Preventing & tackling bullying
Guidelines for professionals

What is bullying?

The Anti-Bullying Alliance* defines bullying as…

> **"the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. Bullying can be physical, verbal or psychological. It can happen face-to-face or through cyberspace."**

The Anti-bullying Alliance (ABA) is a coalition of organisations and individuals working together to stop bullying and create safe environments in which children and young people can live, grow, play and learn. Kidscape has been an member of the ABA since 2003, and sits on the advisory board.

What constitutes bullying behaviour?

Verbal: name calling, persistent teasing, mocking, taunting and threats.

Physical: any degree of physical violence, intimidating behaviour, theft or the intentional damage of possessions.

Emotional: excluding, tormenting, ridiculing, humiliation, setting people up and spreading rumours.

Cyber bullying: the misuse of digital technologies or communications to bully a person or a group, typically through messages or actions that are threatening and/or intended to cause offence, anxiety or humiliation.

> *More about cyber bullying can be found in our resource **'Cyber bullying and online safety; guidelines for professionals.'** www.kidscape.org.uk/professionals*

Why are young people bullied?

Children and young people are most commonly bullied because of a real or perceived 'difference'. This difference can be anything, but in our experience bullying can often be...

Racist: bullying based on ethnicity, skin colour, language, religious or cultural practices.

Homophobic: bullying based on sexuality or gender identity.

Disabilist: the bullying of children who have special educational needs and disabilities.

Sexual: unwelcome sexual advances, remarks that are intended to cause offence, humiliation or intimidation.

Discriminative: bullying based on any perceived weakness such as children in fostering or care homes, young carers, those with disabled siblings or parents, single parent families, low economic backgrounds…

The effects of bullying

The effects of bullying are severe and can often continue long into adulthood. Those working with children and young people have a duty to prevent it, and take incidents seriously if they occur. When left unaccounted for, bullying doesn't just have a negative impact on the target, but everyone who is exposed to the environment in which it occurs.

Children who are bullied are more likely to:

- have low self-esteem.

- develop depression or anxiety.

- become socially withdrawn, isolated and lonely.

- have lower academic achievements due to avoiding or becoming disengaged with school.

- be unable to form trusting, healthy relationships with friends or partners in the future.

Children who frequently bully are more likely to:

- drop out of, or be expelled from school.

- engage in criminal behaviour.

- develop depression or anxiety.

- be abusive towards their sexual partners, spouses or children as adults.

Children who witness bullying are more likely to:

- feel powerless.

- live in fear and guilt.

The signs of bullying

Children do not always ask directly for help or discuss their concerns openly. When bullying is involved, they may feel at fault or anticipate that there will be negative repercussions to telling an adult. Changes in a child's behaviour and body language cannot tell you for certain that bullying is happening. However, the following signs can certainly indicate that something is likely to be wrong.

- Unexplained injuries.

- Lost or broken possessions.

- Low self-esteem.

- A loss of friends.

- Changes in attitude: becoming aggressive, irritable, unreasonable or anxious.

- Difficulty sleeping, nightmares or bed wetting.

- Truanting or feigning sickness.

- Declining grades and a lack of interest in school.

- Self-destructive behaviour such as running away, self-harm or talking about suicide.

- Refusal to talk about what is wrong, or give improbable explanation to any of the above.

Creating an anti-bullying strategy

Organisations that work with groups of children and young people should take a proactive approach to preventing bullying, where an anti-bullying strategy is embedded in the organisation's values and reinforced to the young people that are in its care. Follow our guidelines below on how to create a best practice anti-bullying strategy.

Detailed policies and procedures

Effective policies and procedures are the backbone to any anti-bullying strategy. They encapsulate a school's or organisation's values and mission regarding acceptable behaviour, while also giving staff clear guidance on how to deal with incidents. Due to the complexities of bullying, it is highly advised that a dedicated anti-bullying policy is created, to be used in conjunction with the behaviour policy.

As children now have active online identities from a young age, professionals must also address cyber bullying and online safety. It is also strongly advised that a dedicated e-safety policy be created.

