



Services for Children, Families and Wellbeing

CHILDREN IN CARE

ANTI-BULLYING

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This procedure applies to children placed in Children's Homes and Foster Homes managed by the authority, but the principles apply to the placement of all Children in Care. Therefore, where Children in Care are placed with parents, relatives or friends or in placements not managed by the authority, the social worker must ensure these or other adequate procedures are applied.

What do we mean by bullying?

"Deliberate, hurtful behaviour...often over a period of time, towards people who [may] find it difficult to defend themselves"

Bullying can take many forms (this should not be seen as a definitive list):

Physical Pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching, taking belongings, any form of violence or threats

Verbal Name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, persistent teasing

Emotional Tormenting, threatening ridicule, humiliation, exclusion from groups or activities

Racist Racial taunts, graffiti, gestures

Sexual Unwanted physical contact, abusive comments

Social Being left out of things/being ignored

Material Possessions stolen/property damaged or destroyed

Mental Threats or pressure to conform

Everyone involved in looking after children share responsibility for countering bullying and for creating a culture that 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 staff/carers to counter it. Everyone should also be clear what measures they should take if they suspect bullying or it is reported to them.

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 Board's Child Protection Procedures.

Staff and foster carers may become aware of an incident of bullying in a number of ways:

- a) They may receive a complaint from the young person concerned.
- b) They may witness bullying behaviour
- c) They may become aware of behaviour changes within a child
- d) They may receive information from others

In all the above circumstances, staff/foster carers should:

- a) Promote zero tolerance to bullying
- b) Take all incidents seriously
- c) Respond immediately
- d) Address the needs of the victim *and* the alleged perpetrator
- e) Inform all significant people involved with the child, e.g. parents, social worker, Children's Home manager, Children's Rights Officer, foster carer

Risk Assessment

As part of the Placement Planning process, the child's social worker must ensure that a Risk Assessment is conducted to ascertain whether the child may be a victim or perpetrator of bullying.

If there is any risk, there must be clear control measures in place outlining the strategies to be adopted to counter bullying.

COUNTERING BULLYING

Response to Minor or Non-persistent Bullying

Where bullying is not persistent or not serious, it should be notified to the manager and child's social worker at the first opportunity.

Notifications of Persistent or Serious Bullying

Serious, one-off, episodes of bullying are deemed to be Incidents and must be notified to the Manager and the child's social worker as soon as possible but within 24 hours. The child's social worker should decide whether to inform the child's parent(s) and, if so, who should do so.

Where serious bullying persists, the child's social worker, and staff/foster carer should come to a decision about whether it is deemed to be an Incident and the child's social worker should be notified on each occasion or at specified intervals.

If the bullying is serious or persists, the child's social worker should consider whether the bullying constitutes Significant Harm. If this is likely, a referral should be considered under the Trafford Safeguarding Children Procedures.

It is important to offer appropriate support and reassurance to children who are bullied by communicating well with them. Counselling should also be offered.

Involving Children

Where children have bullied others, the focus should be on the behaviour rather than the child and full explorations made of reasons for the behaviour.

Children should be encouraged to see the bullied child's point of view. A written agreement should be drawn up by the child's social worker to outline the strategies to be employed to challenge and modify the behaviour.

Both bullied and those who bully should be closely monitored within their placement.

Response to Incidents of Bullying

Response to An Incident Of Bullying Between Children In Care

Stage One

- The staff member/foster carer should talk to the victim about their feelings. He/she does not need to question the victim in detail but it is necessary to find out who was allegedly involved.
- The alleged perpetrator and any witnesses should be seen separately.
- The staff member/foster carer should tell the child how the victim maybe/is feeling.
- No blame should be attributed but staff/carers should emphasise the child's responsibility for their behaviour.
- All children involved should be asked for suggestions to make the alleged victim feel happier. These suggestions should be recorded and made into an agreed contract.
- The staff member/carers agrees to meet with the child involved in a week's time to review progress.
- If after a week, things have improved, no further formal action may be required but the staff/foster carers should continue to monitor the situation.
- If things have not improved, the staff member/carers should move to StageTwo.



N.B. IT MAY BE NECESSARY TO BYPASS STAGE ONE AND MOVE IMMEDIATELY TO STAGE TWO



Stage Two

- If bullying is continuing, a meeting should be convened, chaired by the Homes
- Registered Manager or Team manager, as appropriate. The child's social worker for each young person involved should attend. Both the victim and the perpetrator/s should attend, with an advocate, should they wish. Parents should also be invited.
- The meeting should restate the departmental anti-bullying policy.
- Views and feelings of all present should be shared, beginning with those of the victim/s and perpetrator/s.
- An action plan should be drawn up, which should include direct work with the children involved and strategies to improve the situation.
- The situation should be monitored to assess progress. If, after a week, the situation has not improved, Stage Three should be implemented.

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Stage Three

If, at the end of stage two of the process, bullying is continuing, a referral should be made to the appropriate Resource Panel. The panel should review and assess the circumstances, highlighting risks and agreeing actions.

- This could result in a change of placement or an end to an accommodation agreement.
- The needs and circumstances of all young people involved must be taken into account.
- The panel should consider any practice learning issues and make necessary recommendations.
- Minutes of the panel discussion, including recommendations, should be distributed to all interested parties within 5 working days.

Recording

At all stages of the above process, information must be clearly recorded on the files of children involved and shared with the relevant child's social worker. It is crucial that staff and carers consult appropriately on action/s taken and record decisions.

Trafford Safeguarding Children Board Procedures should be followed in cases of serious physical, sexual or emotional abuse.