



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol
MERTHYR TUDFUL
MERTHYR TYDFIL
County Borough Council

Safe From Bullying

Linked to Part 3 Regulation 12 (2) and 27 (5) of The Regulated Services
(Service Providers and Responsible Individuals) (Wales) Regulations 2017

The aim of this procedure is to assist staff members across the homes to identify and prevent episodes of bullying – it explores the functions and the impact on young people in general. The procedure also explains staffs responsibility to act and take action as well as share information.

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PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

Merthyr Tydfil's children's home staff work with children and families as part of its activities. The purpose of this policy statement is:

- to prevent bullying from happening between children and young people who reside within our homes
- to make sure bullying is stopped as soon as possible if it does happen and that those involved receive the support they need
- to provide information to all staff, volunteers, children and their families about what we should all do to prevent and deal with bullying

We believe that:

- children and young people should never experience abuse of any kind
- we have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people, to keep them safe and operate in a way that protects them
- bullying causes real distress and affects a person's health and development
- in some instances, bullying can cause significant harm
- all children, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse
- everyone has a role to play in preventing all forms of bullying (including online) and putting a stop to bullying.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

There is no one legal definition of bullying, harassment or victimisation. However, bullying, harassment and victimisation can involve conduct that is unlawful under either common law or specific legislation.

Some acts of harassment or bullying may amount to discrimination, assault or incitement, giving rise to civil liability or criminal prosecution of the perpetrator. Bullying is the intentional (physical or emotional) hurting of one person by another, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. It is usually repetitive or persistent, although some one-off attacks can have a continuing harmful effect on the person being bullied.

Bullying can have a life-long negative impact. 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. At worst bullying has been a factor in suicide.

Ethos

The ethos of the home is important in creating a welcoming and inclusive environment in which bullying is not tolerated. To create a welcoming, safe environment that encourages values such as respect, honesty, empathy and acceptance.

We will seek to prevent bullying by:

- holding regular discussions with staff, children, young people and families who work and live in our homes about bullying and how to prevent it
- providing support for all staff on dealing with all forms of bullying, including racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic and sexual bullying
- putting clear and robust anti-bullying procedures in place.

Our regular discussions with staff, volunteers, children, young people and families will focus on:

- Everyone's responsibilities to look after one another and positive trauma informed behaviour
- Practicing skills such as listening to each other
- Respecting the fact that we are all different
- Making sure that no one is without friends
- Dealing with problems in a positive way
- Checking that our anti-bullying measures are working well.

What is bullying?

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

- 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 there is a danger to an individual, then intervention is urgently required from team members.

What forms can 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 rumors; 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 particular group or wear certain clothing.

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 ethnicity, culture, faith community, national origin or national status.'

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.

Sexual, sexist and transphobic bullying

Sexual bullying includes any behaviour, whether physical or non-physical, where sexuality is used as a weapon by any gender against any gender. It can be carried out to a person's face, behind their back or by use of technology. Sexist bullying refers to bullying 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 and so will not be tolerated. Inappropriate touching can also be a form of bullying and harassment, and need to be considered in line with safeguarding procedures. Similarly, 'jokes' about sexual assault, or rape, if unchallenged, can create an atmosphere in which this behaviour is seen as more acceptable. There should be no tolerance of these forms of behaviour within the home.

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. This can be deemed harassment if it is at the expense of someone's dignity.

Any terms used as an insult are unacceptable and should always be challenged, as such use can create an atmosphere in which a young person feels denigrated and even hounded. Terms are 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.

Disablist bullying

Bullying involving children and young people with disabilities employs many of the same forms as other types of bullying. 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, 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 for example children on the Autistic spectrum, may experience persistent bullying which is used to incite certain reactions from the young person. These behaviours can then be 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.
- There can be bullying between children with emotional and behavioural difficulties, as well as bullying of them by other children. It is important to monitor the relationships and consider compatibility between children.
- Young people with disabilities report being bullied in the street, on the bus and in shops or at college. It should be addressed as early as possible and the young person provided with support.

When children live together new hierarchies can form very quickly. When supervision is limited or staff change frequently, an underlying culture can develop in which children do not report bullying. Children Looked After may have had several placements and have had to adapt to new situations and people repeatedly. They can lose contact with friends and often with extended family members. 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 persons being bullied and those bullying. Working in a trauma informed way will support the young people to develop healthy relationship skills and will reduce incidents of bullying.

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.

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.

