Defining and recognising bullying

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Bullying may be defined as:

"Behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally".

However, organisations will wish to involve the whole community in agreeing the definition of bullying that will be used in their own policy documents. By involving children and young people, parents and staff in agreeing the definition, the community will secure greater ownership for its overall policy and its strategies to tackle bullying. It is important that the definition is accessible to the children and young people in the community *'Safe To Learn'*.

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Recognising bullying

It is often hard to decide whether an incident, or incidents, are part of a pattern of bullying.

Is there a power dynamic in this situation?

A group or individual may be exercising power as a result of:

- Force of numbers
- Persistence
- Intellect

- Age
- Intellect
- Status

Is this behaviour intentional?

Many witnesses are not reliable because they may tell you whatever they can to present themselves in the best possible light, and/or to prevent threat to themselves and/or to get the interaction over as quickly as possible. This is true even of apparently disinterested bystanders. Moreover, adults often see the response of the child who is bullied rather than the provocation which can lead to a misinterpretation of the situation.

It is important that everyone understand what is meant by bullying.

If this is the case you can operate the rule of thumb that, 'If it feels like they are being bullied, they probably are.'

Types of Bullying

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All children can be the subjects of bullying, but certain vulnerable individuals include those who are bullied due to:

- race, religion or culture;
- special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities;
- appearance or health conditions;
- sexual orientation;
- being young carers or looked-after children or otherwise related to home circumstances.

Bullying can take many forms:

- **Physical** — pushing, kicking, 'barging-in', hitting, including violent threats,

- **Theft or Damage** — targeted theft, extortion, damage of belongings

- **Verbal** — name calling, sarcasm, gossiping, spreading rumours and persistent teasing, taunts, mocking, making offensive comments, graffiti, tormenting, humiliating, ridiculing

- **Non-verbal** — social exclusion, gestures, ignoring

- **Sexual** — unwanted physical contact, comments of an unwelcome sexual nature

- **Cyber/electronic** — harassment, alarm, distress or humiliation that uses internet related and telephone technology.

For information re workplace bullying please contact your Dignity At Work Champion.

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Impact and Effects

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Bullying can have a rapid and intense impact on children or young people.
Over time it ruins childhoods and can impact on mental health into adulthood.

"I didn't want to go to the school reunion because when I remember my schooldays I just remember how horrid everyone was to one boy. Even the teachers seemed to pick on him. I just don't want to go back and see them and remember that I sat there and did nothing" Louise aged 44

Symptoms of bullying include disturbed sleep, bed-wetting, head and stomach aches, problems with concentration, behaviour, learning and truancy. It leads to feelings of anxiety, shame, guilt, anger, powerlessness and a loss of confidence, hope and personal identity. At its worst, bullying results in severe clinical depression, self harm and even suicide.

"I got to the stage of wanting to die instead of going to school." Alex aged 11

Sadly, children and young people start to internalise the messages they receive and believe them. This creates a vicious circle in which it is hard for them to realise that what they are experiencing is bullying, especially if the bullying behaviours are subtle and the ring-leaders behaviour covert. Moreover, bullied children and young people find it hard to report bullying either because they feel they deserve it or that it will get worse and they find it hard to change their behaviour in ways that may help to alleviate it..

"You never question that what they are saying could be wrong. You believe it and you think everyone there does, even your friends …especially your friends". Patsy, now aged 47 looking back on her experiences at 16.

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In the longer term, taking part in bullying activities either directly or indirectly as a colluding bystander can lead to feelings of guilt and anger. Unfortunately in the short-term, it often fulfils a need for those who take part in it and can be very reinforcing.

"Most nights I can't go to sleep because I worry whether my friends will be nice to me tomorrow". Ben aged 8

Though bullying is resistant to change, the good news is that there are things that can be done within communities to break the cycles of bullying and these are described in the information cards that follow.

"It took me years to get my confidence back – years really – I still think about it and get upset." Darren aged 26

Every year around 16 children die as a result of bullying. Without exception, each case started with a "just a bit of name calling".

