Tackling Bullying Guidance

February 2016
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1. Introduction

This guidance is aimed at all settings and organisations that work with children, young people and families.

What is Bullying?

- Bullying is a subjective experience and can take many forms, making it extremely difficult to define. Children, young people and adults can instigate bullying. The nature of bullying is changing and evolving as technology develops. Bullying via the internet (cyberbullying) or through the use of mobile phones, social media and gaming sites now affects many young people and appears to be on the increase. Behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally

- One-off incidents can in some cases also be defined as bullying

- An imbalance of power leaving the person bullied feeling defenceless

- Emotionally or physically harmful behaviour which could include name-calling, taunting, mocking, making offensive comments, kicking, hitting, pushing, taking belongings, inappropriate text messaging and e-mailing, sending offensive or degrading images by phone or via the internet, gossiping, excluding people from groups and spreading hurtful or untruthful rumours. Although sometimes occurring between two individuals in isolation, it can also take place in the presence of others.

Cyberbullying

Bullying that happens online, using social networks, gaming sites and mobile phones, is often called cyberbullying. Unlike other forms of bullying, cyberbullying can follow children and young people into their private spaces and outside school hours; there is no safe haven for the person being bullied and takes place anywhere, and at any time, including in the victim’s own home.

An isolated incident of cyberbullying can lead to a child becoming a victim again on multiple occasions, for example a degrading or humiliating photograph taken on a mobile phone can be sent to a wide audience by cyberbullies with remarkable speed, and can often remain undeniable. A child can feel like there’s no escape because it can happen wherever they are, at any time of day or night.

Bullying may be related to:

- religion, belief, race, class or culture
- special educational needs (SEN) or disability
- appearance or health conditions
- sex, sexual orientation,
- gender reassignment
- Pregnancy or maternity
- young carers
- looked-after children
- home circumstances

The emotional distress caused by bullying in whatever form can prejudice school
achievement, lead to lateness or truancy, damage self-esteem and, in extreme cases, end in suicide.

Not current

There is no ‘hierarchy’ of bullying - all forms of bullying should be taken equally seriously and dealt with appropriately.

2. Signs and Symptoms for Parents and Staff

A child may give signs or behave in an unusual way which may indicate that he or she is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and that they should investigate if a child:

• is frightened of walking to or from school
• begs to be driven or accompanied to school
• changes their usual routine
• is unwilling to go to school
• begins to truant
• becomes withdrawn anxious, or lacking in confidence
• starts stammering
• attempts or threatens to harm themselves or runs away
• cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
• feels ill in the morning
• begins to do make less effort with school work than previously
• comes home with clothes torn or books damaged
• has possessions which are damaged or "go missing"
• asks for money or starts stealing money
• has dinner or other monies continually "lost"
• has unexplained cuts or bruises
• comes home hungry (money / lunch has been stolen)
• becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
• is bullying other children or siblings
• stops eating
• is frightened to say what’s wrong
• is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
• is nervous and jumpy when a cyber-message is received
• has lack of eye contact
• becomes short tempered
• has a change in attitude to people at home
• gives improbable excuses for any of the above
3. Guidelines for agencies and organisations

Whilst much can be done by individual professionals to alleviate the problems for individual young people, the only effective way to reduce bullying throughout Darlington on a permanent basis is via agencies and services working together.

- Tackling the problem of bullying is the responsibility for all of us who have contact with children and young people.

- Promoting effective school/organisation leadership that creates and maintains an open and honest anti-bullying ethos.

- A network of good communication is essential between and within agencies. This needs to be considered as a specific issue if subsequent intervention is to be successful.

- Engaging pupils/young people in the process of developing the school’s/organisations anti-bullying policy and promoting open and honest reporting.

- It is important to evaluate any interventions or specific work undertaken to tackle bullying. For example a survey into bullying both raises awareness, provides details on the incidents and can serve as a baseline for later evaluation.

- Maintenance of the anti-bullying policy and procedures is essential. A whole organisation approach to anti-bullying should be part of an ongoing consideration and be subject to review.

- Use of curriculum opportunities within schools, for example (in particular, PSHE and Citizenship classes) can be used to discuss issues around diversity and draw out anti-bullying messages.

