

Would you recognise the signs of bullying?

Your guide for taking action in Scouting



www.scouts.org.uk/bullying

Scouting has the power to create an environment in which bullying is not acceptable...

This guide has been written to help you deal with bullying and take steps to reduce the chances of it happening in your Group or Section. It is Scout policy that bullying in any form is unacceptable and all activities should have in place rigorous anti-bullying strategies.

This applies to all Sections within Scouting.

All adults in Scouting have a responsibility to help ensure that Scouting activities take place in a caring and supportive environment. This means maintaining morale and being aware of any changes.

In the main we are a happy lot. Regrettably, at some time we will all have experienced bullying, either as a victim or observer of



someone else's misery. Maybe we have unwittingly caused someone else to be miserable?

What is bullying?

Bullying is a social problem found in all walks of life. Some may say 'it's just part of growing up', but many will be aware of the misery that bullying causes.

It's all too easy to ignore an instance of bullying and assume it is a one-off, or that young people will sort out their differences. Often this is not the case. Young people feel powerless to stop bullying and may carry its effects long into their adult lives.

Bullying can take many different forms, some less obvious than others. Bullying is deliberately hurtful behaviour that may be repeated over a period of time. It doesn't have to be a long-running series of incidents – it can be any occasion where someone deliberately intimidates or harasses another.

Half of primary school age children and more than one in four secondary school students say that they have been bullied within the last year. These are some of the types of bullying they describe:

- Being called names
- Being teased
- Having money, mobile phones or other possessions taken

- Being hit, pushed, pulled, pinched or kicked
- Getting abusive or threatening text messages or e-mails
- Being ignored or left out
- Being attacked or abused because of their religion, gender, sexuality, disability or appearance.



Name-calling is the most common form of bullying that is reported. It can include calling someone names because of their appearance, their accent, because they're not good at something, because their parents are rich, for any reason or even for no reason at all.

Where and when do you draw the line between bullying and simply having some good-natured fun? Well, if the person who it's aimed at doesn't see it as fun, if the teasing becomes nasty, hurtful or vicious, it becomes bullying.

Who is involved?

Bullying can happen anywhere.

Some individuals may be picked on because of differences of race, class, gender or disability. Others are bullied for no obvious reason. For nearly 20% of the young people who call ChildLine about bullying their current tormentor is a former friend.

Bullies and the bullied are not always distinct groups. In a survey of primary school children 15% said they had both bullied and been bullied in the last year. Some

describe bullying as a bad habit they were trying to break.

Like adults, young people can act more cruelly when in larger numbers. Of those calling ChildLine, almost three out of four reported being bullied by a group rather than just one person.

'The things they say feel like a dagger in my back.' - Mark, 10

'It took me a long time to get my confidence back-years really. I still think about it.' - Darren, 26

What are the effects of bullying?

Bullying hurts. It can make people feel that it's somehow their fault or that there is something wrong with them. It can have a devastating effect on young people's self-esteem and destroy their confidence and concentration. They may become more withdrawn and insecure, more cautious and less willing to take any sort of risk. It can leave young people feeling lonely, isolated and very unhappy. Bullying has an effect on everyone,

not just those directly involved. Some feel they can only stand on the sidelines and do nothing because if they intervene they run the risk of being turned on themselves. This makes them feel helpless and guilty.

How do I recognise the signs?

Because it often happens away from others, bullying is not easy to detect. But you can watch for signs, for example, the Member who:

- Hesitates to come to meetings or join in activities
- Asks to change groups
- Is the last one to get picked for a team for no apparent reason, or gets picked on when people think your back is turned
- Is often the target of jokes

'What hurts is that she used to be my friend.' - Louise, 15

- Is reluctant to go to certain places or work with certain individuals
- Has clothing or personal possessions go missing
- Has bruising or some other injury
- Keeps 'losing' their subs or is short of pocket money
- Is quiet and nervous, withdraws from everybody else and becomes quiet and shy – especially in the case of people who are usually loud and noisy
- Refuses to talk about the problem

- Is usually quiet but becomes suddenly prone to lashing out at people, both verbally and physically.

Also remember that victims of bullying may be adults and that a young person's aggressor may not be a peer.

How do you stop bullying?

Bullying carries on because of the fear it creates, not just for those who are bullied, but also for others who witness the bullying.

In the end, it becomes a vicious circle of fear and threats. To stop bullying it is necessary to break the circle once and for all.

Adults in Scouting must never become party to bullying in any form. In fact, they must make sure everyone knows they will not tolerate any form of bullying. Young people must feel confident that they can approach Leaders with a complaint and that it will be dealt with.

'I want to stop, but i'm scared the ringleaders will turn on me.'
- Rob, 11

'I don't want to tell my mum and dad - it would upset them too much.' - Sunita, 16

How can you help?

Bullying can only work if victims and their friends remain silent. Finding an adult they can trust and talk to can help in many ways.

If a young person tells you that they are being bullied, the first and most important step is to listen.

A sympathetic adult can give support just by listening to them discuss their feelings.

Talk to the young person about how they want you to address the issue. They may not be ready to do anything other than talk about the bullying, or they may have some very clear ideas and want to talk them through to try to sort them out. Young people often don't report bullying because they fear adults taking over and acting unilaterally without their permission. Therefore, make sure you discuss what you are going to do with the young person first and get their agreement.

Young people are less likely to be bullied or suffer from the long-term effects of bullying if they feel good about themselves. Remind them that instead of feeling small or left out, because they don't have the 'right' clothes or aren't good at sport, that we are all different. If someone doesn't like them because they are different, that's the other person's problem – not theirs.

