



Breakaway

Countering Bullying

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Policy Summary:

Regulations 6, 10, 12, 14, 19, 34, 35 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2015 including the Quality Standards

Policy Aim:

The policy aim is to outline to children and young people, parents/carers, social workers and significant others, Breakaway's policy on responding to bullying within the home.

Breakaway References

- Child's individual Care Plan ("This is Me")
- Child's individual Risk Assessments
- Child's individual Positive Support Plan

Policy

All children and young people, staff members and visitors to Breakaway have the right to feel safe and secure within the home and the wider community.

Statutory Framework

The Quality Standard 'The Quality and Purpose of Care Standard' 2 (b) (ii) states that staff ensure that they protect and promote each child's welfare. Through staff training, staff are made aware of the particular vulnerability of children with learning difficulties/disabilities and their susceptibility to bullying. Management have put this policy in place and any incidents of bullying will be recorded clearly and factually.

Why Looked After Children are at Particular Risk

Children who are looked after are often at heightened risk of being targeted by bullies. Bullies frequently focus on characteristics that make their victims appear different from their peers, using these differences to justify their behavior. These differences may include physical features such as appearance, weight, or height, or other factors such as social class, religion, ethnicity, or disability. The unique vulnerabilities associated with being a looked-after child can make them more susceptible to bullying and other forms of mistreatment.

Who are the Bullies?

There are various reasons why children and adults engage in bullying behaviour. For some, bullying may be a coping mechanism for difficult situations, such as family breakdowns or personal struggles. Others may use bullying as a means of gaining status or power within their peer group. In some cases, individuals may bully because they are accustomed to controlling situations and may not fully recognize the impact of their actions on others.

Additionally, some bullies may have themselves been victims of bullying. It is important to understand that the factors leading to a child becoming a victim may also contribute to the development of bullying behaviour in others.

For residential staff, this dynamic has significant implications when caring for a group of children. If there are concerns that a child is being bullied, it is crucial to consider the possibility that underlying issues within the group may be influencing behaviours, requiring a sensitive and informed approach to intervention and support.

Bullying

Bullying can be defined as the deliberate actions or behaviours of an individual or group that cause distress, harm, or fear to another person or group. This may involve physical threats, assault, verbal abuse, or other forms of mistreatment, such as teasing, horseplay, isolation, blackmail, or intimidation.

Key characteristics of bullying typically include:

- Intentional hostility and aggression directed towards the victim.
- A power imbalance, where the victim is weaker or less powerful than the bully or group of bullies.
- Emotional distress and harm experienced by the victim as a result of the bullying behaviour.

Bullying is often a repetitive pattern of behaviour but can also occur as a one-off incident. It can take various forms, including:

- **Verbal Abuse:** This includes persistent teasing, name-calling, and the spreading of rumours.
- **Physical Abuse:** This involves actual or threatened harm, such as being pulled, pushed, or physically intimidated.
- **Sexual Abuse:** This can include unwanted physical contact or verbal abuse, such as inappropriate comments about the victim's sexuality.
- **Racial Abuse:** This can be physical, verbal, or written, targeting the victim's race or ethnicity.
- **Emotional Abuse:** This includes behaviours such as tormenting the victim, subjecting them to persistent ridicule or humiliation, taking or throwing their belongings, isolating them, or coercing them into doing things against their will.
- **Abuse of Authority:** This involves the misuse of power or responsibility by a member of staff, leading to harmful behaviour towards children or young people.

Possible Signs of Bullying

The following behaviours may indicate that an individual is the victim of bullying. However, it is important to recognize that there could be other explanations for these signs, and each situation should be assessed carefully:

- A noticeable change in their usual routine or behaviour.
- Reluctance to attend school, Breakaway, or work.
- Complaints of feeling unwell, particularly in the mornings.
- A decline in academic performance or school work.
- Becoming withdrawn, displaying signs of low self-esteem, stammering, or lacking confidence.
- Expressing thoughts of self-harm or threatening suicide.
- Crying themselves to sleep or experiencing frequent nightmares.
- Possessions going missing or being damaged.
- Reluctance or refusal to discuss what is wrong, often due to fear of the bully.
- Unexplained injuries, such as bruises, scratches, or cuts.
- A sudden shift in behaviour, such as beginning to bully others.
- Exhibiting aggression or becoming unreasonable in their interactions.

Breakaway's Measures to Counter Bullying

At Breakaway, all suspected or actual incidents of bullying will be taken seriously. Bullying is not an acceptable part of growing up, and every individual has the right to live and work in an environment free from intimidation. All reported incidents will be thoroughly investigated, with appropriate support provided to all parties involved.

We All Agree That Bullying is Wrong and Will Not Be Tolerated

- **Promote Open Communication:** A culture will be fostered in which individuals feel comfortable expressing when they are being bullied.

- **Provide Information and Support:** Information on how to address and counter bullying will be made available to all individuals at Breakaway, including young people, staff, and visitors, both verbally and in writing.
- **Regular Discussion:** Bullying will be regularly discussed at children's and staff meetings to raise awareness and reinforce the commitment to a bully-free environment.
- **Reporting Concerns:** Any concerns about bullying behavior should be reported to the shift leader immediately. The manager and head of service must also be informed.
- **Confidential Reporting:** Any child, young person, staff member, or visitor who wishes to report bullying should be provided with a safe, confidential opportunity to voice their concerns, without fear of retribution.
- **Parental and Social Worker Involvement:** Whenever a child or young person is involved in a bullying incident, their parents and social worker will be informed as quickly as possible.
- **Advocacy and Feedback:** Staff members are encouraged to advocate on behalf of children, especially non-verbal children, by completing a child-friendly complaints form (available electronically on the shared drive). Staff will inform the child of the outcomes of any bullying-related incident and seek their feedback on the resolution process.

Recording

Staff are required to document all suspected or actual incidents of bullying, whether the victim is an individual within the home or someone being bullied by an individual in the home. A child-friendly complaints form can be completed and submitted on behalf of children, ensuring that their voice is heard. All incidents should be reported to the manager for further action. If a young person is involved, their social worker, parent, or carer must be informed as soon as possible to ensure transparency and appropriate support.

Training

Breakaway staff are required to complete the following mandatory training to ensure they are equipped with the skills and knowledge to support the children and young people in their care:

- Safeguarding Levels 1 & 2 and other training that covers managing behaviour and recognising sign of abuse.
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Team Teach
- Unconscious Bias
- Makaton Training
- Restorative Practice
- Preventing Sexual Harassment in Workplace