



ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

Children and young people in care are among the groups most vulnerable to bullying. No child deserves to be bullied. It is unacceptable behaviour. Fortitude fostering is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all children, young people. It is important that foster carers receive support and appropriate information so that they can take action against bullying. If bullying does occur, children, young people and foster carers must inform the supervising social worker (or manager) and/or respective social worker so appropriate action can be taken, and a strategy formed to help prevent further bullying. This is a requirement by the Fostering Standards and Regulation:

Foster carers must have positive strategies for effectively supporting children where they encounter discrimination or bullying when-ever this occurs.

National Minimum Standards (England) 2011 Standard 3 (3.6)

There is a link between bullying and sexual / criminal exploitation. Hence it is important that both staff and carers familiarise themselves with appropriate research, guidance and policies on bullying, going missing, and gangs, in addition to raising awareness of bullying in support groups, team meetings, and supervision.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THIS POLICY

- To ensure that all children, young people, foster carers and staff have an understanding of what bullying is and their role in preventing it.
- To outline the agency's anti-bullying policy and the procedures to be followed when bullying is reported.
- To underline our commitment to take bullying seriously and ensure that children, young people, foster carers and agency staff will be supported when bullying is reported.
- To demonstrate that bullying will not be tolerated and that all children deserve our help to learn different ways of behaving.
- To achieve benefits through tackling bullying effectively and consistently i.e.: improving safety of young people, standards of behaviour, academic/work performance, self-esteem and motivation, school attendance, as well as building partnerships, communications and trust with all parties

3. DEFINING BULLYING

Bullying may be defined as behaviour by an individual or group usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group physically or emotionally. Bullying is:

- Deliberately harmful
- Repetitive and persistent
- Involves an imbalance of power



3.1. Different forms of Bullying

- **Physical** pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence as well as making a child/young person do something they don't want to do or stopping them from doing something they do want to do. Taking belongings, damaging someone's belongings.
- **Emotional** being unfriendly, excluding and tormenting, sending malicious emails, or text messages, intimidating glances and body language.
- **Verbal** name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing, insulting, blackmail and threats, making offensive remarks.
- **Discriminatory** making offensive remarks and singling out for poor treatment based on someone's gender, race, gender re-assignment, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation – this may be unlawful (Equalities Act 2010).
- **Hidden or indirect bullying** lying and spreading rumours, negative facial or physical gestures, menacing or contemptuous looks, playing nasty jokes to embarrass or humiliate, mimicking unkindly, encouraging other to socially exclude someone, damaging someone's reputation.
- **Cyberbullying** See separate section.

4. SIGNS OF BULLYING

Foster carers often feel guilt and confusion that they have not recognised that a child in their care is being bullied or bullying, but a lot of children who are being bullied and bully are very good at hiding their feelings. As appropriate a foster carer may have to monitor bullying both overtly (discussion with young person) or covertly e.g. being aware of the signs of bullying. Other signs include:

- 'Losing' dinner money or other monies continually lost
- Falling out with previously good friends
- Being moody and bad tempered
- Being quiet and withdrawn
- Wanting to avoid leaving the house
- Aggression with brothers and sisters
- Doing less well at schoolwork, signs of struggling
- Unwilling to go to school or socialise
- Insomnia
- Anxiety
- Claiming to be unwell on a regular basis, particularly in the morning
- Coming home with cuts and bruises
- Self-harm
- Torn clothes
- Asking for stolen possessions to be replaced



Carers have to be extra vigilant of children/young people's behaviour patterns as it can be difficult to separate out behaviour that stems from the child/young person's background/attachment issues and behaviour that stems from being bullied.

Fortitude Fostering recognises that it is essential for foster carers to have as much knowledge of a child / young person's background and behaviour prior to a placement starting. To help prevent bullying foster carers should closely involve child/young person in their child specific safe care plan, so that they are aware of expectations of behaviour and it can be a forum in which it is agreed what is and is not bullying. Foster carers should read and discuss with the school the school's anti-bullying policy and will work closely with the school to prevent bullying.

