

# Safe from Bullying

**in youth activities**



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# Introduction

*'I always help if someone is being bullied'*

Boy, 16

Young people say bullying is among their top concerns. Bullying can make the lives of victims a misery; it can undermine their confidence and self-esteem and can destroy their sense of security.

Bullying can have a life-long negative impact.<sup>1</sup> It makes it difficult for young people to learn and can have a lasting detrimental effect on their life chances. Young people who have been bullied can become anxious and withdrawn, depressed or aggressive. Some turn to substance misuse as a way of dealing with the emotional impact of bullying.<sup>2</sup> At worst bullying has been a factor in suicide.<sup>3</sup>

Bullying can happen anywhere. Young people who are badly bullied in school are more likely than others to be bullied both in and out of school.<sup>4</sup> To tackle bullying successfully, the whole community and all services for young people need to work together to change the culture so that bullying is unacceptable.<sup>5</sup>

The government has made tackling bullying a key priority. This guidance outlines what bullying might take place in youth activities, and the steps that can be taken to prevent bullying happening in the first place, and to respond effectively when bullying does occur. It is part of a suite of guidance<sup>6</sup> on preventing bullying outside of schools that includes guidance on tackling bullying in:

- Play and leisure
- Extended services in and around schools
- Journeys and public transport
- FE Colleges, and
- Children's Homes

1 Olweus, D. (1994) Bullying at school: Long term outcomes for victims and an effective school-based intervention program. In L.R.Huesmann (Ed.) Aggressive behaviour: Current perspectives, pp97-130 New York, Plenum Press.

2 Katz, A., Stockdale, D and Dabbous, A. (2002) Islington & You; Katz, A, (Young Voice) Buchanan, A & Bream, V.(University of Oxford, Centre for Research into Parenting and Children). (2001) Bullying in Britain: Male bullies are twice as likely to use alcohol and three times more likely to use an illegal drug 'to relieve stress' than peers, 13% of bullies vs. 9% of peers said they felt pressurised into using illegal drugs.

3 Hawker, D.S.J., & Boulton, M J. (2000) Twenty years research on peer victimisation and psychological maladjustment: A Meta-analysis review of cross-sectional studies. Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry.

4 Hayden C (2008) Staying Safe and Out of Trouble: University of Portsmouth ; Safe To Play (2008).

5 National Crime Prevention Strategy, Canada. Bullying prevention In Schools section 2.5 Findings that interventions were more successful when the whole community was involved. <http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/res/cp/res/bully-eng.aspx>.

6 Available at: <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/IG00363/>

Each of these guidance documents is designed to be used in conjunction with a set of training resources on tackling bullying outside of schools. Because we know that bullying can follow young people between different settings, this suite of guidance also includes guidance for local authorities and others who are in a position to coordinate anti-bullying activities at a local level.

This suite of guidance builds on the existing guidance on bullying in schools: 'Safe To Learn'<sup>7</sup>, a suite of materials which includes supplementary guidance on racist bullying, homophobic bullying, cyberbullying and bullying involving children and young people with Special Needs and disabilities, and will shortly include bullying related to gender and gender identity. Although Safe to Learn focuses on tackling bullying in school, it contains detailed information on tackling different forms of bullying, which may be useful to staff working in youth activities.

## Who is this guidance intended for?

Managers, staff and volunteers in youth activities, clubs and groups – including local authority and third sector providers, and voluntary management committees.

"4Children passionately believes that every child and young person should be protected from bullying. This guidance will be invaluable to all out of school, play and leisure services, and staff working in extended services in and around schools."

**Anne Longfield, Director, 4Children**

This guidance is also supported by the Anti-Bullying Alliance, Action for Children, EACH (Educational Action Challenging Homophobia) and Childnet International.

# The context

## What is bullying?

Bullying is behaviour, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group, physically or emotionally. One person or a group can bully others.

## How does bullying differ from banter?

- There is a deliberate intention to hurt or humiliate.
- There is a power imbalance that makes it hard for the victim to defend themselves.
- It is usually persistent.

Occasionally an incident may be deemed to be bullying even if the behaviour has not been repeated or persistent – if it fulfils all other descriptions of bullying. This possibility should be considered, particularly in cases of sexual, sexist, racist, or homophobic bullying and when young people with disabilities are involved. If the victim might be in danger then intervention is urgently required.

