sexual orientation, physical, emotional, or intellectual vulnerability

• Involves an element of coercion or pre-planning

• Involves a power imbalance between the child/children allegedly responsible for the behaviour

• Involves a misuse of power.

**3.2 Online Behaviour**

Many forms of abuse and child-on-child abuse have an element of online behaviour. Online abuse / child-on-child abuse is any form of abuse involving children or young people with a digital element. For example, consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nude images and/or video, online abuse, coercion and exploitation, grooming, threatening language delivered via online means, distribution of sexualised content and harassment. Please see Staying Safe Online, Anti-bullying (including Cyberbullying) and Safeguarding policies for further information.

**4.0 Responding to Alleged Incidents and Concerns**

Staff must follow this policy if a child/young person is at risk of harm, is in immediate danger, or has been harmed. Consideration must be given to the proportionality of the response on a case-by-case basis. When making decisions about how to deal with allegations, the age and understanding of the child/young person who has displayed harmful behaviour must be taken into consideration, as well as any relevant personal circumstances and how this relates to their behaviour. SMC must consider any disparity in age between the children/young people who has displayed harmful behaviour and the victim, the impact the behaviour has had on the victim, and any element of coercion or violence. **Staff must act immediately and report any concerns regarding abuse between children or young people to the DSL immediately and document this on Sleuth.** The DSL must deal with any concerns of abuse between young people and children immediately and sensitively. As much information as possible must be gathered from the victim and the child/young person who has allegedly displayed harmful behaviour to gain the facts of what has happened. The language used must be sensitive, non-judgemental and must not blame the victim. Victims must be supported and reassured that their safety and welfare within the college is the priority. Each student is to have a risk assessment including any safeguarding risks.

Where the DSL believes that there has been significant harm caused to the student, a referral must be made to the Local Authority immediately. It is important that college provides as much information as possible as part of the referral process. This will allow any assessment to consider all the available evidence and enable a contextual approach to address such harm. In agreement with the Local Authority, parents/carers must be informed, where possible, this should be done face-to-face. If the Local Authority does not believe it meets their threshold for further action and the DSL is not in agreement, this must be challenged with the Local Authority.

**4.1** **The Immediate Response to a Report**

How staff respond to a report can encourage or undermine the confidence of future victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment to report or come forward.

Staff must:

* Report any concerns about a child’s/young person’s welfare immediately to the DSL rather than waiting to be told. The DSL will support/instruct the staff member to report the incident on Sleuth and to other agencies as appropriate e.g., the placing authority and the police.
* Be able to reassure victims that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting abuse, sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report. All staff will be trained to manage a report.
* Explain, in such a way that avoids alarming or distressing children/young people, that the law is in place to protect them rather than criminalise them.
* Listen, ask open questions, and write down as much as possible. Language must be used that is not victim-blaming, they must be non-judgemental and reassure the child that they have not caused a problem by disclosing.
* Be aware that children/young people may not feel ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, exploited, or neglected, and/or they may not recognise their experiences as harmful. For example, children/young people may feel embarrassed, humiliated, or being threatened. This should not prevent staff from having a professional curiosity and speaking to the DSL if they have concerns about a child/young person. It is also important that staff determine how best to build trusted relationships with children and young people which facilitate communication.
* Understand that victims may not talk about the whole picture immediately. They may be more comfortable providing information on a piecemeal basis. It is essential that dialogue is kept open and encouraged. When it is clear that ongoing support will be required, the victim should be asked if they would find it helpful to have a designated trusted adult to talk to about their needs. The choice of any such adult should be the victims, as far as reasonably possible. The College should respect and support this choice.
* Not promise confidentiality as the concern will need to be shared further (for example, with the DSL or social care). Staff will only share the report with those people who are necessary to progress it. Information can be legally shared even if the student states they do not want it to be.
* Produce a written report as soon after the interview as possible, recording the facts as presented by the child/young person. These may be used as part of a staMentory assessment if the case is escalated later.
* If the concern relates to online abuse, be aware of **searching screening and confiscation** advice [**searching screening and confiscation advice (for schools)**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/searching-screening-and-confiscation) and **[UKCIS Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-advice-for-education-settings-working-with-children-and-young-people/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-advice-for-education-settings-working-with-children-and-young-people)** where the report includes an online element. The highlighted advice provides more details onwhat to do when viewing an image is unavoidable. **The key consideration is for staff not to view or forward illegal images of a child/young person.** In some cases, it may be more appropriate to confiscate any devices to preserve any evidence and hand them to the police for inspection.
  1. **Considerations by the College**

The college will consider:

• The wishes of the victim in terms of how they want to proceed. This is especially important in the context of sexual violence and sexual harassment.

