


FOSTERING SERVICE GUIDANCE ON PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Children's Services (CS) recognises and affirms the right of every young person to live and learn in a safe and secure environment and is committed to the development of policies and strategies for preventing and responding to bullying which support this vision. Bullying is completely unacceptable.
- 1.2 It is acknowledged that bullying can seriously disrupt an individual's personal, social and educational progress and achievement, so CS will develop, promote and implement policies which;
- reduce and eradicate where possible instances in which children and young people are subjected to bullying in any form
 - establish appropriate means of support should an incident of bullying occur
 - ensure that all children, young people and staff are aware of the policy and fulfil their obligations to it
 - reflect the principles contained in this guidance/policy
- 1.3 This document sets out a statement of principles, a definition of bullying, how it may be recognised and how CS expects its services to children and young people prevent and respond to bullying.

2. DEFINITION OF BULLYING

- 2.1 Bullying is defined as deliberately hurtful behaviour, **repeated over a period of time**, where it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves. It can take many forms, but the four main types are physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, theft), verbal (e.g. name calling, racist remarks), indirect/emotional (e.g. spreading rumours, excluding someone from social groups) or cyberbullying (misuse of technology, games, social networks and mobile phones to bully others).

Whilst bullying can take many forms, it is also important to note that bullying can happen anywhere – at home, outside the home, in school and online.

- 2.2 Single incidents of a verbal or physical attack, and behaviour which is hurtful but not intentional, must also be taken seriously and dealt with according to the principles outlined in the guidance/policy.
- 2.3 These are some of the ways children and young people have described bullying:
- being called names
 - being persistently teased or ridiculed
 - being pushed or pulled about
 - being hit or attacked
 - being intimidated by being sworn at, shouted at, treated aggressively in a number of ways including threatening looks over a period of time

- having possessions taken and thrown about
 - having rumours spread about you
 - being ignored and left out
 - being forced to hand over money or possessions
 - being attacked because of your religion, race or colour, disability, gender or sexuality.
 - being sent threatening notes, e-mails or text messages
 - gang pressure
 - being taken advantage of; e.g. my sweets for your watch
- 2.4 CS aims to treat everyone with dignity, respect and consideration and to value the diversity of our community. Bullying will often include elements of discrimination and/or oppression and this must be challenged and responded to appropriately.

For any bullying incident which includes racism, please refer to the County Guidelines for dealing with Racial Harassment.

- 2.5 The effect of bullying behaviour can also be made worse by the contribution of bystander/collusive behaviour. This can happen by:
- choosing to ignore or deny that a bullying incident has occurred
 - witnessing an incident but supporting the bully or refusing to report it
 - being informed that an incident has occurred but does nothing about it
 - failing to report that a colleague or young person has committed or has been accused of, or is implicated in an incident
- 2.6 Bullying usually involves an imbalance of power between the bully and the victim which makes it difficult for victims of bullying to defend themselves and/or talk about it. Bullying does not just happen between children and can involve adults being the perpetrator of bullying to children and other adults as well as being the victim.

3. STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

- 3.1 CS recognises and affirms the right of every young person to live and learn in a safe and secure environment.
- 3.2 CS promotes a culture of treating everyone with respect.
- 3.3 CS ensures that its Schools, Fostering Service and other services have policies in place which aim to prevent bullying and deal with bullying sensitively when it occurs.
- 3.4 CS ensures that it's Schools, Fostering Service including foster carers and other services are sensitive to any signs of bullying and that all young people are listened to.

- 3.5 CS does not tolerate bullying by young people or adults in its Schools, Fostering Service or other services.
- 3.6 CS will help and support both the victim and the bully. Foster carers and workers should be proactive in engaging with the victim and the bully.
- 3.7 CS will ensure that the victim of bullying will be supported to remain in his/her current School, Foster Placement or other service when it is in his or her best interest.
- 3.8 CS ensures that young people, parents, foster carers and other adults know what they should do and to whom they can talk if they believe someone is being bullied.

4. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS AND CARERS

- 4.1 Parents, carers and families have an important role to play in helping schools and other services to deal with bullying. They should:
 - a) Be able to recognise and deal with any indication or incidents of bullying.
 - b) Discourage children from using bullying behaviour at school, at home or elsewhere.
 - c) Take an active interest in their children's school, and out of school activities, discuss friendships, how free time is spent and the journey to and from school.
 - d) Watch out for signs that their children are being bullied, including, if the child:
 - Is frightened of walking to or from school
 - Doesn't want to go on the school/public bus
 - Begs to be driven to school
 - Is unwilling to go to school (school phobic)
 - Begins Truanting
 - Begins to do poorly in school work
 - Comes home with clothes torn or books damaged
 - Often 'loses' dinner or other monies
 - Comes home starving (money/lunch has been stolen)
 - Changes his/her usual routine
 - Becomes withdrawn, anxious or lacking in confidence
 - Starts stammering
 - Attempts or threatens suicide or starts to run away
 - Cries him/herself to sleep or has nightmares
 - Feels ill in the morning
 - Has possessions 'go missing'

- Asks for or starts stealing money (to pay the bully)
- Has unexplained cuts or bruises
- Becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- Is bullying other children or siblings
- Stops eating
- Is frightened to say what is wrong
- Gives improbable excuses for any of the above

e) Develop positive strategies to support children and young people if they are bullied

These signs and behaviours could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated. Please note this is not an exhaustive list of the possible signs of bullying as bullying can affect individuals differently. Also, signs of bullying are not always visible.

4.2 Parents and foster carers should also:

- a) contact the school, or other services such as their supervising social worker and children's social worker at the first sign if they are worried that their children are being bullied or are bullying others
- b) be made aware of any others they should contact if they have concerns about bullying

4.3 Many bullying incidents will be dealt with through the family policy with the support of the supervising social worker and the child or young person's social worker where appropriate. Some schools have found that a reparative approach can be effective in some circumstances. Children's homes find that a similar approach called restorative justice is effective. These approaches involve the bully in carrying out some work for the school or community.

APPENDIX 1 GUIDANCE FOR FOSTER CARERS

1. LEGAL CONTEXT

The Fostering Service National Minimum Standards and Regulations 2011 require the fostering service to ensure that foster carers are aware of the particular vulnerability of looked after children and their susceptibility to bullying; ensuring that procedures are in place to recognise, record and address any instances of bullying and help foster carers manage it.

2. PREVENTION

Foster carers should create an atmosphere where bullying is known to be unacceptable. All young people should feel safe where they live and foster carers have a responsibility to create an ethos where bullying is not tolerated and where everyone: -

- Feels valued for herself/ himself
- Is treated with kindness and respect
- Learns respect for others
- Is able to feel safe from intimidation, threat or harm

3. RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS OF BULLYING

- a) All foster carers will receive a copy of this Guidance and the attached guidance for staff and young people.
- b) Foster carers should be alert to signs of bullying and act. Importantly, they must be seen to act firmly against bullying wherever it appears.
- c) Instances of bullying will be discussed in supervision to ensure a constructive response.
- d) For sustained acts of bullying the supervising social worker will convene a meeting with relevant professionals to agree a plan of action.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES: RECORDING AND MONITORING

- 4.1 Risk assessments will be completed on vulnerable young people and the risk assessment must specifically identify times, places and circumstances where there is a risk of bullying.
- 4.2 Individual Care Plans should include ways of working with the young person to counteract bullying. All care plans will be regularly reviewed in accordance with Hertfordshire County Council policies and procedures.
- 4.3 All incidents of bullying will be recorded on a detailed record (DR1) and the relevant professionals, including schools, and parents/carers informed on a need to know basis.

THE ROLE OF YOUNG PEOPLE

4.4 It is important that young people should:

- Learn about what constitutes bullying and what to do about it
- Have opportunities to develop the skills to resist bullying and to deal with bullying
- Be aware that knowing about bullying by others to others and doing nothing about it is unacceptable
- Be made aware that it is 'OK to tell' if they are being bullied or if they know someone who is being bullied, and that they will receive practical help if they do so
- Be made aware of whom to contact if they have concerns about bullying.

4.5 Anyone who bullies should be made aware of the effect of their actions. It should be made clear to them that they are bullying and that their behaviour is unacceptable. It should be recognised however, that bullies also need help and support and that the foster carers have a responsibility to ensure that they receive the help they need.