5. INFORMATION SHARING & GATHERING

If a foster carer thinks that a child/young person is being bullied or is bullying, then they must immediately discuss the issue with their supervising social worker and the child/young person's social worker.

The foster carer and social worker should put into place a plan to calmly gather information over a couple of weeks to help build up a picture of evidence. Foster carers may be requested to ask the following questions over a period of time:

- Tell me about your day at school today?
- Describe what you enjoyed most at school today/what you enjoyed less?
- Who did you play with/what sort of games did you play?
- Would you have liked to play different games with someone else?
- Are you looking forward to going to school tomorrow?
- What did you do at lunchtime today?
- Is there anyone you would like to invite home?
- Is there anyone at school you don't like and why?
- Are they looking forward to going to school tomorrow?

The questions will depend on age and disposition of the respective child/young person.

6. TAKING ACTION

The child's Local Authority social worker is ultimately responsible for following through any concerns or action plans put in place due to concerns around bullying. If bullying is taking place on school premises due to the relationship that will have built up between the foster carer and school, the foster carer may be asked to meet with the class teacher.

Social Workers and schools have a duty of care and allowing a child to be continually bullied when the school has been alerted to the problem could be seen as a breach of that duty.

It is helpful to look at the school's policies on bullying, or behaviour. Section 89 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 states that maintained schools must have measures to encourage good behaviour and prevent all forms of bullying amongst pupils. Some schools choose to include this information in an anti-bullying policy, whilst others include it in their behaviour policy.



When a foster carer meets with the teacher to raise the issue of bullying, they should explain their worries and explore the issues further with appropriate questions e.g.:

- How the child/young person is getting on with others in class?
- Has the teacher noticed any issues of conflict with other children/young people?
- Has the teacher noticed that the fostered child/young person seems unhappy and isolated?
- Is the child/young person being excluded from games in the playground or regularly not having a partner to work with in class?
- Ask the class teacher if they can keep an eye on the situation and let you know if they have any concerns
- Ask what the teacher suggests would be the best way of sorting it out

The foster carer should then pass on the details of the interview and any school meeting to their supervising social worker and the child's social worker and if it is felt that there is a high risk of bullying taking place then the child's social worker may wish to speak to the child directly or have a further meeting with the school. If the foster carer feels that the teacher is not addressing the matters satisfactorily and does not feel that the Head is any further help, the issue can be referred to the Board of Governor. Fortitude Fostering in consultation with the Local Authority will seek to support carers through this process, if this course of action is deemed appropriate.

7. SUPPORTING THE CHILD

Foster carers should be available to support and comfort the child/young person in the home setting. The process of dealing with bullying is very stressful for children/young people who may feel that they will get into further trouble with the bully or feel guilty for causing trouble for the social worker and the foster carer. It may be helpful for the foster carer to increase the child's circle of friends by inviting a number of children home regularly for tea etc. With young people, established friendships help keep them safe as well as developing interests and engaging with community activities all of which should be encouraged.

It is important that a child or young person has appropriate school uniform, clothes and equipment and where possible lifestyles similar to his or her peers as any difference (taking into account his or her wishes) can be a cause for unkindness and singling out. In relation to this children & young people should be involved in decisions about clothing and shopping in an age appropriate way.

Once bullying is discovered the Child's Social worker and School should put together a plan of action in liaison with the child / young person, Foster Carer and Supervising Social Worker.

8. BULLYING IN THE COMMUNITY & WORKPLACE.

Much of the research is in respect of bullying in the school and in further education but looked after children and birth children are vulnerable to bullying in the community and the workplace and through social media. Young people (particularly vulnerable when based out of borough) do not always have the backing of their friends and family (sometimes they are simply not in the area) also for older children in the workplace, zero hours' contracts, and casual labour do not operate the anti-bullying or grievances policies or have established human resources teams. Therefore, there are not systems or structures to challenge bullies and particularly when out of borough children / young people are further vulnerable to criminal exploitation.



