BULLYING: THE FACTS
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The Welsh Assembly Government defines bullying as the intentional hurting of one person by another, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. It is usually repetitive or persistent, although some one-off attacks can have a continuing harmful effect on the victim, leaving them traumatised and nervous of future recurrence. This definition is consistent with accounts from children and young people, and with research.

The Welsh Assembly Government and Anti-Bullying Network believe that bullying is serious, and that we should work to reduce and prevent it as part of our efforts to create safe, positive and stimulating environments for children. This factsheet sets out some of the recent findings on bullying, the legislative and policy context, a brief guide to resources, and the importance of participation by children and young people.

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying takes many forms, face-to-face, or through third parties. The hurt can be either or both physical, and emotional.

Some bullying is physical:
- kicking, hitting, pushing
- taking and damaging belongings.

Some bullying is verbal:
- name-calling
- taunting, mocking
- making offensive comments
- making threats.

Some bullying is relational:
- excluding people from groups, deliberately ignoring
- gossiping, spreading rumours.

Some bullying uses modern technology such as mobile phones, or the internet. This ‘cyber bullying’ includes:
- text-message bullying
- phone-call bullying
- picture/video-clip bullying (via mobile phone cameras)
- email bullying
- chat-room bullying
- bullying through instant messaging
- bullying via websites.
ROLES IN BULLYING

There are many roles in bullying: there may be a gang of bullies, with a ringleader and followers. Some pupils watch and reinforce the bullying actively, or passively by doing nothing to stop it. Other pupils - defenders - may help the victim. These roles are not exclusive: at different times or in different contexts, children and young people can both bully and be bullied (Wolke and others 2000).

RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS IN BULLYING

A child or young person can be bullied for no particular reason. Sometimes personal characteristics (such as height, weight, or hair colour) are targeted. Children who are timid and unassertive are more vulnerable to being bullied, so assertiveness training can help some children. Having friends, especially friends you can trust, is an important protective factor against being bullied in the peer group. Some bullying is done because a child or young person belongs to a certain group. This has been labelled 'prejudice-driven bullying', and includes homophobic bullying, racist bullying, sexual or gender bullying, and bullying of pupils with learning or other disabilities.

It is possible for many children to get involved in bullying, too, and it is important not to 'pathologise' most cases of bullying. All bullying is unacceptable, and many children who are aggressive and lack empathy for others can be helped to understand the consequences of their actions and change their behaviour. The home background can be an important factor to take into account in addressing bullying behaviours, together with peer-group influence, which is especially significant in secondary school.
Most of our information on the extent of bullying comes from children and young people saying that they have been bullied, or have taken part in bullying others - this is called 'self-report' data. This is a good source, as bullying is first and foremost a subjective experience. It is also important to take account of other perspectives, for example of witnesses or bystanders (pupils, teachers, parents).

Surveys provide information on the frequency of bullying, but the figures will be influenced by: the age of the children; their understanding of what bullying is; and how the questions have been asked, for example, what time period is being referred to and how serious or frequent the bullying has to be. Pupils may report being bullied, even if this was mildly or once or twice, if this is not specified. This could account for the figures obtained in a study on 953 pupils in 2002 (Oliver and Candappa 2003) that showed that half of all the primary school children and more than one in four secondary school children asked said they had been bullied in the last term.

Other surveys usually produce figures within the range of 10-20 per cent. Over the last few years, data gathered from some 16,000 pupils in Leicestershire schools (Pupil Attitude Survey 2005/6) shows that the proportion who say they have been bullied in school this year more than once or twice was 16.3 per cent in 2002/3, 14.9 per cent in 2003/4, 14.4 per cent in 2004/5, and 13.9 per cent in 2005/6. Levels of severe bullying appear to be declining from around 13 per cent in 1996 to 8 per cent in 2006 (Katz, 2006). These slow but steady declines do suggest that anti-bullying work is having an effect, but also that much remains to be done.

