

# Countering Bullying

We are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment. Bullying of any kind is not acceptable within Donyland Lodge. All young people should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. Any bullying behaviour will be challenged immediately. This is done not only on at individual level but also in the Community meetings by the staff and whole resident group.

## **Bullying:**

Bullying is most simply defined as “the wilful, conscious desire to hurt, threaten or frighten someone.” Research indicates that the most distressing aspects of living away from your own family is the impact of the behaviour and action of the other young people.

Everyone involved in caring for young people shares responsibility for safeguarding children and countering bullying and we strive to create a culture, which positively encourages acceptable behaviour and reduces or prevents the likelihood of bullying. Donyland lodge makes every effort to create an atmosphere where bullying is known to be unacceptable to both the young people and the staff.

As part of the ethos, everyone must understand what bullying means and what measures should be taken within the home and by individuals to counter it. Everyone should also be clear what measures they should take if they suspect bullying or it is reported to them. In this respect, everyone should be alert to the fact that bullying may be a potential child protection matter and if appropriate the child protection procedures should be followed.

Bullying can be:

**Emotional** – being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (eg: hiding possessions, threatening gestures)

**Physical** – pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence

**Racist** – racial taunts, graffiti, gestures

**Sexual** – unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments

**Homophobic** – because of, or focussing on, the issue of sexuality

**Verbal** – name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing

The severity can vary from horseplay to vicious assault. Bullies may be motivated by use of aggression to get their own way, to extort favours or goods or money, or may get pleasure from inflicting pain, fear, or humiliation. An individual or a group may carry out bullying.

## **Why is it Important to Respond to Bullying?**

Bullying hurts. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Young people who are bullying need to learn different ways of behaving.

We all have a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying.

## **Statement of Policy**

An anti-bullying policy needs to address bullying behaviour with a holistic approach encompassing prevention, intervention and changes of attitude and/or behaviour of both perpetrator and victim.

Bullying within Donyland Lodge is unacceptable and will be addressed. Young people should be made aware that if they are experiencing threats or bullying from other residents they could raise this privately with any member of staff. Alternatively young people can use the complaints procedure to seek help and support.

Regular discussions on bullying and anti discriminatory issues take place with both staff and young people in a variety of forums including community meetings, staff and Keyworker meetings; this subject is also raised within PSHE studies in Education. Young people are taught that differences are not divisive but should be celebrated. Young people from different cultural, racial and religious backgrounds are recognised and the exploration and acceptance of different ideas and beliefs is encouraged. Racial and cultural bullying is typically a product of ignorance and fear and should be challenged whenever and wherever it happens.<sup>1</sup>

Staff have an important role in modelling non-intimidating behaviour, and in setting positive standards for dealing with conflict and disagreements. Children learn by example and staff should provide behaviour role models for young people. Adults should not resort to shouting, being abusive, sarcastic, or insulting. Adults should raise self-esteem, listen, promote social skills, and encourage assertiveness among young people. Staff must be alert to the possible signs that bullying is taking place and should investigate if a young person:

- Seems to be frightened
- Does not want to take part in activities with others
- Changes their usual routine
- Becomes withdrawn, anxious or lacking in confidence
- Starts stammering
- Is secretive
- Attempts or threatens suicide
- Runs away
- Requests a move from Donyland Lodge or disrupts agreed placement plans
- Cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
- Feels ill in the morning
- Begins to do poorly in school work
- Has clothes torn
- Has property damaged
- Has possessions “go missing”
- Asks for or steals money
- “Loses” money
- Has unexplained cuts or bruises
- Becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- Is bullying other young people
- Stops eating
- Is frightened to say what is wrong
- Gives improbable excuses for any of the above

These signs and behaviours could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

All young people must know that victims and bystanders have an obligation and duty to tell staff if they have been in receipt of or witnessed bullying behaviour. Secrecy allows bullying to flourish. Young people need to be taught that they are expected to report any bullying, whether as a victim or as a witness. Once bullies know that their actions will be reported automatically, they quickly learn that they can no longer rely on the silence of victim and bystanders to protect them.

