



# Peer on Peer Abuse

December 2019  
Jocelyn Anderson





***‘We met at school when we were in year 6 and went all the way through to the end of sixth form. We were in the same form group. Alphabetical seating you know. I had to sit next to him every day in class, every day. It kind of ruined school for me. I didn’t go to University and I don’t know for sure if I would have done anyway but I know I was doing well at school and then I hated being there’***

WMRSASC client – survivor of rape by a peer



# Learning Outcomes

- Review the local perspective here in Herefordshire
- Share the voice of the child and case examples
- Demonstrate and review ongoing work WMRSASC is providing in this area
- Our observations of current practice and what needs to change

West Mercia Rape & Sexual Abuse Support Centre



# Peer on Peer Abuse

- Peer on peer abuse describes any type of abuse that is perpetrated by one CYP (under 18) on another CYP (under 18). Peer on peer abuse can take place in any context and within **any type of relationship** between the two CYP affected (for example (but not limited to) families, friends, acquaintances, strangers)
  - WMRSASC Working definition (2019)

# West Mercia Rape & Sexual Abuse Support Centre



## School pays thousands to former pupil over handling of rape claim

Case settled out of court after girl was expected to attend classes with accused pupil



▲ The boy was arrested at the time of the alleged rape and bailed on condition that he not make contact with the girl. Photograph: Dimitris Legakis/Athens Pictures

A secondary school has agreed to pay tens of thousands of pounds in damages and legal costs over its handling of an allegation of rape made by one of its former pupils against her then classmate, the Guardian has

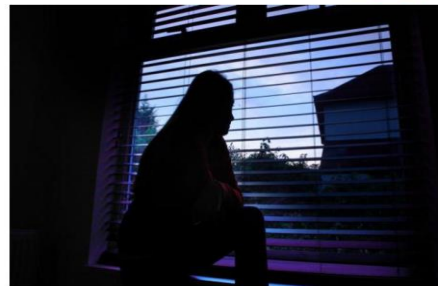
<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/oct/24/school-pays-thousands-to-former-pupil-over-handling-of-claim>

## 'I was sexually assaulted in school when I was 12. Here is my story'

Writing in the aftermath of revelations about peer-on-peer sexual assault in schools in England, one student who was attacked on multiple occasions recounts her experience

By Anonymous  
02 April 2019

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I was a victim of repeated sexual assault in the school environment. The way in which peer-on-peer sexual assault is dealt with in schools is truly awful and needs to change.

<https://www.tes.com/news/i-was-sexually-assaulted-school-when-i-was-12-here-my-story>  
5/5/19

## Exclusive: School failed to protect girl from pupil on double rape charge

Boy was convicted of raping two girls just weeks after he allegedly sexually exploited third girl in school

By Will Hazell  
24 May 2019

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A secondary failed to safeguard a girl from a boy who allegedly sexually exploited her in school, even though school leaders knew the teenager had been accused of two earlier rapes, *Tes* can reveal.

Just weeks after the alleged abuse of the key stage 3 girl came to light, the boy was convicted of the rapes of two other girls.

<https://www.tes.com/news/exclusive-school-failed-protect-girl-pupil-double-rape-charge>  
24/5/19



# The National Perspective

- About 1/3 of child sexual abuse committed by other children and young people (Hackett, 2014)
- Almost a third of girls aged between 16 and 18 years old have been subjected to unwanted sexual touching in UK schools.

<https://hub4leaders.co.uk/learning-hub/blog/what-you-need-to-know-about-peer-on-peer-abuse/>