- Activities delivered by youth offending service, youth service, can also tackle these important issues.

- Improving the organisation’s environment, looking in particular at staff supervision patterns, the physical design of the building(s) and joint work with partners e.g. transport service providers. Organisations may want to work with young people to establish key times and locations where bullying is more prevalent and target their attention on these areas.

- Regular use of opportunities throughout the year and possibly at certain times of the day to raise awareness of the negative consequences of bullying e.g. Anti-Bullying Week in November, whole school assemblies.
4. Guidelines for Professionals

- Understand the principles and purpose of your organisation’s anti bullying policy.
- Understand your legal responsibilities regarding bullying.
- Know where to seek support e.g. in setting or multi-agency teams.
- Tell young people from day one that bullying (verbal or physical) is not tolerated in your organisation. Everyone is expected to ensure that it does not happen and has the responsibility to tell- this is not telling tales.
- Watch for early signs of distress in children and young people- deterioration of work, isolation from peers, the desire to remain with adults, often late for lessons/ sessions, low self-esteem, bruises and cuts.
- All of the above may be symptomatic of other problems but may be early signs of bullying
- Ensure that children/young people know what to do when they are being bullied and their parents/carers are aware of your appropriate procedures.
- All observed incidents of bullying must be stopped immediately. They must be dealt with, either immediately or at a later more appropriate time.
- Be available and willing to listen. Treat the information seriously.
- Offer the victim immediate support and help by putting your organisation’s procedures into operation. Inform the parents/carers of both the victim and the child/young person who is doing the bullying where appropriate.
- Record each incident precisely in line with your organisation’s procedures and be seen to do this.
- Bullying is always wrong - a victim of bullying must not be made to feel guilty because she/ he is bullied.
- Help children/young people think about strategies to use.
- Help parents/carers think about strategies to support their children/young people.
- Help the child who is bullying to become aware that his/ her actions are considered to be bullying and that these are hurtful to the victim.
- Ascertain wherever possible the reasons why she/ he bullies others and help the child/young person who is bullying resolve his/her problems.
- Use young people as a positive resource in tackling bullying. Set up discussion groups with young people, lead sessions/ lessons about bullying.
- Use peer pressure against bullying behaviour.

• If you feel you do not have the skills to deal with any aspect of bullying, discuss in the first instance with your line manager to seek approval for staff development.

5. Guidelines for children and young people

Some things to do if you are being bullied
Tell someone

• Tell an adult who you know will take you seriously.
• Or tell another young person that you trust.
• Or report the bullying in any other way your school/organisation has available eg email, message box etc.
• Tell them again if the bullying does not stop.

There is safety in numbers

• Go around with a friend or two.
• Stay near others eg friends, other young people or adults.
• Get your friends together and say no to the bully.
• Only go into places where bullying happens, if you have some friends or an adult near you.

Other things to try

• Try not to show you are upset.
• Walk confidently even if you don't feel that way inside.
• Fighting back will make it worse and may put you at greater risk.
• Just walk past if people call you unpleasant names.
• Practise what you plan to say or do when you next see the bully.
• If you are in danger get away. Do not try to keep possessions.

If you are bullying someone

• You may think teasing people at school or in your organisation is harmless fun but for the victim it can be no fun at all. Try to put yourself in the victim’s place.
• There are serious consequences for you if you are found to be bullying someone.
• Admit to yourself that you are a person who is bullying others.
• If you feel you can’t stop by yourself then ask someone you trust to help you.
6. Guidelines for Parents

What to do if you think your child is being bullied

- Watch for signs - not wanting to go to school, minor illnesses, and headaches, avoiding friends, coming home with bruises or torn clothes, possessions disappearing or uncharacteristic behaviour.

- Listen and talk to your child, be calm, show sensitivity but reassure your child that he or she is not to blame. Try to establish that the problem really is bullying and not something else.

- Take it seriously and discuss with your child what you can do.

- If your child would find it easier to talk to someone completely different from you or the school/organisation contact an external agency such as Child Line (see References).

- Talk to the appropriate professional within the school/organisation. Do this for as long as the bullying continues. If at all possible act with your child’s permission.