For guidance on writing best practice policies, download the following Kidscape resources from our website at www.kidscape.org.uk/professionals.

- **Anti-bullying policy and procedures checklist**
- **E-safety policy and procedures checklist**

Need help with drafting it? Kidscape also offers training for SMTs in how to write and implement policies. Contact us at **training@kidscape.co.uk** or on **020 7730 3300**.

Take it seriously

When bullying is reported, it must be taken seriously and investigated; following the protocols set within the organisation's relevant policies. If these procedures are not rigorously upheld, young people quickly become distrusting of the system, which in turn will encourage misbehaviour and prevent targets from getting the support they need.

If professionals do not take bullying seriously, and fail to support pupils or implement appropriate sanctions when bullying incidents occur, they will be cultivating a learning environment based on a culture of fear and disrespect. This is likely to result in young people:

- disengaging with learning and development.
  (Alongside poor staff retention and parent satisfaction)
- being given the impression that professionals have little control and do not care about them.
- having low self-esteem and lacking ambition.
- failing to be inspired to reach their full potential.

Encourage good behaviour

Good behaviour can be encouraged by delivering lessons, workshops and activities dedicated to raising awareness of the issues associated with bullying and online safety. It is also important to highlight and give information about what young people can do if they are being bullied, or witness bullying happening to a peer.

Champion reporting

Encourage young people to always tell staff about bullying incidents whether they have been a target or bystander. Young people often do not report because they do not believe that anything will be done or think they will be targeted themselves. To combat this mistrust, create an anonymous reporting system and ensure all incidents are taken very seriously and followed up.

Investigate bullying

It is imperative that the state of bullying within an organisation or school is not solely measured on the incidents that are reported, as this will by no means give an accurate indication to the level of bullying being perpetrated. The simplest and most effective way to determine the experiences of young people in your care will be to conduct an anonymous survey. It is also advisable to analyse the incidents that are reported to establish if there is any behaviour patterns in regards to year groups and/or types of bullying that will need to be specifically addressed.

Invest in staff training

Anti-bullying strategies are only effective when staff truly understand their principles and are equipped with the knowledge and skills to implement policies and educate young people in how to protect themselves from bullying, and treat others with respect.

In addition to offering basic and advanced CPD courses in child protection and e-safety, Kidscape specialist trainers can deliver bespoke anti-bullying professional workshops in a setting of your choice. Find our how we can tailor our delivery to your organisation's needs by contacting us at **training@kidscape.org.uk** or on **020 7730 3300**

Additional support and referrals

ZAP assertiveness workshops

Kidscape's assertiveness workshops are for young people aged 9-16 who have experienced severe bullying and their parents or carers. Over the course of a day, young people are taught practical skills in how to deal with bullying while raising their self-esteem. Parents/carers attend a separate session where they are able to share their experiences and gain advice on how to support their child through bullying.

These workshops are held in Birmingham, Leicester, London, Newcastle and South Shields. ZAP is funded by the Big Lottery and is free of charge. For more information visit www.kidscape.org.uk/zap

ZAP in your setting

The assertiveness skills taught in our ZAP workshop can be delivered to any class of children in your school. For more information contact our training manager at **training@kidscape.org.uk** or on **020 7730 3300**.

Bespoke workshops

Kidscape trainers can also deliver a vast range of bespoke workshops for young people and parents relating to bullying, cyber bullying, online safety and self-esteem. Find out how we can tailor our delivery to your organisation's needs by contacting our training manger at **training@kidscape.org.uk** or on **020 7730 3300**

School programmes

Kidscape offers longer term school anti-bullying programmes that raise pupils' self esteem, highlight the negative effects of bullying and offer alternative ways to deal with conflict. Our current projects include Primary Bullying Intervention Training (BIT) and Positive Assertive Confidence Skills (PACS).

For more information about Kidscape's projects and services, visit us online at **www.kidscape.org.uk/what-we-do**

Further resources

It is important that bullying is addressed alongside the wider context of safeguarding and e-safety. Please visit the Kidscape website for further resources that offer guidance in this area. **www.kidscape.org.uk/professionals**