All young people in the care of Donyland Lodge need to be very clear about what will happen to both bully and victim. On admission to Donyland Lodge all young people are presented with a contract as part of the “Welcome Book” setting out clearly the code of

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<sup>1</sup> *How to Stop Bullying: A Kidscape training Guide*

behaviour expected within Donyland Lodge. Staff will go through this contract carefully with new residents who will then sign a statement that says that they understand and agree to adhere to the conditions laid out.

**Bullying behaviour has three main features:**

- Deliberate aggression.
- An unequal power relationship.
- It causes pain and distress.

**Procedures:**

1. A young person should report and bullying incidents to staff.
2. Any case of serious bullying will be recorded by staff.
3. In serious cases social workers will be informed, and will be asked to come to Donyland Lodge to discuss the problem.
4. If necessary and appropriate, other authorities will be consulted
5. The bullying behaviour or threats of bullying must be investigated and the bullying stopped quickly.
6. An attempt will be made to help the bully or bullies change their behaviour.

**Outcomes:**

1. The bully or bullies may be asked to genuinely apologise.
2. In serious cases some form of sanction will be considered.
3. If possible the young people will be reconciled
4. After the incident or incidents have been investigated and dealt with, each case will be continuously monitored to ensure repeated bullying does not take place.

**Prevention:**

At Donyland Lodge we will use various methods for helping young people to prevent bullying. These may include:

- Writing a set of rules
- Signing a behaviour contract
- Writing stories or poems or drawing pictures about bullying
- Reading, or being read, stories about bullying
- Making up role plays
- Having discussions about bullying and why it matters

**Addressing the Needs of the Victim:**

Donyland Lodge have adopted a multi agency approach in serious cases of bullying, however in the first instance of a report of bullying staff must:

- Show support for the victim. In particular ensure that victims of bullying are not viewed as “wimps’ or weaklings.
- Assess factors in the individual that may elicit bullying from others.
- Develop a programme for the individual aimed at reducing behaviour, which attracts bullying. Seek advice from management where necessary.
- Demonstrate that work is being undertaken where necessary.

**Addressing the Needs of the Bully:**

- Ensure that the behaviour is discussed in a safe setting with the bully and clearly recognised as unacceptable.

Assess the factors producing the bullying behaviour: e.g. insecurity, disrupted relationships, and previous victimisation peer pressure.

Develop a programme to address these issues. Seek management advice where necessary.

Demonstrate support for the victim and encourage empathy and understanding of others.

### **The Potential Risk for Bullying Behaviour within Donyland Lodge.**

Given the nature of the difficulties the residents have and the trauma they have suffered due to their early life experiences, their potential to be either a victim or perpetrator of bullying behaviour is great. In some cases the complexity of the individual young person is such, that they may be both bully and victim.

Their backgrounds of violence and abuse for many of our residents, leaves them with very little capacity to tolerate any anxiety of mental pain, which they quickly try to locate in others. Bullying behaviour can be an ideal outlet for their frustrations and the level of intimidation and violence they can use is often a re-enactment of the inappropriate abusive behaviour they have been exposed to in the past. Therefore, it is important that the degree of potential risk for each individual resident, to bully or be bullied, is considered very carefully prior to admission to Donyland Lodge and this potential is considered alongside the resident group already established.

Within the extensive grounds and buildings there is a vast arena for bullying behaviour, which is why in accordance with the recommendations of the National Minimum Standards, we adopt an allocated worker system, in which individual staff members have responsibility for certain residents when on shift. This will not only be ensuring their primary needs are met but also closely supervising and monitoring their behaviour and whereabouts. We provide well over the recommended amount of staff on shift, as experience has taught us that the boys we care for will demand attention of staff through negative behaviour (including bullying), if the home is staffed inadequately. So this high level of supervision is one strategy employed to reduce the risk of negative behaviour. Staff are allocated to residents with careful consideration of the current dynamics of the young people group and those who are considered to be at most risk, placed on a higher level of supervision.

