

Delivering on  
**The Children's Plan**

# Safe from Bullying

## in Children's Homes



department for  
**children, schools and families**

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# Introduction

*'They try to get you into trouble with the staff and then you can't say you were bullied – nobody will believe you.'*

Young people in care 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 children 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 Young people who have been bullied can become anxious and withdrawn, depressed or aggressive.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 does not happen only in schools. It can happen anywhere. Children 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 children and 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 Children's Homes, and then outlines 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

- 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 ; *Bullying Beyond School* (2008); *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> hard copy ref: NCPC at 1-800-302-6272.
- 6 Available at: <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/IG00363/>

outside of schools that includes guidance on tackling bullying in:

- Play and Leisure
- Extended services in and around schools
- Journeys and public transport
- FE Institutions and
- Youth activities.

Each of these guidance documents is designed to be used in conjunction with a set of training resources. Because we know that bullying can follow children 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 in Children's Homes.

## Who is this guidance intended for?

Managers, social workers and other staff in Children's Homes.

"Action for Children would want to say that this guidance will contribute to tackling bullying in a positive way. We know as an organisation that bullying affects large numbers of children and young people and can be very harmful for some, we also know that it is an issue that concerns large numbers of children and young people"

**Action for Children**

This guidance is also supported by the Anti-Bullying Alliance, 4Children, EACH (Educational Action Challenging Homophobia) and Childnet International.

## The National Minimum Standards

Specific responsibilities with regard to those living in Children's Homes are contained in regulations made under the Care Standards Act 2000 (section 22), and the National Minimum Standards (section 23). The regulations and National Minimum Standards cover Children's Homes whether they are run by the local authority, an independent provider or a voluntary agency.

Bullying is covered in Standards 17 and 18 of the *National Minimum Standards and Regulations for Children's Homes*.

This guidance outlines how Children's Homes can fulfil the requirements of the National Minimum Standards and make sure that all children and young people living in Children's Homes are safe from bullying.

Standard 17 – There are systems in place to promote the safety and welfare of children and to ensure that children are protected from abuse, which are known and understood by all staff (including junior, ancillary, volunteer and agency staff).

Standard 18.1 – The registered person and the staff create an atmosphere where bullying is known to be unacceptable. There is a policy on countering bullying, which is known to children and staff and is effective in practice.

Standard 18.2 – The registered person has a policy on countering bullying which includes:

- a definition of bullying, which is reviewed frequently with staff and children, and which includes bullying by staff and bullying that may occur elsewhere than in the home and which covers different types of bullying, e.g. on the grounds of race, gender, disability or sexual orientation, and which includes name-calling;
- measures to prevent bullying and to respond to observed or reported bullying;
- training for staff in awareness of, and effective strategies to counter, bullying.

Standard 18.3 – This policy is available and known to both staff and children, including junior, agency and recently appointed staff. The policy is implemented, and monitored for effectiveness in practice. Steps are taken to ensure that the policy is revised where necessary to ensure that staff reduce and respond to bullying effectively.

Standard 18.4 – Children who are bullied are supported, and children who may bully others are given suitable guidance.

Standard 18.5 – The registered person regularly carries out recorded risk assessments of the times, places and circumstances in which the risk of bullying (including bullying amounting to abuse by other children) is greatest, and takes action where feasible to reduce or counteract the risk of bullying.

# The context

## What is bullying?

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

## 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 children 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

child or 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 or instant messages, 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 children wherever they are, including in the home.

Bullies may pick on children 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 children because they belong to a

particular group or wear certain clothing. 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 child should be made to feel inferior because of their background, culture or religion. Forms of racism which are the result of ignorance are hurtful to the recipient and other members of that group. It is vital that all children and young people are valued and learn to respect others. Adults should make their stance against racist behaviour clear to all children 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.

### **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 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>10</sup>

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 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.

Adults can find homophobic bullying difficult to challenge, but some excellent resources are available<sup>11</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>12</sup>.

