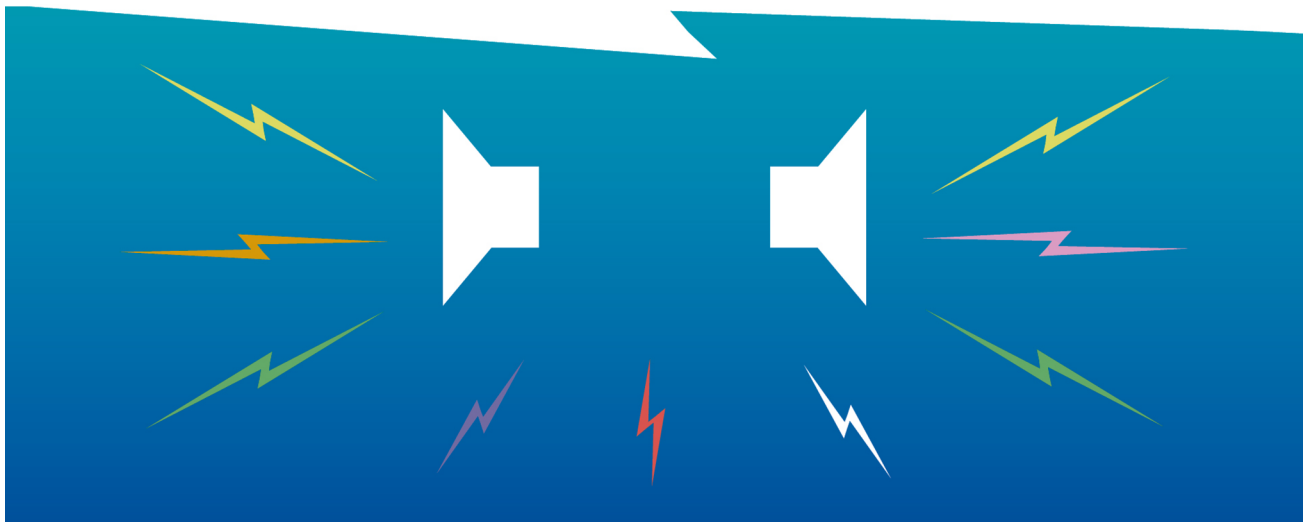


Children's Homes - Prevention of Bullying Policy



Introduction

This policy is written for children's homes in England. This is written in line with The Children's Homes Regulations 2015 and Working Together to Safeguarding Children 2018.

Our Children supported with their views to help write this policy, their comments are highlighted in orange through the policy.

Our home has a **zero-tolerance to abuse** it is not 'banter' 'having a laugh' 'part of growing up' or 'boys will be boys'.

Even if no cases are reported, such abuse may be taking place and is not being reported. Staff must remain vigilant (keep a watchful eye) and approach to abuse is 'it could happen here'.

All our homes work with others and promote a multiagency approach to ensure that children have the right intervention at the right time.

Aims of Policy

The aims of this policy are to help staff and managers to understand:





- What is Bullying
- The difference between bullying and banter
- Signs of bullying
- The effects of bullying
- How to prevent bullying
- Working with others
- How to respond to bullying incidents

What is bullying?

Bullying is a behaviour or series of behaviours, by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group. The type of 'hurt' caused can be either physical, emotional or both. A bully can be a single person or a group of people.

Under the Children Act 1989 a bullying incident should be addressed as a child protection concern when there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm'. As such, it will sometimes be appropriate to report bullying incidents to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). In making this decision, staff should follow the home's safeguarding policy.

Children can bully one another in a variety of ways. Incidents of bullying can be done either face to face, online, through social media or texting. Below is a list of forms of bullying staff should be aware of:

Emotional: being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. 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 focusing on the issue of sexuality;

Verbal: name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing;

Cyberbullying: e.g. using mobile phones or social networking sites to intimidate or bully others.

Prejudice based: Prejudice-based bullying can be against Asylum seekers/refugees; because of Body Image; Disability; Homophobic; Looked After Children; Racial; Religion and belief; Sectarianism; Gender; Young Carers.

When asked what bullying was, our children identified the following actions as signs:

- **Name calling (both isolated cases and continuous)**
- **Dirty looks**
- **Picking on others**
- **Making fake social media accounts to 'have a go at' others**
- **Gossiping about others.**

The difference between bullying and banter



Banter is defined as - teasing or joking talk that is amusing and friendly

In bullying:

- There is deliberate intention to hurt or intimidate.
- There is a power imbalance that makes it hard for the victim to defend themselves.
- It is usually persistent.