• The nature of the alleged incident(s), including whether a crime may have been committed and consideration of harmful sexual behaviour.

• The ages and developmental stages of the children/young people involved.

• Any power imbalance between the children/young people. For example, is the alleged perpetrator significantly older, more mature or more confident? Does the victim have a disability or learning difficulty?

* If the alleged incident is a one-off or a sustained pattern of abuse; (sexual abuse can be accompanied by other forms of abuse and a sustained pattern may not just be of a sexual nature).
* That sexual violence and sexual harassment can take place within intimate personal relationships between peers.

• Related issues and wider context, including any links to child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation.

* Any intra familial harms and any necessary support for siblings following incidents.
  1. **Children and Young People Sharing a Classroom**

Whilst the DSL establishes the facts of the case, records on Sleuth and starts the process of liaising with children’s/young people’s social care and the police:

• The perpetrator will be removed from any classes they share with the victim.

• The College will assess how best to keep the victim and alleged perpetrator a reasonable distance apart on College premises and on transport to and from the college.

These actions are in the best interests of both children/young people and should not be perceived to be a judgment on the alleged perpetrator.

* 1. **Response to the Alleged Perpetrator**

Any allegation is likely to be traumatic for the alleged perpetrator. In cases of child-on-child abuse the alleged perpetrator must also be treated as vulnerable and may require specialist support, which should be organised by the DSL. Staff must be aware that the perpetrator may have suffered or be suffering abuse and/or trauma.

The DSL must ensure that the alleged perpetrators age and understanding is considered, as well as trying to understand the reasons why the alleged perpetrator may have harmed another child/young person. A risk assessment must be completed **immediately** which should balance the proportionality of the allegation alongside the needs of the victim and the alleged perpetrator’s right to continue to be educated.

It is good practice for the DSL to meet with the parents/carers of the alleged perpetrator to explain the situation and what measures will be put in place to support their child/young person. The DSL must be led by the police regarding what information can be shared with the alleged perpetrator and their family.

If the alleged perpetrator moves colleges, the DSL must ensure that all safeguarding information is shared in advance with the new College. Colleges must also inform their Local Authority of all deletions from their admission register when a child is taken off roll. The DSL must liaise with the Police and Social Care should they wish to take disciplinary action prior to the conclusion of a Police/Social Care investigation. Other professionals investigating an incident does not in itself prevent a college from coming to its own conclusion, on the balance of probabilities, about what happened, and imposing a penalty accordingly.

Staff must be alert to possible bullying of the alleged perpetrator either within college or online. Arrangements must be made to safeguard them. Staff must promote a culture where bullying is not tolerated.

* 1. **Local Procedures**

The DSL will be familiar with the local referral procedures for safeguarding and child protection concerns and safeguarding procedures for adults. They must also be familiar with local responses to sexual violence and harassment, and these must shape their own responses. The DSL will ensure that staff are aware and understand the local processes and that they are familiar with local support services.

Where staMentory assessments are appropriate, the DSL will be working alongside the relevant lead social worker. Collaborative working will help ensure the best possible package of coordinated support is implemented for the victim and, where appropriate, the alleged perpetrator and any other children/young people that require support. The placing authority **must** be notified immediately where it has been identified that there are immediate safeguarding concerns. It is recommended as best practice that steps are taken to convene a multi-agency professionals meeting to review any potential risks and agree actions to be taken to safeguard the young person/young people. The DSL is responsible for this.

The College should be part of discussions with staMentory safeguarding partners to agree the levels for the different types of assessment and services to be commissioned and delivered, as part of the local arrangements. Safeguarding partners should publish a local threshold document which includes the process for the local early help assessment and the type and level of early help services to be provided .The DSL and DDSLs will need to familiarise themselves with this document.

