



Safeguarding Children from Bullying

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

Bullying can take place in a variety of settings including face-to-face, via other people, on the phone or Internet, including social networking sites, such as Facebook.

Bullying can be:

- **Emotional** - being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding possessions, threatening gestures)
- **Physical** - pushing, kicking, hitting, punching, spitting or any use of violence
- **Racist** - racial taunts, graffiti, violent or offensive gestures or language
- **Religious** – because of, or focusing on, religion or beliefs
- **Sexual** - unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments
- **Homophobic** - because of, or focusing on, issues of sexuality
- **Verbal** - name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
- **Cyberbullying** - e.g. using mobile phones or social networking sites to intimidate or humiliate others.

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

The Foster Carer handbook incorporates strategies for tackling and reporting bullying, and the Children's Guide also contains information and advice on dealing with bullying. Leaflets to raise awareness are available for young people.

Foster Carers must be alert to the risk of bullying and should take all reasonable steps to prevent such behaviour. Every foster home should have its own strategies for preventing bullying, which should be reflected in the Foster Carer's safer caring policy. Foster Carers should be mindful of a child or young person's past experiences or vulnerabilities in this regard and adapt their own practice accordingly. For instance, for some children, banter works well, but others may find it difficult and may misinterpret this as bullying or targeting.

Strategies to tackle bullying could include:

- Implementing clear rules within the household that reinforce why bullying is not acceptable and the measures which will be taken if the Foster Carer suspects bullying or it is reported to them
- Being clear with all the children in the household as to what is acceptable behaviour
- Providing opportunities for children to explore issues of bullying e.g. writing stories or poems or drawing pictures about bullying

- Encouraging children to read stories about bullying or, for younger children, reading stories to them
- Encouraging children to watch videos on anti-bullying and to review relevant website and social media information (see information section below), appropriate to their age and understanding
- Having discussions about bullying and why it matters
- Helping children to empathise with those who are bullied and encouraging them to be pro-active in reporting any bullying they have seen or heard
- Being good role models as Foster Carers.

If Foster Carers have any concerns that incidents of bullying have taken place between children in the foster home, or that a child in the foster placement may be a victim or perpetrator of bullying at school or elsewhere, they must discuss this with their Placement Manager.

When bullying occurs within the foster home it may be appropriate to convene a meeting, preferably with the child or children concerned, to discuss strategies to prevent or reduce the bullying. The recommendations arising from such a meeting may include:

- The bully (bullies) may be asked to apologise
- In serious cases, some form of sanction should be considered
- Work should be carried out with the child/children to effect reconciliation
- After the incident/incidents have been investigated and dealt with, there will be continuous monitoring to ensure further bullying does not take place

If the bullying is persistent or serious, the Child's Social Worker should be consulted. It may be necessary to conduct a Placement Planning Meeting, or a referral may be necessary under the Child Protection Referral Procedure. A Strategy Discussion/Meeting may also need to be convened.

Minor or Non-Persistent Bullying

Even if bullying is not persistent or serious it should still be brought to the attention of the Placement Manager at the first opportunity. The Placement Manager should inform the child's Social Worker of any further action to be taken.

Persistent or Serious Bullying

The Placement Manager should be notified immediately of any serious, persistent or intimidatory bullying and, within one working day, the Child's Social Worker should be contacted by the Placement Manager or anyone acting on their behalf. Consideration will also need to be given as to whether a Child Protection Referral should be made under Safeguarding Procedures.

Recording and Review

The Foster Carer must record all incidents of bullying in their daily or weekly records for the child who is the alleged victim and the child who is the alleged bully, if the child/children are in an AFA placement.

The child's Placement Agreement/Placement Plan should be reviewed and include strategies to reduce or prevent future incidents.

Further information

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/bullying-and-cyberbullying/>

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/feelings-and-symptoms/bullying/>

<https://www.nationalbullyinghelpline.co.uk/kids.html>

<https://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/>

<https://www.bullying.co.uk/anti-bullying-week/anti-bullying-week-videos/>

<https://childhood101.com/bullying-videos-kids/>

<https://www.stopbullying.gov/resources/kids/kid-videos>

Connected Policies or Guidance

Name of Policy / Guidance	Relevant for
Record Keeping and Confidentiality Policy	All staff and carers
Safeguarding Policy	All staff and carers
Foster Carer Handbook	Carers, Placement Managers
Staff Handbook	All staff

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