



A Guide to... **respectme, Scotland's Anti-Bullying Service**

Practical advice and guidance on preventing and addressing bullying behaviour

“respectme’s vision is of a society where all children can live free from bullying and harassment and are encouraged to reach their full potential”

Introduction

respectme, Scotland’s Anti-Bullying Service, was launched in March 2007 and is managed by SAMH (Scottish Association for Mental Health) & LGBT Youth Scotland in partnership with the Scottish Government.

Although we work with schools, our remit extends far beyond the school gates. Bullying isn’t confined to the playground, it can happen anywhere: at school, at home, at the local football club, or at the local youth club.

respectme works with **all** adults who have a role to play in the lives of children and young people, providing practical advice and guidance to give adults the skills and confidence to deal with bullying behaviour, wherever it occurs.

What We Do

Assistance with Policy Development

A strong policy is the cornerstone in delivering effective anti-bullying strategies.

respectme can help organisations to develop a policy from scratch using the ‘Better Policy Making’ approach, which outlines the steps that should be taken to ensure that the policy is robust, well informed and in line with current legislation.

We can also help with the evaluation and development of existing policies, which should be reviewed at least every three years to ensure that they meet the changing environment in which we work and live.

Assistance with Practice Development

When your anti-bullying policy is in place, you need to develop a strategy to ensure that it is effectively implemented. There isn’t a single strategy that ‘fits’ all organisations, different measures will meet different needs. respectme can help you to establish which measures will work for you and help you to put them in place.

We also offer free training to adults across Scotland and have produced a Training Toolkit, which is cascaded through a programme of Training for Trainers.

www.respectme.org.uk



What is Bullying Behaviour?

If you were to ask your colleagues, 'what is bullying?' you would get a number of different answers. Perceptions and attitudes towards bullying can differ from person to person, between organisations and even between departments within the same organisation. This simple question can set the scene for the way that you view and deal with bullying incidents at an organisational and personal level, so it is important to find some common ground.

respectme understands that it is not always easy to narrow behaviour into a definitive statement that will cover all actions and situations, but it is important to recognise and acknowledge bullying behaviour so it can be addressed.

Bullying behaviour can include:

- Being called names, teased, put down or threatened
- Being hit, tripped or kicked
- Having belongings stolen or damaged
- Being ignored, left out, or having rumours spread about you
- Receiving abusive text messages or emails
- Being targeted because of who you are or who you are perceived to be

When devising a definition of bullying for your organisation, staff, young people and other key stakeholders should be consulted. Some key points to consider during this consultation are:

When is bullying not bullying?

Children will fall in and out with each other, have arguments, stop talking to each other and disagree about what is cool and what is not – this can be a normal part of growing up and it is important to recognise that. However, in an environment where this behaviour is left unchecked, it can lead to bullying behaviour.

Prejudice-based bullying

Children and young people can experience bullying for a variety of reasons, including their sexuality, disability, the colour of their skin, the clothes they wear or the team they support, ie. difference or **perceived** difference. Some children and young people don't understand diversity and only see difference. Adults should be prepared to deal with any prejudiced attitudes that might be unearthed.

Impact

It is important to take into account the impact of bullying behaviour. Bullying behaviour can leave people feeling helpless, frightened, anxious, depressed and demeaned and this should be taken into consideration. If you are unsure if behaviour is bullying, look at the effect it is having on the child or young person.

Intent

In some cases, children or young people may not be aware that their behaviour is bullying. They might be copying the behaviour of adults or other children and young people, not understanding that it is wrong. In these circumstances, the intent to bully may not be present but it will still affect the person being bullied.

Does the behaviour have to be persistent?

For those who have been bullied, the fear and anticipation of further bullying can affect their ability to be themselves and interact with others, even after just one incident. Bullying behaviour and its potential impacts should be addressed as they arise.

POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR AND ACTIONS

- Be a good role model - respect others and be courteous at all times
- Get young people involved in writing a Behaviour Pledge
- Have clear boundaries that are well communicated
- Agree natural consequences for behaviour and a way back for those who need support
- Talk about diversity and prejudice with young people
- Listen! Your response is vital. A considered and empathetic response will help young people communicate with you
- Discuss bullying behaviour as a team and agree consistent responses
- Listen to what the young people want to happen. Most young people want bullying to stop with a minimum of fuss so be mindful of this
- Create a range of ways for young people to tell you they are being bullied, for example through bullying or feedback boxes or one to one sessions
- Encourage young people to be supportive of each other; peer support schemes can be really worthwhile
- Access information and training to improve your skills
- Be proactive! Get your colleagues and the young people to think about bullying through projects or discussions

NEGATIVE BEHAVIOUR AND ACTIONS

- Ignoring the behaviour or not naming it
- Thinking it is just a normal part of growing up or it is part of the character building process
- Encouraging anyone to hit back
- Confusing and inconsistent responses
- Overreacting - it is likely to put off anyone who really needs your help
- Assuming that all adults know what to do
- Jokes or comments that reinforce prejudice and ignoring these when they are made
- No policy, procedures or access to training and advice

Issues Specific to Youth Workers

Youth Workers interact with young people in a wide variety of settings and this can raise a number of issues in relation to bullying. Youth Workers often see children and young people in situations which other adults won't see them in: relaxed among friends, anxious or agitated around people that they don't know very well, or seeking out adult attention or company in order to avoid people or activities. In turn, children and young people can view relationships with Youth Workers as unique – an adult who is not seen as an authority figure who can offer advice and support. This means that Youth Workers will often be in a position to identify bullying behaviour and/or be the adult that a child or young person decides to disclose bullying behaviour to.

Children and young people may disclose that they are being bullied in environments which you as a Youth Worker have no influence over. What can be done in these situations? The response should always be the same. The child or young person should be reassured that they have done the right thing by telling you and should be encouraged to speak to an adult in authority in the organisation where they are experiencing the bullying. You can be a good source of information and support by learning about the policies and practices of the other environment (school, sports club, etc) and letting the child or young person know what they can expect.

You can also play a vital role in the process of recovery by supporting children and young people involved in bullying behaviour to regain control, rediscover meaning in their lives and take safe risks. To learn more about children and young people's journey of recovery from bullying, visit www.respectme.org.uk.

Youth Workers and other Community Education Workers are usually very skilled at reflective practice. This can be a vital tool in addressing or preventing bullying behaviour within your club or group. Practitioners must reflect on an individual and organisational level. If bullying behaviour is on the increase, or is flourishing, you should consider whether staff are offering consistency to children and young people. Are children and young people having the same inappropriate behaviour addressed in a consistent manner? Is there consistency in staffing? Is positive, respectful behaviour being role modeled by staff towards each other and towards children and young people?

It is **vital** that youth workers remain conscious of their position as role models to children and young people. This involves challenging unacceptable behaviour or language at all times, even when the person on the receiving end insists that things are okay, that it is just banter or that it doesn't bother them. This may or may not be true. How you react to these situations is key.

Culture, Practice and Response

To create an ethos where bullying is never acceptable, it is important to adopt preventative and reactive strategies on all organisational levels. This will involve looking at the culture, practice and response of the organisation in relation to anti-bullying work and dealing with bullying incidents and behaviour.

Culture – An organisation’s culture should make it clear that bullying is never acceptable and support all adults and children and young people in achieving this ethos.

Practice – Day to day practices should reflect the message that bullying is never acceptable.

Response – Your response when dealing with children and young people involved in bullying incidents is vitally important. The response should be consistent regardless of who the child or young person approaches.

Bullying incidents should be reviewed individually and you might find that you have to adopt different strategies before finding one that is effective. The following sections will provide further information on implementing the message that ‘bullying is never acceptable’ into your organisational culture, practice and response.

Culture

A culture that encourages respect, values opinions, celebrates difference and promotes positive relationships will make it more difficult for bullying behaviour to flourish or be tolerated. The overarching ethos of any organisation should make it clear that bullying is never acceptable and all adults, children and young people should understand the role they play in addressing bullying.

Anti-bullying Policy

An anti-bullying policy can be the start of shaping this culture. It provides consistency in process, action and practice and enables organisations to keep account, and be accountable for, anti-bullying work. A successful policy also serves as guidance and a support mechanism for those implementing and receiving the policy.