Diversity and inclusion

We recognise that bullying is closely related to how we respect and recognise the value of diversity. We will be proactive about:

- seeking opportunities to learn about and celebrate difference
- increasing diversity within our staff, volunteers, children and young people
- welcoming new members to our homes.

Preventing Bullying

Tackling bullying is the responsibility of ALL who work with children, the home manager will be the 'anti-bullying lead' who provides a focus for anti-bullying work. The home manager coordinates all anti-bullying activity in the home.

This leadership role includes responsibility for:

- Maintaining policies
- Arranging training
- Responding to bullying incidents
- Ensuring that records are kept
- Linking with the local authority equality team and other partners, as appropriate.
- 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.

Bystanders: an audience for bullying

When one person bullies another there is often an audience and supporters who reinforce the behaviour. Bystanders can lend support to the bullying simply by watching, however, young people say they have wanted to help the person being bullied, but felt they could not. 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 person being bullied 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.

Practices

There are a number of specific practical steps which the home 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 family time. 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 home 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- All incidents of bullying to be recorded on the bullying incident form.

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.
- Tackle any local prejudice against children in care by proactively making links with local schools and clubs.

Responding to Bullying

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 person being bullied safe.
- To stop the bullying and change the 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 manager as soon as possible. Consulting colleagues could be helpful to bring a wider perspective.

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 young person calmly, using effective listening techniques.
- Take bullying seriously and avoid telling young people to 'just ignore it'.
- Agree an action plan with their consent.
- Consider the views of all young people when taking actions.
- Support all parties involved considering a trauma informed approach for example by building up 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.

Consider the emotional environment

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.

Work with the children to help them understand their behaviour and its effects on others.

The overall goal is to ensure the bullying stops:

- Make it clear that it is the behaviour of bullying that is not acceptable, 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. Is there a trigger that can be identified and actions that can reduce these behaviors? 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 have some understanding of the feelings of the person being bullied, 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 person being bullied for the distress caused? Can the child offer some ideas?
- Be aware that many people who bully others have been bullied at some point themselves and may still be one. These cases might be more complex and those involved may need professional help and counselling.
- Avoid granting the bully hero status or marginalising them so that you have no influence. Consider trauma informed practice.
Sometimes a child 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.

Monitor and record

Monitoring whether bullying has stopped or continues less overtly can be challenging for staff. Incidents may have decreased or appear less obvious and so it is important that staff continue to monitor and support all parties. Behaviours may have changed because of strong controls which strictly enforced, but work needs to continue to determine whether the intervention has secured lasting change. Encourage and praise any positive behaviour and model appropriate behaviours.

- Monitor the situation.
- Record any bullying incidents and action taken – bullying forms are to be utilized and sent to SW and TM
- Report back to the person being bullied.

- Follow up, discreetly, with the person being bullied 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 person being bullied 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 feedback?
 - 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 person being bullied safe and to stop the bullying behaviour. 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 and activity providers may have a role.

Resolving Conflicts

Even when bullying has been serious or persistent, the most effective response may be to resolve matters between those involved. 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, harassment offences, 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 manager and Team Manager should make the decision as to whether to involve the police with the support and consent of senior management; this should not be taken without due consideration due to Merthyr Tydfil's ethos of not criminalizing children. Alternative methods should be considered first before contacting the police; nonetheless children need to be protected from bullying.

Bullying as a safeguarding Issue

A bullying incident should be addressed as a safeguarding 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 both children's allocated social workers. In making this decision, staff should follow the home's safeguarding procedures.

Be aware that a child may be bullying because of problems in his or her life and therefore support is needed for all parties involved in incidents. Appropriate safeguarding procedures should be applied if any safeguarding issues are alleged.

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 person being bullied feel safe?
- Did the person conducting the bullying behaviours change?
- What have we learned?

Feedback Form

Name of Policy:

Please insert identifying details from 'Document History' from the front cover

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We would value your suggestions and comments for consideration for the next **Review**. We would really like your feedback on this document and would welcome your views on what should be added, taken away, or changed. We would also like to be advised of:

- Related evidence based practice or training issues
- Any areas of practice which would benefit service user care by being added to the document, or any other aspects of practice which should be included here
- Any factual errors or inaccuracies in the document
- Other related issues which would help inform the Policy.
- Please use the space below and overleaf for your comments.

It would be helpful if you could date your comments. Please feel free to add or withhold your own identifying details as you see fit.

Please return your views to the Responsible Individual

If you would like this information in another language or format, please contact us.