Younger children can also get bullied and picked on in the park, play areas, at the shops, at the end of the road – literally anywhere. It is crucial that bullying is followed up by sharing information, recording and working together to create an action plan that best protects a child or young person.

9. IF BULLYING CONTINUES

The school/community/social worker plan may work for some time, but the child/young person may begin to suffer from bullying again. Foster carers should be available to support and comfort the child/young person in the home setting and keep lines of communication open. If a foster carer suspects that the bullying has started again, they should:

- Contact the Child's social worker and their supervising social worker
- Keep a diary/up to date recording of what the child/young person says is happening/add details to monthly reports
- Or get the foster child/young person to keep his/her own diary/add details to monthly reports
- In respect of school write a note to the Head Teacher explaining that the problem is still unresolved/or escalate by referring the issue to the Board of Governors.
- Ask for the letter to be put onto the child's school file, together with a note of action taken

10. CHILDREN WHO BULLY

Foster children and birth children may be involved in bullying at home, community or at school or in the workplace. Foster carers find this behaviour very distressing as they may not be aware of the child/young person's involvement in bullying until the respective child discloses, or they are approached by a social worker or teacher, or someone in the community
Children/young people sometimes bully others because:

- They don't know it's wrong.
- Because they are unaware of the impact of their behaviour.
- They are copying older siblings or other people in the family whom they admire.
- They haven't learnt other ways of mixing with their school friends.
- Their friends encourage them to bully.
- They are going through a difficult time and are acting out aggressive feelings
- They may be jealous of the foster child.
- They may be jealous of the birth child.
- Attachment issues; lack of empathy, emotional age, inability to self soothe etc
- Feelings of powerlessness, opportunity to have sense of control.
- Peer pressure and/or wanting the approval of others
- Are being bullied themselves
- Being worried, unhappy or upset about something
- Lacking social skills or not understanding how others feel.



If a foster carer suspects that their birth children or foster children may be bullying each other or other children at school, or in any environment then they should contact their supervising social worker or the child's social worker immediately. It is far better for a supervising social worker or the child's social worker to deal with the matter and put a plan in place before an allegation is made/or and harm happens to an individual child or young person.

If a child protection Investigation is instigated by the fostered child's social worker, the supervising social worker will be able to advise the foster carer of the processes involved and advise of sources of appropriate legal advice.

11. STOPPING CHILDREN / YOUNG PEOPLE FROM BULLYING

The foster carer's supervising social worker and child's social worker will be able advise and assist foster carers in practical management techniques to help children to stop bullying.

Fortitude Fostering has training courses to help with this area, but some of the techniques involved include:

- Explaining that using aggression or force to get what they want is unacceptable.
- Explaining that what they are doing makes other children/young people unhappy.
- Discourage other family members from bullying and aggressive behaviour.
- Encourage the child to play with other children without bullying.
- Make an appointment to see the child 's class teacher.
- Explain to the teacher the problems the child is experiencing.
- Discuss with the teacher how you and the school can stop them from bullying.
- Regularly check with the child how things are going at school.
- Give the child/young person praise and encouragement when they are co-operative and kind.

12. CYBER BULLYING

Cyberbullying is bullying and harassment through e-mail, instant messaging, text messages, blogs, websites and tablets, laptops, mobile phones. It is also called electronic bullying, SMS bullying, mobile bullying, online bullying and internet bullying. It can happen at any age, by any age. Please ensure you read the Fortitude Fostering Internet Safety Policy.