Even if many forms of bullying are slowly decreasing, cyber bullying, as one particular form of bullying, is probably on the increase as new technologies spread more widely, including downwards to younger children. A study of more than 11,000 pupils from 2002 to 2005 asked them how often they had received any nasty or threatening text messages or emails. The percentage answering 'once in a while' or more often was 5.8 per cent in 2002, 5.9 per cent in 2003, 7.4 per cent in 2004 and 7.0 per cent in 2005 (Noret and Rivers 2006). An NCH survey in 2005 (NCH 2005) found that 20 per cent of young people are bullied or threatened through text messages or online: 14 per cent received bullying or threatening text messages, 5 per cent were harassed in internet chat rooms, and 4 per cent were harassed by email. A detailed report on 92 pupils (Smith and colleagues 2005) found that 7 per cent had experienced some kind of cyber bullying in the last couple of months, with phone-call, text-message and email bullying the most common forms. Prevalence rates of cyber bullying were greater outside of school than inside.

Other studies show that children report being bullied out of school, for example 'on the bus', 'on the train', 'on my way to school', 'on the way home', 'out on the street', 'in the shop' and 'down my local park' (Frew 2002).
**Children in Public Care**

Children in residential care are particularly vulnerable to bullying. The Social Exclusion Unit found 60 per cent of looked after children report being bullied in school compared to 17 per cent of all children (Social Exclusion Unit 2003). A report by Barter and others (2004) found that half of the young people interviewed in children's homes had experienced direct physical assault as victims, perpetrators or witnesses, and nearly all experienced verbal abuse.

Young people in secure settings also report being bullied. A survey by the Youth Justice Board (Challen and Walton 2004) found that 10 per cent of boys and 13 per cent of girls were bullied during their first few days in custody. In Scotland, a questionnaire given to all young offenders in Young Offenders Institutions found that 26 per cent said they had been bullied at their present institution during their present sentence; and 33 per cent said they had been bullied by staff at some point during their stay in the institution (Dyson 2005).

**Homophobic Bullying**

A survey of homophobia in schools for the DfES (Warwick, Chase and Aggleton 2004) reported that around 82 per cent of secondary school teachers are aware of verbal homophobic bullying and 26 per cent of physical homophobic bullying. Pupil reports suggest that between 30-50 per cent of young people in secondary schools attracted to people of the same sex will have directly experienced homophobic bullying (compared to the 10-20 per cent of young people who experience general bullying). A survey in 1997 found that only 6 per cent of schools had anti-bullying policies that address homophobic bullying; in 2004 this had increased, but only to 13 per cent (YWCA 2004).

**Gender or Sexual Bullying**

Girls and boys can receive name-calling, inappropriate touching, and other forms of harassment based on gender (Duncan 1999). Young Voice (Katz, Buchanan and Bream 2001) reported that 19 per cent of young people had been insulted because of their gender. Girls and boys who are not perceived to live up to gender stereotypes and expectations can often find themselves bullied, and whether they are gay or not, this bullying if often homophobic.
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CONT. RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS IN BULLYING

BULLYING AND RACISM

Research in mainly white schools in 2001/2 found that 25 per cent of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds had experienced racist name-calling within the last week. A third reported hurtful name-calling and verbal abuse either at school or during the school journey, and for more than 16 per cent this was persistent (DfES 2002).

Research with Traveller pupils found that more than half of Year 6 pupils interviewed had been called racist names; and 29 of the 38 pupils interviewed who transferred to secondary school said that they had encountered some kind of racial abuse, particularly in their first year of secondary school (Derrington and Kendall 2004).

BULLYING AND LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

Children and young people with learning or communication difficulties are especially vulnerable to bullying. They may not have the ability to be assertive because they lack confidence or are more sensitive. According to a report by Mencap (2000), nearly 90 per cent of people with a learning disability experience bullying, with over 66 per cent of them experiencing it on a regular basis. Nearly three quarters (73 per cent) are bullied in a public place, including a quarter on buses.

WHY IS BULLYING AN IMPORTANT ISSUE?

