



Anti-Bullying Policy, Procedure and Guidance

REGULATIONS AND QUALITY STANDARDS

Regulation 5 – Engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met

Regulation 10 – The health and well-being standard

Regulation 11 – The positive relationships standard

Regulation 12 – The protection of children standard

Regulation 13 – The leadership and management standard

Regulation 34 (3) – Policies for the protection of children

Regulation 40 – Notification of a serious event

8.16 – The guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including quality standards

OUTCOME

Children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe, staff prevent, effectively intervene and address bullying

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1. Definition of Bullying and Underlying Principles

Bullying is defined as behaviour or actions of a person, group of people or a whole organisation designed to cause distress or to hurt a person or group of people.

Sometimes whole organisations can bully. Bullying can be overt and plain to see or can be subtle and insidious. Bullying can become part of the culture, recognised or believed by all or a significant number of people as 'acceptable'; it can even be encouraged and rewarded, for instance, young people may feel superior power by venting anger and can feel excited from the fear of others. This can be difficult to detect and challenge if it becomes the 'culture' of the home.

Bullying can be:

- Emotional - being unfriendly, threats, intimidation or inciting others to do so, excluding, tormenting (e.g., hiding possessions, threatening gestures);
- Physical - pushing, kicking, hitting, spitting, punching or any use of violence.
- Racist - racial taunts, graffiti, gestures.
- Sexual - unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments.
- Disability - threats or actions relating to people's disability
- Homophobic - because of or focusing on the issue of sexual orientation.
- Verbal - name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing.
- Cyberbullying e.g. using mobile phones or social networking sites to intimidate or bully others.

Staff and children are capable of bullying and of being bullied. The seriousness of any bullying will depend on a number of factors:

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

Any child may be bullied but this often occurs where the child has been identified as being vulnerable or 'different' or inclined to spend more time on their own.

2. Prevention

Each young person has an individual risk assessment outlining concerning behaviours and strategies that staff should follow in order to minimise the risks. There is a section on bullying which must be completed and kept updated.

Addressing issues of bullying early reduces the chances of bullies getting into trouble later in life. Bullying starts with apparently trivial events such as teasing and name calling which nevertheless rely on an abuse of power. Such abuses of power if left unchallenged, can lead to more serious forms of abuse such as domestic violence, racial attacks and sexual harassment.

A climate of openness should be established in which children are not afraid to address issues and incidents of bullying. This should be a regular agenda item in Key Working sessions, young people's meetings and staff meetings.

Staff must be alert to the risk of bullying and should take all reasonable steps to prevent such behaviour. This includes:

- Implementing a clear policy within the home that bullying is not acceptable.
- Identifying a key member of staff to regularly undertake monitoring of the in-house procedures. It is essential to follow up the policy and procedures with reminders in staff and children's meetings.
- Ensuring that any admissions of children as well as new staff to the home are made aware of the policy and related in-house procedures.
- Ensuring staff are aware of the link between bullying and safeguarding (child protection). See Reporting Concerns of Abuse Procedure.
- Completing a building risk assessment (see Bullying Building Risk Assessment) which will highlight hotspots for potential bullying in the home.
- Undertaking risk assessments on admission and at appropriate stages thereafter.
- Providing information and guidance to children.
- Providing clarity to children on acceptable behaviours.
- Providing opportunities for children to explore issues of bullying e.g., writing stories or poems or drawing pictures about bullying.
- Reading stories about bullying or having them read to them.
- Making use of role-play.
- Having discussions about bullying and why it matters.
- Not using young people to control other young people in the home.

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

Everyone involved in looking after children shares responsibility for countering bullying and for creating a culture which positively encourages acceptable behaviour and reduces or prevents the likelihood of bullying.

As part of this ethos, everyone must understand what bullying means and what measures should be taken within the home and by individual staff to counter it. Staff must also understand that there is a fine line between aggressive or intimidating behaviours between children and young people and what is normal acting out.