**4.6 Reporting to the Police**

**Where a crime has been committed the DSL must immediately contact the police.**

Where a report has been made to the police, the college will consult the police and agree what information can be disclosed to staff and others, the alleged perpetrator and their parents or carers. They will also discuss the best way to protect the victim and their anonymity. Where there is a criminal investigation, the College will work closely with the relevant agencies to support all children/young people involved (including potential witnesses). Where required, advice from the police will be sought in order to help manage the situation sensitively.

Whilst protecting children/young people and/or taking any disciplinary measures against the alleged perpetrator, the college will work closely with the police (and other agencies as required), to ensure any actions the college take do not jeopardise the police investigation. The DSL must inform the Chair of Governors, Regional Director and Outcome First Group’s Head of Safeguarding.

**4.7 Action Following a Report of Sexual Violence and/or Sexual Harassment**

**If a student alleges that they have been raped, assaulted by penetration or sexually assaulted, this must be reported to the Police and Social Care immediately by the DSL.**

The student’s parents/carers should normally be informed unless there is a risk of greater harm to the student.

When there has been a report of sexual violence, the DSL will make an immediate risk and needs assessment which will be recorded within one working day and recorded on the College’s electronic recording system, Sleuth. The risk and needs assessment should consider:

* the victim, especially their protection and support
* whether there may have been other victims
* the alleged perpetrator(s)
* all the other children/young people (and, if appropriate, adult students and staff) at the college, especially any actions that are appropriate to protect them.

The risk assessment must be shared with the police (where requested), local authority, Head of College, Chair of Governors for the College, the Regional Director, and Outcome First Group’s Head of Safeguarding. Consideration must be given to informing the Outcome First Groups’ Corporate Affairs/Commercial Director in case of media interest.

Risk assessments will be kept under review by the DSL. Where there has been a report of sexual harassment, a risk assessment should also be completed.

Staff must ensure that their response to sexual violence, harassment or harmful behaviours between children/young people of the same sex is equally robust as it is for sexual violence and harassment between children/young people of the opposite sex.

**5.0 After the Outcome/Conclusion of the Incident**

The college must:

* Take a contextual safeguarding approach.
* Take all necessary action to learn from the incident and prevent future incidents from occurring, such as through targeted education around specific types of abuse.
* Offer support for the victim and ensure it is provided wherever possible. Appropriate risk assessments must be implemented to provide reassurance and safety for the victim.
* Ensure that they **do not** adopt a victim blaming approach.
* Complete an investigation into the incident, carried out by the DSL. The investigation must consider the occurrence of the incident itself, whether it is an isolated incident, and the personal circumstances of the young person who is alleged to have displayed harmful behaviour.
* If necessary, make appropriate referrals to support services for the child/young person who has displayed harmful behaviours.
* Complete and implement a risk assessment for the child/young person who has displayed harmful behaviours to safeguard them and other students.

**5.1 The End of the Criminal Process**

If a child/young person is convicted or receives a caution for a sexual offence, the College will update its risk assessment and ensure relevant protections are in place for all children/young people. The College will consider any suitable action following the College’s Positive Behaviour Management Policy. If the perpetrator remains in the College, expectations regarding the perpetrator will be clearly set out if they have been convicted or cautioned. This could include expectations regarding their behaviour and any restrictions the college thinks are reasonable and proportionate about the perpetrator’s timetable.

Any conviction (even with legal anonymity reporting restrictions) is potentially going to generate interest among other students in the college. The College will take measures to protect all children and young people involved, especially from any bullying or harassment offline and online.

Where cases are classified as “no further action” (NFA’d) by the police or Crown Prosecution Service, or where there is a not guilty verdict, the college will continue to offer support to the victim and the alleged perpetrator for as long as is necessary. A not guilty verdict or a decision not to progress with their case will likely be traumatic for the victim. The fact that an allegation cannot be substantiated does not necessarily mean that it was unfounded. The College will continue to support all parties in this instance.

**5.2 Unsubstantiated, Unfounded, False or Malicious Reports**

All concerns, discussions and decisions made, and the reasons for those decisions, should be recorded in writing.