## What forms does bullying take?

Bullying includes: name-calling; taunting; mocking; making offensive comments; kicking; hitting; pushing; taking belongings; inappropriate touching; producing offensive graffiti; spreading hurtful and untruthful rumours; or always leaving someone out of groups. It is also bullying when a

young person is pressured to act against their will by others.

Bullying can sometimes take the form of harassment. This is defined as unwanted conduct which violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading or humiliating environment.

Increasingly, bullying is happening through new technology. This can involve sending inappropriate, or hurtful text messages, emails, instant messages, or posting malicious material online (e.g. on social networking websites), or sending or posting offensive or degrading images and videos.

'Cyberbullying', as it is often called, might take the form of 'real world' bullying being played out online. Situations may be deliberately engineered in order to photograph someone in a humiliating way and circulate this online. It can be particularly insidious, because of the potential to follow young people wherever they are, including youth clubs and activities.

Bullies may pick on someone for no apparent reason, seizing on some aspect of the victim's appearance, or personality as an excuse to bully them. This kind of 'mindless' bullying may be seen as 'harmless' fun by the perpetrators, but not by the victim.

However, bullying may also take the form of singling out a young person because they belong to a particular group. The following sections cover different types of prejudice-based bullying in no particular order.

### Racist and religious bullying

Racist bullying can be defined as ‘A range of hurtful behaviour, both physical and psychological, that makes a person feel unwelcome, marginalised, excluded, powerless or worthless because of their colour, ethnicity, culture, faith community, national origin or national status’.<sup>8</sup>

No young person should be made to feel inferior because of their background, culture or religion. Forms of racism which are the result of ignorance are nevertheless hurtful to the recipient and other members of that group. It is vital that all young people are valued and learn to respect others. Adults should make their stance on racist behaviour clear to all young people so as to discourage racist behaviour and to encourage reporting if it does take place.

Under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, all public bodies have a duty to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and promote good race relations. Tackling racist bullying is a key part of fulfilling this duty.

### Sexual, sexist and transphobic bullying

Sexual bullying includes any behaviour, whether physical or non-physical, where sexuality is used as a weapon by boys or by girls. It can be carried out to a person’s face, behind their back or by use of

technology. Sexist bullying refers to bullying simply because the victim is a girl or a boy, based on singling out something specifically gender-linked. Transphobic bullying refers to bullying because someone is, or is thought to be, transgender.

While young people may express an acceptance of sexual/sexist or transphobic insults because they are widely used, such insults are often used to bully someone.<sup>9</sup> Inappropriate touching can also be a form of bullying and harassment, and may escalate into abuse. Similarly, ‘jokes’ about sexual assault, or rape, if unchallenged, can create an atmosphere in which this behaviour is seen as more acceptable.

One in five say that insulting sexual language is used ‘often’. 16% of young people surveyed for a BBC Panorama programme reported that they were often bullied about how they look. A minority (11%) believed that forcing someone to do something sexual against their will is ‘mostly OK’. 23% of young people surveyed said they had experienced jokes about assault or rape on social networking sites. 20% who had experienced sexual bullying told nobody.<sup>10</sup>

### Homophobic bullying

Homophobic bullying targets someone because of their sexual orientation (or perceived sexual orientation). It can be particularly difficult for a young person to report, and is often directed at them at a very sensitive phase of their lives when identity is being developed. What might be called banter can be deemed harassment if it is at the expense of someone’s dignity and meant

8 Bullying Around Racism, Religion and Culture: <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=10444>.

9 Young Voice and Youthworks survey for BBC Panorama, more than one in five said these insults were ‘often’ used against them and a further 14% said it happened ‘all the time’. The concern is that young people may come to see it is acceptable. More than one in four thought it was acceptable.