Our children identified different ways in which a child could be bullied:

- Fighting
- Face to face
- Online
- Emotionally
- Psychological abuse

Signs of bullying

Staff must ensure they have the skills to recognise incidents or indications of bullying and how to deal with them. Training is available on Myrus, if staff require any additional support, they should speak with their manager in supervision. The manager can contact the training and development team to access additional training if required.

These are signs staff should be aware of:

- Injuries that are not adequately explained, e.g. teeth marks, bruises etc;
History of bruising, injuries, accidents;
- Injuries getting progressively worse, or occurring in a time pattern, e.g. every Monday morning, or after visits to a particular place or person;
- Bruised eyes, especially if both at once. A doctor can tell if the injury is spread bruising from
- an accidental bump to the nose, or more likely to have been a fist to the eye.
- Poor or deteriorating schoolwork where a child/young person has normally been a good achiever;
- Erratic attendance at school if normally good, running away behaviour;
- Unwilling to be involved with activities or other young people in the home.
Problems with sleeping, bed-wetting, nightmares;
- Complaints of hunger on return from school after taking either dinner money or packed
- lunch;
- Possessions often lost, dirtied, destroyed, spectacles often broken; Reluctance to go out, always seeking the presence of adults; Reluctance to attend doctors, or school medical;
- Reluctance to walk home at the same time as other children/young people, change in habits, avoiding certain people;
- Unhappy, withdrawn isolated behaviour; A new tendency to stammer;



- Lack of appetite, anorexia, bulimia, excessive comfort eating;
Aggressive eruptions, tantrums;
- Constant attention seeking over pleasing, compliant behaviour;
Indications of alcohol, drug or substance abuse;
- Promiscuous sexual behaviour;
- Attempted suicide.

Staff must explore their curiosity when they notice some of the following signs within their homes:

- The same person or group always leaves someone out or shuns them.
- Someone makes threats of violence against someone else
- When someone damages or takes someone's possessions deliberately.
- Someone tried to force someone else to do something they do not want to do.
- Someone tries to force another to do something sexual they do not want to do.

Our children gave an insight as to how adults can spot when a child is being bullied:

- **Consider a change in a child's mood**
- **Different behaviours**
- **A child isolating themselves either by choice or by peers**
- **A change in the way children act to fit in with others.**

The effects of bullying

Children can become isolated due to bullying and no longer participate in hobbies and social activities. Research suggests that people who have been bullied as children are at increased risk of mental health concerns as adults.

Staff must be aware that a child may be bullying because of problems in their life and prepare for disclosures. For example, it is not uncommon for children to disclose domestic violence when counter-bullying work is undertaken. Staff must consult the Safeguarding policy if a disclosure is received.

Staff prevention of bullying

The Guide to the Regulations state that –

'Children's home staff should take every step to make sure that individual children and young people are not subject to discrimination, marginalisation or bullying from their peers by virtue of their gender, religion, ethnicity, cultural and linguistic background, sexual identity, mental health, disability or for any other reason.'

Staff should support their manager to create a culture of openness and respect within the home to prevent bullying behaviours in the first instance.

Our staff have discussed strategies to prevent bullying and felt the most important aspects of prevention were for staff to:

- Identify when behaviour becomes unwanted to the child.



- Pay attention to admission processes (*what does the paperwork say? What have you learned about the child at visits, have you considered the impact on the whole group?*)
- Regular check in's with children via Key Work Sessions
- What is the child's understanding of bullying?
- Be creative with technology and use useful media to help children better understand
- Use Social stories for children who benefit from this communication.

Staff must:

- communicate to children that bullying is unacceptable
- consult children about whether they feel safe, consider if there are places where they feel unsafe such as school or home.
- Be alert after family visits of visits to family home, this is a time where a child may feel distressed, sensitive and vulnerable. This could lead to bullying issues if there are unresolved issues in a child's family.
- Be vigilant (keep a watchful eye) if a child has damaged clothing or equipment.
- Create a space where children can raise any issues or concerns (including the use of Mind of My Own – MOMO)
- Ensure children have time alone with a trusted member of staff inside or away from the home to explore bullying experiences
- Use resources physical or onlineⁱ to improve knowledge and awareness – including CareTech's Anti-Bullying week.

Working with others

When bullying does occur, a clear consistent response is essential. A good working partnership can share information on any trouble spots, serious incidents or newly emerging patterns of bullying. Staff must:

- Ensure a close partnership with schools through the designated teacher.
- Contact the child's social worker, and where possible the host local authority anti-bullying lead.
- Be proactive in making links with local schools and clubs and tackle local prejudice against children in care.