When considering the areas and times that carry with them a degree of higher risk, we do know that meal times and staff handover times are when many incidents can occur if staff are not ready to supervise the young people when they directly come out of school. To remedy this some staff are always close to the school buildings to directly take charge of any residents who come out of school and also leave to supervise any young people who vacate the dining room during meal times. Staff are also expected to remain in the communal areas at the end of their shifts until the oncoming staff relieve them.

With regards to boys' bedrooms, staff maintain a high degree of supervision. Residents are told clearly on arrival that no two boys are allowed in a bedroom alone without the door being kept open and a member of staff being within the vicinity for the duration of time that the boys are together.

Donyland Lodge take the safety and security of our residents very seriously. The degree of risk that individuals pose to other boys is constantly being assessed on a daily basis and when planning the shift and activities, the potential for bullying is always borne in mind. Formal risk assessments are carried out around this matter and reviewed on a regular basis.

Donyland Lodge will not tolerate bullying in any form and work hard to create a safe non-threatening therapeutic environment. Systems are in place to encourage young people to challenge any bullying behaviour with staff support. Staff supervision of young people is

high with special vigilance of the interaction between the residents. If a young person targets another the Donyland Lodge procedures are implemented to support both victim and bully with a special programme to bring about change. Those young people, who persist with this type of behaviour and to not respond to the help provided, may have their placement terminated.

Bullying by staff is also not tolerated and anyone found to do so would be subject to the disciplinary process. Staff are encouraged to report any concerns of this nature to the Child Protection Co-ordinator or a senior manager. Where the staff member is concerned by managements behaviour they should contact the safeguarding board for advice.

Young people in the care of Donyland Lodge have open access to their social worker and a private telephone. Information on private agencies providing support for young people in distress is given to every resident on admission and is included in the young person's handbook along with a copy of the Donyland Lodge complaints procedure. An independent advocate from the Colchester Young Mind project holds a weekly surgery on site and residents are encouraged to discuss with him matters that they feel unable to discuss with Donyland Lodge staff

### **Children's Rights and Anti-Discriminatory Practice:**

Within the therapeutic milieu of Donyland Lodge, great emphasis is placed on the right of the individual to live in a caring, friendly and safe environment. Bullying of any kind is not acceptable within Donyland Lodge and any incident of negative behaviour, which could be interpreted as such, is immediately challenged. This is done not only on at individual level but also in the Community meetings by the staff and whole resident group.

Young people and staff are encouraged to recognise and respect their individual differences particularly in respect of ethnicity, race, gender and disability, with activities, discussions and school projects promoting a greater understanding and acceptance of these differences. Posters and literature are provided to reflect different cultures.

When assessing the individual needs of young people, ethnic, religious and disability issues are covered comprehensively in their Placement Plan and resources are provided both in Donyland Lodge and in the outside locality to meet these needs as far as it is practicable to do so.

At the time of admission residents are given the contact numbers of independent organisations who promote the individual rights of children in care and attendance of children's rights days organised by the placing Local Authorities or Essex County Council are encouraged and facilitated by the staff of Donyland Lodge.

Prior to admission, each young person will be informed of our "telling" bullying policy, and consideration is always given during the referral process, as to whether a new resident would pose a serious threat to the existing group of young people.

Donyland Lodge have clear procedures for staff in dealing with bullying behaviour, promoting a holistic approach encompassing prevention, intervention and changes of attitude/behaviour of both perpetrator and victim. Any young person who persists with bullying behaviour and does not respond to this approach, may have their placement terminated.

Staff receive support in dealing with bullying behaviour and Kidscape are invited to run workshops with both residents and staff around issues of bullying behaviour, from time to time.