- In 2017/8 calls to child line about peer on peer sexual abuse increased by 29% on the previous year.
- Peer on Peer abuse, like all types of CSA is likely to be underreported

www.west-merciasupportcentre.com

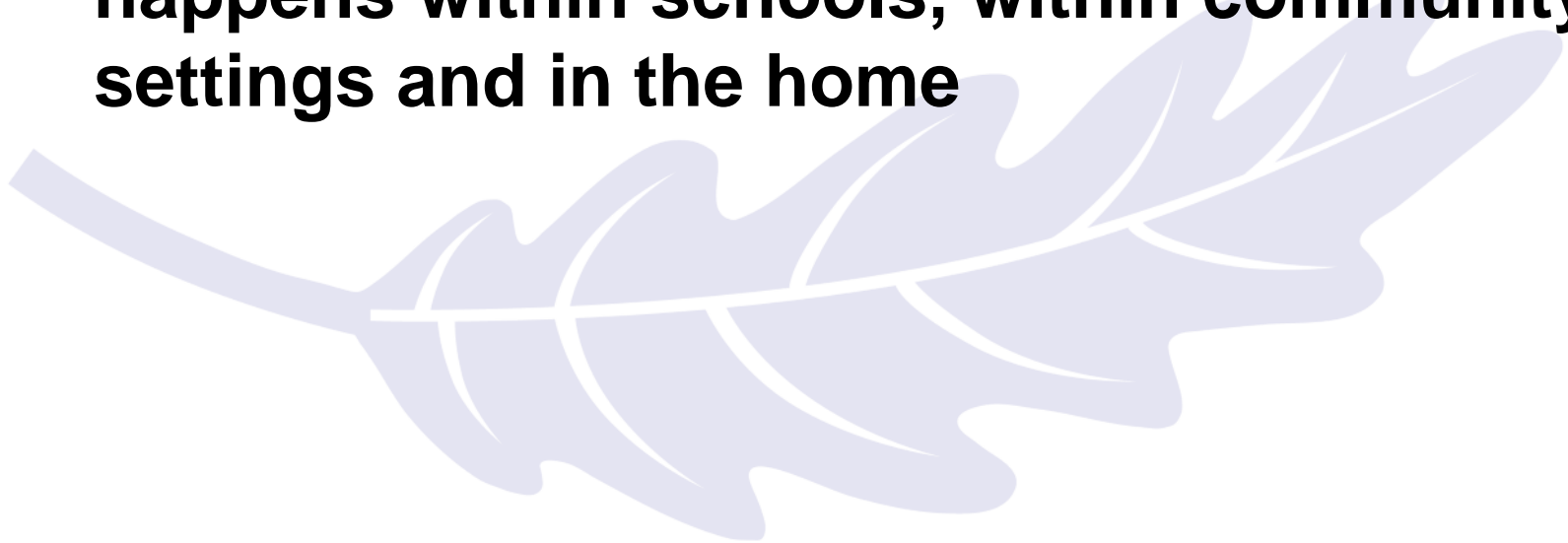


# WMRSASC – experience to date

13 Survivors supported to date from **1/4/19** from Herefordshire

- *10 would fall into the NSPCC definition of peer on peer abuse*

Contextual Safeguarding highly relevant – **this happens within schools, within community settings and in the home**





Experiences of Children who have experienced peer on peer abuse in our counties; Herefordshire and Worcestershire.







# WMRSASC projects

- **Children's Independent Sexual Violence Advisor**

practical support within the CJS, advocacy for the CYP within the school and institutional advocacy where required in relation to the perpetrator/offender/CYP exhibiting PSB

- **The Branch Project Worker**

121 work with CYP impacted by CSE. Building trusting relationships with CYP to cope and recover

- **Professionals Education**

Provision of specialist training for schools and colleges on how to manage allegations of peer on peer abuse in their settings.

- **SELFIE 121 and group work (to be renamed Empowerment Project 2020)**

Providing non victim blaming facilitated discussion to enable CYP to feel empowered to make healthy informed decisions in relation to consent and sex, to recognise unhealthy feelings and speak up



# Some important myth busting

**Children who exhibit harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) have all been sexually abused.**

In fact what the research tells us is whilst it is a mistake to assume no coloration, this is not **the same as causality**. Experiencing sexual abuse alone is not a sufficient condition for developing HSB. Theorists and research now suggests a more integrative explanation for HSB (Rasmussen, 2013; Allardyce and Yates, 2018)

