Academic Guardians UK

Peer on Peer Abuse Policy

This policy summarises Academic Guardians UK current working practices in relation to context of peer on peer abuse which requires the organisations support.

The policy is linked to the Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy, E-Safety Policy, Youth Produced Imagery Policy and should be seen as part of our existing safeguarding framework and responsibilities.

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Policy owner	Updated	Review date
Andrew Kettle	August 2024	August 2025

Academic Guardians UK Ltd – Peer on Peer Abuse Policy

Policy:	Peer on Peer (Child on Child) Abuse Policy
Summary:	This policy summarises Academic Guardians UK current working practices in relation to context of peer on peer (child on child) abuse which requires the organisations support. The policy is linked to the Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy, Online E-Safety Policy, Youth Produced Imagery Policy and should be seen as part of our existing safeguarding framework and responsibilities.
Policy Owner:	Andrew Kettle (Designated Safeguarding & Prevent Lead) Update: August 2024
Next Review Date:	August 2025

1. Context

1.1. In recent years there has been growing recognition that children can suffer significant harm, and abuse, at the hands of other children or young people. Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2022 makes clear that all staff should be aware that safeguarding and child protection issues can also 'manifest themselves via peer on peer abuse' also known as 'child on child abuse'. Staff, local coordinators, drivers and homestay host families should recognise that children are capable of abusing their peers and have a wider awareness of peer on peer abuse. KCSIE September 2022 also makes clear that:

1.2. The following document:

- defines peer on peer (child on child) abuse
- reflects on the different forms of peer on peer abuse, including contextual abuse
- outlines procedures to minimise the risk of peer on peer (child on child) abuse
- outlines how allegations and disclosures of peer on peer (child on child) abuse will be investigated and dealt with
- outlines how victims of peer on peer (child on child) abuse will be supported.

1.3 This document has been created with reference to KCSIE September 2019.

1.4 This Policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- Online E-Safety Policy
- Youth Produced Imagery Policy

1.5 This Policy should also be read with the understanding of the following key principles based on the KCSIE 2019:

- Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children at AGUK is the responsibility of all staff, local coordinators, drives and homestay host families
- All AGUK representatives should always consider what is in the best interests of the students in our care
- No single AGUK representative can have a full picture of each student and so prompt action and sharing of information is crucial
- All personnel should be aware that abusive behaviour amongst peers can put children in danger; abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as "banter" or "part of growing up", or "having a laugh"

- All AGUK representatives should be aware that safeguarding issues can manifest themselves via peer on peer (child on child) abuse. This may include (but is not limited to) bullying (including cyber bullying) gender-based violence/sexual assaults, sexting, homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying

- Finally, as regarding any safeguarding issue, all members of the community are asked to cultivate an understanding that 'it could happen here' and be prepared to 'think the unthinkable'.

2. Definition and forms of peer on peer (child on child) abuse

2.1 There is no clear boundary between incidents that should be regarded as abusive and incidents that should be dealt with by the AGUK behavioural and disciplinary systems. If one child or young person causes harm to another, this should not necessarily be dealt with as abuse: unkindness, physical fighting and harassment between children are not always or inevitably seen as child protection issues.

2.2 However, it may be appropriate to regard peer on peer behaviour as abusive if harm is caused because:

- There is a significant power imbalance between the young people concerned. The abuse of children is often constructed around an age differential between the abuser and the abused, but in cases of peer-on-peer abuse this may not always be the case. In such circumstances, power imbalances can manifest in other ways, for example gender, social status within peer groups, intellectual ability, physical development, economic wealth, social marginalisation and so on. It is important to note that the perpetrator and/or victim may well be subject to power imbalances with other individuals in an incident of abuse and so it is important to investigate any incident as fully as possible.

- The perpetrator has repeatedly tried to harm one or more other children.

- There are concerns about the intention of the alleged perpetrator.