Staff responses to bullying

If bullying is suspected staff must do the following:

- Monitor the situation
- Raise their concerns with their manager without delay
- Follow up with the victim, discreetly to assure yourself that bullying has stopped and they feel safe.
- Do nothing to create an image of the victim as weak.
- Help the victim to believe in themselves
- Use the incident as learning opportunity for everyone.

Record any bullying incidents and action taken.

- The home's bullying log
- The home's concern log



It is important that the Registered Manager considers these alongside other safeguarding records such as missing logs, behavioural incidents, or education attendance as this may provide a pattern or trend which could alert them to other contextual risks.

If it is unclear who the alleged perpetrator is, staff must focus their time on the future rather than spending time on which party denies their role.

Staff must give children the opportunity to reflect on bullying and how it impacts themselves and others.

Staff must talk to the person who has been bullied, establish what has happened and agree a way forward.

- Make time to listen to the victim calm, using effective listening techniquesⁱⁱ.
- Take bullying seriously and avoid telling children to 'just ignore it'.
- Agree and action plan with the child's consent.
- Avoid humiliating the victim by taking actions which make them seem weaker, powerless or a 'grass'.
- Help the victim to become more resilient, build up their confidence, emphasise their strengths and help them to develop positive friendships.

Our children offered advice to adults supporting children who have said they have been bullied:

- **Sit down and talk about the issue with the young person**
- **Get both sides of the story**
- **Make sure the young person feels listened to**
- **Don't ignore the young person**
- **Don't favour one young person over another**

Our children also spoke of how to best support a child being bullied:

- **Intervene if you see it**
- **Help the child and offer space to have a timeout if they want it**
- **Offer mediation if possible.**

Our children also felt it was important to have an adult to sit with them if they felt upset. If appropriate, reflect on how relationships can affect their wellbeing and offer support and reassurance.

Leader's response to bullying

This includes the role of:

- Registered Manager
- Deputy Manager
- Team Leaders

Staff should understand what they must do to prevent bullying of children by other children or adults. Staff should be able to recognise and address different types of abuse such as peer abuse, cyber-bullying and bullying in day to day relationships in the home. Registered persons must ensure that procedures for dealing with allegations of bullying are in place and staff have the skills required to intervene, protect and address bullying behaviours effectively. (See regulation 34(3) on the policy for the prevention of bullying.)



When incidents of bullying occur, managers need to ensure that these are recorded and must monitor patterns and trends. This may help to underpin why this behaviour has taken place.

If a manager is concerned with a pattern of behaviours or a single incident has been significant, then they must consider if this has met the threshold for abuse. If so, then the manager must refer to the Children's Home Safeguarding Policy.

The registered manager must include external agencies when concerns arise and consider a joint response. They must also consider the wellbeing of the person who is considered the perpetrator, they too are vulnerable.

The registered manager should also look at what behavioural incentives can be introduced to stop a culture of bullying developing in their home.

To support managers and staff, consideration will be given to bullying incidents and the staff's approach to prevention at regional audits, Regulation 44 visits, regulation 45 reports, monthly manager reports and via KPI's.

Date Written / Review

This policy was written on 17 November 2023. This was written as part of the Group's 'Make a Noise About Bullying' campaign for Anti-Bullying Week. This policy will be reviewed annually in line with this campaign.

The policy was written by the Group's safeguarding Champions Group:

- Matt Nicholls – Head of Policy (Children)
- Ian Roberts - Head of Children's Performance Improvement
- John Reidy – Regional Manager (NE)
- Jeanette Swift – Head of Service (ROC NW)
- Zoe Austin – Senior Homes Manager (SW)
- Samantha Kingston – General Manager (Merida and Meeko)
- Bethany Telling – Registered Manager (Greenfields)
- Shelley Simpson – Registered Manager (Yorkshire)

This policy was also supported by the children at Meeko who shared their views.

ⁱ Anti-Bullying resources

[Helping Children Deal with Bullying & Cyberbullying | NSPCC](#)
[National Bullying Helpline contact information](#)
[Bullying | Parents Guide to Support | YoungMinds](#)
[Resources and campaigns \(kidscape.org.uk\)](#)

ⁱⁱ Active listening guidance

[Active Listening - Hear What People are Really Saying \(mindtools.com\)](#)
[How to Practice Active Listening \(with Examples\) \[2023\] • Asana](#)
[How to Practice Active Listening: 16 Examples & Techniques \(positivepsychology.com\)](#)
[What is Active Listening? | Active Listening Skills - Twinkl](#)