10 Survey for BBC panorama programme 5th January 2009 by Young Voice.

offensively. The term 'gay' as an insult is unacceptable and should always be challenged, as such use can create an atmosphere in which a young person feels denigrated and even hounded. The term 'gay' is sometimes used as a proxy for racist or disablist bullying because young people may believe they can get away with using these words in an abusive way, whereas racist insults would be challenged by staff.<sup>11</sup>

Adults can find homophobic bullying difficult to challenge, but some excellent resources are available<sup>12</sup>. If homophobia is approached as a rights issue – by arguing the case that everyone has a right to be and feel safe – young people are usually more receptive.<sup>13</sup>

Homophobic bullying has been shown to have an extremely damaging impact, with depression, suicidal thoughts and self harm reported.<sup>14</sup>

Regulations made under the Equality Act 2006 outlaw discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in the provision of 'goods and services',

including those provided by public bodies. The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 also place a duty on employers to protect all staff against discrimination or harassment on the grounds of their sexual orientation.

### Disablist bullying

Bullying involving young people with disabilities employs many of the same forms as other types of bullying, with name calling and pushing and shoving being common. Additional forms include:

- Manipulative bullying, where the perpetrator tries to get the victim to act in a certain way – do something they should not do – steal from a newsagent for example, when they may not be able to recognise that they should not do this.
- Bullying that exploits a particular aspect of a condition such as sensitivity to sensory stimuli, lights or sounds.

Joe was aged 16 and openly gay within the youth centre that he attended. Whilst he was strongly supported by the workers and a few of his friends, many of the young people reacted with hostility when he 'came out', and they displayed a lack of understanding of what it means to be lesbian, gay or bisexual. They called him derogatory names, loudly expressed their disgust of gay people, and verbally and physically tormented him. Any material that was displayed showing the acceptance of gay people was defaced. Their behaviour was consistently challenged and some members were even banned, but the torment would continue when they had left the centre at the end of the night. One night, a group of young men threatened to slit Joe's throat on his way home, and he had to be escorted by local community police officers. Undeterred, members threw objects and abuse at him as he walked to the car. Joe continued attending the group because ironically, it was the only environment he felt comfortable enough to be open about his sexuality.

11 Safe to Play (2008) – young people with SEN were significantly more likely than peers to say they had been called 'gay'. Survey of 4546 children in Dudley.

12 See <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/IG00363/>

13 See Safe to Learn: Homophobic Bullying, Download 11: <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=11860>.

14 Rivers I. (2000) Mullen 1999 Young Voice in association with Oxford University 1999.



- Conditional friendship where the victim is 'allowed' to be in the friendship group only on certain conditions. These are intended to get the victim into trouble or to humiliate them and may put the victim in danger.
- Young people with disabilities also report persistent, seemingly 'low level' bullying from which there is no let up. Eventually the victim 'snaps'. This is commonly seen among young people on the Autistic Spectrum. They can become uncontrollably angry when this occurs, and some are then blamed by adults without looking at the full context behind their behaviour.
- Among young people with disabilities of various kinds a hierarchy can develop based on skills. Bullying can occur within such a hierarchy. For example the sighted may bully the unsighted.

- There are typically high levels of bullying between young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties, as well as bullying of them by others.

Young people with disabilities report being bullied in the street, on the bus and in shops or at college. Prejudice against them is evident in the primary years and is resistant to change in the secondary years.<sup>15</sup> It should be addressed as early as possible.

In a recent Mencap survey, 8 out of 10 young people with a learning disability had been bullied, and 6 out of 10 said they had been physically hurt by bullying. Eight out of 10 were scared to go out because of bullying.<sup>16</sup>

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 makes it unlawful to discriminate against disabled persons in the provision of facilities and services.



15 Safe To Play (2008)

16 Mencap (2007), *Bullying Wrecks Lives – the experiences of children and young people with a learning disability.*

Under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, all public bodies have a duty to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and harassment on grounds of disability and promote positive attitudes towards disabled people. Tackling disablist bullying is a key part of fulfilling this duty.

## Bullying in youth activities

Youth activities can help young people to make friends, gain new skills and build confidence and resilience. But a few can find they are always left out. If permitted to continue, these situations can send a message to the group that bullying is acceptable.

Many young people look to the youth club as a refuge from bullying they are experiencing elsewhere. Some groups form in response to a particular need, such as to support newcomers, carers or a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender group – these groups report high levels of bullying experienced, but not necessarily within the group. Some of the young people in youth clubs consulted for the development of this guidance reported having been bullied ‘a lot’, although many of these said that the bullying had taken place some time ago.

