

COUNTERING BULLYING

Outcome Statement

All members of the Community are protected from bullying and harassment

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Definition of Bullying

Bullying is defined as any behaviour or actions of a child, young person, member of staff, teacher or other adult, group of people or a whole organisation, designed to cause distress or to hurt a person or group of people.

Precise definitions are difficult, but the key factor is that the action, whatever it is, causes distress to the recipient. Research suggests that the most distressing aspect of living away from your own family is the impact of the behaviours and actions of others.

General

The young people cared for by ourselves are particularly vulnerable to both being bullies and to being bullied. This will be for a variety of reasons including being new comers to the existing group, and having been exposed to poor role models in the past.

Everyone involved in the care of children shares responsibility for safeguarding them and countering bullying. We must strive to create a culture which positively encourages acceptable behaviour and reduces the likelihood of bullying. Donyland Lodge must make every effort to create an atmosphere where bullying in any form is known to be unacceptable to both the young people and the staff.

In order to promote this ethos all staff must understand what bullying means and what measures should be taken within the home and by

individuals to counter it. Staff must be alert to the fact that bullying may also be a potential Child Protection matter and must always be considered in that context and, as such, may need to be reported under Safeguarding Procedures.

Risk Assessment and Planning

The manager will regularly carry out and record risk assessments of the times and circumstances at which the risk of bullying is greatest. The manager should record the action taken where feasible to reduce or counteract the risk of bullying.

As part of the assessment and planning process, the manager must ensure that the risk of bullying either as a victim or a perpetrator is considered and covered as part of the child's Care Programme, and where necessary have clear strategies for reduction and prevention.

Countering Bullying Day-to Day

If staff have concerns, they must discuss them as a staff team and with their manager, who will agree what action will be taken. If the bullying is serious or persistent, the social workers should be consulted and it may be necessary to hold a strategy discussion in line with Child Protection Procedures.

Notifications and Management Review

There are different notification procedures depending on the persistence and seriousness of the bullying.

Where bullying is not persistent or serious it should be notified in the first instance to the manager; who will then liaise with the social worker and agree what actions to take.

If the bullying is persistent or serious, it is to be deemed to be an incident which must be notified to the manager without delay. The manager and social worker will then decide who else needs to be informed and by whom.

The manager and social worker will also consider whether the incident may constitute potential referral under Child Protection Procedures.

Consideration should also be given as to whether the incidents warrants notification to the regulatory authority (Schedule 5) Notifiable Events

GUIDANCE

Introduction

Bullying can be a major management problem in residential settings where a range of children and young people with different problems are accommodated. Other young people from outside the home may also be involved, and there may be allegations of bullying by teachers, care staff or support staff working in the home. All reports and situations that arise will need to be looked into and managed sensitively.

Staff may come across children who seem to invite bullying, who will set themselves up in the role of victim. They may become very attention seeking of staff and can be a complex problem to address, as staff will want to protect the child, but at the same time will need to address the young person's need to create situations in which they make themselves deliberately vulnerable.

In some circumstances it may be necessary to seek guidance from an expert or specialist.

Bullying is best dealt with in its early stages before it has the chance to become established, it will need a consistent and concerted effort from the staff team to bring it under control and to re-establish healthy peer group functioning. If not addressed quickly the danger is that such behaviour may self-perpetuate, since new arrivals will be encouraged to join with it or become subject to it themselves.

Underlying Principles

Bullying can be defined as the behaviour of one person or group, which causes distress to another person or group as a result of physical menace, assault, verbal abuse or threats. Bullying activities may include teasing, horseplay, humiliation, isolation, extortion, damage or theft of property. Precise definitions are difficult, but the key factor is that the action is causing distress to the recipient, rather than the motivation of the perpetrator(s).

Examples to consider

- VERBAL Name calling or making personal comments
- SOCIAL Not being spoken to or being left out

MATERIAL Possessions are stolen, damaged or extorted

MENTAL As in pressure to conform

PHYSICAL Harassment or aggression, physical assaults

SEXUAL Harassment or aggression, unwanted advances or comments, discrimination, exclusion.

RACIAL Harassment or aggression, taunts, exclusion, discrimination.

Other factors to consider in terms of seriousness will include:

- How long has the bullying been going on?
- How is it personally affecting the bullied child?
- The number of children involved
- The degree of pre planning and provocation

Any child may be subject to bullying, but bullying often occurs when a child is seen as vulnerable because they are different, or inclined to be a loner. This can apply to many children in residential care.

Staff must be very clear of their role in supporting young people to report incidents of bullying.

It has been shown through research that children who bully have often been bullied themselves, but bullying may also occur because a child is unhappy, jealous or lacking in confidence.

Staff must also recognise that bullying can bring young people perceived or actual rewards, including:

- The demonstration of superior power
- A closer group identity
- Gaining attention or material gain
- Venting anger, frustration
- Compensating for a lack of something
- Excitement from the fear of others

Such rewards are the “encouragement” required to continue the behaviour and may lead to its development into a sophisticated mechanism for control, which can be difficult to detect and challenge if it becomes the “culture” of the home.

Dealing with Allegations and Suspicions

In order to maintain an effective strategy for dealing with bullying staff need to challenge the traditional misconceptions about bullying e.g.

- It's only a bit of harmless fun
- It's all part of growing up
- He sees the funny side of it
- Adults getting involved just make it worse
- Leave them to sort it out for themselves

Establishing a climate of openness will help children and young people to feel able to speak out about issues and incidents of bullying.

Under no circumstances should staff use children to control other children.

Helpful Techniques

The Listener Listen patiently with full attention, encouraging, clarifying, restating, reflecting, validating and summarising.

The Detective Establishes clear details of the allegation/suspicion.

The Supporter Seeing their side, acknowledging and allowing expression of their feelings.

The Coach Checking out what help is being asked for and offering practical realistic options.

Resolving/Reducing Incidents of Bullying

- Create an anti-bullying climate within the home
- Adopt a zero tolerance of minor incidents "nipping in the bud"
- Never ignore victims of bullying, always show concern
- Publicly acknowledge the bullied child's distress
- Openly discuss issues in Community Meetings
- Encourage mutual respect, compassion, empathy and assertiveness
- Avoid being accusatory or threatening in your responses to bullying behaviours
- Focus on the behaviours as opposed to the child, explore and where possible deal with the reason for the bullying
- Assess what they get out of the behaviour, could they achieve this in a positive way
- Keep the situation closely monitored