



Spotlight Review Report

**Spotlight review concerning peer
on peer abuse in schools**

December 2019

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Chairperson's Foreword

The children and young people scrutiny committee agreed that a spotlight review focusing on peer on peer abuse in schools was added to the committee's work programme for 2019/20.

We would like to place on record our thanks to all who contributed. The attendance at the spotlight review from a range of local partner organisation was excellent and I am grateful for the time and effort of the council's officers and all our local partners. I commend the quality of the presentations which provided a comprehensible and concise overview of some very complex areas. The quality of the presentations and the involvement of all those in attendance in the lively and constructive discussions allowed for a number of recommendations to emerge from the day.

I must also thank all those members of the council and the children and young people scrutiny committee who attended and contributed to the day including:

Cllr Paul Andrews, Cllr Christy Bolderson, Mr Pat Burbidge, Cllr John Hardwick, Cllr Kath Hey, Cllr Philip Howells, Mr Andy James, Cllr Peter Jinman, Cllr Mike Jones, Cllr Jeremy Milln and Cllr Diana Toynbee

Councillor Carole Gandy, December 2019
Chairperson of the Spotlight Review

1 Executive Summary

1.1 At its meeting on 15 July 2019 the children and young people scrutiny committee requested the convening of a spotlight review concerning peer on peer abuse in schools as part of the setting of its work programme priorities. The committee agreed to undertake this review due to reports of increasing levels of peer on peer abuse and public concern at schools in Herefordshire. At the following meeting on 16 September a scoping document for the spotlight review was presented. The committee proposed some amendments with final agreement given to the scoping document (attached as the appendix) at its meeting on the 25 November.

1.2 A number of partners and local agencies were invited to participate in the spotlight review and the following bodies and organisations were represented: Herefordshire Council; Public Health; West Mercia Police; Primary and Secondary schools in Herefordshire; West Mercia Rape & Sexual Abuse Support Centre (WMRSASC); The Children's Society; and Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group.

1.3 Presentations were provided as follows (slides for the presentations are contained through the weblink below):

- Herefordshire Council presentation
- Public Health presentation
- WMRSASC

1.4 The full recording of the spotlight review and all presentations can be accessed through the webpage below:

<http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=1087&MIId=7561&Ver=4>

1.5 The outcomes and recommendations from the spotlight review can be condensed into ten topics. The recommendations focus on:

1. School policies
2. DfE guidance
3. Herefordshire Council review of historic cases
4. Data collection of incidence of peer on peer abuse cases and national reporting
5. CLD Trust positive relationships training
6. Risk Assessments
7. Resource Pool for schools
8. Family support workers
9. Future meetings of the spotlight review
10. Council Policies

2. Composition of the Spotlight Review

2.1 All members of the children and young people scrutiny committee and any other member of the council expressing an interest. At the spotlight review 12 members of the council and co-optees of the children and young people scrutiny committee attended to contribute to discussions and the consideration of recommendations.

3 Context

Why did we set up the group?

3.1 The spotlight review was convened in order to:

- To receive data on the incidence of peer on peer abuse in Herefordshire schools;
- To learn of statutory guidance relating to peer on peer abuse and child protection policies in schools;
- To consider policies in place at schools to address peer on peer abuse and assess their effectiveness;
- To look at the role of the Council, the Police and voluntary/charitable organisations to assist schools, pupils and their parents
- To consider potential future initiatives and projects; and
- To inform a report to the children’s scrutiny committee with potential recommendations relating to peer on peer abuse in schools.

What were we looking at?

3.2 A range of local partner organisations were invited to the review and they were asked to present evidence and detail of work with respect to peer on peer abuse in schools.

Who did we speak to?

