Countering Bullying

RELEVANT REGULATIONS

The Positive Relationships Standard
Regulation 11

1. Policy

All children and young people have a right to feel confident that this is a safe and healthy environment.

We want to ensure that all children, young people and staff remain safe from bullying behaviour and have the opportunity to thrive and prosper, emotionally and socially within and outside the Home.

When bullying is encountered we will ensure that the procedures are in place to allow:

- Reporting of the incident;

- Having incidents of bullying properly recorded;

- Having concerns or incidents of bullying properly monitored;

- Ensuring appropriate action is taken in response to incidents of bullying and that is followed up.

This will ensure that people feel listened to and understand that their concerns have been and will be taken seriously.

Within the home a culture of respect and dignity is agreed and promoted amongst the staff, children, and any visitors into the home and a set of shared standards of what behaviour and language is acceptable across the home will be advocated.

Staff and children will receive guidance and training that encourages an understanding and appreciation of what bullying is and how it impacts on self and others.

2. Definition of Bullying

Bullying is defined as behaviour or actions of a person, group of people or a whole organisation designed to cause distress or to hurt a person or group of people.

Bullying can be:

- **Emotional** - being unfriendly, excluding an individual from activities/games and social acceptance of the peer group, tormenting (e.g. hiding possessions, threatening gestures);

- **Physical** - pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence;

- **Racist** - racial taunts, graffiti, gestures;

- **Sexual** - unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments and harassment;

- **Homophobic or remarks about gender identity** - because of, or focusing on the issue of sexuality;

- **Verbal** - name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing;

- **Cyberbullying** - e.g. using mobile phones or social networking sites to intimidate or bully others.

An Ofsted thematic review ([Review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges (Ofsted, June 2021)](#)) identified substantial levels of sexual harassment for both girls (90%) and boys (nearly 50%) and that in a number of schools this went unreported as a result of the school's 'culture' – a part of which appeared to be that staff were not aware; did not countenance that this could happen, and because once it was discussed (the children) feared the process would be out of their control.

Sexual harassment and sexual violence exist on a continuum and may overlap. Where the latter occurs, there could be a criminal offence committed.

3. General/Prevention

Staff must be alert to the risk of bullying and should take all reasonable steps to prevent such behaviour. Clear messages must be given that bullying is not acceptable and children must be reassured that significant adults involved in their lives are dealing with bullying seriously. Some acts of bullying could be a criminal offence.

This includes:

- Implementing a clear policy within the home/school that bullying is not acceptable;

- Undertaking risk assessments at point of referral and at appropriate stages thereafter;

- Providing information and guidance to children;

- Providing clarity to children on acceptable behaviours;

- Drafting Individual Crisis Management Plans/contracts with relevant children;

- Providing opportunities for children to explore issues of bullying e.g. writing stories or poems or drawing pictures about bullying;

- Reading stories about bullying or having them read to them;

- Making use of role-plays;

- Having discussions about bullying and why it matters.

We all have a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying.

Everyone involved in looking after children shares responsibility for countering bullying and for creating a culture which positively encourages acceptable behaviour and reduces or prevents the likelihood of bullying.

As part of this ethos, everyone must understand what bullying means and what measures should be taken within the home and by individual staff to counter it.

Everyone should also be clear what measures they should take if they suspect bullying or it is reported to them.

A part of this must be to recognise where an offence has taken place. Sexual assaults (including rape) are clear examples of this together with the fact that legally a 13yr old child cannot 'consent' to intercourse. Additionally, creating or sharing explicit images of a child is illegal, even if the person doing it is a child. A young person is breaking the law if they:

- Take an explicit photo or video of themselves or a friend;

- Share an explicit image or video of a child, even if it's shared between children of the same age;

- Possess, download or store an explicit image or video of a child, even if the child gave their permission for it to be created.

However, if a young person is found creating or sharing images, the police can choose to record that a crime has been committed but that taking formal action is not in the public interest.

See also E Safety.

With effect from 29 June 2021, section 69 Domestic Abuse Act 2021 expanded so-called 'revenge porn' to include **threats** to disclose private sexual photographs and films with intent to cause distress.

In this respect, everyone should be alert to the fact that bullying may constitute Significant Harm and, if so, must be reported under the Safeguarding Children and Young People and Referring Safeguarding Concerns Procedure.

Where children attend the same school, staff should work together with educational establishments where bullying occurs between children they both have responsibility for.

4. Risk Assessment and Planning

4.1 Homes Strategies

Each home may have it's own Strategies for countering bullying, depending on the purpose of the home and the needs of child(ren) living there. This should include the procedure for dealing with any allegations of bullying and advising the responsible authority's social worker. (Where bullying has been assessed as significant or serious, this communication should be made promptly and should apply whether the child has been a victim or perpetrator).

The Home's Strategies should be set down in the Statement of Purpose.

The Children's Guide should also contain information and advice on countering bullying.

4.2 Individual Plans for Children

As part of the assessment and planning process, the Manager of the home/school must ensure that a Risk Assessment is conducted on each child to ascertain whether s/he may be a victim or perpetrator of bullying.

If there is any risk, it should be addressed in the child's Placement Plan with details of the strategies that must be adopted to prevent or reduce the bullying.