The most effective way to deal with verbal bullying is to stay calm, don't react, and look confident. If they don't get angry or upset, the bully won't think they're worth picking on.

Anyone can be a bully; sometimes adults bully too!

Don't encourage aggressive responses to bullying. If violence is involved, encourage them not to hit back as this will only make matters worse. Advise them to refuse to rise to the bait and walk away.

Any form of training to improve confidence and assertiveness can help. For example, going to a self-defence class might be a good idea, not to turn them into an 'ace fighter', but to teach them how to get out of tricky situations without violence.

If they learn to protect themselves, they'll be less frightened of aggression. Also their confidence will increase, which will decrease their chances of being bullied.

Involving parents...

We should always aim to work in partnership with parents. If a young person is being bullied parents should be made aware of the situation.

Talk to the young person and their

parents about actions you are proposing to take. Where appropriate suggest other sources of advice and help e.g. one of the national phone or email helplines (see page 7).

Where a young person is responsible for bullying others, think about whether it would be appropriate to talk to the parents to help resolve the situation. You might want to think about talking to parents alone first to ensure you give the same messages to the young person about their behaviour. It may be that their parents have encouraged their behaviour e.g. told them to stand up for themselves. If the parents then disagree with you this will give mixed messages to the bully and is more likely to make the situation worse.

Seek parents' help and support in getting the young person's commitment to change their behaviour. A good start could be your Group/Section's Anti-Bullying Code (see pages 6&7). Use this to establish what is and what is not acceptable behaviour.

Help the young person understand the consequences and effects of bullying. Get their agreement to put the Code into practice at all times.

Deal firmly and fairly with any breaches of the Code.

If all else fails, you may have to consider further action to avoid

more unpleasantness and prevent further bullying. In this situation, seek guidance from your County/ Area Child Protection Co-ordinator or call the Scout Information Centre.

You can make a difference in the following ways:

- Acknowledge the problem. Bullying happens everywhere in society. It is important that everyone in your Group/Section recognises that bullying exists.
- Be aware of the potential problems bullying may cause.
- Watch for early signs of distress.
- Encourage young people to tell.
- Calm the situation as quickly as possible.
- Offer support to help young people who are bullied. Young people need to know they can rely on support from a source they feel comfortable with. This could be a Leader, a helpline such as ChildLine, or another young person e.g. their Sixer or Patrol Leader.
- Help young people feel good about themselves.
- Show a fair but firm hand. Make it clear to all Members that bullying behaviour is unacceptable in Scouting and in

wider society.

- Try to find constructive ways to help those who are bullying change their behaviour. Punishing bullies doesn't end bullying. It is important to stress that it is the bullying behaviour that is not liked rather than the person.
- Ask young people what they feel constitutes bullying. You can relate bullying to the Promise and Law. Discussions about what is and is not bullying can help form the basis for your Group/Section's Anti-Bullying Code.



'It was only a bit of fun really. I didn't mean for him to take it seriously.' - Jay, 13

Anti-Bullying Code

All Groups/Sections should have a clear policy or charter for dealing with bullying and for helping those who have been bullied.

There are normally five main goals:

- To improve Members' self-confidence
- To promote good behaviour in the Group/Section
- To improve the Group environment and make it a place where bullying is less likely to happen
- To improve everyone's awareness of bullying and its consequences
- To make sure everyone is aware of the action that may be taken if bullying takes place.

DO involve young people in anti-bullying work, as this is far more

likely to succeed than if ideas are imposed on them. If strategies are created with and supported by young people, they will become more responsible and more aware of other people's needs. Young people often have the best approaches to solving problems within their peer groups.

DO consider how your Group's Anti-Bullying Code should be publicised, including making it known to parents and carers.

DO regularly review the Code with the youth Members of your Group/Section.

DO also refer to the Association's factsheets on managing behaviour available from the Scout Information Centre on 0845 300 1818 or www.scoutbase.org.uk

Putting it into practice... an example

In OUR Scout Group...

We DO have respect for everyone as individuals, whatever their differences.

We DO take bullying seriously – it's not 'just a bit of fun.'

We DON'T accept any bullying behaviour – name-calling, physical violence, threats, being left out, spreading nasty rumours either in person or by text and email, or any other way of making people feel bad.

We DO report any bullying we see, whoever it's aimed at. It should be reported to a Leader or someone else we trust like our Patrol Leader.

We DO take someone seriously if they tell us they're being bullied, and we also don't watch others being bullied without doing something.

We DON'T just put up with bullying. We DO make sure something is done about it.

Don't wait and see. Take action on bullying now!

Young people can call helplines such as *ChildLine* or the *NSPCC National Helpline* free, at any time, for information and confidential advice about all problems, including bullying. For *ChildLine* call 0800 1111 or the *NSPCC Helpline* on 0808 800 5000

ChildLine's website offers information, advice and true stories about bullying. Visit www.childline.org.uk/bullying.asp

The *NSPCC's There4me.com* is a confidential online support service for young people aged 12 to 16. Visit www.There4me.com

Kidscape produces leaflets and booklets on bullying, and runs a helpline Monday-Friday on 08451 205204 or visit www.kidscape.org.uk

Bullying Online gives advice and information on bullying. Visit www.bullying.co.uk or email help@bullying.co.uk

BBC Radio 1 has a *Beat Bullying* campaign for young people. Visit www.bbc.co.uk/radio1/onelife/personal/index.shtml

Anti-Bullying Campaign operates a helpline for parents and counselling for children who are being bullied. Call 020 7378 1446.

Parentline Plus is a free, confidential 24-hour helpline for parents concerned with a wide range of issues, including bullying. Call 0808 800 2222 or visit www.parentlineplus.org.uk

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