3.3 The spotlight review engaged the following organisations in the discussions:

Organisation	Invitee
Children and Families, Safeguarding and Education, Herefordshire Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Chris Baird, Director Children and Families – Liz Elgar, Assistant Director Safeguarding and Family Support Children and Families – Ceri Morgan – Alison Naylor, Head of Learning and Achievement
Public Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Karen Wright, Director of Public Health
West Mercia Police	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – DCI Jon Roberts, Herefordshire Local Policing Area
Secondary and Primary Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Sian Alderton, Aylestone School – Julie Rees, Ledbury Primary School – Diana Pearce, St Francis Xavier RC Primary School – Trixie Clarke/Serena Croad, John Kyrle High School – Martin Henton/Pete Gibbins, Bishop of Hereford Bluecoat School
West Mercia Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Jocelyn Anderson, CEO, WMRSASC – Anna Coombs
The Children’s Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Lucy Belcher, Service Manager – North, Prevention Programme, The Children’s Society
Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Rebecca Haywood-Tibbetts, Named Professional for Safeguarding

What did we ask?

3.4 In order to undertake the review the lines of questioning below were proposed:

- What is peer on peer abuse and what are the different forms;

- What are the latest statistics for the incidence of peer on peer abuse in Herefordshire schools;
- What statutory guidance exists regarding the incorporation of peer on peer abuse in schools' child protection policies;
- What work does the Council undertake with Herefordshire schools to introduce peer on peer abuse policies;
- What preventative work is being undertaken to address peer on peer abuse;
- Are those policies that have been introduced in schools effective in addressing peer on peer abuse;
- Where a case of peer on peer abuse cannot be resolved at school how is it escalated or what is the course of action followed;
- How the police deal with incidents of peer on peer abuse and how they work with local schools;
- How other agencies including therapy and voluntary/charitable services assist schools, pupils and their parents?

4. Summary of our findings

1. School policies
2. DfE guidance
3. Herefordshire Council review of historic cases
4. Data collection of incidence of peer on peer abuse cases and national reporting
5. CLD Trust positive relationships training
6. Risk Assessments
7. Resource Pool for schools
8. Family support workers
9. Future meetings of the spotlight review
10. Council Policies

4.1 School Policies

The spotlight review heard that a number of schools had chosen to implement a separate policy to address peer on peer abuse in schools. The numbers of schools which had chosen to implement a separate policy was not available but it was hoped that in 2020 when a review of safeguarding policies had been completed all schools would introduce a separate policy. The spotlight review felt that in order to ensure consistency across Herefordshire, all schools should be encouraged to establish a separate policy regarding peer on peer abuse.

It was further felt that peer on peer abuse policies at schools in Herefordshire contain provision for children inside and outside of the criminal justice system and children under the age of criminal responsibility.

4.2 DfE guidance

The spotlight review questioned the guidance from the DfE concerning the separation of victim and perpetrator and whether it was felt to be adequate. The difficulty of ensuring there was no contact between victim and perpetrator was raised and the guidance concerning the potential return to a school of a perpetrator who had been convicted of a criminal offence. It was confirmed that the separation of victim and perpetrator did present a challenge but schools employed methods such as staggered start times and establishing safe areas at break times.

It was queried whether guidance should be amended to state that a perpetrator should be suspended or removed from a school if they were convicted or currently under investigation. It was explained that such guidance would require a change to exclusion rules however it was confirmed that if a pupil was convicted of rape or a serious sexual assault it was likely they would have breached school disciplinary policy and would be excluded from school.

The spotlight review heard that Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019 had assisted to provide better guidance regarding peer on peer abuse in schools and demonstrated that the issue was receiving prominence nationally. In producing a school policy for peer on peer abuse in schools the importance of learning from best practice was highlighted whilst retaining a focus on the contextual elements of each school.

The spotlight review felt that guidance from the DfE could be clarified to include greater detail regarding the separation of perpetrator and victim and that exclusion policies at schools should state explicitly the types of peer-on-peer abuse that could result in an exclusion. It was also felt that the likely consequences of committing peer on peer abuse should be outlined in schools disciplinary policies.

