



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 an individual person or group. It can take place within a variety of settings including face-to-face, through other people, on the phone or Internet, including social networking sites, such as Facebook, Snapchat and TikTok.

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, which challenges bullying and reduces or prevents the likelihood of such. 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 as to the past experiences or specific vulnerabilities that a child or young person may have in this regard and adapt their own practice accordingly. As an example, banter may work well for some children, while 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 have open discussions about bullying and why it matters, helping them explore issue 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.
- Helping children to empathise with those who are bullied and encouraging them to be pro-active in reporting any bullying behaviour 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 consequences as a result of their behaviour
- Work being undertaken with the child/children to effect reconciliation
- Ongoing monitoring after incident/incidents have been investigated and dealt with

Even if bullying appears relatively minor, 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 action to be taken.

Where bullying is serious, persistent and/or intimidatory, the Fostering Social Worker should be notified immediately and, within one working day, the child's Social Worker should be contacted by them or anyone acting on their behalf. It may be necessary to conduct a Planning Meeting, or a referral may be necessary under the Child Protection Referral Procedure. Depending on the significance of the situation, a Strategy Discussion/Meeting may also need to be convened. Consideration as to the impact of bullying should be detailed within a child's Risk Assessment and Reduction Plan as appropriate.

The Foster Parent must record all incidents of bullying in their records for the child who is the alleged victim and the child who is the alleged bully if they live within the home. 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/>

[Anti bullying week - Bullying UK | Family Lives](#)

<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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