# Bullying

## Information and advice for parents

**Dorset County Council**

word
Information
and Advice

Improving the quality of life for people in Dorset, **now and for the future**

# What is Bullying?

Bullying can present in many different forms - physical injury, threats, verbal abuse, teasing or excluding someone - but in all forms we believe bullying is wrong and is totally unacceptable.

Children and young people in Dorset schools have told us that they want an end to bullying which they define like this:-

**"Bullying is when a person or group hurts you, means to upset you or unfairly stops you leading your life the way you want, again and again, over a period of time. It will usually make you feel scared or worried about telling someone."**

# Is your child being bullied?

There are many possible signs of, or reactions to, being bullied. Your child may be reluctant to talk about it, but the following signs may indicate possible bullying:-

- coming home with damaged or missing clothes, without money they should have, or with scratches and bruises

- having trouble with school work for no apparent reason

- using a different route between home & school

- refusing to go to school, or having sudden aches or pains which would keep them at home

- feeling irritable, touchy or particularly emotional.

# What you can do:-

- Make time to listen to your child; take his or her concerns seriously. Sensitive questions will be helpful - try to avoid jumping to conclusions

- Keep a diary of all the bullying incidents your child has experienced for you to refer to

- Explain what you are going to do next to help your child - try to act with his or her agreement if possible. Stay calm - showing stress will not help your child. Assure your child that the bullying must be stopped.

- Contact the school, youth club or other organisation if that is where the bullying is taking place and find out who will deal with the problem. At a school the school office should be able to tell you who this is. Leave a phone message and write a note detailing what has happened. It is helpful to keep a copy for yourself.

- Ask for a copy of their anti-bullying policy which will tell you how they will support you and your child. You can use this to check that your concern is being dealt with correctly and promptly.

- Expect staff at your child's school or organisation to treat your concerns seriously and to keep you informed about what they are doing to address your concern. If you are unhappy with any aspect of the school's / organisation's response, make an appointment to speak to the head teacher, youth worker in charge etc. If you are anxious about this ask a friend to go along to support you.

- Remember that neither you nor your child is at fault if your child is being bullied. There can be a tendency to blame the victim which perpetuates the bullying. It is the bullying that is wrong, and the bullying which must be stopped.

- If the matter remains unresolved you should ask the school, youth club or organisation for a copy of its complaints policy and follow the guidance in that to take the matter further.

# What if your child is bullying other children?

The 'Don't Suffer in Silence' anti-bullying website (DCSF) recognises that many children may be involved in bullying other children at some time or other. Often parents are not aware that their child is involved in bullying. Finding out can make you feel upset and ashamed, but it is important to remember not to get angry with your child. Many children go through a phase of bullying behaviour, which may be a result of:

- ignorance – not knowing that it is wrong

- peer pressure at school or at a club

- copying older brothers or sisters or other people in the family

- reacting to tensions or difficulties at home

- acting out aggressive feelings caused by upsetting experiences.

# What you can do

Tell your child it is not acceptable to bully, but try not to over-react or provoke a confrontation.

Listen to your child and try to understand what is upsetting him or her and causing this behaviour.

Get help and advice from someone at school or youth club if you can. Find out what support they can give you and your child to stop the bullying behaviour.

Praise your child for improvements in his or her behaviour and for reducing the bullying. This will encourage your child to stop bullying altogether.

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# Cyber-Bullying

"Cyber-bullying" is the misuse of technology like computers and mobile phones for the purposes of bullying. It can be a criminal activity. It includes:

- Bullying by texts or messages or calls on mobile phones

- Use of mobile phone cameras to cause distress, fear or humiliation

- Posting threatening, abusive, defamatory or humiliating material on web-sites

- Hi-jacking email accounts

- Making threatening, abusive, defamatory or humiliating remarks in chat-rooms

- Posting threatening, abusive, defamatory or humiliating material on reunion sites.

# What you can do

Make sure your child understands the serious nature of these activities.

If your child is a victim of cyber-bullying you or your child should let the school know. Ask for a copy of the school's ICT (Information and Communications Technology), cyber-bullying or e-safety policy. This will give guidance on what to do and how the school may be able to help.

Because almost all cyber-bullying incidents happen out of school, the school is not required to take any action, but the headteacher will consider if and how he or she could help to stop the bullying happening, and how to prevent it in the future.

Further guidance on this is currently being developed and will appear on the DCC anti-bullying website soon.

# Advice you can give your children

- All the essential anti-bullying messages apply e.g. tell someone.

- Never reply to abusive messages but log them and report them

- Never give out personal details

- Never reply to someone you do not know

- Stay in the public areas of chat rooms

# Some further sources of help & information regarding bullying:-

**www.dorsetforyou.com/antibullying**
Dorset's anti-bullying website providing further guidance on responding to and preventing bullying.

**www.ncb.org.uk/**
The national Anti-Bullying Alliance website

**www.childline.org.uk**
Childline's website offers information, advice & guidance about bullying. The free helpline is on 0800 1111.

**www.kidscape.org.uk**
Kidscape produces leaflets & booklets on bullying, and runs a helpline Monday – Friday 10am – 4pm on 08451 205204

**www.parentlineplus.org.uk**
Parentline Plus is a free, confidential 24 hr helpline for parents concerned with a range of issues, including bullying. Call 0808 800 2222

**www.ace-ed.org.uk/pdf/bullying.pdf**
The Advisory Centre for Education publishes information sheets on bullying and runs a helpline Monday-Friday 2pm – 5pm on 0808 800 5793. You can download a leaflet titled 'Tackling Bullying' at the website.

**www.dcsf.gov.uk/bullying**
Don't Suffer in Silence - The Department
for Children, Schools and Families website for
anti-bullying

**www.antibullying.net/**
The Anti-bullying Network website, with links to
www.antibullying.net/cyberbullying1.htm
This website can help you to find out how to remove any
upsetting or abusive material about your child which has
been put on the Internet

**www.swgfl.org.uk/**
The SW Grid for Learning has information on e-safety and
cyberbullying.

**Anti Bullying Campaign**
185 Tower Bridge Road, London SE1 2UF – Tel 0207 378 1446 9.30
– 5.00pm – advice line for parents & children

Also if you live in the Weymouth and Portland area, advice and
support is available for children, young people and parents from
the Waves Project (telephone **01305 768768** or call in at **52 St
Mary Street, Weymouth**), contact **Kris Rymer** or **Jane Fuhrmann**.

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This leaflet is being produced in a number of languages other than English, and in different formats. Telephone 01305 224661 for further information.

All leaflets can be made available in audio tape, large print and Braille, or alternative languages on request.

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