4.3 Herefordshire Council review of historic cases

The spotlight review requested details of the review of cases of peer on peer abuse referred to the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) between 2017 and 2018 and when it was likely that the review would be concluded. It was explained that a systematic review would be taking place into how cases had been handled in the past and one outcome would concern if there was any need to change current processes. The review would be concluded by late February 2020 and there would be a report to the children and young people scrutiny committee. It was requested that the outcomes be presented to members of the spotlight review.

4.4 Data collection of incidence of peer on peer abuse cases and national reporting

The spotlight review considered the data relating to the incidence of peer on peer abuse that was compiled from the multi-agency referral forms (MARF) submitted to the MASH. It was queried what reporting of 'lower level' peer on peer abuse incidents took place and how this data was compiled. It was explained that schools did not have to report lower level incidents therefore such statistics were not collected.

There was concern that without reporting of the full range of peer on peer incidents it was not possible to gain an accurate perspective of the scale of the issue. There was further concern that there were no national statistics regarding such a serious issue in schools and it was felt the DfE should be lobbied to establish a reporting method and data set for peer on peer abuse cases nationally.

The spotlight review felt that the council should work to compile the data in Herefordshire that was available and then analyse this data to determine where gaps existed. This would assist the development of a dataset relating to peer on peer abuse in schools in Herefordshire.

4.5 CLD Trust positive relationships training

The spotlight review referred to the CLD Trust (counselling/learning/development) and the valuable work they undertook in schools to promote healthy relationships between pupils. Ambassadors from the Trust visited schools to provide training on positive relationships and the spotlight review felt that schools should be encouraged to utilise this training. The promotion of positive relationships between pupils would complement efforts to address the incidence of peer on peer abuse cases in schools.

4.6 Risk assessments

The spotlight review learned from the police that the CPS advice in cases of sexual abuse, where children are the suspects, is that they should be subject to a risk assessment to assist CPS decision-making in the case. This risk assessment was undertaken by children services in other area of the West Midlands but this was not advocated in Herefordshire because it was not a statutory responsibility for council and it was costly and time consuming. In Herefordshire it was explained that there was no route to obtaining the risk assessment prior to conviction. The CPS have demanded the AIM 2 risk assessment (a national level risk assessment for children at risk of sexually offending) which the youth offending service were trained to provide but not funded to undertake at the pre conviction stage.

The spotlight review learned that the West Mercia Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre had undertaken training to complete AIM 2 risk assessments. It was explained that the programme would shortly be updated to AIM 3.

The spotlight review felt that the provision and resourcing of the risk assessment required clarification and relevant partners should work together to achieve this.

4.7 Resource Pool for schools

The spotlight review heard from schools about the difficulties involved in addressing complex cases of peer on peer abuse that involved the police. It was explained that the role of schools was to educate and ensure the safety of pupils and during cases of peer on peer abuse it was important schools did not prejudice the work of the police. It was explained that access to advice from the council, health partners and the police was welcomed by schools. The spotlight review recognised the complex issues that potentially surrounded cases of peer on peer abuse in schools and suggested that consideration be given to establishing a pool of specialist resources that schools could access when addressing complex cases of peer on peer abuse.

4.8. Family support workers

The spotlight review heard from schools that the work undertaken by the family support team in schools with pupils was highly regarding and provided a valuable contribution to early help and preventative work. The spotlight review felt that the work of family support workers with schools should be assessed and whether there was provision in the service to make additional resources available to support this work.

4.9 Future meetings of the spotlight review

The spotlight review was minded to suggest further meetings of the spotlight review took place in due course to: consider responses to the recommendations raised; review new data that was available; assess the introduction of peer on peer abuse policies at schools; and consider the outcomes of the review into historic cases of peer on peer abuse and the lessons learned.

4.10 Council Policies

As a consequence of the prominence of the issue the spotlight review considered that Peer to peer abuse should be linked in to all relevant council policies.