Bullying is one of children and young people's main concerns. In 2004/5, ChildLine counselled 32,688 children about bullying - almost 1 in 4 of children counselled. Bullying accounted for 25 per cent of the calls to ChildLine and was the most common reason why children call the helpline. The Children's Commissioner in Wales has said that bullying is one of the biggest concerns that children and young people contact him about.

Bullying can destroy children and young people's enjoyment of school, family and social life, as well as their capacity to learn. One study found that primary school children who were bullied were more likely to report disturbed sleep, bed-wetting, feeling sad, headaches and stomach aches. The risk of these symptoms increased with the frequency of the bullying (Williams and others 1996). Children and young people who are bullied often truant from school. They can be more anxious and insecure than those who are not bullied, and suffer from low self-esteem and see themselves as failures. Bullying can lead to depression or, in the most serious cases, self-harm or attempted suicide (DfES 2006).
THE LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY CONTEXT

Protection from bullying and the right to attend education without fear is covered by a number of articles in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

In Wales, the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 states that 'Head teachers in state schools have a duty to encourage good behaviour and respect for others on the part of pupils and, in particular, prevent all forms of bullying among pupils' (Section 61(4)). Since September 1999, head teachers of maintained schools in England and Wales have been under a duty to draw up measures to prevent all forms of bullying among pupils (Schools Standards Framework Act 1998).

The Education and Inspection Bill (2006) also reinforces the duty on head teachers to have in place a behaviour policy that includes measures to prevent bullying and states the disciplinary penalties that will result should bullying occur. The Education Act 2002 (Section 175) gives all schools, including independent schools, the duty to 'safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils'.

Section 28 of the Children’s Act 2004 places a duty on local authorities in Wales and a range of partners to improve the well being of children and young people in each local authority area. The new duties come into force on 1 September 2006.

The Assembly Government has set seven core aims as the basis of all its work for children and young people. They seek to ensure that all children and young people:

1. have a flying start in life;
2. have a comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities;
3. enjoy the best possible health and are free from abuse, victimisation and exploitation;
4. have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities;
5. are listened to, treated with respect, and have their race and cultural identity recognised;
6. have a safe home and a community which supports physical and emotional wellbeing;
7. are not disadvantaged by poverty.

The Assembly Government is working on priority outcome measures to sit under the 7 Core aims. Keeping children and young people safe from bullying will fall under core aim 6.

From 2004, Estyn’s Common Inspection Framework considers how well schools care for, guide and support learners. This will include assuring the healthy development, safety and well-being of all learners, and that the school has effective procedures for the protection of children and young people, and for
dealing with appeals and complaints. Schools, local authorities and other children’s services are required to self-evaluate, prior to inspection by officials.

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 requires schools to work towards stopping racial discrimination and promoting race equality. This includes racist bullying.

The Disability Discrimination Act (2005) requires schools and other public bodies to promote disability equality from December 2006. Schools will need to take action to ensure that disabled pupils are not discriminated against because of their disability, including through bullying.

RESOURCES

The Welsh Assembly Government has anti-bullying guidance for schools, Respecting Others, which gives guidelines for drafting a policy and a range of suggested preventive strategies. In addition, you may find it useful to refer to DfES guidance on anti-racist bullying; Bullying Around Racism, Religion and Culture; and is producing guidance on homophobic bullying in 2007. The DfES website on bullying is at www.dfes.gov.uk/bullying.

The Estyn (2006) report “Tackling Bullying in Schools: A Survey of Effective Practice” identifies a number of features of good practice found across Wales.

There are many other resources available to help schools reduce and prevent bullying. The Respecting Others website (www.wales.gov.uk/respectingothers) includes website links to our partners members of the Anti-Bullying Network and also the Anti-Bullying Alliance (England) website.