Bullycide: Death at Playtime - An Expose of Child Suicide Caused by Bullying
By Neil Marr, Tim Field
Published by Success Unlimited, 2001
ISBN 0952912120, 9780952912125
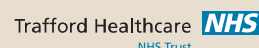
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Where and when does bullying happen?

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It is important to realize that bullying is not an inevitable part of 'growing up'

It can happen-

- **At home by:** parents, siblings, children or a partner (assault, domestic abuse, verbal abuse)

- **At school by:** teachers, other staff, peers or other pupils (harassment, assault)

- **In the care of others:** such as in hospital, convalescent homes, care homes, youth clubs, nurseries, residential homes (harassment, assault)

- **By those in authority:** (harassment, abuse of power)

- **At work by:** manager, co-workers, or by their clients (mobbing, work abuse, harassment, discrimination)

- **In the armed forces:** (harassment, discrimination, assault)

- **By neighbours and landlords:** (harassment)

- **By strangers:** (harassment, stalking, assault, sexual assault, rape, grievous bodily harm, murder).

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- **Bullying in the community**

1. **Formal Areas -** places created and maintained by adults with the purpose of providing communal areas where children will be in a safe and monitored environment e.g. parks, playgrounds, leisure centres.

2. **Informal areas -** places visited by children, but not specifically set aside to meet their needs, e.g. alleys, side streets, shopping centres, small woodlands areas, or unused wastelands.

Cyber-bullying can happen in any setting.

In 2004 more than 31,000 children called Childline about bullying. This makes it their most common problem.

A quarter of young adults who were bullied by their peers during childhood reported that they suffered long term harmful effects as a result.

(Cawson et al., 2000, Child Maltreatment in the UK: A Study of the Prevalence of Child Abuse and Neglect, NSPCC, p.30)

The law empowers Head teachers, to such extent as is reasonable, to regulate the behaviour of young persons when they are off site which is particularly pertinent to regulating cyber-bullying, and empowers members of school staff to impose disciplinary penalties for inappropriate behaviour.

In dealing with bullying, establishments need a clearly defined policy/code of practice, which is known and owned by all, including parents/carers, stakeholders and users.

Developing and communicating your Anti-Bullying policy

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How to develop policy

It is good practice for organisations to use the principles in the Charter for Action document to develop their anti-bullying policies and we have adapted the charter to make it accessible for any organisation which is working with children and young people. The Charter provides a framework for self-evaluation.

When establishing the arrangements for developing or reviewing the anti-bullying policy, you may find it helpful to discuss this with a member of the TAB steering group. If you are a school, you may also find it useful to look at the Anti-Bullying Section of the Trafford Quality Assurance standards CPD Framework.

You may also want to review arrangements with relevant partner agencies for sharing information about bullying and thresholds and triggers for multi-agency interventions.

There are many different successful approaches to writing an AB policy and the method chosen will depend on your organisation. We have not provided a sample policy as an AB policy needs to be owned and practised by all stakeholders, and developed after consultation which engages the whole community.

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The following steps are common to all good policies:

1. **Involving all stakeholders** in a survey, written or online, around what constitutes bullying and how it should be prevented and responded to in your community. A discussion of the principles of the Charter could be a good starting point.
2. **Developing the key aspects** via a working party (some organisations have divided all stakeholders into working parties to take on different aspects of the policy. Sometimes this has been done in one day with everybody working on it at the same time, others have spread it over a short time period.)
3. **Consulting stakeholders** for amendment and approval of the draft policy. You will also need to consider what should be recorded, how you will do that and how you will use that information to move your community forward.
4. **Publish and communicate** the agreed policy and sign up to the Charter if it meets your communities' needs.
5. **Review** after 1 year to ensure that the policy is still meeting your community needs and meets any updated guidance criteria, and amend or re-write if it is not.

Good practice to include:

A mission statement
Aims
Definition of bullying as agreed by your community   (see Information Card 1)
Preventive strategies   (See Information Card 6)
Response   (See Information Card 7)
Recording & reporting procedures   (See Information Card 8)
Monitoring & evaluation

Ways of communicating your policy
Charter ceremony & prominent display of Charter
Staff handbooks
Online
Planners, displays and notice boards
Brochure/ prospectus
Electronic noticeboards

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Preventative Approaches

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It is probably impossible to eradicate bullying in communities but by taking a multi-faceted approach, by having proactive and reactive approaches, it is possible to drastically reduce the number of incidents and improve the experiences of children and young people in the community.

