

Dealing with Bullying Policy

1. Introduction

This policy provides summary information for our staff and for foster carers on what bullying is, how to recognise it, the impact it can have and what we can do about it.

As part of our Independent Fostering Agency, everything we do is underpinned by principles and standards of care. Our prevention of bullying policy specifically helps us to meet the following of these fundamental principles and standards of care:

- The child's welfare, safety and needs are at the centre of their care.
- Children should have an enjoyable childhood and benefit from excellent parenting and education, enjoying a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and skills, leading to a successful adult life.
- Children are entitled to grow up in a loving environment that can meet their developmental needs.

This policy also supports us to meet the National Minimum Standards for Fostering, specifically Standard 3 on promoting positive behaviour and relationships that requires us to have "positive strategies for effectively supporting children where they encounter discrimination or bullying wherever this occurs" (NMS 3.6).

2. Different types of bullying

Bullying can happen at all ages, and in lots of different environments. Children can be bullies as well as being bullied. Remember that:

- Anyone can bully others
- Anyone can be bullied
- Anyone can be an onlooker

There are several types of bullying, the following list identifies the main categories.

Cyber bullying: takes place over digital devices like mobile phones and computers and often occurs through text messages, SMS, Facebook, Snapchat etc and through online media, forums and gaming where people can view, participate in or share content.

Emotional bullying: excluding, tormenting; ridicule; humiliation. Emotional bullying seems to be the most common kind of bullying, and can be the most difficult to deal with.

Physical bullying: including pushing; hitting; kicking; pinching; any form of violence; any form of threatened violence

Racial bullying: racial taunts; abusive graffiti; abusive gestures. Racial bullying can also include verbal, physical or emotional bullying.

Sexual bullying: unwanted physical contact; abusive comments and demanding a child or young person sends inappropriate photographs or images of themselves.

Verbal bullying: name-calling; sarcasm; spreading rumours; persistent teasing.

3. Some signs that a child is being bullied

The following list includes some of the common signs that a child is being bullied. There may be other signs that are not on the list, and a child showing these signs may not always be a victim of bullying. But if the child shows any of these signs, talk to them sensitively about bullying.

Getting to school

The child may:

- Be frightened of walking to and from school
- Change their normal route to or from school
- Not want to go on the school bus
- Want you to go with them on the bus, or take them to school
- Beg you to drive them to school
- Be unwilling to go to school
- Be scared of school and the idea of school
- Feel ill in the mornings

At school

The child may:

- Begin truanting for all or part of the day
- Begin doing poorly in their schoolwork
- Stop wanting to be in the playground

Coming home from school

The child may:

- Come home with their clothes or books damaged
- Come home saying they are very hungry (the bully may be taking their lunch or dinner money)
- 'Lose' possessions regularly
- Have unexplained cuts, bruises, scratches etc.

Outside school

The child may:

- Become withdrawn
- Become aggressive and unreasonable
- Start stammering
- Lack confidence
- Become distressed and anxious
- Stop eating
- Attempt or threaten suicide
- Cry themselves to sleep or have nightmares
- Ask for money or start stealing (to pay the bully)
- Continually 'lose' their pocket money or lunch money
- Refuse to talk about what is wrong
- Begin to bully other children (for example, brothers and sisters) or animals
- Give unlikely excuses for any unusual behaviour

4. The effects of bullying

The effects of bullying can be serious, and can last for a long time. That's why it's important to catch the problem early.

The effects of persistent bullying can include:

- Depression and anxiety
- Increased feelings of sadness and loneliness
- Low self esteem
- Shyness
- Poor academic achievement
- Changes in sleep and eating patterns
- Loss of interest in activities they used to enjoy
- Health complaints
- Increasing the risk of suicide

5. If you think the child that you are looking after is being bullied

A good start is for you to recognise the warning signs that the child is involved in bullying - they could be being bullied, bullying others or witnessing bullying.

If you think that the child that you are looking after is being bullied, assure them that they are not alone in addressing any problems that may arise.

This list of questions and suggestions may help you to discuss the problem with them:

About being bullied

- 'What does bullying mean to you?'
- 'Would you know if you were being bullied?'
- 'What do you think are the reasons people bully other people?'
- Have you ever been bullied - do you feel that you are being bullied now?'

About what the child can do

- 'Keep a diary of what goes on with dates, places and times. It may help to sort things out later.' Or you can keep a diary on behalf of the child.
- 'Get away from the bullying situation as quickly as possible.'
- 'Try to stay around friends or where an adult can see you at break times.'
- 'Don't keep things to yourself. It's OK to share your worries – even if the bully threatens you. Speak to your friends, your teacher, us as your carers, your Social Worker, or any other adult that you can trust about what is going on.'
- 'If you are worried about telling us, we can agree who else should know – who else should be told.'
- 'Once you have told us, or if you tell a teacher, we – or they – can help you to think about what you want to do next, and make sure that you have a say in what happens.'

Once you have worked through these questions and suggestions with the child that you are looking after, you may still feel that you want to turn to others for help and support. You can speak to your supervising social worker and any bullying needs to be reported to the child's social worker.

6. If you think the child that you are looking after is a bully

If you think that the child that you are looking after is behaving in a bullying way, it's important to think through what you can do to solve the situation without alienating the child.

You may find it helpful to work through this list of questions and suggestions:

About being a bully

- 'Do you know what bullying is?'
- 'Are you bullying others?'
- 'Do you realise when you are bullying others?'
- 'Do you know the reasons and how you are bullying others?'
- 'Do you know it's wrong?'

About what the child can do

- 'Think about the pain that bullying can cause – do you mean to hurt or upset others?'
- 'Remember that bullying will not win you any real friends. Try to find other ways of mixing with other children.'
- 'It is not big to make others feel small, or to copy bullying behaviour that you see in others you admire.'
- 'Talk to a friend or an adult about your feelings – particularly any feelings of aggression.'
- 'Ask for support from other people to help you stop bullying.'

Once you have worked through these questions and suggestions with the child that you are looking after, you may still feel that you want to turn to others for help and support. You can speak to your supervising social worker.

7. If you think the child that you are looking after knows about another child who is being bullied

If the child that you are looking after knows about another child who is being bullied, they may be worried about telling an adult in case the bully turns on them. But they will only become more scared and distressed if the situation continues.

You may find it helpful to work through this list of questions and suggestions:

About being an onlooker to bullying

- 'Do you know what bullying is?'
- 'Do you know about a child who is being bullied?'
- 'Do you know why someone might be bullying others?'
- 'Do you know why someone might be being bullied themselves?'

About what the child can do

- 'Listen to people who are being bullied, or are bullying others, and talk to them about their feelings and behaviour. Notice any changes in the way that they act.'

- ‘Don’t join in with people who bully. It isn’t big to make other people feel small.’
- ‘Try not to ignore things because you are worried that you will be bullied yourself.’
- ‘Try not to ignore things because you are worried that you will be bullied yourself.’
- ‘Tell somebody, and encourage others to ask for support and help.’

Once you have worked through these questions and suggestions with the child that you are looking after, you may still feel that you want to turn to others for help and support. You can speak to your supervising social worker, or there are some useful phone numbers and other sources of information below.

8. Further information

If you have any concerns about bullying, you can always talk to your supervising social worker who will listen and be able to help or signpost you to more support.

You can also talk to the child’s school. Every school should have an anti-bullying policy and should take time to discuss your concerns.

Other sources of information are:

Anti-Bullying Alliance

www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk

Childline

Phone: 0800 1111 or visit their website at: www.childline.org.uk

Bullying Advice and Support Helpline

www.nationalbullyinghelpline.co.uk

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