



## **BULLYING**

### **Types of Bullying**

Bullying can occur:

- child to child - includes physical aggression, verbal bullying, intimidation, damage to property and isolation
- adult to child - includes the use of repeated gestures or expressions of a threatening or intimidatory nature, or any comment intended to degrade the child
- child to adult – includes the use of repeated gestures or expressions of a threatening or intimidatory nature by an individual child or a group of children

### **The Individual**

- Respect every child's need for, and rights to, a play environment where safety, security, praise, recognition and opportunity for taking responsibility are available
- Respect for every individual's feelings and views
- Recognise that everyone is important and that our differences make each of us special
- Show appreciation of others by acknowledging individual qualities, contributions and progress
- Ensure safety by having rules and practices carefully explained and displayed for all to see

### **Bullying**

- Bullying will not be accepted or condoned. All forms of bullying will be addressed. Bullying can include:
  - physical pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching etc
  - name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, persistent teasing and emotional torment through ridicule, humiliation and the continual ignoring of individuals
  - sectarian/racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
  - sexual comments and /or suggestions
  - unwanted physical contact
- Children from ethnic minorities, disabled children, young people who are gay or lesbian, or those with learning difficulties are more vulnerable to this form of abuse and may well be targeted.
- Everybody has the responsibility to work together to stop bullying – the child, the parent, the coach, the youth worker, the sport's official
- Appropriate forums should be established within the organisation, including children, parents, youth workers and other agencies, to address, monitor and stop bullying

- Commitment to the early identification of bullying and prompt, collective action to deal with it
- Policy and practice should be agreed through consultation with clubs, parents and children
- Children should be encouraged to take a role in stopping bullying in their club
- Policy and practice should be reviewed regularly in the light of changing needs and changes adopted by other agencies (e.g. schools)

### **Support to the Child**

- Children should know who will listen to and support them
- Any advice and assistance should be given by an appropriately trained and experienced worker
- Children should have access to Helpline numbers
- Children should be told what is being recorded, in what context and why
- **Systems should be established** to open the door to children wishing to talk about bullying or any other issue that affects them. Barriers to talking need to be broken down to enable children to approach adults
- Anyone who reports an incident of bullying will be listened to carefully and be supported, whether the child being bullied or the child who is bullying
- Any reported incident of bullying will be investigated objectively and will involve listening carefully to all those involved
- Children being bullied will be supported and assistance given to uphold their right to play and live in a safe environment which allows their healthy development
- Those who bully will be supported and encouraged to stop bullying
- Sanctions involving long periods of isolation, or which diminish and make individuals look or feel foolish in front of others, should be avoided

### **Support to the Parents/Guardians**

- Parents/Guardians should be advised on local policy and practice about bullying
- Any incident of bullying will be discussed with the child's parent(s)/guardians
- Parental/Guardian advice on action will be sought and agreements made as to what action should be taken
- Information and advice on coping with bullying will be given

Support should be offered to the parent(s) including information on other agencies or support lines.

### **Anti-Bullying Policy**

*Factsheet 2 from Our Duty to Care, Dept. of Health and Children 2000*

This is adapted from the Scout Association of Ireland's Child Protection Policy and may provide a useful reference to organisation's considering an Anti-Bullying Policy

### **What is Bullying?**

Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression be it verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against others.

It is behaviour that is intentionally aggravating and intimidating and occurs mainly in social environments such as schools, clubs and other organisations working with children and young people. It includes behaviours such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting and extortion by one or more children against a victim.

### **Is Bullying harmful?**

Persistent bullying can have a devastating effect on a child's self esteem. They may feel it's somehow their fault, or that there's something wrong with them, they may become withdrawn and insecure, more cautious, and less willing to take any sort of risk.

Being victimised in this way can cause days of mental anguish and leave lifelong emotional scars. It has driven some young people to try to murder their tormentors and others to suicide. A child who has suffered bullying often needs professional counselling to let out their feelings and rebuild their self-confidence. Bullying also affects any child who witnesses it.

What do children get bullied about?

Some of the factors involved in bullying include:

- Puberty
- Peer pressure
- Gender differences
- Stereotypes / prejudice
- Structure of the group – hierarchy of dominance
- Family background of victims and bullies

*Bullying can be distinguished from bossiness and boisterous play. A bossy child will boss whoever is around. So often it is due to lack of self-control or skills of negotiation or compromise. Boisterous play can be dangerous but it does not involved young people wilfully setting out to hurt or victimise. Young people often grow out of this kind of behaviour as they grow older. What distinguishes bullying from bossiness or boisterousness is that the bully always picks on someone less powerful and more vulnerable. Persistent 'slagging', which has the same, devastating effects as bullying, shouldn't be ignored.*

### **How would you know if a child is being bullied?**

All bullies operate using furtiveness, threats and fear. Bullying can therefore only survive in an environment where the victim does not feel empowered to tell someone who can help or in which it is not safe to do so.