5 Summary of Recommendations

From our findings, the spotlight review would like to make the following **12 recommendations** to the executive and ask that they are given appropriate consideration:

5.1 School Policies

- i) **That the executive promotes to all schools in Herefordshire the implementation of distinct, stand-alone peer on peer abuse child safeguarding policies;**
- ii) **That the executive works with all schools in Herefordshire to ensure that exclusion policies explicitly state the forms of peer on peer abuse that will result in permanent exclusion;**
- iii) **That the executive works with all schools in Herefordshire to ensure that peer on peer abuse policies contain provision for children inside and outside of the criminal justice system and children under the age of criminal responsibility;**

5.2 DfE guidance

- iv) **That the children and young people scrutiny committee writes to the department for education (DfE) to outline the comments of witnesses at the spotlight review concerning existing peer on peer abuse guidance for schools. In particular, correspondence should highlight the requirement for specific guidance for schools to develop their own peer on peer abuse policies.**

5.3 Herefordshire Council review of historic cases

- v) **That the executive provides the outcome of the current review (including lessons learned) into cases of peer to peer abuse referred to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to the spotlight review and the children and young people scrutiny committee;**

5.4 Data collection of incidence of peer on peer abuse cases and national reporting

- vi) **That the children and young people scrutiny committee write to the DfE to encourage the establishment of a national database on peer on peer abuse cases including data on:**
 - **level 4 referrals to MASHs and convictions relating to rape, assault, assault by penetration and sexual assault; and**

- **'lower level' of seriousness cases to allow for information to be compiled on the scale and diversity of peer on peer abuse cases.**

5.5 CLD Trust positive relationships training

- vii) **That the executive encourages all schools to invite the CLD Trust ambassadors to provide training on positive relationships between peers;**

5.6 Risk assessments

- viii) **That the executive works with the Crown Prosecution Service and the West Mercia Youth Justice Board to clarify responsibility for the production of risk assessments for children attending court in peer on peer abuse cases and considers a suitable provider for risk assessments in future;**

5.7 Resource Pool for schools

- ix) **That the executive considers the establishment of a pool of resources for schools to access to address complex cases of peer on peer abuse.**

5.8. Family support workers

- x) **That the executive considers what extra resources can be committed to the work of family support workers with schools.**

5.9 Future meetings of the spotlight review

- xi) **That the children and young people scrutiny committee agree further meetings of the spotlight review to consider a greater level of data to provide a more informed understanding of the scale and complexity of peer on peer abuse in Herefordshire.**

5.10 Council Policies

- xii) **That the executive gives consideration to how to include reference to peer on peer abuse in relevant council policy (e.g. the children and young people plan);**

Title of review	Peer on Peer Abuse in schools Spotlight Review
Scope	
Reason for review	<p>The work programme of the children and young people scrutiny committee has identified the issue of peer on peer abuse to be considered at a spotlight review. Department for Education statutory advice¹ defines peer on peer abuse as consisting of (but not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullying (including cyberbullying); • Physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm; • Sexual violence and sexual harassment; • Sexting (also known as youth produced sexual imagery); and • Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals. <p>There is a concern regarding reports of increasing levels of peer on peer abuse and this spotlight review will consider available data regarding the incidence of peer on peer abuse in all Herefordshire schools including primary, secondary and post-16 settings. The review will also assess the incorporation of peer on peer abuse into child protection policies.</p>
Links to the corporate plan	<p>The review contributes to the following objectives contained in the Herefordshire corporate plan and other key plans and strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep children and young people safe and give them a great start in life; and • Secure better services, quality of life and value for money.
Summary of the review and terms of reference	<p>Summary:</p> <p>The review will receive data on the incidence of peer on peer abuse in Herefordshire schools. It will learn of statutory guidance relating to peer on peer abuse and child protection policies in schools. It will consider policies in place at schools to address peer on peer abuse and assess their effectiveness. It will look at the role of the Council, the Police and voluntary/charitable organisations to assist schools, pupils and their parents.</p> <p>The review will ensure that a focus is retained on the experience of children and young people; to understand how work undertaken by stakeholders supports them, educates them, prevents incidents from occurring and seeks to change behaviour if it has occurred.</p> <hr/> <p>Terms of Reference:</p> <p>The spotlight review will:</p>