In the absence of such a plan/strategy, the following must apply.

5. Countering Bullying Day-to-Day

If they have any concerns, they must discuss them with colleagues and the Home Manager, who should take what actions are necessary to reduce or prevent it.

In order to maintain an effective strategy for dealing with bullying, traditional ideas about bullying should be challenged by everyone working in the home, e.g. by emphasising:

- It's NOT only a bit of harmless fun;

- It's NOT part of growing up;

- Children do NOT have to put up with it;

- Adults getting involved will NOT make it worse.

A restorative approach and the use of restorative enquiry and subsequent mediation between those involved can provide an opportunity to meet the needs of all concerned. The child who has been bullied has the chance to say how he or she has been affected. The opportunity is provided for the child doing the bullying to understand the impact of their actions and to make amends.

Staff in the home may have to deal with the perpetrators as well as the victims of bullying. It should be borne in mind that bullying behaviour may in itself be an indication of previous abuse or exposure to violence. The focus should be on the bullying behaviour rather than the child and, where possible, the reasons for the behaviour should be explored and dealt with. A clear explanation of the extent of the upset the bullying has caused should be given to the young person who perpetrated the bullying behaviour and they should be encouraged to see the bullied child's points of view.

It may be appropriate to convene a meeting, preferably with the young person/people concerned, to discuss strategies to prevent or reduce the bullying. This may include the following:

1. The bully (bullies) may be asked to genuinely apologise;

2. In serious cases (see Section 6, Notifications, Recording and Review), some form of sanction or exclusion from the other young person will be considered;

3. If possible, the young people will be reconciled;

4. After the incident / incidents have been investigated and dealt with, each case will be continuously monitored to ensure repeated bullying does not take place.

If the bullying is persistent or serious, the social worker should be consulted and it may be necessary to conduct a Placement Planning Meetings or a Strategy Discussion in line with Child Protection Referral Procedures.

See: Safeguarding Children and Young People and Referring Safeguarding Concerns Procedure

If the Home Manager is unavailable, staff may take what immediate actions are necessary to reduce or prevent bullying from occurring and then inform the Manager as soon as practicable.

6. Notifications, Recording and Review

6.1 Minor or Non Persistent Bullying

Where bullying is not persistent or not serious it should be notified to the Home Manager at the first opportunity; the manager will decide whether to inform the social worker and what further actions to take.

6.2 Persistent or Serious Bullying

Serious or persistent bullying must be notified immediately to the Home's Manager and the relevant Social Worker notified within 1 working day - the social worker should be consulted and consideration given to whether a Child Protection Referral should be made, if so, see Safeguarding Children and Young People and Referring Safeguarding Concerns Procedure.

The Designated Manager (Bullying) should also be notified and consideration given to whether the incident is a Notifiable Event.

6.3 Recording and Review

All incidents must be recorded in the Home's Daily Log and relevant child's Daily Record.

An Incident Report must also be completed (where it is possible the specific category of bullying e.g. verbal/physical/cyberbullying should be identified and highlighted in the incident report so that different incidents of bullying can be monitored as required).

The child's Placement Plan should be reviewed with a view to incorporating strategies to reduce or prevent future incidents.

The Home's Manager is responsible for reviewing the incidence and nature of bullying in the home as part regular Quality Audits, see Monitoring Quality Procedure.

7. Further Information / Specialist Support

See also: Advice for Parents and Carers on Cyberbullying (Department for Education, 2015).

Specialist Organisations:

- The Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA): Founded in 2002 by NSPCC and National Children's Bureau, the Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA) brings together over 100 organisations into one network to develop and share good practice across the whole range of bullying issues;

- Kidscape: Charity established to prevent bullying and promote child protection providing advice for young people, professionals and parents about different types of bullying and how to tackle it. They also offer specialist training and support for school staff, and assertiveness training for young people;

- The BIG Award: The Bullying Intervention Group (BIG) offer a national scheme and award for schools to tackle bullying effectively.

Cyberbullying:

- ChildNet International: Specialist resources for young people to raise awareness of online safety and how to protect themselves;

- Think U Know: Resources provided by Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) for children and young people, parents, carers and teachers;

- Advice on Child Internet Safety: The UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS) has produced universal guidelines for providers on keeping children safe online.

LGBT:

- Schools Out: Offers practical advice, resources (including lesson plans) and training to schools on LGBT equality in education;

- Stonewall: An LGB equality organisation with considerable expertise in LGB bullying in schools, a dedicated youth site, resources for schools, and specialist training for teachers.

SEND:

- Mencap: Represents people with learning disabilities, with specific advice and information for people who work with children and young people;

- Changing Faces: Provide online resources and training to schools on bullying because of physical difference;

- Cyberbullying and Children and Young People with SEN and Disabilities: Advice provided by the Anti-Bullying Alliance on developing effective anti-bullying practice.

Racism:

- [Show Racism the Red Card](#): Provide resources and workshops for schools to educate young people, often using the high profile of football, about racism;

- [Kick it Out](#): Uses the appeal of football to educate young people about racism and provide education packs for schools;

- [Anne Frank Trust](#): Runs a schools project to teach young people about Anne Frank and the Holocaust, the consequences of unchecked prejudice and discrimination, and cultural diversity.

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