Building Positive Relationships

Building positive relationships based on respect and embracing difference is essential in preventing bullying behaviour. Teaching children and young people to negotiate, socialise appropriately and to find non-bullying strategies to deal with conflict will create an environment where bullying is less likely to be tolerated.

Case Study

respectme was asked to support a community based young people's drop-in project to develop an anti-bullying policy. The Young People's Advisory Group for the project was to be the driving force behind the policy development and welcomed the idea with a resounding cry of 'Noooooo – not a boring policy!' The young people were clear that they were not interested in a lengthy policy document or a list of 'don'ts'. As a result, the work started from a discussion where the young people were asked to think about behaviours that they encountered that they did not like. After some time it became clear that it was more productive to talk about behaviours that they *did* like and identify ways in which they would like to be treated by other young people and by staff.

Through discussion it was decided that an 'Expectations' document should be produced. This was a simple document outlining what type of behaviour the projects expect to see displayed by staff and by young people. This included kindness, friendliness, politeness, patience, humour, fairness, consideration and making sure that everyone gets a chance. The document was coupled with a review of the discipline procedures; promotion of the 'expectations' – all young people signing a pledge, an anonymous 'concerns' box, a 'launch' of the document – and continuity plans for keeping awareness levels high.

The Young People's Advisory Group had developed a policy and policy guidelines in the form of a pledge and supporting guidelines – and they didn't even know it!

Partnership Working

Bullying is a joint responsibility using everyone's expertise to achieve a shared vision of how the problem should be solved. At the very heart of this is consultation and children and young people should be involved before any anti-bullying strategy is put into place. Steps can then be taken to work in partnership with other organisations to address the problem. Partnership working and consultation allow everyone involved to understand the needs, expectations, concerns and capabilities of each partner. Partners you may wish to engage with include schools, parents, the police and community education staff.

Role modelling

Young people will model their behaviour on what they are witnessing and we should always be mindful of this. Lead by example. If you boss, judge and criticise, children and young people will think this behaviour is acceptable and follow your lead. Let children and young people know that bullying is never acceptable and help them to find non-bullying strategies to deal with conflict. Talk to children and young people, and listen to them. Show them respect and they will respect others.



The respectme Training Model

respectme can help to build your confidence and skills in dealing with bullying behaviour through our programme of training. Training is important in helping to ensure that all staff within an organisation are consistent in their approach, understand the role they play and have the necessary skills to prevent and address bullying incidents.

respectme's 'It's Never Acceptable' training provides an introduction to bullying behaviour and the practical strategies that can be used to address bullying.

This one day training is being delivered free of charge throughout Scotland to a wide audience, including youth workers, teachers, parents and carers. The training has been extremely well received by the wide variety of delegates who have participated to date.

"Training is excellent. Tutors knew their subject well, they were enthusiastic and I certainly felt that they are approachable to get further information and support."

**"Excellent teaching, I learned more than I thought.
This will be of benefit to me both on a professional and personal level."**

However, to help us reach as wide an audience as possible, and to keep up with demand for our training, we are using a 'cascade' model. This allows us to train a series of trainers who can then deliver our one day training programme on our behalf. To facilitate this, we have devised a two-day Training for Trainer's programme which provides participants with the necessary knowledge and skills to deliver this training within their organisation or community.

To make this as straightforward as possible, our training toolkit has been designed so it can be adapted to meet the specific needs of different organisations; e.g. case studies and examples of bullying behaviour can be developed which are relevant to the work of particular organisations or specific roles within them. The flexibility of the toolkit also allows training to be delivered at a time that suits individual organisations and audiences, for example, over three two-hour slots or two half-days. respectme will provide guidance and support with adapting the materials to suit organisational needs.

For further information on respectme training events and opportunities to access Training for Trainers, visit the training section of the respectme website: www.respectme.org.uk



Find Out More

Further information on policy and practice development, training opportunities, and general advice and guidance on bullying-related issues can be found on the respectme website: www.respectme.org.uk

Alternatively you can contact us on 0844 8008600 or email: enquire@respectme.org.uk