The following indicators are warning signs that a young person might be getting bullied.

- Reluctance to come to a centre or take part in activities
- Physical signs (unexplained bruises, scratches, or damage to belongings)
- Stress-caused illness – headaches, and stomach aches which seem unexplained
- Fearful behaviour (fear of walking to scout meeting, going different routes, asking to be driven)
- Frequent loss of 'subs' or shortage of money with vague explanations
- Having few friends
- Changes in behaviour (withdrawn, stammering, moody, irritable, upset, distressed)
- Not eating
- Attempting suicide or hinting at suicide

- Anxiety (shown by nail-biting, fearfulness, tics)

*There are other possible reasons for many of the above*

### **What makes a person bully others?**

Bullies are often making a plea for help through their violent behaviour, which may reflect a sense of insignificance. Bullies whose activities go un-addressed often fail socially and academically in later life. They need to be taught all important negotiation and co-operative skills, working with others rather than competing.

### **Who should deal with bullying?**

While the more extreme forms of bullying would be regarded as physical or emotional abuse and are reported to the health board or An Garda Síochana, dealing with bullying behaviour is normally the responsibility of the organisation where it is taking place.

### **How can it be prevented?**

Modules on raising awareness and developing techniques for dealing with bullying should be included in training.

An Anti-Bullying Policy and Code should be drawn up and enforced and procedures should be clearly established to deal with any incidents. While it is important to have rules about bullying, a whole group policy is the best solution. This means not 'bullying the bully' but working with bullies and the group of young people, helping them to understand the hurt they are causing, and so make the problem a 'shared concern' of the group. Group discussion methods have a big advantage over punishment in that they do not drive the problem underground or escalate it by making the bully more excluded or more of a social failure. This is known as the "No blame approach" (see below)

### **Are there any practical steps that can be used to counter bullying?**

- Use young people as a positive resource in countering bullying and to change the culture of the group to a permission to tell culture rather than a 'might is right' one
- Teach young people to negotiate, co-operate and help others, particularly new or different children
- It's a good idea to run poster campaigns and have stories and role-plays on how to deal with a bully included in ordinary group activities
- Offer the victim immediate support and put the 'no blame approach' into operation
- Never tell a young person to ignore bullying, they can't ignore it, it hurts too much
- Never encourage a young person to take the law into their own hands and beat the bully at their own game
- Tell the victim there is nothing wrong with them and it is not their fault

### **What is the 'No Blame' Approach?**

#### *Step 1 – Interview with the victim*

If you find that there has been an incident of bullying, first talk to the victim. At this stage find out who was involved and what the victim is now feeling. Try asking the following questions:

- Was it verbal or physical intimidation?
- How hurt is the victim
- Was it within his/her own peer group?
- Ensure the victim that his/her name will not come out in the investigation
- Actively listen

#### *Step 2 – Meet with all involved*

Arrange to meet with all those involved; this should include some bystanders, those who may have colluded, those joined in and those who initiated the bullying.

- Just have a maximum of six to eight in the group – keep the number controllable
- Make a point of calling a 'special' meeting

- Ensure the severity of the topic is understood by all
- Speak only of the hurt caused in general terms with no reference to the victim
- Play on the conscience of all – ask questions like: How would you feel? Would you like it done to you?

*Step 3 – Explain the problem*

The distress being suffered as a result of the bullying incident is explained. At this stage the details of the incident or the allocation of the blame is not discussed. Explain the feelings of loneliness, feeling left out, rejected, laughed at. Try asking questions:

- Would they like it if it happened to them
- “Someone here in this group was bullied by someone within the group, what could we do to see it does not happen again?”
- Listen, watch out for reactions, and pick up on any without isolating anyone

*Step 4 – Share the responsibility*

Explain what steps / controls may have to be introduced to prevent further incidents and how everyone will loose out as a result

*Step 5 – Ask the group for their ideas*

At this stage the group is encouraged to suggest ways that would make the victim feel happier. All positive responses are noted. Use phrases “if it were you” to encourage a response. Listen to all suggestions and note them

*Step 6 – Leave it to them*

Now the problem has been identified, solutions suggested, the problem is now handed over to the group to solve. Arrange to meet again in a week’s time. Pass responsibility over to the group and give a time frame within which something must be done

*Step 7 – Meet them again*

Each member of the group, including the bully, discuss how things are going, who is doing what and have there been other incidents. This allows for continual monitoring and also keeps all involved in the process.

Again enforce the idea of the ‘team’ looking after each other at regular intervals to ensure it is know that bullying or intimidating behaviour will not be tolerated.