Proactive approaches

- A named person taking the lead on Anti-Bullying within the community

- An anti-bullying ethos, modelled from the top, which encourages openness, promotes and takes seriously feedback on bullying incidents and takes an attitude of zero tolerance to all negative behaviour between people, whatever their age or status

- Opportunities to develop social and emotional skills in all children and young people including empathy, co-operation and positive conflict resolution and these skills are modelled by adults

- Opportunities to model and develop positive attitudes towards diversity in young people and combat racism, homophobia, hatred towards others religions or belief systems and negative attitudes towards disability

- Programmes for vulnerable children and young people to develop skills of assertiveness (individuals should not follow these programmes with those who bully them)

- Activities to highlight anti-bullying at certain times of the year such as during anti-bullying week in November when bullying in schools tends to peak

- Participation by children and young people in policy and peer support schemes for which they receive training and supervision from adults.

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- A built environment which supports anti-bullying measures with signposting for support, opportunities to report bullying in confidence and monitoring of bullying hotspots

- Annual surveys to identify issues and vulnerable individuals or groups

- Varied opportunities for young people to report bullying that they are experiencing or witnessing both anonymously and personally

- Recording, monitoring and follow-up for all aggressive incidents involving young people within the community (See Information Card 8)

- Involvement of the wider community such as the police and other LA and voluntary agencies

- Acceptance that if these approaches are successful, it is likely that in the short term, reported incidents of bullying will increase. In the medium to long term they should diminish in terms of number and severity.

- A SEAL ethos and use of SEAL resources around anti-bullying.

Communities are advised to conduct an audit of their current practices to prevent and deal with bullying and prioritise necessary changes to their policies and anti-bullying strategies. Audits are available from the ABA, SEAL resources and the DfE, amongst others.

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Reactions when a bullying incident occurs

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The aims of anti-bullying strategies and intervention systems are:

- To prevent, de-escalate and to agree solutions to end the bullying behaviour.
- To safeguard the young person who has experienced bullying and to trigger sources of support for the young person.
- To respond to bullying incidents in a reasonable, proportionate and consistent way.
- To apply sanctions to the young person causing the bullying to ensure they learn from the experience, possibly through multi-agency support.

Solution-focused responses to bullying

- Listening, acknowledging and keeping all parties informed:
- Involving parents wherever possible in the response to the bullying, whether their child has been bullied or is accused of bullying behaviours.
- Development of the roles that young people can play, (e.g. training in alternative strategies in response to being bullied, however, this is never enough to stop established bullying.)
- Work with all those involved (especially bystanders) to identify ways to make things better for the child/young person. There are specific strategies such as Support Group Approach, Circle of Friends and Pikas method of shared concern and Restorative approaches* which hold young persons to account for their behaviour and engage with them to agree the actions to be taken to repair the harm caused.
  www.Traffordlearning.org >EPS
- Adult mediation services that may be offered by the local authority or by commercial organisations that schools can engage. Mediators work with young persons to try put an end to the bullying and mend relationships.
- Establishing Safer School Partnerships with local police.
- As well as immediate short-term monitoring, a staged review should take place, over two or three months, to see whether the action has prevented recurrence of the bullying and ensure that the young person being bullied feels safe again.
- Organisations are legally required to have a complaints procedure and to make parents aware of this procedure.
- Peer mediation.

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The use of sanctions:

The DfE advises that sanctions be applied fairly, proportionately, consistently and reasonably, taking account of any special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities that young persons may have and taking into consideration the needs of vulnerable children.

Disciplinary penalties have three main purposes, namely to:

- impress on the perpetrator that what he/she has done is unacceptable;
- deter him/her from repeating that behaviour; and
- signal to other young persons that the behaviour is unacceptable and deter them from doing it.

Sanctions for bullying are intended to hold young persons who bully to account for their behaviour and ensure that they face up to the harm they have caused and learn from it. They also provide an opportunity for the young person to put right the harm they have caused.

