

**Outcomes
First
Group.**

**ACORN EDUCATION
AND CARE**

OptionsAutism



Children's Homes

Anti-Bullying Policy

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1.0 Introduction

Children and young people in care are among those most vulnerable to bullying. Children who are looked after and living away from home are particularly vulnerable and may face discrimination from other children at school and in the community, simply because they are looked after (Please see [Anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk - Bullying and Care](http://Anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk) for further information). Bullying is frequently cited by young people as the main reason for absconding from residential homes or schools.

Outcomes First Group is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all children and young people in its care. The Group aims to enable young people to lead fulfilling and meaningful lives. This cannot be achieved if they are being bullied and we are committed to ensuring that the risk of bullying is reduced and, if a bullying incident occurs, children and young people are effectively supported by staff.

2.0 Objectives of this policy

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Set out the Group's approach to prevent and address bullying and the actions that should be taken to minimise its impact on children and young people looked after in our residential homes;
- Ensure that all children, young people and staff understand what bullying is and know who to speak to for support;
- Outline the procedures to be followed when bullying is reported or observed;
- Underline our commitment to take bullying seriously and ensure that children and young people know they will be listened to.
- Demonstrate that bullying will not be tolerated and that all children deserve help to learn different ways of behaving.

Other policies that must be read alongside this policy:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Staying Safe Online
- Child Exploitation Policy
- Peer on peer Abuse policy – this policy was initially written for schools but is useful to all services.
- Notifiable Events Policy
- Serious Incident Escalation Policy

3.0 Defining Bullying

Bullying is a behaviour that hurts someone else. It is usually repeated over a long period of time and can hurt a child both physically and emotionally. It can include name calling, hitting, pushing, spreading rumours, threatening or undermining someone. The [Anti-Bullying Alliance](#) provides the following definition:

“Bullying is the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. It can happen face to face or online.” Children in care experience twice the level of bullying than other children in primary years (38% vs 19%) and four times the level of bullying than other children in secondary years (36% vs 9%). ([Anti-Bullying Alliance](#))

4.0 Forms of bullying

Bullying behaviour can be:

- Physical – pushing, poking, kicking, hitting, biting, pinching etc.
- Verbal - name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, threats, teasing, belittling.
- Emotional – isolating others, tormenting, hiding books, threatening gestures, ridicule, humiliation, intimidating, excluding, manipulation and coercion.
- Sexual – unwanted physical contact, inappropriate touching, abusive comments, homophobic abuse, exposure to inappropriate films etc.
- Indirect - Can include the exploitation of individuals.
- 'False friendships'- relationships where someone pretends to be a friend or is a 'friend' but actually uses their power to bully the other person. False friendships can sometimes be hard for adults to identify.

4.1 Cyber bullying

Those caring for and supporting children in residential settings play a vital role in helping to keep them safe in the offline and online worlds. **Staff must read the Outcomes First Group's *Staying Safe Online Policy*.**

The [Anti-bullying Alliance](#) identifies the following characteristics that make online bullying different to 'traditional' bullying:

- 24-7 nature - the nature of online activity means you can be in contact at any time. There is the potential for a wider audience and bullying incidents can stay online e.g., a photograph being uploaded that you cannot remove.
- Evidence - a lot of cyberbullying incidents allow those experiencing it to keep evidence, such as taking a screen shot to show to staff or police if needed.
- Potential to hide your identity - it is possible for people to hide their identity or use a false identity.
- Degree of separation - people who cyberbully often do not see the reaction of those experiencing it so it can sometimes be harder for them to see the impact of their actions.

Cyberbullying can occur in many ways, below are some examples:

- Sending humiliating and abusive text, photo or video messages and/or phone calls. This includes anonymous text messages and sharing videos of physical attacks on individuals.
- Sending emails that are threatening or upsetting.
- Sending messages and group-chat messages to contacts or direct to a victim via social media.
- Setting up profiles on social networking sites to make fun of someone.
- Posting personal photos, emails or blogs where others can see them without the individual's permission.
- Through interactive gaming - deliberately blocking, ignoring or excluding an individual from multi-player games or hacking into other people's accounts.

The UK Safer Internet Centre provides advice, information and links to toolkits to help keep those in residential settings safe online. Please go to the following websites to access these resources:

<https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/residential-care-settings>

<https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/blog/supporting-vulnerable-groups-online>

The National Bullying helpline has produced a guide for different apps giving detailed the steps on how to block or report a bully via some of the most popular social platforms:

<https://www.nationalbullyinghelpline.co.uk/social-media.html>

An E-safety agreement should be completed on Access for each person supported in residential care.