## Why is it important to tackle bullying in youth activities?

Every young person should feel safe to learn, play and socialise. Whether in youth clubs or activities, every young person should be safe from victimisation and discrimination. Their journeys to and from these places should be free from fear and intimidation. No-one should suffer the pain and indignity that bullying can cause.

Tackling bullying is a crucial part of achieving the Aiming High for Young People objective of ‘removing the barriers and supporting young people to access local opportunities and services for them’<sup>17</sup>.

## Bullying and the wider Staying Safe Agenda

Effective anti-bullying practice gives all children and young people the assurance that they are cared for in a safe and friendly environment. It upholds their fundamental right to be safe.

If children are being bullied, the achievement of all or any of the five Every Child Matters outcomes may be seriously undermined. Tackling bullying is mentioned explicitly under two of the Every Child Matters outcomes:

### Outcome 2: Stay safe

- Aim: Children and young people need to be safe from bullying and discrimination.

### Outcome 4: Make a positive contribution

- Aim: Children and young people are helped to develop positive relationships and choose not to bully or discriminate.

## Responsibilities for tackling bullying in youth activities

All organisations and adults (paid or unpaid) who work with children owe them a duty of care, and must take all reasonable steps to ensure their safety.

In relation to youth activities specifically, a number of the *Professional and National Occupational Standards for Youth Work* relate to bullying. These fall under Value 2 “Promote equality and young people’s interests and welfare” and its Standards.

- Standard 2.1.1 – “Ensure that the rights of young people are promoted and upheld”.
- Standard 2.2.1 – “Address the health and well-being of young people”.
- Standard 2.2.2 – “Work with young people in safeguarding their welfare”.
- Standard 2.2.3 – “Promote a culture that safeguards the welfare of young people”.
- Standard 2.2.4 – “Embed an organisational policy for the protection of young people”.
- Standard 2.3.1 – “Promote equality of opportunity and diversity in your area of responsibility”.
- Standard 2.3.2 – “Develop a culture and systems that promote equality and value diversity”.
- Standard 2.3.3 – “Challenge oppressive behaviour in young people”.



## How can bullying be stopped?

Bullying can only be stopped through a combination of **prevention** and **response**. Preventative work is ongoing and sustained. It should provide consistency and a clear framework. When an incident occurs, a response is required to deal with the bullying behaviour and support the victim.

The next two sections of this guidance will outline the steps staff working in youth services can take both to prevent bullying and to respond to it when it occurs.



# Preventing bullying

As with all steps we take to keep young people safe, it is better to intervene early to prevent harm than to wait for incidents to occur. This section sets out the different components of an effective strategy to prevent bullying.

## Leadership

Tackling bullying is the responsibility of all who work with young people, but having a nominated 'anti-bullying lead' from within the staff team provides a focus for anti-bullying work. A member of staff should be nominated as the person who coordinates all anti-bullying activity. This leadership role should include responsibility for:

- Maintaining policies;
- Arranging training;
- Responding to bullying incidents;

- Ensuring that records are kept, and
- Linking with the local authority anti-bullying lead and other partners.

## Ethos

The ethos of the youth group is important in creating an inclusive environment in which bullying is not tolerated. To create a welcoming, safe ethos:

- Encourage values such as team spirit and respect.
- Model fair and respectful behaviour and leadership.
- Challenge all forms of prejudice and promote equality.

### Bystanders: an audience for bullying

When one person bullies another there is usually an audience and supporters who reinforce the bully. Bystanders can lend support to the bullying simply by watching. Research shows that 85% of bullying takes place with bystanders present.<sup>18</sup> However, young people say they have wanted to help the victim, but felt they could not.<sup>19</sup> Mobilise the group to remove the audience for bullying. Bystanders can be encouraged to walk away, get help and always tell a member of staff. They can befriend the victim or include that person in a group for safety. They should be advised not to tackle the bully physically.

<sup>18</sup> Craig and Pepler (1997) O'Connell and others (1999).

<sup>19</sup> Safe To Play (2008).

- Discourage young people from colluding with bullying – bystanders and those who reinforce the bullying behaviour are contributing to it.