There is a strong link between cyberbullying and face to face bullying. Research has shown that 80% of victims of cyberbullying were also bullied face to face (Anti-Bullying Alliance May 2019). Anti-Bullying Alliance indicate succinctly how cyberbullying differs:

- **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, for example: a photo that you can't remove
- **Evidence** - a lot of cyberbullying incidents allow those experiencing it to keep evidence - for example, take a screen shot - to show to school staff or police if needed.
- **Potential to hide your identity** - it is possible to hide your identity online which can make cyberbullying incidents very scary



- **Degree of separation** - people who cyberbully often don't see the reaction of those experiencing it so it can sometimes be harder for them to see the impact of their actions
A Survey carried out by Anglia Ruskin University found that one in five young people had fallen victim to cyberbullying (CYPD 2.8.2011)

13. GROUPS MORE LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE BULLYING.

All children and young people have intrinsic value and worth and we embrace their uniqueness and autonomy. At the same time Fortitude Fostering (staff and foster carers) acknowledge that whilst each child is an individual research shows that looked after children of all ages are more vulnerable to bullying, particularly:

- Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender children and young people
- Disabled children and young people and with/or special needs
- Unaccompanied asylum seekers and race and faith targeted bullying

Individuals who are perceived to be different are more vulnerable to bullying behaviour based on prejudice and ignorance.

13.1. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender children and young people

Those perceived as LGBT+ are at an increased risk of being bullied and ridiculed at school and in the community. The number of negative experiences in both residential and foster care because of bullying and violence is not widely recorded, however:

- **55 per cent** of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people have experienced homophobic bullying at school (*The School Report*). **75 per cent** of trans young people have experienced name-calling and **28 per cent** physical abuse at school (*Metro Youth Chances*)
- *Trans young people may experience homophobic bullying, and lesbian, gay or bisexual young people may experience transphobic bullying. Any young person perceived to be 'different' in some way, for example a young person who doesn't conform to gender stereotypes, may experience homophobic, biphobia or transphobic bullying (Stonewall)*

Examples of bullying

- A boy being picked on because he wears make up or behaviours in a way that others that others do or do not perceive as conforming to a set 'norm'
- Inappropriate and persistent questioning. For example, a bisexual young person being asked if he or she can't make up his or her mind or being called greedy/promiscuous
- Over intrusive questioning re gender and sexuality
- Name calling e.g. tranny, lessey, gay boy, it, puff, lemon
- Intimidation
- Mimicking and exaggerating actions



- Physical intimidation and violence
- 'Outing' or threatening to 'out' an individual
- Using social media and texts to spread rumours
- Excluding someone from an activity or conversation because of their perceived sexual identity

It is important that parents, carers, teacher's SSW's and all professionals and people in the community play their part in creating a safe inclusive environment:

- Build strong connections/relationships, keeping the lines of communications open and observing the behaviours of others. It is important for individuals to know who they can turn to both for support but also to share concerns when they feel another person may not be safe.
- Establish a safe environment at school, in the home and in the community sending the message that no one should be treated differently, yet at the same time challenging stereo types.
- Community clubs and organisations should have policies that address bullying and aid protection.
- Create (where natural and possible) gay and straight alliances between individuals and groups. Encourage open discussion.
- Dealing with suspected and known bullying and bullies in an appropriate and intelligent manner that will help build a safer and inclusive environment
- Protect privacy and confidentiality where appropriate.

13.2. Disabled children and young people and with/or special needs.

The Children and Families Act 2014 requires a Local Authority to produce a Local Offer that sets out what parent carers and children and young people with SEND can expect in their local area. Within the SEND Code of Practice, it also confirms that the "Local Offer" must demonstrate the arrangements schools in their local area have in place for emotional mental and social development of children and young people with disabilities but also those with SEN and one of those arrangements is to prevent bullying. Contact a Family and the National Network of Parent Carer Forums, as part of the ABA (Anti-Bullying Alliance) All Together programme, have written a document which gives some guidance about bullying and the local offer.