Note for Schools: Young people must not be excluded from school for being bullied, even if the school believes they are doing so for the child's benefit. Some young people who have been subjected to bullying are provoked into violent behaviour. A young person can be excluded for violent behaviour; it is a matter for the head teacher's judgement, taking account of the evidence available, all the circumstances of the case and the need to balance the interests of the young person concerned against those of the whole school community. However, before deciding to exclude a young person, the Department recommends that the head teacher always allows him or her to state their case, and checks whether the incident may have been provoked by, for example, racial or sexual harassment or a child's SEN or disability.

"Where a young person has retaliated after months of persistent bullying, we advise that this be considered differently from an unprovoked attack."
'Improving Behaviour & Attendance, Guidance on Exclusion from schools and PRU's' 2008'

*Restorative Justice training is available to schools via the Restorative Practice Working Party – see contact page.

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Recording incidents

The DfE recommends that **organisations should record all incidents of bullying**, and schools now have a duty to record serious and persistent incidences of bullying and to report the statistics to their local authority.

The purpose of reporting incidents to the local authority is to enable the gathering of information on the number and nature of bullying incidents and to identify any developing trends. The local authority can analyse the information gathered from schools to identify any issues of particular concern. This will enable the authority to be better informed in the development of appropriate strategies to tackle bullying across their area, as part of the needs assessment that underpins the Children and Young People's Plan. Cyberbullying may involve children or young people across a variety of settings.

The data will also enable local authorities to support and challenge schools in their duties to promote the welfare of young persons.

Schools have a specific legal duty to have a race equality policy and monitor its impact on young persons, staff and parents. Schools also have a specific duty to eliminate disability related harassment under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

Keeping records of bullying incidents will enable the school to:

- manage individual cases effectively;
- monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of strategies;
- celebrate the anti-bullying work of the school;
- demonstrate defensible decision making in the event of complaints being made;
- engage and inform multi-agency teams as necessary.

Some organisations use SHARP which is a web-based reporting page fronted by a community police officer and linked to your organisation. For more information please contact Andrew Phoenix.

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Information for parents and carers

Look out for signs that your child is being bullied, for example, are they:

- Frightened to go to school or out into the community or suddenly changing where she/he goes?
- Doing less well in school work?
- Coming home with damaged or missing things?
- Coming home hungry or asking for money with no explanation?
- Becoming withdrawn or easily distressed?
- Starting to take things out on a younger sibling?
- Sleeping badly?
- Having unexplained injuries?
- Attempting suicide or self-harm?
- Giving unlikely excuses for any of these things?

Collect information

- Listen to any reports your child gives you about bullying in general.
- Don't pressurise your child to talk about things that are happening to him/her. You could say, "Tell me about bullying in your school."
- Ensure they know about Childline, or the SHARP system if it used in your area. Sometimes children find it easier to talk to their parents once they have contacted Childline.
- When you are given information about something that is happening to your child, try to stay calm and ask for facts – when it started; when it happens.
- If it helps, find out what your child's friends are saying to their parents
- Do not tackle the parents of the child who is bullying directly. However reasonable they seem, they will almost invariably stand up for their own child and this can lead to an escalation of issues.
- Monitor internet and mobile phone use if appropriate.
- If you think that your child is a victim of cyber bullying, your mobile phone provider, Internet Service Provider and the police can all offer advice.

Children who call Childline say that sometimes they keep the bullying quiet for fear of upsetting their parents or sometimes because they are worried that they will not be taken seriously.

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Responding to what your child tells you

- Do not blame your child or dismiss your child's worries. Comfort and support your child
- It is not your child's fault that she/he is bullied and she/he cannot change the bullying on his/her own. You can help your child to think of things to do or say to feel stronger but she/he still needs help in changing things
- Encourage your child to accept that it is in his/her best interests for you to talk to staff about what she/he has told you
- Talk with staff and ensure you have concrete facts
- Encourage your child to keep you informed and keep a diary of any further incidents
- Meet your child after school or community activities, if necessary. Ensure the home feels safe for him/her
- Don't ever stop looking for ways to help your child.