Adopting and displaying a charter of rights can help to make these principles clear.<sup>20</sup> See Training Resources for further suggestions about challenging prejudice and encouraging respect.<sup>21</sup>

## Policies

An anti-bullying policy is an important way for everyone to understand what behaviour is acceptable, what is unacceptable and how bullying will be dealt with:

- Involve young people in setting rules and developing policies.
- Ensure that the policy covers different kinds of bullying, (e.g. sexual bullying, cyberbullying and prejudice driven bullying).
- Publicise anti-bullying policies and rules. Make sure all young people and staff are fully aware of this policy and how it is put into practice – invite young people to design posters.
- Ensure that the policy is revised and updated regularly in consultation with young people.
- **Make sure everyone knows what bullying is and what they can do if they see it or experience it, by providing regular training sessions for staff and discussing with children and young people.**<sup>22</sup>
- Make it clear that bullying and harassment are unacceptable, and set out what the consequences are for those who bully.
- Inform young people, parents and staff of the anti-bullying policy.
- Include a section on bullying in any welcome pack for young people. Staff will also need a guide to the anti-bullying policy and procedures.
- Use and promote positive images and language. Positive images of disability and diversity celebrate difference and pride.
- Provide links to useful helplines, websites and local voluntary sector groups (see Training Resources).
- Communicate ideas and suggestions from young people via an ideas board or poster/manifesto displays which convey the message that bullying is unacceptable.

## Communication

Effective communication is key to create an environment where bullying is not tolerated.

## Training

The effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy will depend on how well staff are trained to tackle bullying. Advice on training is available in most regions of England through the Anti-Bullying Alliance. It can also be commissioned from a number of organisations (see Training Resources

20 Richardson. R. and Miles, B. 2008 Racist incidents and bullying in schools, Trentham Books

21 See 3: What should an Anti-Bullying policy include

22 See <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/IG00363/>

### Case Study: Surrey Youth Development Service

Surrey youth development service and a local charity worked with young people to make a DVD about bullying in a teenage dating relationship. A DVD with facilitator's booklet was developed and the pack distributed widely. The young people who raised the issue were able to develop the script and act in the film, while learning some film techniques and skills from professionals. They premiered the film in a local cinema to local authority agencies and schools. The young people have won an award for their work.

for more information). The Local Safeguarding Children Board and/or local authority anti-bullying lead may also be able to provide support and training, or train the anti-bullying lead to provide it themselves.

As a result of training, staff should:

- Understand the anti-bullying policy, and their role in implementing it.
- Know how to spot bullying, including understanding different types of bullying.
- Know how to respond appropriately if they witness bullying or young people report it.
- Know which partner agencies may be able to offer help and know how to access that help.

The anti-bullying lead should also consider whether there are specific training needs in the youth group. For example, staff may feel they need particular support in addressing homophobic bullying, or cyberbullying.

In order to respond effectively to bullying when it happens, it may be valuable to train key staff (e.g. the anti-bullying lead) in mediation, restorative justice, or conflict resolution techniques (see Training Resources).

Young people can also play an important role in preventing bullying. This might include training young people as peer supporters or mediators (see Training Resources).

### Practices

*'I would talk to my youth worker if I had a problem but not really to anyone else. I've told my problems to so many social workers and they just keep leaving.'*

Male 18

There are a number of specific practical steps which youth groups can take to reduce the likelihood of bullying happening:

- Consult young people about bullying, whether they feel safe, and if there are places where they feel unsafe.
- Be vigilant if a young person has clothing or equipment damaged.
- Challenge all forms of prejudice.

As young people mature and become more independent, it is increasingly important to build their capacity to respond to bullying themselves:

- Help young people to develop their own resilience and strategies for preventing bullying. These can include 'fogging' techniques such as deflecting the hurt or refusing to provide the reaction the bully hopes for.<sup>23</sup>
- Make sure young people, fathers, mothers and carers know how to report bullying.
- Train peer support for resolving conflicts.
- Build emotional resilience and well-being through activities. Group work that builds trust between the participants can reduce feelings of isolation. Drama and role-play can help make bullying incidents seem less intimidating and model effective responses.
- Encourage the language of decision making and negotiation. Ask open ended questions and avoid questions that invite a simple 'yes' or 'no' as this does not allow young people to explore the problem or describe issues of concern to them. Encourage young people to use a wide range of words to express how they feel, so that they can use language to resolve conflicts without bullying.
- Encourage young people to take part in structured meetings to discuss any concerns about bullying.