Records should be reviewed so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified, and addressed.

If a report is determined to be unsubstantiated, unfounded or false, the DSL should consider whether the child/young person and/or the person who has made the allegation is in need of help or may have been abused by someone else and this is a cry for help. In such circumstances, a referral to children’s social care or adult’s social care may be appropriate.

If a report is shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, the college should consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the individual who made it as per their own behaviour policy.

**6.0 Support for Children and Young People Affected by Sexual Assault**

Where there is a criminal investigation, the alleged perpetrator will be removed from any shared classes with the victim and consideration will be given as to how best to keep them a reasonable distance apart on the college premises or on college transport. This is in the best interest of the children/young people concerned and should not be perceived to be a judgement of guilt before any legal proceedings. The college will work closely with the police.

Where a criminal investigation into a rape or assault by penetration leads to a conviction or caution, the College will take suitable action. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances, the rape or assault is likely to constitute a serious breach of discipline and lead to the view that allowing the perpetrator to remain in the same college or setting would seriously harm the education or welfare of the victim (and potentially other students or students).

Where a criminal investigation into sexual assault leads to a conviction or caution, SMC will consider any suitable sanctions using the Positive Behaviour Management Policy, including consideration of permanent exclusion. Where the perpetrator is going to remain at the College, the Principle would be to continue keeping the victim and perpetrator in separate classes and continue to consider the most appropriate way to manage potential contact on College premises and transport. The nature of the conviction or caution and wishes of the victim will be especially important in determining how to proceed in such cases.

Staff should be aware that sexual assault can result in a range of health needs, including physical, mental, and sexual health problems and unwanted pregnancy. Children and young people that have a health need arising from sexual assault or abuse can access specialist NHS support from a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC). (See Annex C for further details).

The victim should be given all the necessary support to remain in their College, however, if the trauma results in the victim being unable to do this, alternative provision or a move to another setting should be considered to enable them to continue to receive suitable education. This should only be at the request of the victim and following discussion with their parents or carers.

If the victim does move for any reason, the DSL must ensure that the new education setting is aware of any ongoing support needs and should discuss with the victim and their parents/carers the most suitable way of doing this. The DSL must transfer the child/young person protection file.

All the above will be considered with the needs and wishes of the victim at the heart of the process (supported by parents/carers as required). Any arrangements should be kept under review.

Further support for victims of sexual assault is available from a variety of agencies (see Annexes B and C).

**7.0 Prevention strategies**

SMC actively seeks to raise awareness of and prevent all forms of abuse by:

• Educating all governors, senior leaders, staff and volunteers, students, parents and carers about this issue. This will include training all governors, senior leaders, staff and volunteers on the nature, prevalence and effect of abuse, and how to prevent, identify and respond to it and challenge attitudes that underly such abuse.

• Taking appropriate action to ensure that children and young people learn about appropriate relationships with adults, online safety, as well as sex and healthy relationships. PSHE lessons will focus on important age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate issues in line with Government guidance.

• Supporting children/young people to understand what abuse is and the impact it can have on those who experience it.

• Creating a culture in which our students feel able to share their concerns openly, in a non-judgmental environment and have them listened to. Students are clear about how to report abuse or any concerns about possible abuse or harmful behaviour. This includes being able to access in private, relevant websites or help lines, such as Childline and the NSPCC, to seek advice and help.

• The College recognises that some children and young people are more vulnerable by virtue of their complex health or behavioural needs, or disabilities. All staff have a responsibility to be the 'eyes and ears' and report all concerns to the DSL. Consideration will be given as to whether additional support for children with protected characteristics is required.

* Engaging with parents/carers on this issue by:
* Talking with parents/carers about it and asking them what they perceive to be the risks facing their child and how they would like to see the college address those risks.
* Involving them in the review of the college’s policies and lesson plans.
* Encouraging them to hold the College to account on this issue.
* Ensuring that all abuse issues are fed back to the Head of College and DSL, so they can spot and address any concerning trends and identify students who may need additional support.
* Working with governors, senior leaders, all staff and volunteers, students and parents to address equality issues, to promote positive values, and to encourage a culture of tolerance and respect amongst all members of the college community.
* Working with multi-agency partners to further understand and address abuse and reduce its occurrence.