2.3 If evidence suggests that there was an intention to cause severe harm to the victim, this should be regarded as abusive whether severe harm was caused or not. Different forms of abuse are well documented in AGUKs Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, found in the AGUK portals, SharePoint sites and on the company website. These include physical, emotional, sexual abuse and neglect.

2.4 In the context of peer on peer (child on child) abuse examples include:

- Teenage relationship abuse (both physical and emotional)

- Sexual touching/harassment, sexual violence or assault

- Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals

- Sexting (also known as youth produced sexual imagery)

- Prejudiced behaviours such as sexism, racism and social marginalisation

- Bullying, where the context meets the criteria referred to above,
- Physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling or otherwise causing physical harm.

2.5 Issues surrounding Honour Based Violence (HBV), Forced Marriage and Radicalisation may also be relevant where coercion or power imbalances are involved between peers. It is also important to recognise that peer on peer (child on child) abuse may well involve students within AGUK care and young persons and children in other contexts, thus making a full range of abuse types possible. When dealing with any disclosure of abuse it is important to remember the three bullet points above regarding power, frequency and intention. The extent to which any victim has given consent is also important.

3. Prevention

3.1 In the broadest sense, it is hoped that the AGUK pastoral, academic and education guardian role create and sustain an environment that helps to minimise the risk and occurrence of peer on peer (child on child) abuse.

3.2 AGUK also looks to take a proactive, preventive and educative approach to safeguarding issues with its staff, representatives and students

3.3 AGUK recognises the challenge that young people face in talking about such issues and so information sharing and learning opportunities should aim to develop confidence in our students so that they feel they can communicate about safeguarding issues, including asking questions and disclosing concerns.

3.4 AGUK believes that other underpinning preventive learning about issues, such as consent, healthy relationships, online safety, recognising abusive and coercive behaviour, may help to support learning about abuse, some of which is covered in the student, parent and homestay host family handbooks as well as the 'Be Smart Be Safe' infographic flyer.

3.5 Systems are in place for children to express their views and give feedback. Ultimately, any system and processes should operate with the best interests of the child at their heart.' Students should be aware that there are a variety of ways in which they can express their views and feelings on any pastoral matter; to access support in order to prevent abuse from occurring, to report abuse that is happening, and to find ongoing support after abuse has been identified. Schools and Universities will have in place options for students to find help and support if they feel they are being abused or that one of their peers is at risk from abuse or peer on peer (child on child) abuse. In addition, the guidance made available to AGUK students also highlights the key contacts at the organisation who may also be able to help.

3.6 Contacts

Designated Safeguarding Lead & Prevent Lead – Director Andrew Kettle who can be contacted on 0203 515 8880, 07823 321 993 or andrew@academic-guardians.co.uk

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead – Director Dawn Kettle who can be contacted on 0203 515 8880, 07931 954 106 or dawn@academic-guardians.co.uk

Concerns in relation to the Managing Directors should be addressed to the Director of Safeguarding, Andrew Kettle, Concerns in relation to the Designated Safeguarding Lead should be addressed to Dawn Kettle and vice versa, on a confidential basis without disclosing to the safeguarding officer the matter relates to. As the DDL & DDSL are connected parties, then concerns about either can also be addressed with the Safeguarding Partners as detailed below. Concerns about all Directors should be directed to Crimestoppers, which will remain confidential.

Safeguarding Partners - Academic Guardians UK registered office is within the borough of Islington whose current safeguarding contact details are as follows:

Website: https://www.islingtonscp.org.uk/are-you-worried-about-a-child

Children's Services Contact Team - +44 20 7527 7400

Tim Djavit - Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) - +44 20 7527 8102

Information about services for children can be found on the Islington Family Directory https://www.islingtonscp.org.uk/

Police Referrals - Child Abuse Investigation Team (CAIT) +44 20 8733 6495 or +44 20 8733 6500

For Emergencies - 999

All Local Safeguarding Partnerships & MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hubs) contact details are provided to Homestay Host families, attached to the student profile on confirmation of booking.

A link to the list of Local Safeguarding Partnerships can be found here.