- Help your child to deal with the problem by him or herself. Be tactful.

- Try not to be over anxious or over protective.

- Do not promote a simple “thump back” approach this rarely helps and may only make things worse or your child.

- Most children are called names at some point. Usually these names are used in a humorous way and are not meant to cause offence. If, however, your child is upset about some of the names used, then let the setting/organisation know about this.

- If a name is used which refers to your child’s physical characteristics then let your child know that you love him or her, for the way they are, including these particular characteristics which make him or her an individual.

- Give the school/organisation time to deal with the problem.

- If you think things are not getting better or you are still concerned ask to see the school/organisation’s anti-bullying policy.

- Do not be tempted to tackle the bully yourself.

What to do if your child is bullying others

- Sit down with your child and find out what has been happening.

- Explain to your child that all forms of bullying are wrong. Give them examples of how hurtful this can be.

- Ask your child how they think the bullying can be stopped. They may need help from you and the school/organisation to change a situation or the way they are acting.

- Let your child know that you still love them as a person – it is their behaviour you want to change.
• You may need to work with the school/organisation to establish if there are any underlying problems that may be contributing to the bullying behaviour.

7. Checklists for organisations

Putting bullying on your agenda

• Does your policy include strategies for promoting positive behaviour, preventing bullying and stopping bullying?

• Do you have a written statement about bullying which is available to governors, staff, children/young people and parents/carers?

• Do you need to start a process which aims to make bullying a school/organisation priority and tackles this at various levels and with different groups?

• Does your school/organisation have a forum which has the opportunity to regularly monitor work to reduce bullying?

Information about bullying

• Is there enough knowledge within your school/organisation about the complexities of bullying?

• Could you carry out a whole school/organisation audit of perception of bullying?

• Could you use a model questionnaire?

• Could you ask the children/young people to devise one themselves?

• Could you use group discussions?

• Do you have a monitoring system to log incidents of bullying?

• Is data analysed to identify incidents of bullying in relation to specific vulnerable groups, hot spots, days of the week, times of day and settings?

• How do you disseminate information around bullying across your organisation?

• How do you inform parents/carers of your schools/organisations policies/procedures?

• Do you encourage parents/carers to inform you if their child is being bullied?

• How do you ensure that support agencies working within your school/organisation follow your policies and procedures, ethos and culture regarding bullying?

• Do you have a clear and confidential system for victims and other children/young people to report bullying?

• Does this system make it clear to young people that they can trust an adult not to take any action which has not been previously agreed by the victims?
Strategies to reduce bullying

- What do the governors, staff, parents and pupils think we do about bullying? Does your policy clearly identify bullying and does it establish consistent procedures for dealing with the problem?

- Do your present pastoral care arrangements promote positive behaviour in a way as to prevent bullying as well as deal with the incidents as they occur? Are all the staff sufficiently involved in pastoral care? How can pupils be encouraged to accept pastoral responsibility for other pupils?

- Are young people made aware that bullying should be reported to any member of staff and that whoever takes the report will act immediately and sensitively?

- To what extent are the support services involved in supporting the school/organisation in its anti-bullying strategies?

Partnerships with parents/carers

- Do parents have clear guidelines on what to do when they think their child is being bullied?

- Are parents of children who bully and victims routinely informed and involved when incidents happen?

- Do staff have clear guidelines as to who communicates with parents?

- Do parents often approach our school/organisation themselves to discuss their child/young person’s difficulties including bullying. If not, why not?

- Do we need to make group meetings with parents/carers more informal to allow a more open discussion?
8. Advice to Develop Anti-Bullying Policy

Statement of your setting/organisation’s ethos
- Statement on approach to talking bullying and harassment.
- Key values and mission

Aims of your policy
Suggestions.
1. To reduce the frequency of bullying incidents.
2. To increase the likelihood that incidents are disclosed to responsible adults.
3. To intervene effectively when bullying happens.
4. To meet establishment’s legal requirements

Statement of process

It is envisaged that the policy will be developed by a group, who consult and negotiate on the content and process.
Consideration should be given to whether a policy for all children differs from a policy for all and how it can be made inclusive for adults and young people within and associated with the organisation, staff, parents/carers, governors etc.
Documentation should be planned in various formats to be accessible to people of different ages and suited to different literacy and language needs.