5.0 Groups More Likely to Experience Bullying

The [NSPCC](#) explain that any child can be bullied for any reason. If a child is seen as different in some way or seen as an easy target they can be more at risk. This might be because of their race, ethnic background, gender or sexual orientation. Or it could be because they appear anxious or have low self-esteem or are shy or introverted. Popular or successful children are also bullied, sometimes because others are jealous of them. Sometimes a child's family circumstance or home life can be a reason for someone bullying them. Disabled children can sometimes experience bullying because they may be less able to defend themselves. Children in care are also more vulnerable to bullying as highlighted by the [Anti-Bullying Alliance](#)

Please see the following for further information and support:

[Racism and racial bullying | Childline](#)

[Refugees / Asylum-Seekers \(supportline.org.uk\)](#)

<https://www.stonewall.org.uk/> <https://www.stonewallscotland.org.uk/> <https://www.stonewallcymru.org.uk/>

[Advice if your disabled child is bullied - Family Lives \(bullying.co.uk\)](#)

6.0 Signs of Bullying

Children who are being bullied, and those who bully, often hide their feelings and do not speak about what is happening to them. Staff should encourage open communication and should also be aware of the signs of bullying, which can include:

- “Losing” money regularly and/or asking for stolen possessions to be replaced
- Falling out with previously good friends
- Being moody, bad tempered, quiet and/or withdrawn
- Aggression with brothers and sisters
- Doing less well at school, signs of struggling
- Wanting to avoid leaving the house
- Unwilling to go to school or socialise
- Claiming to be unwell on a regular basis, particularly in the morning
- Insomnia and/or other signs of anxiety
- Coming home with cuts and bruises, torn clothes
- Self-harm

7.0 Impact of bullying

The consequences of bullying may lead to a child or young person experiencing pronounced social, emotional or mental health difficulties. Young people who are bullied are more likely to experience depression, anxiety, increased feelings of sadness and loneliness, changes in sleep and eating patterns, and loss of interest in activities they used to enjoy.

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It can also result in low self-esteem, shyness, isolation, underperforming academically, threatened or attempted suicide or self-harm. One study conducted by researchers at Kings College London found that children between the ages of 5 and 12 who were frequently bullied were three times more likely to harm themselves when compared with children who were not bullied (for further information please go to www.verywellfamily.com).

Bullying can also damage bullies. It can teach them that they can get away with violence, and that aggression and threats can be an effective way to control people. Those who bully are also at higher risk of self-harming.

It is also important that staff are aware of the link between bullying, exploitation, going missing and gangs. They must maintain awareness of relevant research, guidance and policies which should be discussed in team meetings and supervision.

Comprehensive training on bullying and exploitation is available to staff through the Outcomes First Group. Please see *Shine* for further information.

8.0 Children who Bully

Understanding how and why a child is bullying can be key to helping the bullying to stop. There can be many underlying reasons including problems at home, being bullied themselves, learned behaviour or to impress their peers.

There may be several causes and although it does not make it right to bully others, helping to understand why is important. Children and young people may bully others because they:

- do not know it is wrong or are unaware of the impact of their behaviour
- have not learned positive ways of interacting with others or to express their feelings
- copy older siblings or people in their family or community they admire
- peer pressure/ trying to get admiration and attention from others
- have low self-esteem/ feel powerless
- are being bullied themselves
- are experiencing family difficulties/going through a difficult time
- may feel jealous of those they are bullying;
- feel sad, isolated, and lonely
- fear of being left out if they do not join in
- are taking out their angry feelings
- are in a culture of aggression and bullying.

9.0 Talking About Bullying

There can be many reasons why young people are reluctant to discuss the fact that they are being bullied, including being afraid that they will not be believed or that nothing will be done, they may be worried that the bullying will become worse. The bully/bullies may have threatened them not to tell anyone.

It is important to develop an environment where children and young people feel safe to talk about whatever is happening to them. Talking directly and openly about bullying lets them know that the adults who care for them take bullying seriously and that they can talk to them if they experience bullying it or see others being bullied. It is also helpful to discuss how adults and children can work together to stop and prevent bullying.

It is important that staff always listen carefully to children and young people and take them seriously.

10.0 Responsibilities of staff

Care staff have a key role both in the prevention of bullying and in effectively dealing with any instances of bullying. All **staff must**:

- Build trust so that children and young people feel empowered to speak to them about being bullied.
- Challenge any child or young person who are witnessed bullying another person. This is to be done in a non-aggressive and non-confrontational way.
- Ensure all those in our care know about the complaints procedure and who they complain to.
- Work with young people to enable them to report any serious incidents to the police.
- Work with those who bully to enable and encourage them to alter their behaviour.
- Take time to be with young people who have been the victims of bullying.
- In cases of persistent bullying, managers, in consultation with placing authorities, should consider the movement of a young person from the home to protect those being bullied.

The Home must **ensure that children know**:

- How to report any concerns and feel confident that they will be listened to and supported.
- They can also report any concerns by emailing tellus@ofgl.co.uk, which is monitored by the Outcomes First Group's Quality Team.
- Are aware of how to contact Childline and the NSPCC.