Cardiff University were commissioned to carry out an assessment of school anti-bullying policies in Wales. The purpose of the evaluation was to assess how well, on the whole, current policies in Wales reflected the guidance set out in ‘Respecting Others’. An additional purpose was for the evaluation to identify policies which may be used as examples of good practice. The final report was published on the Assembly website in April 2006.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE’S PARTICIPATION

The new inspection arrangements require inspectors to hold discussions with pupils to explore their knowledge and understanding of current and recent work, how well they are being looked after and whether the school is ensuring their health and safety. Inspectors should also set aside time to gain first hand views of pupils through a meeting with representatives of the school council, to
identify whether they are given the opportunity to reflect on their experiences and to participate in making decisions. The school is expected to have arrangements in place for responding to pupils views and concerns.

Young people can also participate actively in important decisions that concern their peer group, for example through engaging in school councils, youth parliaments or other democratic systems. Children and young people need to negotiate and own a strategy rather than have one simply imposed upon them. In Wales all schools are required to have set up a school council and held their first meeting by 1 November 2006. Assembly Government guidance was issued to all schools in September 2006.

There are a range of activities and areas that children and young people can be involved in that relate to bullying:

- decisions about how to tackle bullying
- identifying priority issues that need to be addressed, which will often include bullying
- the development and delivery of the taught curriculum that can focus on aspects of bullying and discrimination
- identifying new forms of bullying, such as text and email bullying
- learning how to play an active participant role in challenging bullying
- peer support including mediation, listening, advocacy and mentoring for those experiencing or at risk of bullying or being bullied (Cowie and others 2002). Peer support systems have changed as the children and young people involved have become more creative and confident in developing the systems in which they have been trained to play a part, for example, by making changes in the logistics of peer support, and developing use of the internet and email support (Cartwright 2005; Cowie and Hutson 2005).
- reviewing, auditing and developing anti-bullying policy and practice and giving feedback to Estyn.
- volunteering and supporting others in the wider community to promote inclusion and reduce bullying, for example, those with learning disabilities.

**WHAT THIS MEANS FOR SCHOOLS AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS**

Given the continued prevalence of bullying and its impact on health and well-being, schools and other organisations that educate and care for children and young people will want to do what they can to prevent it and deal with it effectively when it occurs. Schools are legally required to have an anti-bullying policy and to safeguard children and young people. Anti-bullying policies should refer to specific forms of bullying such as homophobic and racist bullying, as well as to particularly vulnerable groups such as children in public care, young
Preventing bullying through a whole-school approach; focusing on creating a culture where bullying is unacceptable and curriculum provision in Personal and Social Education supported by effective pastoral systems including peer support.

**PREVENTION**

An effective anti-bullying strategy involves three elements:
- prevention
- reacting and responding
- supporting and monitoring those who have been bullied and those doing the bullying.

**REACTING AND RESPONDING**

Responding effectively to bullying using reward and sanctions as outlined in your behaviour policy. The key tasks in responding effectively are:
- making sure the person being bullied is safe and feels safe
- establishing what happened by listening to different perspectives, including those of the person bullied, the person doing the bullying and those that have witnessed the bullying (also called 'bystanders')
- making sure the person who is doing the bullying knows it is wrong to bully, takes responsibility for their behaviour and makes amends. Doing this in an emotionally intelligent way will require focusing on the unacceptable behaviours being displayed, and not reinforcing a sense of the individual being bad
- publicly signalling, where necessary and appropriate, to the whole school that the bullying is taken seriously and has been responded to well. This will often including talking to and with parents and carers.

**SUPPORTING AND MONITORING**

This will include:
- identifying immediate and longer-term support needs of both the person being bullied and the person who has done the bullying. This may include friendship-based group work, accessing support from external agencies including voluntary agencies and Child Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- recording the bullying incident, including what happened and who was involved, including the bystanders
- reflecting on the process to identify any lessons for the future and disseminating any learning to colleagues
- monitoring and following up with all parties concerned to ensure that the bullying has stopped, and if it hasn’t, taking appropriate steps.
The Welsh Assembly Government is grateful to the Anti-Bullying Alliance (England) for providing this briefing, which we have amended to reflect the Welsh context.

References
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