The Registered Manager and staff team should discuss each child in staff meetings to identify whether behaviours constitute bullying. For instance, 2 young people who are involved in an altercation which involves name calling or even fighting may or may not be deemed as bullying depending on the age, vulnerability and relationship between them and the impact that the altercation has on each young person.

Having an argument and addressing these issues is an important part of growing up and staff should encourage and support young people to finding a resolution to conflict situations. The timing of this is important as young people need to have had the time and space necessary following an altercation in order to be in the right mind-set for resolution. In these instances, the young person's resolution form needs to be completed.

Everyone should also be clear what measures they should take if they suspect bullying, or it is reported to them which will need to be recorded on the Anti-bullying initial concern form.

Children should be able to approach any member of staff with personal concerns and not just their keyworker.

In this respect, everyone should be alert to the fact that bullying may constitute significant harm and, if so, must be reported to a senior member of staff, the Registered Manager / Designated Safeguarding Lead.

3. Managing Bullying

In order to maintain an effective strategy for dealing with bullying, staff meetings should challenge misconceptions about bullying e.g.

- It's only a bit of harmless fun.
- It's all part of growing up.
- Children just have to put up with it.
- Adults getting involved will make it worse.

Clear messages must be given that bullying is not acceptable, and children must be reassured that staff deal with bullying seriously. Focus on the bullying behaviour rather than the child and explore and where possible deal with the reasons for the behaviour. Give a clear explanation of the extent of the upset the bullying has caused, encourage them to see the bullied child's point of view and reward good behaviour towards other children.

If staff have any concerns, they must discuss them with colleagues and the Registered Manager, who should take the necessary actions to reduce or for prevention.

Any bullying concern must be taken seriously and reported using the initial concern form. If a young person has been physically bullied, consideration needs to be given to what medical assistance is required and whether police involvement is necessary. Any injuries should be recorded on the accident form.

Young people should be assured that it is not their fault and supported in their feelings. Staff should be aware of any underlying issues in relation to gender, race and sexuality which should be addressed and challenged accordingly.

It may be appropriate to convene a meeting, preferably with the young person/people concerned, to discuss strategies to prevent or reduce the bullying. This may include the following:

1. The bully (bullies) may be asked to genuinely apologise.
2. In serious cases (see next paragraph), some form of sanction or exclusion from the other young person will be considered.
3. If possible, the young people will be reconciled.
4. After the incident / incidents have been investigated and dealt with, each case will be continuously monitored to ensure repeated bullying does not take place.
5. The young person's resolution form needs to be completed.

If the young person is not satisfied following the resolution meeting, the young person may make a complaint which should be recorded as such. The child should be advised of other avenues open to them which may include contacting their social worker, independent advocate, Childline, the Children's Commissioner, or Ofsted.

All incidents should be recorded clearly and concisely on the daily record and on the initial concern form and resolution form, a copy of which should be filed in the young person's file.

If the Manager is unavailable, staff/carers may take what immediate actions are necessary to reduce or prevent bullying from occurring and then inform the Registered Manager as soon as practicable.

4. Notifications and Management Review

There are different notifications procedures depending on the persistence and seriousness of the bullying. Any incidents of bullying reported to staff, which may have occurred at school, should be acted on immediately and notifications made to relevant personnel within the school.

Where bullying is not persistent or not serious it should be notified to the Registered Manager at the first opportunity; the Manager will decide whether to inform the Social Worker and parents and decide what further actions to take. Parents should also, where applicable, be involved in supporting programmes devised to challenge bullying behaviour. Any concerns of bullying should also be reported to the child's teacher so they can monitor the child during the day.

- If the bullying is persistent or serious, it is deemed to be an Incident which must be notified to the Manager, parents where applicable and relevant Social Worker within 24 hours or as soon as practicable thereafter.
- The Manager and Social Worker should consider whether the bullying may constitute Significant Harm; if this is likely, a referral should be made under the Reporting Concerns of Abuse Procedure