Any staff member found to be bullying young people will be disciplined. Bullying by an adult is child abuse and, as such, will be seen as gross misconduct and a staff member could be dismissed if found guilty at a disciplinary hearing.

10.1 Reporting bullying incidents

If a child or young person is at immediate risk of serious harm, call the police.

Staff must also:

- Follow the Safeguarding Policy if a child is at risk of harm, is in danger, or has been harmed. Consideration must be given to the proportionality of the response on a case-by-case basis.
- Ensure the child or young person is safe, supported and reassured.
- Not promise confidentiality as the concern will need to be shared further (e.g., with the Designated Safeguarding Manager or social care). Staff will only share the information with those people who are necessary to progress it. This information can be legally shared with the appropriate staff and external agencies even if the pupil states they do not want it to be.
- **Act immediately. Report any concerns regarding bullying to the Designated Safeguarding Manager, the Home Manager and relevant social worker within one working day, and document this on the Home's electronic recording system. The appropriate information should be recorded on the record of the child that is being bullied and any child or children that is carrying out the bullying.**
- Children must be supported and reassured that their safety and welfare within the home is the priority.
- Risk assessments must be implemented where necessary.

The Designated Safeguarding Manager (DSM):

- must deal with any concerns reported to them immediately and sensitively.
- If they believe that there has been significant harm caused to the young person, a referral must be made to the Local Authority immediately. It is important that homes provide as much information as possible as part of the referral process. This will allow any assessment to consider all the available evidence and enable a contextual approach to be taken.
- Any criminal offences must also be reported to police immediately.
- Email this information to Safeguarding@ofgl.co.uk
- Inform the Regional Director.
- If the Local Authority does not believe it meets their threshold for further action and the DSM is not in

agreement, this must be challenged with the Local Authority.

- Information must be shared with relevant parties as appropriate e.g., parents, school etc

When making decisions about how to deal with allegations, the age and understanding of the young person who has displayed harmful behaviour must be taken into consideration, as well as any relevant personal circumstances and how this relates to their behaviour. Homes must consider any disparity in age between the young person who has displayed harmful behaviour and the victim, the impact the behaviour has had on the child that is being bullied, and any element of coercion or violence.

If staff become aware of a cyberbullying/online incident that is a cause for concern, **in addition to the above, they must:**

- Review the supervision and support arrangements for the young person accessing the internet and social media.
- Check the privacy and security settings on the person's devices and account.
- Agree what action will be taken to prevent recurrence and reduce risk. The risk assessment should be reviewed and updated. Consideration of further education on cyber safety matters should be included.
- The incident must be recorded on the Home's electronic recording system.

11.0 Responding to bullying outside of the home

Any incidents of bullying from outside the children's home must be taken seriously and dealt with immediately. Following such incidents, risk assessments **must** be put in place highlighting high-risk situations. The information provided must be recorded on the child's record.

12.0 Management responsibilities

All managers are responsible for ensuring:

- Staff are aware of all the issues that surround bullying and the impact it has;
- Staff are trained to be able to counsel young people, resolve conflict and use the complaints procedure;
- Action is taken when bullying is reported;
- Incidents of bullying and the actions taken are recorded on the home's electronic recording system and are monitored;
- Services have an open and honest culture that encourages issues such as bullying to be discussed;
- Services have a good working relationship with the local police and other partners that facilitates the reporting of more serious incidents of bullying.
- Ensure children and young people know who to talk to and how to raise a concern and report bullying.

13.0 Useful organisations and websites

[Anti-bullying Alliance](#) - is a coalition of organisations and individuals that are united against bullying. Taba@ncb.org.uk.

[Bullying UK](#), part of [Family Lives](#), is a leading charity providing advice and support to anyone affected by bullying.

Childline: <https://www.childline.org.uk/get-support/> or call 0800 1111

The *Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP)* maintains a website for children and young people, and parents and carers about staying safe online: [Think U Know](#)

[EACH](#) : has a freephone Helpline for children experiencing homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying or harassment: 0808 1000 143. It's open Monday to Friday 10am-5pm.

[Kidscape](#) Tel: 0207 730 3300 Anti-bullying Helpline: 08451 205204

Their vision is for all children to grow up in a world free from bullying and harm, with adults who keep them safe and help them to reach their full potential.

[NSPCC](#) provides information and advice about bullying.

[Victim Support](#): offer support to young people affected by crime. Their Children and Young People's (CYP) Service also deals with cases of bullying; offering advice and working with professionals to ensure young people get the support they need. You can call their Support line for free on 08 08 16 89 111.

We are part of the Outcomes First Group Family, by working together we will build incredible futures by empowering vulnerable children, young people and adults in the UK to be happy and make their way in the world

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