5. WHY PEOPLE BULLY

The following are some of the reasons why people bully: -

- They may be scared
- There are family problems
- They have seen others bully
- They are being bullied themselves
- They feel out of control
- They are being abused
- It is seen as a way of surviving
- They feel insecure and unimportant
- To gain acceptance
- Issues related to racism
- Not liking yourself very much/wanting others to feel as bad as you do
- To belong to a particular group or gang
- They are taking out their own anger on others
- They don't understand how bad victims' feel
- They have no friends and feel lonely
- They are selfish and always want to get their own way
- A cry for help/attention
- Not being listened to

6. ACTIONS REQUIRED TO PREVENT AND RESPOND TO BULLYING

6.1 Children and young people should be treated and treat others with kindness and respect. In order to achieve this foster carers and young people will need to work together to counteract bullying and its effects. In order to achieve this: -

- a) All foster carers will be given a copy of this policy.
- b) Risk assessments will be completed on vulnerable young people, and for times, places and circumstances where there is a risk of bullying. This information, and the resulting actions, will be shared with the foster carer, supervising social worker and young people involved.
- c) Incidents of bullying will be addressed immediately or as soon after the incident as possible. Foster carers must inform all relevant professional and seek advice if they're unsure of the most appropriate action to take.
- d) Bullying should be discussed regularly to encourage openness. Young people may need help to understand that it is okay to tell someone and that they will receive help and support if they do.
- e) Instances of bullying will be discussed in supervision to ensure a constructive response.
- f) Individual Care Plans should include ways of working with a young person if they are bullying or being bullied.
- g) Where bullying is felt to be a serious concern, relevant professionals/family members will meet to discuss a way forward.
- h) Foster carer should inform schools of relevant incidents and where bullying is reported at school, foster carers should work closely with the school to come up with the best way of dealing with this.
- i) Where bullying has occurred outside the home, foster carers should ensure that the incident is appropriately followed up, informing all relevant others.
- j) Foster carers should point out bullying behaviour where appropriate and help the young person with alternative ways of behaving.

6.2 In the most serious incidents:

- a) The relevant area social workers will be informed as soon as possible and a discussion will take place as to whether it is safe for the person responsible for the bullying behaviour to remain in placement.
- b) Only in the interests of safety would the person being bullied be moved.

- c) A meeting must be convened with relevant professionals within 72 working hours of the incident.
 - d) The person being bullied will be informed that he/she has a right to inform the police, with support, if they wish to do so.
- 6.3 Incidents of bullying can be discussed with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) in support groups as well as individual consultation.
- 6.4 Training will be provided for foster carers on the awareness of, and effective strategies to, counter bullying.
- 6.5 Young people will be helped with strategies to cope with bullying.

7. WORK WITH THE PERSON BEING BULLIED

7.1 Guiding Principles for intervention: -

- a) Each young person will require an individual response, whilst applying these guiding principles.
- b) Offer support to the young person, being sensitive in listening to their feelings about what is happening.
- c) An opportunity will be given to the young person to talk to someone outside the home if they would prefer.
- d) Foster carers must inform the young person what action they intend to take.

7.2 In deciding what the individual response should be for a particular child, foster carers could:-

- a) Advise on possible responses the young person could give; e.g. to teasing and insults:
 - Responding with more insults generally does not work
 - Arguing can make matters worse
 - Replying to taunts with something short 'maybe', 'that's what you think' and walking away can be helpful in taking control
 - Practising the strategies alone or with someone else can be helpful.
- b) Teach assertiveness techniques (i.e. saying no firmly):

- Help the young person think about what they want to say
 - Talk about having the right to say no
 - Discuss possible responses if a young person is feeling under pressure
 - Talk about ways of coping with anger/distress
- c) Work on self-esteem (i.e. helping a young person develop skills or interests and helping them talk positively about themselves)
 - d) Help young people to think how the person who is bullying might be feeling to try and stop it becoming personal
 - e) Look at courses that may be available
 - f) Talk openly when they see bullying behaviour
 - g) Where appropriate, encourage positive contact between the person being bullied and the person bullying.
 - h) Offer 1:1 if this is felt to be helpful.
 - i) Use Restorative Justice
 - j) Seek advice if you are unsure of an appropriate response

8. WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE WHO BULLY

- 8.1 All forms of bullying should be confronted immediately. If you suspect someone is bullying this needs to be discussed openly. Even if you don't directly witness the bullying, it should still be confronted.
- a) The young person should be encouraged to apologise to the victim of the bullying, and helped to think about ways of making things better (the use of Restorative Justice).
 - b) It will be important to try to work out with the young person why they are bullying (i.e. any of the above mentioned issues). If it is possible to address the reasons this may, in itself, help
 - c) Help the young person think about what it feels like to be the victim of bullying/recalling incidents from their own experiences
 - d) Alternative responses in any given situation/other ways of behaving where the young person doesn't feel like they are losing face
 - e) Helping to think of alternative focuses for the young person (i.e. they may only bully when in a certain setting or when with particular young people)

- f) Anger management techniques
- g) In the more extreme cases outside agencies may need to be involved, e.g. Voice.