## Partnership

An effective response to bullying relies on a close partnership between staff in youth groups and other services.

- Ensure a close partnership with the schools and Colleges the young people attend.
- Develop contacts with local partner agencies and the Community Safety manager, as well as your local authority anti-bullying lead.
- Collaborate with local transport providers to ensure that young people travel to and from the service safely service safely.
- Link up with the local Safer Schools Partnership.

## Environment

Consult young people on spaces where they do not feel safe and rearrange equipment or supervision patterns to eliminate these. Managing the environment can help reduce bullying.

Provide quiet spaces where young people can be guaranteed time to themselves or spaces to act as 'social havens'.<sup>24</sup> In a noisy environment where sensory stimuli can overwhelm some young people with special needs, it is helpful to provide chill out zones.

<sup>23</sup> See <http://www.kidscape.org.uk/assets/downloads/assertivenessforchildren.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> 18 Daniels, A. and Williams, H. (2000) 'Reducing the need for exclusions and statements for behaviour'. *Educational Psychology in Practice*.15,4, pp221-227.



### Case Study: ChildLine in Partnership with the Scout Association

The Scout Association national Child Protection Coordinator contacted CHIPS – ChildLine in Partnerships – regarding supporting the Scouts to implement an anti-bullying policy and support for Scout Leaders across the UK. An information booklet for Leaders and a poster were produced in partnership and distributed across all Scout Groups in the country. This included information about bullying and best practice, such as encouraging each group to write their own anti-bullying policy. Secondly it was decided that bullying would consciously be included in the remit of local Child Protection coordinators (a volunteer in each county takes on the role of providing support and training to their local leaders). At their regular training events, anti-bullying training was delivered by CHIPS, to increase coordinators' knowledge, awareness and skills of bullying. As a result, coordinators were able to better support leaders in their local area in preventing bullying, and dealing with issues when they arose.



# Responding to bullying

When bullying does occur, **a clear consistent response is essential**. There are many different ways in which staff can respond to bullying. However, the goals of any intervention should always be the same:

- To make the victim safe.
- To stop the bullying, and change the bully's behaviour.
- To make clear to every other young person that bullying is unacceptable.
- To learn lessons from the experience that can be applied in future.

If bullying is reported, the member of staff to whom it is reported should immediately investigate so as to understand the nature of the concern. Where there is evidence they should contact the anti-bullying lead or manager.

Bullying is complex behaviour and if it is not clear who the perpetrator is, it may be more productive to focus on the future than to spend time while each party denies it. In such cases steps could be taken to agree with the young people how they will behave in future.

## Support the young person who is bullied

The starting point for any intervention should be to talk to the person who has been bullied, establish what has happened, and agree a way forward:

- Make time to listen to the young person who has been bullied calmly, using effective listening techniques.
- Take bullying seriously and avoid telling young people to 'just ignore it'.

### Skills for effective listening

Invite and encourage talk.

Consider your body language – sit down, make eye contact.

Return and clarify what the young person tells you.

Be comfortable with silence.

Summarise the problem.

Encourage the young person to come up with ideas about next steps.

- Agree an action plan with his or her consent.
- Avoid humiliating the victim by taking actions which make them seem weaker, powerless or a 'grass'.
- Help the victim become more resilient, for example by building up their self-confidence, emphasising their strengths and helping them to develop protective friendships.
- Cyberbullying can be traced and tracked to find proof of the bullying so it becomes less of a question about one person's word over another.
- Help young people to find other ways than bullying to feel recognised and to manage their emotions.
- Consider: is there a warning moment before they 'kick off'? What skills can be used before it all becomes 'too much'? Are there patterns to this behaviour – for example on certain days or situations?
- Try to elicit some understanding of the feelings of the victim, and challenge any prejudice such as racism. Prejudiced views might be shared among the community in which they live or be driven by anxieties about identity and territory. Young people may adopt these views in order to be accepted into a group. By engaging with these concerns rather than dismissing them, it may be possible to help all the young people as well as the one leading bullying

## Change the emotional environment

Address any prejudice exhibited with the whole group – whether within the youth group or outside it. If a group of young people are behaving in a prejudice driven way – perhaps against disabled people or in a racist way – this needs to be addressed with the whole group. A guest may be invited in to talk to them, a film chosen or some other form of challenge to their accepted view presented.