¹ Statutory Guidance for Schools and Colleges, September 2018

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive a definition of and understand the nature of peer on peer abuse and consider latest statistics concerning its incidence in Herefordshire schools; • Develop an understanding of recent statutory guidance and the requirement for schools to ensure that child protection policies include procedures to address peer on peer abuse. • Examine selected child protection policies in place at Herefordshire schools to ensure that they take account of statutory guidance and contain procedures to hear the voice of the child. • Receive evidence from teachers and school professionals on the challenge posed by peer on peer abuse and the introduction of polices designed to meet the challenge. • Engage teachers and school professionals to assess the success/effectiveness of policies to address peer on peer abuse in Herefordshire schools. • Develop an understanding of the role of the Council to: provide advice to schools on the production of peer on peer abuse policies; undertake preventative work; and raise awareness. • Engage with West Mercia Police to understand how incidents of peer on peer abuse are dealt with and how the Force works with schools. • Understand how other agencies such as therapy services and voluntary/charitable services assist schools, children and their parents. Witnesses for these sectors will be asked to present the voice of the child. • To look at examples of best practice from other local authority areas and possible implementation in Herefordshire. <p>Membership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All members of the children and young people scrutiny committee - Councillor Peter Jinman - Councillor Jeremy Milln - Councillor Christy Bolderson
What will NOT be included	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The examination of any individual cases concerning peer on peer abuse.
Potential outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An understanding of the current statistics and data in respect of peer on peer abuse; • Assurance that the advice schools are receiving is compliant with statutory guidance; and • Assurance that the Council is working with schools and local agencies to support the introduction of effective policies to address peer on peer abuse.
Key Questions	<p>To consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is peer on peer abuse and what are the different forms; • What are the latest statistics for the incidence of peer on peer abuse in Herefordshire schools; • What statutory guidance exists regarding the incorporation of peer on peer abuse in schools' child protection polices;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What work does the Council undertake with Herefordshire schools to introduce peer on peer abuse policies; • What preventative work is being undertaken to address peer on peer abuse; • Are those policies that have been introduced in schools effective in addressing peer on peer abuse; • Where a case of peer on peer abuse cannot be resolved at school how is it escalated or what is the course of action followed; • How the police deal with incidents of peer on peer abuse and how they work with local schools; • How other agencies including therapy and voluntary/charitable services assist schools, pupils and their parents?
Cabinet Member(s)	<p>Cabinet member children and families Cabinet member housing, regulatory services and community safety</p>
Key stakeholders / Consultees	<p>Internal – Education (Children’s and Families)</p> <p>External – Schools in Herefordshire – Herefordshire pupils and parents of children at schools in Herefordshire – through governing bodies – West Mercia Police – Therapy services</p>
Potential witnesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council officers in Education department at Herefordshire Council. • Teachers and governing body representatives from schools in Herefordshire. • Therapy services • Voluntary/Charitable organisations • CLD Trust – strong young minds • Action for Change – c/o bhbs <p><u>Voice of the Child</u> – as part of the review: charities in attendance; the WMRSASC; student initiated work will be invited and asked to represent the voice of the child.</p>
Research Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trends and statistics relating to peer on peer abuse in Herefordshire; • <u>Statutory guidance – child protection policies in schools</u>; and • Peer on peer abuse policies for schools.
Potential Visits	
Publicity Requirements	<p>Following the conclusion of the spotlight review, report back to the children and young people scrutiny committee.</p>

Outline Timetable:	
<i>Activity</i>	<i>Timescale</i>
Confirm approach, Terms of Reference, programme of consultation/research/provisional witnesses/meeting dates	Committee meeting – 16 September 2019
Spotlight Review	Autumn 2019
Present final report to Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee	25 November 2019 or 20 January 2020

Spotlight review members – All Members of children and young people scrutiny committee	
Chair	Councillor Diana Toynbee
Support Members	
Co-optees	Education co-optees on children and young people scrutiny committee
Support Officers	J Coleman M Evans