



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.

It 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, Snapchat and Tik Tok.

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 creating a culture which positively encourages acceptable behaviour and which challenges bullying and reduces or prevents the likelihood of it. AFA's Foster Parent Handbook incorporates strategies for tackling and reporting bullying, and it's Children's Guide also contains information and advice on the issue. Leaflets to raise awareness are available for children and young people.

Foster Parents must be alert to the risk of bullying and take all reasonable steps to prevent such behaviour. They 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, banter may work well for some children, but others may find it difficult, misinterpreting it as bullying or targeting. Strategies to tackle bullying might include:

- Implementing clear rules within the household as to what is acceptable behaviour, reinforcing why bullying will not be tolerated and the measures which will be taken if the Foster Parent suspects such or it is reported to them
- Provision of opportunities for children to explore issues of bullying e.g. writing stories or poems or drawing pictures about it, or for younger children reading stories to them, supporting their understanding of the same
- Encouraging children to watch videos on anti-bullying, reviewing relevant website and social media information (see information section below), appropriate to their age and understanding
- Having open 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 Parents

If Foster Parents have any concerns that incidents of bullying have taken place between children in the foster home, or that a child in their care may be a victim or perpetrator of bullying at school or elsewhere, they must discuss this with their Fostering Social Worker. Every foster home should have its own strategies for preventing bullying, which should be reflected in its Safer Caring Policy.

When bullying occurs within the foster home it may be relevant to convene a meeting, with all concerned, to discuss strategies to prevent or reduce this behaviour. The recommendations arising from such a meeting may include:

- The bully/bullies being asked to apologise
- In serious cases, the consideration of appropriate sanctions
- Work being undertaken with the child/children to effect reconciliation
- Ongoing monitoring after incident/incidents have been investigated and dealt with

If bullying is persistent or serious, the child's Social Worker should be consulted. It may be necessary to conduct a Planning Meeting, or a referral may be necessary under the Child Protection Referral Procedure. A Strategy Discussion/Meeting may also need to be convened. Consideration of the impact of bullying should be detailed within a child's Risk Assessment and Reduction Plan as appropriate.

Minor or Non-Persistent Bullying

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

Persistent or Serious Bullying

The Fostering Social Worker 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 them or anyone acting on their behalf. Consideration will need to be given as to whether a Child Protection Referral should be made under Safeguarding Procedures.

Recording and Review

The Foster Parent 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 they live with AFA Foster Parents. The child's Care Agreement/Plan and their individual Risk Assessment and Reduction 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/>

Connected Policies or Guidance

Name of Policy / Guidance	Relevant for
Record Keeping and Confidentiality Policy	All staff and Foster Parents
Safeguarding Policy	All staff and Foster Parents
Foster Parent Handbook	Foster Parents, Fostering Social Workers
Staff Handbook	All staff

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