## Work with the bullying young person

Work with the bullying young person to help them understand their behaviour, and its effects on others. The overall goal is to ensure the bullying stops and the bully's behaviour changes:

- Make it clear that it is the behaviour that is 'bad', not the young person
- How does bullying make them feel? Why do they need to do this?
- How can this person make amends or compensate the victim for the distress caused? Can they offer some ideas?
- Many people who bully others have been victims at some point themselves, and may still be one. These cases might be more complex and 'bully victims' as they are known may need professional help and counselling.
- Avoid granting the bully hero status, or marginalising them so that you have no influence.

Sometimes a young person who bullies will be relieved to change their behaviour because they have been uncomfortable with it. They may have been pressured by a group into behaving this way. Others may alter their behaviour because they

understand the harm they have caused and wish to change.

*'I used to just kick off – now they help me think about how I feel and do something before I get that angry.'*

Male 14

## Monitor and record

Bullies will often appear to comply – but may still bully someone else, or bully more secretly so that they do not get caught. They can appear to comply because of strong controls strictly enforced, but it is unclear whether or not their behaviour and prejudices have really changed. So consider whether your intervention has secured lasting change and check from time to time.

- Monitor the situation.
- Record any bullying incidents and action taken, including incidents on the way to the youth group.
- Report back to the victim.
- Follow up, discreetly, with the victim to make certain the bullying has actually stopped, and that they feel safe.

- Use an incident as a learning opportunity for everyone.
- Raise awareness and empathy for young people who are looked after and those who are carers to reduce the bullying they experience.
- Liaise with residential care managers on anti-bullying initiatives for young people in care.
- Work closely with the Community Safety Team to identify neighbourhood danger spots.
- Provide relevant information on severe bullying to the appropriate school or college so that they can take steps to protect a young person if necessary.

## Responding to serious or persistent bullying

Sometimes bullying involves a specific serious incident, such as a serious physical or sexual assault. Bullying might persist despite attempts to intervene. In this kind of situation, a different response may be required, but the goals of the intervention remain the same: to make the victim safe and to stop the bullying behaviour.

The anti-bullying policy should set out a clear process of escalation for dealing with serious and

### Check your practice

- Do you make sure that individuals are not ridiculed in front of others?
- Do you notice if one young person or a group is being targeted?
- Do you look at seemingly small incidents to see if there is a pattern?
- Do you know where to get help if a serious case of bullying emerges?
- Do you ensure you never leave young people completely unsupervised?

persistent bullying, explaining the roles of the anti-bullying lead, other members of staff and parents in making decisions.

Whatever action is taken, staff involved should make sure that all bullying incidents and actions are recorded.

### Working with partners

If a serious incident or persistent pattern of bullying occurs, staff should engage with other practitioners to agree a joined up response. Schools, colleges, police and the community safety team may have a role here. Schools have a power under Section 89 (5) of the Education and Inspections Act (2006) to impose sanctions for bad behaviour which takes place out of school and it may be appropriate for these to be part of a joined up response. Where staff are unsure about how to deal with particularly serious or persistent bullying, partner agencies such as the police, the local authority anti-bullying lead and other organisations such as anti-bullying charities may be able to provide advice and support.

### Partnership with fathers, mothers and carers

- In many cases, partnership with parents will be key to success
- Parents need to know how to report any concerns about bullying
- Parents of children who bully others may need support in addressing this behaviour (see Training Resources for possible sources of support)
- With the consent of the young person involved, it will usually be helpful to involve parents in developing strategies for responding to bullying

- Where there are safeguarding concerns, parents may be contacted without the consent of the young person involved, in line with the organisation's Safeguarding Policy.

### Resolving conflicts

Even when bullying has been serious or persistent, the most effective response may be to resolve matters between the victim and the bully.

Consider using conflict resolution or restorative justice techniques to help young people understand how each other feels, make amends and move on, but only if both parties agree to this approach.