9. ON-LINE/CYBER BULLYING

9.1. Online/Cyber bullying includes:

- sending threatening or abusive text messages
- creating and sharing embarrassing images or videos
- 'trolling' - the sending of menacing or upsetting messages on social networks, chat rooms or online games
- excluding children from online games, activities or friendship groups
- setting up hate sites or groups about a particular child
- encouraging young people to self-harm
- voting for or against someone in an abusive poll
- creating fake accounts, hijacking or stealing online identities to embarrass a young person or cause trouble using their name
- sending explicit messages, also known as sexting
- pressuring children into sending sexual images or engaging in sexual conversations.

9.2. With the growth of technology children have changed the way they communicate. Children speak to each other via text and e-mail very regularly.

9.3 They are usually more up to date with current technology than their carers are. As important as it is to identify bullying in the real world it is also important to be aware that cyber bullying is a growing problem for children and young people. It is important to keep communication open with the child so that if they are bullied on-line they are able to tell somebody about it. In recent surveys up to a third of young people have been subjected to hurtful messages from other young people and large numbers have not told an adult about them.
It is important to be involved in their on-line lives. Talk to them about what they are doing; be inquisitive and interested in any new technological developments.

9.4. Ensure you put boundaries around internet use. Make sure the computer is in a public place and keep an eye on what they are accessing. Consider using parental controls. Contact the service provider to find out how to do this. Remind the young person that not everyone on-line is who they say

they are.

- 9.5. CEOP (Child Exploitation and On-line Protection Centre) is CEOP is a law enforcement agency that works nationally and internationally with a clear focus on pursuing offenders and protecting children from sexual abuse. CEOP works closely with child protection professionals to ensure that vulnerable children and those at risk of sexual abuse are given the support and protection required to safeguard them from harm. Specialist social workers from the UK's NSPCC are embedded within teams at CEOP to ensure that the wellbeing of the child/ victim is at the forefront of all investigations. These members of staff also provide initial support to victims and those who report concerns to CEOP via the public reporting function via the ClickCEOP button. You can access further information on their website www.ceop.gov.uk

For more information on online bullying and interactive games for supporting childrens understanding of E-safety visit: <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

10. FOSTER CARERS WHO BULLY OTHERS

- 10.1 Any incident of a foster carer bullying a young person or an adult will be treated extremely seriously. Bullying could include any of the categories mentioned in 2.3 above.

11. FOSTER CARERS WHO ARE BULLIED BY OTHERS

- 11.1 If a foster carer is feeling bullied by a young person the supervising social worker will look into strategies to support them. This may include:
- a) A professionals meeting to look at the best way of dealing with the incident
 - b) Additional support services
 - c) A risk assessment

12. THE ROLE OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES: MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- 12.1 This Guidance is issued as part of a whole departmental approach to preventing and responding to bullying. Schools and other departments of CS are working within the same guiding principles with practice specifically tailored to the individual requirements of the setting.

13. WHERE CAN YOU GET MORE HELP?

Young people should be advised that they may contact any of the following people: -

National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) by telephoning them on the office or free phone number:

01 707 270169
0800 0853070 (Freephone)

Other Useful Names and Contact Numbers Advisory Centre for Education (ACE)

Advice for parents on all matters concerning schools. If you would like to speak to an ACE adviser about bullying a free helpline is available Monday-Friday 2.00-5.00 p.m.

Tel: 0808 800 5793.

<http://www.ace-ed.org.uk/advice/tackling-bullying/>

Bullying online

Gives advice for parents and children as well as links to related websites.

<http://www.bullying.co.uk>

Children's Legal Centre

Publications and free advice on legal issues

<https://www.childrenslegalcentre.com/>

Childline UK

Childline is the UK's free, 24-hour helpline for children in trouble or danger. If you want to talk to someone call Childline free on:

0800 1111

<http://www.childline.org.uk>

Kidscape

Bullying Counsellors available Monday to Friday 10.00 am - 4.00 p.m.

Anti-bullying helpline for parents Tel: 08451 205 204

Useful links available on www.kidscape.org.uk

Mobile and Text Message Bullying

If you or someone you know is receiving text or calls that upset or offend, your network should have a number that you can call to bar or report calls.

Child Exploitation and Online Protection have a website with advice about on-line bullying www.ceop.gov.uk