# 7.1 Risk Assessment (Proactive College-Wide)

The College will conduct a risk assessment to determine the risks to which their students are or may be exposed and will assess and monitor those risks. This is a proactive assessment of the risks facing students and distinct from the assessments that must be conducted following concerns or allegations.

The risk assessment may include:

• The composition of student population, including specific characteristics that affect their vulnerability to abuse for example, gender, age, special educational needs and/or disabilities, sexual orientation and/or religious belief.

• Which students are more at risk of being affected by abuse?

• Any relevant trends in behaviour.

• Environmental factors and local awareness, for example, high levels of gang activity.

• Online activities and vulnerabilities.

This should be reviewed and updated at least annually and reviewed after any incident of abuse.

**Annex A Harmful Sexual Behaviour Guidance**

A contextual safeguarding approach will be taken to understand, and respond to, any occurrences of harmful sexual behaviour, recognising that children and young people who display harmful behaviours must be seen as vulnerable themselves.

1. **What is Harmful Sexual Behaviour?**

Harmful sexual behaviour can include children and young people using sexually explicit words or phrases, inappropriate touching, using sexual violence or threats, penetrative sex with other children/young people. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap; they can occur online face-to-face (both physically and verbally) and are never acceptable.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of **any age and sex.** From primary through to secondary stage and into colleges. It can occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children.

All staff working with children are advised to maintain an attitude of **‘it could happen here”.** Colleges and colleges should be aware of and respond appropriately to all reports and concerns about sexual violence and/or sexual harassment both online and offline, including those that have happened outside of the College.

Age and stages of development of children and young people are critical factors in harmful sexual behaviour; however, it is not defined by these factors. Sexual behaviour between children can be considered harmful if one of the children is much older, particularly if there is more than two years’ difference or if one of the children is pre-pubescent and the other is not. However, a younger child can abuse an older child, particularly if they have power over them, for example, if the older child is disabled, smaller in stature or has other vulnerabilities. Power is a key factor in the reasons why young people display harmful sexual behaviours towards other children. Evidence shows that girls are more likely to be subject to sexual violence and sexual harassment than boys, and that boys are more likely to perpetrate such violence and harassment, however either gender can be victim or perpetrator.

1. **Stages of sexual development**

It is important that anyone who works with children and young people has a good understanding of how children develop sexually. This can help in recognising healthy sexual behaviours that are developmentally appropriate and identifying if a child is displaying behaviour that is inappropriate or potentially harmful.

Sexual development begins in infancy and is a natural part of growing up. Some children may develop later or earlier than others depending on their understanding, their own overall development and environment. The NSPCC provides some examples of age-appropriate healthy sexual behaviour.

**0- to 4-years-old**

At this stage, children display natural exploratory behaviour emerging for the first time such as:

* Enjoying being naked
* Kissing and hugging people they know well, for example friends and family members
* Touching or rubbing their own private parts as a comforting habit
* Showing curiosity about or attempting to touch the private parts of other people
* Being curious about the differences between boys and girls
* Talking about private body parts and their functions, using words like ‘willy’, ‘bum’, ‘poo’
* Role playing about different relationships, for example marriage.

**5- to 9-year-olds**

As children get a little older, they become more conscious of sex and their own sexuality. This can be displayed by:

* Becoming more aware of the need for privacy
* Asking questions about sex and relationships, such as what sex is, where babies come from and same-sex relationships
* Kissing, hugging and holding hands with a boyfriend or girlfriend
* Using swear words or slang to talk about sex after hearing other people use them.

**9- to 13-year-olds**

During these ages, children begin to get more curious about sex. Examples of healthy sexual behaviour during this stage are:

* Having a boyfriend or girlfriend (of the same or different gender)
* Using sexual language as swear words or slang
* Wanting more privacy
* Looking for information about sex online (this might lead to accidentally finding sexual pictures or videos)
* Masturbating in private

**13- to 17-year-olds**

During adolescence, sexual behaviour becomes more private with young people, and they begin to explore their sexual identity. They might be:

* Forming longer-lasting sexual and non-sexual relationships with peers
* Using sexual language and talking about sex with friends
* Sharing obscenities and jokes that are within the cultural norm
* Experimenting sexually with the same age group
* Looking for sexual pictures or videos online.