Homophobic bullying has been shown to have an extremely damaging impact, with depression, suicidal thoughts and self harm reported.<sup>13</sup>

Residential settings may offer opportunities for homophobic bullying not found in school settings.

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 children and 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.
- 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.
- Children 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 children 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 children 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 children with emotional and behavioural difficulties, as well as bullying of them by other children.

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>14</sup> It should be addressed as early as possible.

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

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

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

14 Safe To Play (2008).

In a recent Mencap survey, 8 out of 10 children with a learning disability had been bullied, and 6 out of 10 children said they had been physically hurt by bullying. Eight out of 10 were scared to go out because of bullying<sup>15</sup>.

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

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.



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

## Bullying in Children's Homes

*They never see it- it happens when you are sitting in the lounge when there are no staff – it's threatening and name calling mostly – quite a few people do it.'*

Male, 16

Children in care are among the groups who are most vulnerable to bullying. They report twice the level of bullying than other children in primary years and four times the level in secondary years.<sup>16</sup> Children who are looked after and living away from home are particularly vulnerable,<sup>17</sup> and may face discrimination from other children at school and in the community, simply because they are looked after.<sup>18</sup>

In a consultation for Ofsted's Children's Rights Director<sup>19</sup>, two thirds of children in care or living away from home said that bullying is getting worse. 14% said that they were bullied 'often or most of the time', while a further 20% were bullied sometimes.

When children live together new hierarchies can form, with the strongest bullying the weaker or younger ones. When supervision is limited or staff change frequently, an underlying culture can develop in which children do not report bullying.<sup>20</sup>

Looked after children may have several placements and have to adapt to new situations and people repeatedly. They can lose contact with friends and often with extended family members. There may be higher levels of psychiatric

disorders,<sup>21</sup> with conduct and anxiety disorders being the most common. The life experiences, lost friendships and family difficulties of some children in care emphasise how important it is that they are protected from bullying and supported to avoid bullying others. Staff may find it difficult to know who are the victims and the perpetrators. Some young people constantly change their status between victim and bully.

## Why is it important to tackle bullying in Children's Homes?

Every child and young person should feel safe to learn, play and socialise.



16 Safe To Play (2008) 36% vs. 9% were bullied a lot in secondary years, 38% vs. 19% in primary years.

17 Smith, P.K. (2008) ABA Briefing Bullying Among Looked After Children.

18 Safe To Play (2008).

19 Ofsted (2008).

20 Barter, C. (2003) Young people in residential care talk about peer violence. *Scottish Journal of Residential Child Care*, 2, pp. 39-50 Monks et al (submitted) quoted in Smith above.

21 McCann, J., James, A., Wilson, S. & Dunn, G. (1996) Prevalence of psychiatric disorders in young people in the care system. *British Medical Journal*, 313, pp. 5129-5130, Quoted in Smith above.

Whether in children's homes or other residential settings, every child should be safe from victimisation and discrimination. Their journeys to and from these settings and their life in the community should be free from fear and intimidation. No-one should suffer the pain and indignity that bullying can cause.

### 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.

*'It is particularly important to take bullying seriously in residential homes as if you are living with someone and they are terrorising you, you just can't get away. And some of these kids have been through enough already.'*

Children's Home manager

### 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 children's home staff can take both to prevent bullying and to respond to it when it occurs.

Those children who are severely bullied can suffer lasting detrimental effects<sup>22</sup>, and the fear of being bullied can be just as damaging as actually being bullied.<sup>23</sup> Some young people respond to bullying by taking risky steps to feel safe. Both bullies and victims are more likely to decide to carry a weapon in self-defence, or use alcohol or illegal drugs.<sup>24</sup> Studies show that young people who bully are more likely to carry weapons to school, and to be injured in a fight,<sup>25</sup> and that delinquent behaviour

22 Salmon, G., James, A., & Smith, D. M. (1998). Bullying in schools: self reported anxiety, depression and self esteem in secondary school children. *British Medical Journal*, 17, 924-925.