Again, bullying is not just at school, but in the community and the workplace and through the cyber world. Fifteen-year-olds with statements of special educational needs were significantly more likely to be frequent victims of threats or acts of physical violence and theft, even when other factors that increase the risk of bullying were taken into account. face (Anti-Bullying Alliance May 2019) Disabled youngsters had been "largely neglected" in research assessing the impact of bullying. When they are not in education or employment, they risk economic hardship, isolation, and are vulnerable to bullying and exploitation, with little help.

Cuckooing is where young people (often with disabilities and special needs) who have been allocated through their local authorities housing, where gangs and criminal individuals use the home of the respective young person to sell or store or deal drugs or stolen goods. This places the young person at risk of being bullied and subjected to continual violence and ridicule. Elements of this can be exercised even where young people are in care with foster carers for example used as runners. It is essential that actions are taken following protecting child protection or vulnerable adult policies.



13.3. Unaccompanied asylum seeker and race / faith targeted bullying

The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate against people with a 'protected characteristic' which includes race, religion and belief (also disability and sexual orientation and gender reassignment). Children and young people who are asylum seekers or refugees may be at greater risk of bullying directly and indirectly. Stigma, due to lack of knowledge and understanding of asylum seekers and refugees, and reluctance to burden parents with extra worries can allow bullying to go undetected and continue. Children and young people may also be less likely to seek help from social workers, teachers or police as they may have taken different roles in their own country and may have difficulty to be able to trust.

Bullying can be based on perceived differences in dress, communication, appearance, beliefs and/or culture as well as their skin colour and accent. The status of the ethnic group a child belongs to (or people assume they belong to) in a school, community or organisation can often lead to a child or young person experiencing bullying behaviour. This can arise from a misguided and/or learned belief that they are less valued and 'deserve' to be treated differently, or with less respect.

Lack of knowledge and understanding about the traditions, beliefs and etiquette of different faiths can lead to religious intolerance. Lack of awareness about the differences in practices of religions such as prayer times, dietary requirements, fasting and the wearing of religious clothing or articles of faith can result in misunderstandings and stereotyping, which may lead to bullying

Hate crime is defined through the law as a crime motivated by malice or ill-will towards individuals because of their actual or perceived disability, race, religion, sexual orientation or transgender identity. A hate crime can take a number of forms that are potentially criminal and should be treated as such.

Often Sectarianism is associated with religion. The reality of prejudice however means that your family background, the football team you support, the community you live in, the school you attend and even the colour of your clothing can mark you out for sectarian abuse - whatever your beliefs may be. Sectarianism is most often related to Protestant and Roman Catholic divisions within Christianity but can also relate to other religions, for example Sunni and Shia Muslims within Islam, and Orthodox and Reform Jews within Judaism. It is essential that actions are taken following protecting child protection or vulnerable adult policies

14. Useful Organisations:

The Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA)

The Anti-Bullying Alliance is a coalition of organisations and individuals that are united against bullying. They work in England and Wales.
115 Mare Street, London, E8 4RU aba@ncb.org.uk

NWG Network

A charity and UK wide network of policy makers and researchers working with children at risk of CSE. Children, young people, parents' carers and staff should access NWG (purchased by NFA) so that they may receive advice and support on all forms of exploitation. Bullying can also involve exploitation. www.nwgnetwork.org
01332 585371



Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre www.ceop.police.uk The CEOP Centre is the UK's national police agency set up to tackle child sexual abuse. If you are worried about someone's behaviour towards a child, online or offline, you can report this at www.ceop.police.uk. You can get help, advice and support on all issues related to internet safety for young people by visiting www.clickceop.net

Stonewall

Stonewall was founded in 1989 by a small group of women and men active in the struggle against Section 28 of the Local Government Act

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Website: www.stonewall.org.uk

www.stonewall.org 020 7593 1862

Coram Children's Legal Centre

Tel: 020 7713 0089

Publications and advice line on legal issues © NFAG

Bullying UK

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

Family Lives

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0808 800 2222 www.familylives.org.uk