Develop your child's coping strategies

- Work on increasing the child's self-esteem through doing things together and praise for effort and positive behaviour
- Saying "no" confidently
- Responding to name calling and saying things like: "Whatever"; That's what you think"; "You could be right"; "So". Practise them together and teach your child not to call names back. This runs the risk of escalating the situation and your child getting the blame instead
- Walking with a head held high
- Support new friends and interests (consider skills in a martial art to develop confidence)
- Knowing who to tell and feeling good for telling.

Responding to your child if she/he tells you about others who are being bullied

- Intervening to help stop bullying can promote self esteem and avoid later guilt
- Encourage your child to look at ways that she/he can discourage bullying even if she/he is not brave enough to challenge the bullying directly e.g.

  - Walking away
  - Looking out for the victim later and saying a kind word
  - Explaining to the victim that they don't like the bullying and asking how you can help
  - Telling the bullies they don't like it
  - Asking the victim to come and join their game
  - Talking to other bystanders to agree what everyone can do
  - Talking to adults and asking them to intervene
  - Being part of a formal peer support system in school

Responding to your child if you think she/he is bullying

- Remain calm and listen to the facts. Remember that any child or young person can take part in bullying at some time or another. They can also learn to stop
- Do not berate your child but look for ways that they can make things better for the other child (even if they say they do not like the other child or that the other child deserves it)
- Support the child in accepting any consequences that follow his/her actions
- Ensure that your child has support and the opportunity to feel safe and secure themselves at home. Are there any issues over which your child needs support?
- Set realistic, firm guidelines and be positive when your child does things to improve a situation for another child.

"It took me ages to work out that lots of bad things that happened to him in school were instigated by just a small group of girls. It felt like I was the last one to put it all together and that I hadn't been listening to him – he said that he had told me.Luckily the school listened to me and dealt with it. It took time but we got there in the end and he is so much happier. I wish I'd told the school sooner." 'Carol'

Bullying Involving Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

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'Every child is unique – in characteristics, interests, abilities and needs: and every child has the ability to enjoy his or her rights without discrimination of any kind' (Thomas Hammarberg, 1997)

Children with SEN and disabilities may

- Be adversely affected by negative attitudes to disability and perceptions of difference
- Find it more difficult to resist bullies
- Be more isolated, not have many friends;
- Not understand that what is happening is bullying
- Have difficulties telling people about bullying.

It is important to recognise that all children are potentially vulnerable to bullying and that those with SEN and disabilities may be bullied for a range of other reasons. Evidence shows that children with a range of needs are more likely to experience bullying than their peers

Some considerations to encourage confidence

- Is there a quiet place to go to and talk?
- Does the staff member understand the child's communication needs?
- Can the child understand the staff member?
- Are their personal communication tools available to them?
- Have they had time to calm down and fully tell what they want to?
- Does the child need a supporter?
- Are staff visible and available to all?

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When choosing an approach, knowledge of the child's particular needs and the impact on their social development is essential. 'A one size fits all' approach is unhelpful when supporting children with a range of SEN and disabilities who experience bullying.

For some children it may be necessary to act very quickly while the child can remember what took place. For others a child who has BESD demonstrates anti-social behaviour but did not intend to bully.

Action Summary

- **Celebrate** anti-bullying work
- **Adopt** a rights-based approach to bullying – children with SEN and disabilities have the same right to be safe as other children
- **Have a robust and consistent approach** which makes it clear that bullying on the grounds of disability will not be tolerated.

Moving between settings

For children who use a mix of special and mainstream provision, bullying can be a particular concern as they are repeatedly moving in and out of different environments e.g. between schools or from a specialist unit into a mainstream setting. These moves can be one-off or regular leading children to be exposed to new people and environments, which can be daunting.

One of the most common fears is that they will be bullied especially 'low level' harassment. Where they are seen as outsiders they are more at risk and safety can rely on bystander support and proactive strategies already in place.

Children with learning difficulties are less likely to seek help than their peers. This could make them an easier target, as bullies may realise they can more easily avoid detection. A proactive prevention programme will consider these challenges and provide supportive pathways to reporting and defending.

Further guidance is available from the DfE 'Safe to Learn' suite which includes a booklet about the bullying of young people with special educational needs and disabilities.