Kaltiala-Herino, R., Rimpela, M., Marttunen, M., Rimpela, A., & Rantanen, P. (1998). Bullying, depression, suicidal ideation in Finnish adolescents: school survey. *British Medical Journal*, 319, 348-351.

23 Hawker, D.S.J and Boulton, M.J. (2000) Twenty years' research on peer victimization and psychosocial maladjustment: A meta-analytical review of cross sectional studies. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 41, 441-455.

24 Young Voice (2002) Fitting in and Fighting Back (Bullies: 31% carried a weapon 'to stay safe' vs. 24% of peers).

25 Nansel, T.R., Overpeck, M.D., Haynie, D.I., Ruan, W.J. & Scheidt, P.C. (2003 April) Relationships between bullying and violence among US youth. *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine*, 157, 348-353 quoted in Bullying Prevention Is Crime Prevention. Fox, J.A et al (2003) Fight Crime Invest in Kids. Washington DC.

is far more common in children who bully others.<sup>26</sup> Research from the USA and Canada suggests that bullying reduction also reduces crime.<sup>27</sup>



26 Bullying prevention: The nature and extent of bullying in Canada. Retrieved 22.01.09. <http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/res/cp/res/2008-bp-01-eng.aspx> (almost 40% of boys who frequently bully report delinquent behaviour compared to about 5% of boys who never or infrequently bully. For girls who bully frequently, close to 31% report delinquency compared to 3% of girls who never or infrequently bully (Marcel T. Van der Wal, et al., 2003).

27 Bullying Prevention Is Crime Prevention. Fox, J.A et al (2003) Fight Crime Invest in Kids. Washington DC  
Bullying prevention: The nature and extent of bullying in Canada. Retrieved 22.01.09. <http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/res/cp/res/2008-bp-01-eng.aspx>.

# Preventing bullying

As with all steps we take to keep children 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 children, but having a nominated 'anti-bullying lead' from within the home's staff provides a focus for anti-bullying work. A member of staff should be nominated as the person who coordinates all anti-bullying activity in the home. 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.

It is important that this member of staff has the support of the senior management team, if they are not a member of this team themselves.

## Ethos

The ethos of children's homes is important in creating a welcoming and inclusive environment in which bullying is not tolerated.

To create a welcoming, safe ethos:

- Encourage values such as team spirit and respect.

### 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>28</sup> However, young people say they have wanted to help the victim, but felt they could not.<sup>29</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 but should not join in by laughing, jeering or otherwise encouraging bullies by being an appreciative audience.

<sup>28</sup> Craig and Pepler (1997) O'Connell and others (1999).

<sup>29</sup> Safe To Play (2008) Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

- Model fair and respectful behaviour and leadership.
- Challenge all forms of prejudice and promote equality.
- Discourage children from colluding with bullying – bystanders and those who reinforce the bullying behaviour are contributing to it.
- Extend these values to everybody in the home, such as support staff and short term workers or visitors.

Adopting and displaying a charter of rights can help to make these principles clear.<sup>30</sup> See Training Resources for further suggestions about challenging prejudice and encouraging respect.<sup>31</sup>

## Policies

An anti-bullying policy is an important way for everyone in the home 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).
- Consider any other forms of bullying that are particularly likely in a residential setting, such as taking money, or deliberately getting someone into trouble.

- 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 – offer it in a child friendly version and display it or invite young people to design posters.
- Ensure that the policy is revised and updated regularly in consultation with young people.

## Communication

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

- **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>32</sup>
- Make it clear that bullying and harassment are unacceptable, and set out what the consequences are for those who bully.
- Inform children, young people, carers and staff of the anti-bullying policy.
- Include a section on bullying in any welcome pack for young people, in a child friendly version. Staff will also need a guide to the anti-bullying policy and procedures of the children's home.

30 Richardson. R. and Miles, B. 2008 Racist incidents and bullying in schools, Trentham Books An example of a charter of rights is given which can be adapted.