For further information, please visit: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-health-development/healthy-sexual-development-children-young-people>

1. **Understanding sexual behaviour**

It is essential that those working with children and young people can distinguish normal from abnormal sexual behaviours. Hackett’s (2010) continuum model demonstrates the range of sexual behaviours presented by children and young people, from those that are normal, to those that are highly deviant.

Healthy sexual behaviours are:

* Developmentally expected and age appropriate
* Socially acceptable
* Consensual, mutual, reciprocal
* Shared decision making

Problematic Sexual behaviours are:

• Problematic and concerning behaviours

* Developmentally unusual and socially unexpected

• No overt elements of victimisation

• Consent issues may be unclear

• May lack reciprocity or equal power

• May include levels of compulsivity

Abusive Sexual behaviours are:

* Victimising intent or outcome
* Includes misuse of power
* Coercion and force to ensure victim compliance
* Intrusive
* Informed consent lacking, or not able to be freely given by victim
* May include elements of expressive violence

Further information about consent can be found here: [Rape Crisis England & Wales - Sexual consent](https://rapecrisis.org.uk/get-informed/about-sexual-violence/sexual-consent/)

Sexual harassment between children/young people means ‘unwanted conduct of a sexual nature’. It can occur online and/or face to face and can occur simultaneously between the two. Sexual harassment is likely to violate a child’s dignity, and/or make them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment.

All staff should recognise that children can abuse other children (online and offline). Staff should be clear about their college’s or college’s policy and procedures with regard to child-on-child abuse.

1. **Risk Factors**

**'**Peer relationships are increasingly influential during adolescence, setting social norms which inform young people’s experiences, behaviours and choices and determine peer status. These relationships are, in turn, shaped by, and shape, the college, neighbourhood and online contexts in which they develop. ' (Contextual Safeguarding Briefing, Dr Carlene Firmann, 2017). Young people's peer groups, communities and social media activity can be either key risk factors or key protective factors.

Children and young people can develop harmful sexual behaviours because of trauma or abuse. They may have experienced:

* Physical abuse
* Emotional abuse
* Sexual abuse
* Severe neglect
* Parental rejection
* Family breakdown
* Domestic abuse
* Parental substance misuse

**It is important to remember that being abused does not mean that children or young people will go on to abuse others.**

Key risk factors and vulnerabilities of young people who sexually abuse others are that they may:

* Have poor self-regulation and coping skills
* Experience social anxiety and a sense of social inadequacy
* Have poorly internalised rules for social behaviour
* Possess a poorly developed or primitive sense of morality
* Lack secure and confident attachments to others
* Exercise limited self-control, and act out their emotional experiences through negative or otherwise inappropriate behaviour
* Have little insight into the feelings and needs of others and, indeed, their own emotions
* Place their own needs and feelings ahead of the needs and feelings of others
* Exhibit a poorly defined sense of personal boundaries have developed strong and not easily corrected cognitive distortions about others, themselves, and the world they share
* Struggle to interact socially or have issues with social competence.

Staff must remember this is not an exhaustive list and **must** remain alert to possible signs of sexual abuse, violence, harassment or harmful behaviours by students in the college.

Staff must follow section 4 of the Child-on-child Abuse Policy if they have any concerns, or if a student discloses that they have been harmed.

**Annex B: Helplines and support for young people**

Childline: <https://www.childline.org.uk/get-support/>

NSPCC: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/our-services/nspcc-helpline/>

Barnardo’s: <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/what-we-do/protecting-children/sexual-abuse>

Safeline: <https://safeline.org.uk/services/>

Mind:<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/for-children-and-young-people/useful-contacts/>

<https://www.safe4me.co.uk/support-services/> - provides an A-Z directory listing details of national and local services offering specialist support, advice and resources for children and young people, families and professionals on a broad range of needs, concerns and topics.

**Annex C: Help and Support for children and young people that have health needs**

**arising from sexual assault or abuse**

Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARC) – Centres can be found through a location search at: <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/other-services/Rape-and-sexual-assault-referral-centres/LocationSearch/364>

The [NHS](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sexual-health/help-after-rape-and-sexual-assault/) provides a range of advice, help and support including advice about the risk of pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STI), reporting to the police and forensics.

