



PEER ON PEER ABUSE

Policy

Purpose & Objective

Raise the Bar has a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of its learners.

The purpose of this Peer on Peer Abuse Policy is to provide a clear set of guidance to staff and learners regarding the actions they must take if they become aware or believe that a learner is at risk of abuse from peers through harassment (including sexual) bullying, cyber-bullying and LGBTQI+ bullying. Sexual 'banter' and harassment creates a culture that, if not challenged, can normalise inappropriate behaviours and provide an environment that may lead to harmful sexual behaviours and violence

Scope

This policy is owned wholly by Raise the Bar, it is the responsibility of line managers and HR to ensure that it's fair and consistent implementation. Regular checks will be conducted to ensure this policy is adhered to.

This policy applies to all permanent staff of Raise the Bar, consultants, learners and clients and relates to sexual misconduct perpetrated by a learner on another learner.

External Guidance

Peer on peer abuse can take many forms including physical, sexual (e.g. inappropriate touching) and emotional abuse (including bullying). Department for Education makes it clear that abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as 'banter'.

Peer on peer abuse often involves an imbalance of power between the alleged perpetrator and the victim. This could involve alleged perpetrators having control over the relationship which makes it difficult for those they abuse to defend themselves. This imbalance of power can manifest itself in several ways. It may be physical, psychological (knowing what upsets someone), or social (e.g. isolating or excluding someone). It could also include issues such as revenge porn or what are often gender issues (e.g. girls being touched, or boys being involved in initiation activities).

Bullying (including cyber-bullying and LGBTQI+) can be involved in any type of abuse and is often motivated by prejudice or ignorance due to actual or perceived differences between people or groups or people. People who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT), those from minority ethnic groups, or those with disabilities and/or learning difficulties can be more vulnerable to this form of abuse and RTB takes it duty to protect more vulnerable learners very seriously.

The Equality Act 2010 replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. A key provision was a new public sector Equality Duty, which came into force on 5 April 2011. This requires Raise the Bar to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and people who do not share it
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it

Training & Development

- All staff, in-scope, will have ongoing safeguarding training which will include training on sexual harassment and harmful sexual behaviours.
- All new staff members will have a safeguarding induction with the Safeguarding Lead and undertake Prevent & Safeguarding training.
- All learners will have an induction which will include how to contact the Safeguarding Team.
- The Apprenticeship Team will meet regularly to discuss safeguarding to ensure best practice and standardisation across the team.

Responsibilities

The following actions must be taken by all staff, in-scope:

- Maintain an attitude and mindset of 'it could happen here' so to be vigilant and open to noticing when harmful behaviours occur.
- Respect and understand that the learner has put them in a position of trust in the disclosing their concern and that they will want and need to know what happens next as a result of their disclosure.
- Respond and treat seriously all reports and concerns from a learner including those reports outside of working hours and or online.
- All employees and learners have a responsibility to work together to ensure that abuse does not occur, or where it is found, action is taken
- All staff should maintain a zero-tolerance approach
- Ensure ground rules are set in induction and that learners are made aware of the importance of adhering to fundamental British values, what constitutes abuse (including bullying, cyber-bullying and LGBTQ+ bullying) and how any incidents of abuse will be addressed
- Staff members receiving reports of abuse must make a record and take appropriate action to follow up all allegations/incidents and trigger an investigation

- All staff involved in a disclosure and case must carefully consider the potential impact of the abuse on both the alleged perpetrator/s and the victim/s and refer those involved for additional support to the Safeguarding Team
- Staff must ensure appropriate managers and Safeguarding Team are notified immediately and notes or record keeping forward on.

Safeguarding Lead Responsibilities

The victim may ask the company not to tell anyone about the sexual violence or sexual harassment. There are no easy or definitive answers when a victim makes this request. If the victim does not give consent to share information, staff may still lawfully share it, if it can be justified to be in the public interest. The Safeguarding Lead should consider the following responses and actions:

- All allegations/incidents must be treated seriously and recorded. Learners involved are told what is being recorded, in what context, and why. Learners will be told what will happen as a result of a disclosure and what the next course of action will be. Notes and any learner records could be used in further investigations.
- Rape, assault by penetration and sexual assaults are crimes. Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, this should be referred to the police. The police will take a welfare, rather than a criminal justice approach, in these cases
- A risk assessment should be carried out immediately to ensure the victim and other potential people are protected and supported.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Those taking a report should never promise confidentiality as it is very likely that it will be in the interests of the victim to seek advice and guidance and external specialist support. In the event of a learner requesting that the company do not pass on any details to the Police or Social Services then the Safeguarding Lead should be contacted who will consider if the information is to be passed on and will consider if the information is in the public interest and to protect others from further harm. If the Safeguarding Lead feels there is risk to other people outside of RTB then the Police and Social Services will be contacted.

The company will ensure they can reasonably protect the anonymity of any learner involved in a report of sexual abuse or sexual harassment. This will include the Safeguarding Lead deciding on who is made aware within the Apprenticeship Team.

Risk Assessment

- An immediate risk assessment should be carried out to protect the victim and other learners or staff.
- If an alleged preparator is convicted or receives a caution the Safeguarding Team will update the risk assessment and make any necessary adjustments to the assessment and safety plans.

Policy Version Control

This policy will be reviewed annually or as required.