31 See 3: What should an Anti-Bullying policy include.

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

- Use and promote positive images and language. Positive language seeks to praise what a child can do rather than humiliate them for what they cannot do. Positive images of disability and diversity celebrate difference and pride.
- Provide links to useful helplines, websites and local voluntary sector groups.
- Communicate ideas and suggestions from young people via an ideas board or poster/manifesto displays.

## 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 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 home's anti-bullying lead to provide it themselves.

As a result of training, staff should:

- Understand the home's anti-bullying policy, and their role in implementing it.
- Know how to spot bullying, including understanding different types of bullying (e.g. the different ways boys and girls tend to bully).
- 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 home in question. For example, staff may feel they need particular support in learning how to address homophobic bullying, or cyberbullying.

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

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

## Practices

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

- Consult children and young people about bullying, whether they feel safe, and if there are places where they feel unsafe (at the home, at school or travelling between the two).
- Be alert after any home visits. This is a time when children may be distressed, or feel sensitive and vulnerable. Some may bully others due to their own unresolved anger or problems resulting from an emotional visit.
- Be vigilant if a young person has clothing or equipment damaged.
- Hold regular review meetings at which children can raise their worries.

- Provide private quiet times alone with a young person to explore bullying experiences as a parent might. This may involve going out of the home for privacy.

It is also important to build the capacity of children and young people 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 seeming to agree with the bully, deflecting the hurt or refusing to provide the reaction the bully hopes for. Or the 'stuck record' technique in which a child repeatedly calmly says 'No, I don't want to'. Rehearse responses children may feel comfortable using, so that they have a few phrases or a 'special sentence' ready. Practice with the child some assertive body language that gives off a confident air even if the child feels afraid.
- Make sure children 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.
- Where suitable a 'support' group of trained children can be put in place around a child who needs this.<sup>33</sup>

- Celebrate or display initiatives by young people to tackle bullying and to be supportive to others. Display their work, award prizes or enter their work into competitions.

- Teach children and young people 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 them to explore the problem or describe issues of concern to them. Encourage children to use a wider range of words to express how they feel, so that they can be helped before their emotions overwhelm them and so that they can use language to resolve conflicts without bullying.
- Encourage children and young people to take part in structured meetings to discuss any concerns about bullying.

## Partnership

Children and young people in care can experience bullying at the home, at school, during outside activities and on journeys in between the three. As such, an effective response to bullying relies on a close partnership between staff at the home and the other practitioners who work with children.

- Ensure a close partnership with schools through the designated teacher.
- Develop contacts with local partner agencies and the Community Safety manager, as well as your local authority anti-bullying lead.
- Tackle any local prejudice against children in care by proactively making links with local schools and clubs.

- Ensure their journey home is safe by liaising with the local Safer Travel team as buses and walking home are cited as locations for bullying.
- A good working partnership can share information on any trouble spots, serious incidents or newly emerging patterns of bullying.
- A system for recording incidents may be set up and shared.

Complex cases may require case conferences and the support of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

*'I got bullied basically 'cos I was in care. I was taught at home before year 9 and I'd just come into care. People had the wrong ideas about people in care – like they're in the wrong – people said nasty things when I came to the school.'*



# Responding to bullying

*'We say – take a chill pill – it reminds me to count to ten.'*

Boy in children's home, aged 9.

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 child 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. They should contact the home's anti-bullying lead or manager. In a small team, consulting colleagues could be helpful to bring a wider perspective to bear. In large teams a panel may be selected to consider serious cases.

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 child 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 victim calmly, using effective listening techniques.
- Take bullying seriously and avoid telling young people to 'just ignore it'.
- 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.

### Skills for effective listening

Invite and encourage talk.

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

Repeat 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.

## Change the emotional environment **Work with the bullying child**

Address any prejudice exhibited with the whole group – whether within the children's home or outside it. If a group of children 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. They may be doing this outside the home or inside it. But in either case it requires sensitive work with them all. A guest may be invited in to talk to them, a film chosen or some other form of challenge to their accepted view presented to them.