### Asking a child or young person to leave

In exceptional cases where all attempts to resolve persistent bullying behaviour have proved unsuccessful and action is needed to make the victim safe, it may need to be necessary to ask a the bullying child or young person learner to leave the group/club. Young people who are the victims of bullying should never be asked to leave for their own protection

### Involving the Police

Bullying behaviour may involve criminal offences, such as assault, theft, criminal damage, harassment offences, misuse of communication offences, hate crime offences or sexual offences. Where bullying is particularly serious or persistent, it may be necessary – in order to protect the victim or get the bully to change their behaviour – to involve the police in dealing with offences that have been committed. The anti-bullying lead should make the decision as to whether to involve the police, with the support and consent of senior management.

Although it will be necessary to involve the police in some serious cases, it may be valuable to involve the police in other aspects of your anti-bullying work. For example, in explaining to children how bullying behaviour may constitute crime. This may be a more effective way of building a partnership with local police and Community Support Officers, than only bringing them in once an offence has been committed.

After school patrols are being rolled out across through the Youth Crime Action Plan to provide visible reassurance to young people on the journey home from school.

### **Bullying as a Safeguarding Issue**

Under the Children Act 1989 a bullying incident should be addressed as a child protection concern when there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child – is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm'. As such, it will sometimes be appropriate to report bullying incidents to social services child protection officers. In making this decision, staff should follow the group or organisation's safeguarding procedures. Further guidance on making this kind of decision is contained in the document *What to do if You're Worried if a Child is Being Abused*.<sup>25</sup>

A young person may be bullying because of problems in his or her life, for example, it is not uncommon for young people to disclose domestic violence when you talk to them about bullying.

### **Supporting the victim**

In order to make the victim feel safe, he or she may need further support while bullying is being dealt with, or after it has stopped. Trained peer supporters can be asked to support a victim, and a sympathetic adult will need to monitor carefully how the young person is doing.

### **How do we know our actions have been successful?**

Regular consultation with young people is the most effective way to find out if anti-bullying interventions are working, and young people feel safe. There are three key questions to ask about intervention:

- Does the victim feel safe?
- Did the bully's behaviour change?
- What have we learned?

# Further information, advice and support

## **Anti-Bullying Alliance**

[www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk](http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk)

For a description of ways to enable participation for children and young people with special needs [http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/downloads/pdf/youngvoice\\_participation.pdf.pdf](http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/downloads/pdf/youngvoice_participation.pdf.pdf).

**BECTA:** For more information on cyberbullying [www.digizen.org/cyberbullying/overview](http://www.digizen.org/cyberbullying/overview).

**CEOP (The Child Exploitation Online Protection Centre):** Hosts the Young people's online charter and is responsible for safety on the internet. There is advice for parents and carers and for young people <http://www.ceop.gov.uk>.

**Childnet:** For information and materials on a range of online safety aspects such as social networking, being a good digital citizen, and cyberbullying <http://www.digizen.org/cyberbullying>.

Childnet also offers activities, posters and materials on <http://www.kidsmart.org.uk>.

**EACH (Educational Action Challenging Homophobia):** Provides training for local authorities to challenge homophobic bullying: [www.eachaction.org.uk](http://www.eachaction.org.uk). EACH also provides a national helpline for young people experiencing homophobic bullying: Tel: 0808 1000 143.

**Leap:** Offers training and workshops in confronting conflict and hosts the Academy for Youth and Conflict for formal training leading to qualifications for staff <http://www.leaplinx.com>.

**Mencap:** The Don't Stick it, Stop It! campaign contains stickers and useful materials, such as line animations and video clips, which can be used for training/awareness purposes [www.mencap.org.uk/dontstickit](http://www.mencap.org.uk/dontstickit).

**National Youth Agency**  
[www.nya.org.uk](http://www.nya.org.uk)

**NSPCC:** Visit [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk) for advice and support when a child may disclose a further problem such as domestic violence or neglect.

**Stonewall:** Information on tackling homophobic bullying [www.stonewall.org.uk](http://www.stonewall.org.uk).

**Transforming Conflict:** Information on restorative practices and training <http://www.transformingconflict.org>.

A more comprehensive list including ideas for training and suggestions for developing policies is available in the training resources as part of this suite of guidance<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> See: <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/IG00363/>

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