**Children who exhibit HSB will go on to become adult sex offenders**

The research tells us that 90% do not but this does not negate the impact on the victim/survivor. The abuse is the same, regardless of the age of the perpetrator. Equally importantly, for the 10% that do go on to be a risk as an adult (Allardyce and Yates, 2013; Balfe et al, 2019) we must ensure appropriate risk assessments and interventions are put in place



# Our experiences in West Mercia

- Lack of knowledge from CYP around consent and HSB
  - Specialist SV ethically delivered education has led to disclosures
- Misunderstanding of developmentally appropriate behaviour & minimising HSB
- Myths and stereotypes still permeate this area
- Responses tend to be character/reputation prioritised.
  - Little onward information between schools regarding risk
  - Criminal Justice System dependent
- Little evidence of assessment of risk of/ to all CYP impacted
- Inappropriate referrals

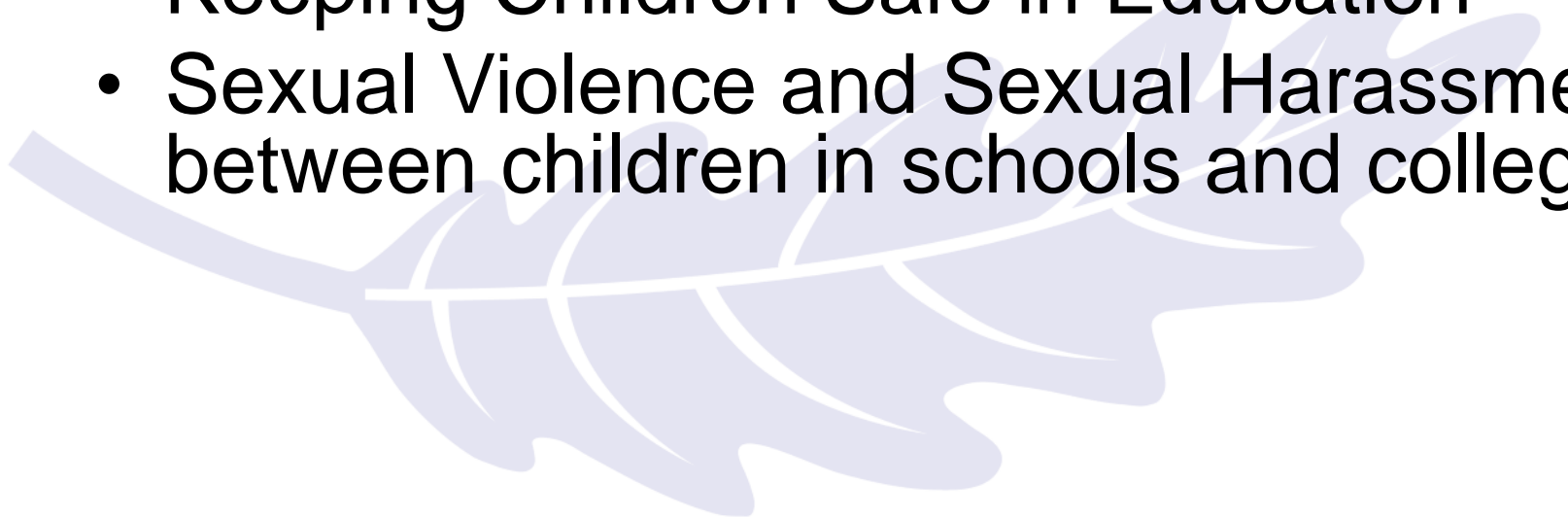
**What we need is a Multi-agency response for all concerned – the survivor, the CYP exhibiting peer on peer abuse , education for professionals and support for other CYP impacted.**



# Guidance and Support

## Guidance

- Harmful sexual behaviour among children and young people NICE guideline
- School Safeguarding Policy
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between children in schools and colleges





# Next Steps

- WMRSASC/Purple Leaf HSB service 2020 launch
- Continued engagement with Dept of Education
- Commitment to work with partners
- Harmful Sexualised Behaviour Audit
  - <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/2019/harmful-sexual-behaviour-framework/>
- Pathway & Support for CYP displaying HSB
- Risk & referral pathway for sexual violence
- Inclusion of CSA in all strategies