4. Procedures adopted when a disclosure of peer on peer (child on child) abuse is made

4.1 The following general principles and guidelines should be followed:

4.1.1 Initial response

- Any direct disclosure by a student of an incident of abuse should be taken very seriously and managed sensitively. Basic principles of listening sensitively, providing reassurance, not asking leading questions and not guaranteeing confidentiality should be remembered

- All incidents should be responded to in line with AGUK Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and the Schools Safeguarding Policy where appropriate.

- Any incident should be referred to the DSL without delay and this students School be notified immediately.

- The DSL should meet with the Deputy Safeguarding Lead and there should be subsequent liaison with the schools Safeguarding representatives and with the young people involved if appropriate.

- If the incident involves Sexting, use of the Policy and Procedures on Sexting should be made.

4.1.2 Investigation

- The DSL will decide if further information is required to decide on the best response in line with the students School Safeguarding Representative.

- In incidents that involve young people not under AGUK care, the DSL will decide if there is a need to contact the guardian agency, college, school, setting or individual.

4.2 When necessary the DSL will take advice from Children's Social Care on the investigation of such allegations and will take all appropriate action to ensure the safety and welfare of all students involved including the student or student accused of abuse.

4.3 If a student against whom an allegation of abuse has been made is required to be interviewed by the police, then the student will be supported during the interview by an appropriate adult.

5. Risk assessment and referral

5.1 The DSL will assess the risk presented by the incident to the student/students involved and in conjunction with the School and decide whether a referral to the police or Local Area Designated Officer is required or whether to proceed using the Schools pastoral support and disciplinary system.

5.2 The DSL should inform parents at an early stage and involve them in the process unless there is good reason to believe that involving parents would put the young person at risk of harm.

5.3 At any point in the process, if there is a concern a young person has been harmed or is at risk of serious harm a referral should be made to Children's Social Care. Any staff member can make such a referral but should inform the DSL as soon as possible that a referral has been made.

6. Recording process and outcomes

6.1 Notes should be made of all conversations and meetings to do with any incident of peer on peer (child on child) abuse.

6.2 Formal written records should be completed immediately or within 24 hours.

6.3 Records should include date, time, place, persons involved, nature of disclosure and any relevant details. These should be emailed to the DSL immediately using the AGUK reporting forms which are available online and in the relevant portals and SharePoint sites.

6.4 Records of all safeguarding concerns are kept by the DSL.

6.5 The DSL will offer ongoing support in the best interests of the students in AGUK care and action may need to be co-ordinated where there is a wider investigation involving Children's Social Care and/or the Police.

6.6 AGUK recognises that sexual violence and sexual harassment can take place between children, and within peer groups. AGUK is committed to responding appropriately and quickly to reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment, within a framework of effective safeguarding practice.

6.7 Part 5 of KCSIE 2022 gives detailed guidance regarding the response to child on child sexual violence and sexual harassment, based on the DfE document Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between Children in Schools and Colleges. AGUKs response to any such report will be led by the DSL and will consider the following elements:

- The wishes of the victim
- The nature of the alleged incident (s) including whether a crime may have been committed and/or whether harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) has been displayed
- The ages of the children involved
- The developmental stages of the children involved
- Any power imbalance between the children
- If the alleged incident is a one off or a sustained pattern of abuse
- That sexual violence and sexual harassment can take place within intimate personal relationships between peers
- Are there any ongoing risks to the victim, other children, or staff
- Other related issues and the wider context including links to CSE and CCE
- Immediate consideration will be given as to how best to support and protect the victim and the alleged perpetrator(s) and any other children involved or impacted.

7. Further Resources

https://napac.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Child-on-child-abuse_Booklet_A5_web.pdf

https://safeguarding.thekeysupport.com/

https://www.nspcc.org.uk/

https://www.educare.co.uk/news/new-course-raising-awareness-of-peer-on-peer-abuse

https://educationinspection.blog.gov.uk/2019/10/04/what-is-peer-on-peer-abuse/