*'They should have covered it at an earlier stage in the general education so that children understand, 'cos people often tell them wrong things about children in care – like keep away from them etc. That's what their parents tell them. People gave me nasty looks. It got worse until I didn't want to go to school. I felt sick. The bullying went on for two years and it drove me so far in the end that ... something just triggered – I didn't trust myself after this. I ended up with worse GCSEs than I should have got. Now I befriend other children'.*

Girl, aged 16

Work with the bully 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 child.
- How does bullying make them feel? Why do they need to do this?
- Help children to find other ways than bullying to feel recognised and ways to manage their emotions. Help a child to learn to recognise their emotions, perhaps marking on a chart how he or she feels today. 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 identify what works for this child. Anger management and conflict resolution skills can be taught. Give the child tasks to do that earn them praise or rewards for pro-social actions such as helping another child with something they are good at or laying the table and helping with meals.

- When a good relationship is established, try to elicit some understanding of the feelings of the victim, and challenge 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. Children 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.
- How can this person make amends or compensate the victim for the distress caused? Can the child offer some ideas?
- Be aware that 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 child 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.

*'They taught me to do deep breathing and calm down. They kind of make me feel loved. It still keeps happening and I get agitated but I know they will help me now.'* Boy in children's home, aged 10

*'When we discussed this book about being mean to one girl, I suddenly saw what it feels like. I felt ashamed that I'd been joining in when C told us to make fun of S.'*

Girl aged 12

## Monitor and record

Bullies will often appear to comply – but may 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. Encourage and praise any positive behaviour by the bullying child.

- Monitor the situation.
- Record any bullying incidents and action taken.
- Report back to the victim.
- Follow up, discreetly, with the victim to make certain the bullying has actually stopped and that they feel safe.
- Do nothing to perpetuate the image of a child as a permanently weak victim, but try to put across a positive strong image of them instead.
- Help the victim to come to believe in themselves starting with small steps.
- Use an incident as a learning opportunity for everyone.

### Check your practice

- Do you make sure that individuals are not ridiculed in front of others?
- Do you give constructive criticism?
- Do you notice if one child 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 children unsupervised?
- Do you encourage all children to make sure that all children develop emotional resilience?

## 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 home's anti-bullying policy should set out a clear process of escalation for dealing with serious and persistent bullying, explaining the roles of the anti-bullying lead and other members of staff, including senior management, 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 outside the home, staff should engage with other practitioners to agree a joined up response. Schools, colleges, activity providers, 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 (see Training Resources).

### 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 the children understand how each other feels, make amends and move on, but only if both parties agree to this approach.

### Involving the Police

Bullying behaviour may involve criminal offences, such as assault, theft, criminal damage, harassment offences, the 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 home's 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.

### **Bullying as a Child Protection 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 home's child protection 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>34</sup>

Be aware that a child may be bullying because of problems in his or her life and prepare for disclosures. For example, it is not uncommon for children to disclose domestic violence when anti-bullying work is undertaken. Appropriate Child Protection procedures should be applied.

### **Removing a child from the home**

In exceptional cases where all attempts to resolve persistent bullying behaviour have proved unsuccessful, it may need to be considered whether a change of placement might be in the best interests of the child carrying out the bullying behaviour and of the other residents of the home. In such cases, staff at the home must discuss this option with the child's social worker so as to ensure that this option is considered in the context of the child's holistic needs and of their Care Plan. Children who are the victims of bullying should not be removed from the home for their own protection, unless they express a wish to move away from all the children in the home and start afresh.

### **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 child 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

## **Action for Children:**

[www.Actionforchildren.org.uk](http://www.Actionforchildren.org.uk).

## **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).

**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/Becta:** For information and materials on a range of online safety aspects such as social networking, being a good digital citizen and cyberbullying [www.becta.org.uk/safeguarding.php](http://www.becta.org.uk/safeguarding.php).

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).

**NSPCC:** Offers a wide range of advice and support in this area, including what to do when a child may disclose a further problem such as domestic violence or neglect. Visit [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk).

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

**Transforming Conflict:** For 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>35</sup>.

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

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