The setting/organisation’s definition of bullying / Harassment

This definition should be clear and accessible to all.

Dominions
- Bullying
- Harassment
- Cyber bullying

Emotional and physical effects of bullying

Examples of Bullying to be included

Setting the policy into context

Link to relevant establishment policies and practice Does the anti-bullying policy cover some topics linked to other documents and are the policies up to date?
- Safeguarding children
- Equal opportunities
- Behaviour and attendance
- Health and well-being

Complaints policy
There is a multitude of current policy papers on these subjects, from many Governmental departments and other organisations. It is advisable to consult those most relevant to the circumstances and setting.
9. Role and responsibilities of staff and volunteers

- **Outline schools responsibilities to respond to bullying that happens within in setting, outside of settings premises, to include journeys to and from setting, external trips and cyber bullying.**

- **The individual roles and responsibilities of the setting, senior management team (SMT), Governors, staff members, children and young people, parents/casers in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour.**

- **Role of key staff, Governors, SMT, support staff or counsellor.**

**Effective action**

**Practical guidelines for the whole setting/ organisation**

- Is the anti-bullying statement or charter clearly displayed?
- Are helpline numbers and sources of support clearly identified?
- How does the organisation encourage and make reporting safe?
- What are the agreed criteria for external agencies’ involvement?

**Practical guidelines for staff and volunteers**

- Action staff/ volunteers should take if they see someone being bullied.
- Action staff/ volunteers should take in helping and supporting children who have been bullied.
- Action staff/ volunteers should take in helping children/ young people who bully others.
- Investigation procedures
- Recording and logging bullying incidents

**Practical guidelines for children and young people**

- Statement on how child/young person are aware of and engage with the settings anti-bullying policy.
- Action a child/ young person should take if he/ she is being bullied.
- Action a child/ young person should take if he/ she sees somebody else being bullied.

Statement on how records of bullying incidents will be completed and who and how this is monitored.

Statement on how children who have been bullied will be supported.

Statement of how the settings communications and involves parents of child who is being bullied.

**Parental Responsibilities**

**Practical guidelines for parents/ carers**

- What parents /carers should do if they think their child is at risk.
- Who they should contact within your setting/ organisation.
Sanctions and Monitoring

Statement on appropriate sanctions that are given to those who have bullied and give them appropriate support to alter their behaviour.

Outline of sanctions and consequences

Statement outlining when the school may need to contact the Police or Social Care

Statement around parents responsibilities
Parent/carers will be informed about their child’s behaviour and a request made that the parents support the setting with any sanctions that it takes

Preventative strategies

Statement of strategies/methods to support children in understanding and preventing the consequences of bullying through:

Suggested ideas depending on setting
• The settings ethos of celebrating diversity
• staff who role-model behaviour
• Class and whole school assemblies
• Curriculum including PSHE and Citizenship lessons, the spiritual, moral, social and cultural curriculum, circle time, literature
• Anti-bullying week
• Worry Boxes
• Peer mediation which teaches staff and pupils conflict resolution skills to use in relationship disputes
• Surveys
• Safe spaces for vulnerable children and young people
• Publicising ways to report bullying incidents such as texting and online reporting as well as face to face or via telephone
• Responding quickly to reporting of incidents by pupils, parents/carers
• Ensuring appropriate support is given to victims of bullying

Assessing the extent of the problem

To reduce the frequency of bullying you will need to assess the extent of the problem.

• Is there a plan to measure/monitor bullying?
• How will this be done?
• What is the purpose of the measurement/monitoring?
• Who and how are incident monitored to identify patterns, perpetrators
• Is there learning from incidents

Monitoring and reviewing of policy

• Is there a clear plan to monitor and review the policy?
• Who will be consulted? Are children involved
• When will it be reviewed?
10. Resources and Reference List

Continuum of Need Level Indicators

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

KIDSCAPE Parents Helpline (Mon-Fri, 10-4) 0845 1 205 204

Bullying Online [www.bullying.co.uk](http://www.bullying.co.uk)

Kidscape [www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk) for further support, links

Child Line 0800 111