Rape Crisis <https://rapecrisis.org.uk/>

The Survivors Trust <https://www.thesurvivorstrust.org/>

The Male Survivors Partnership: [Male Survivors Partnership](https://malesurvivor.co.uk/support-for-male-survivors/directory-of-services/)

Children and Young People’s Mental Health Services [(CYPMHS)](https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/nhs-voluntary-charity-services/nhs-services/children-young-people-mental-health-services-cypmhs/) previously referred to as CAMHS services vary depending on local authority. Most CAHMS have their own website, which will have information about access, referrals and contact numbers.

[Internet Watch Foundation](https://www.iwf.org.uk/) works internationally to remove child sexual abuse online images and videos and offers a place for the public to report them anonymously.

[Childline/IWF](https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/remove-nude-image-shared-online/) Remove a nude image shared online Report Remove is a free tool that allows children to report nude or sexual images and videos of themselves that they think might have been shared online, to see if they can be removed from the internet.

**Annex D: Useful Publications and Websites**

[**NICE guidance**](https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng55)contains information on developing interventions; working with families and carers; and multi-agency working.

The Lucy Faithfull Foundation has developed a [**HSB Toolkit**](https://www.stopitnow.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Stop_It_Now_harmful_sexual_behaviour_prevention_toolkit_Oct_2020.pdf), which provides support, advice and information on how to prevent it, links to organisations and helplines, resources about HSB by children, internet safety, sexual development and preventing child sexual abuse.

The NSPCC provides free and independent advice about HSB: NSPCC Learning: [**NSPCC Learning: Protecting children from harmful sexual behaviour**](https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-abuse-and-neglect/harmful-sexual-behaviour) and [**NSPCC - Harmful sexual behaviour framework**](https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/2019/harmful-sexual-behaviour-framework)

[**https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/**](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/)

[**https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/**](https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/)

[**https://www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre/**](https://www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre/)

[**https://www.stopitnow.org.uk/**](https://www.stopitnow.org.uk/)

[**Relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education DFE**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education)

[**Review of sexual abuse in Colleges and colleges - Ofsted**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-sexual-abuse-in-schools-and-colleges/review-of-sexual-abuse-in-schools-and-colleges)

[**UKCIS Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-advice-for-education-settings-working-with-children-and-young-people/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-advice-for-education-settings-working-with-children-and-young-people)

[**Safeguarding Network: Peer-on-Peer Abuse**](https://safeguarding.network/content/safeguarding-resources/peer-peer-abuse/)

Peer-on-peer abuse toolkit by Farrer &Co Guidance on peer-on peer abuse policy and template peer-on-peer abuse policy:[**https://www.farrer.co.uk/globalassets/clients-and-sectors/safeguarding/farrer--co-safeguarding-peer-on-peer-abuse-toolkit-2019.pdf**](https://www.farrer.co.uk/globalassets/clients-and-sectors/safeguarding/farrer--co-safeguarding-peer-on-peer-abuse-toolkit-2019.pdf)

[**Towards a Contextual Response to Peer-on-Peer Abuse - CSE Network**](https://www.csnetwork.org.uk/assets/documents/Towards-a-Contextual-Response-to-Peer-on-Peer-Abuse_161013_170057.pdf)

[**Beyond Referrals: CSN Beyond Referrals: Levers for Addressing HSB in Colleges Toolkit**](https://www.csnetwork.org.uk/assets/documents/CSN_BeyondReferrals_SchoolsGuidance_ARTWORK.pdf)

[**Sexual bullying: developing effective anti-bullying practice- A guide for College staff and other professional**](https://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/attachments/Sexual%20bullying%20-%20anti-bullying%20guidance%20for%20teachers%20and%20other%20professionals%20-%20FINAL_0.pdf)

[**Anti-Bullying Alliance**](https://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/)

[**It’s Just Everywhere- a study on sexism in Colleges –and how we tackle it - National Education Union and UK Feminista**](https://ukfeminista.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Report-Its-just-everywhere.pdf)