6.8 Countering Bullying

REGULATIONS AND STANDARDS

The Positive Relationships Standard

Regulation 11

AMENDMENT

This chapter was updated in May 2015 in line with the new Quality Standards and Regulations.

Contents

1. Policy

All children and young people have a right to feel confident that this is a safe and healthy environment.

We want to ensure that all children, young people and staff remain safe from bullying behaviour and have the opportunity to thrive and prosper, emotionally and socially within and outside the Home.

When bullying is encountered we will ensure that the procedures are in place to allow:

- Reporting of the incident;

- Having incidents of bullying properly recorded;

- Having concerns or incidents of bullying properly monitored;

- Ensuring appropriate action is taken in response to incidents of bullying and that is followed up.

This will ensure that people feel listened to and understand that their concerns have been and will be taken seriously.

Within the home a culture of respect and dignity is agreed and promoted amongst the staff, children, and any visitors into the home and a set of shared standards of what behaviour and language is acceptable across the home will be advocated.

Staff and children will receive guidance and training that encourages an understanding and appreciation of what bullying is and how it impacts on self and others.

2. Definition of Bullying

Bullying is defined as behaviour or actions of a person, group of people or a whole organisation designed to cause distress or to hurt a person or group of people.

Bullying can be:

- **Emotional** - being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding possessions, threatening gestures);

- **Physical** - pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence;

- **Racist** - racial taunts, graffiti, gestures;

- **Sexual** - unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments;

- **Homophobic** - because of, or focusing on the issue of sexuality;

- **Verbal** - name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing;

- **Cyberbullying** - e.g. using mobile phones or social networking sites to intimidate or bully others.

3. General/Prevention

Staff must be alert to the risk of bullying and should take all reasonable steps to prevent such behaviour. This includes:

- Implementing a clear policy within the home/school that bullying is not acceptable;

- Undertaking risk assessments at point of referral and at appropriate stages thereafter;

- Providing information and guidance to children;

- Providing clarity to children on acceptable behaviours;

- Drafting Individual Crisis Management Plans/contracts with relevant children;

- Providing opportunities for children to explore issues of bullying e.g. writing stories or poems or drawing pictures about bullying;

- Reading stories about bullying or having them read to them;

- Making use of role-plays;

- Having discussions about bullying and why it matters.

We all have a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying.

Everyone involved in looking after children shares responsibility for countering bullying and for creating a culture which positively encourages acceptable behaviour and reduces or prevents the likelihood of bullying.

As part of this ethos, everyone must understand what bullying means and what measures should be taken within the home and by individual staff to counter it.

Everyone should also be clear what measures they should take if they suspect bullying or it is reported to them.

In this respect, everyone should be alert to the fact that bullying may constitute **Significant Harm** and, if so, must be reported under the **Child Protection Referrals Procedure**.

4. Risk Assessment and Planning

The registered person should ensure a process is in place in regard to allegations of bullying.

4.1 Homes Strategies

Each home may have it's own Strategies for countering bullying, depending on the purpose of the home and the needs of child(ren) living there.

If homes have their own Strategies they should be set down in the **Statement of Purpose**.

The Children's Guide should also contain information and advice on countering bullying.

4.2 Individual Plans for Children

As part of the assessment and planning process, the Manager of the home/school must ensure that a Risk Assessment is conducted on each child to ascertain whether s/he may be a victim or perpetrator of bullying.

If there is any risk, it should be addressed in the child's Placement Plan with details of the strategies that must be adopted to prevent or reduce the bullying.

In the absence of such a plan/strategy, the following must apply

5. Countering Bullying Day-to-Day

If they have any concerns, they must discuss them with colleagues and the Home Manager; who should take what actions are necessary to reduce or prevent it.

It may be appropriate to convene a meeting, preferably with the young person/people concerned, to discuss strategies to prevent or reduce the bullying. This may include the following:

1. The bully (bullies) may be asked to genuinely apologise;

2. In serious cases (see **Section 6, Notifications, Recording and Review**), some form of sanction or exclusion from the other young person will be considered;

3. If possible, the young people will be reconciled;

4. After the incident / incidents have been investigated and dealt with, each case will be continuously monitored to ensure repeated bullying does not take place.

If the bullying is persistent or serious, the social worker should be consulted and it may be necessary to conduct a **Placement Planning Meetings** or a **Strategy Discussion** in line with Child Protection Referral Procedures.

See: **Child Protection Referrals Procedure**

If the Home Manager is unavailable, staff may take what immediate actions are necessary to reduce or prevent bullying from occurring and then inform the Manager as soon as practicable.

6. Notifications, Recording and Review

6.1 Minor or Non Persistent Bullying

Where bullying is not persistent or not serious it should be notified to the Home Manager at the first opportunity; the manager will decide whether to inform the social worker and what further actions to take.

6.2 Persistent or Serious Bullying

Serious or persistent bullying must be notified immediately to the Home's Manager and the relevant Social Worker notified within 1 working day - the social worker should be consulted and consideration given to whether a Child Protection Referral should be made, if so, see **Child Protection Referrals Procedure**.

The **Designated Manager (Bullying)** should also be notified and consideration given to whether the incident is a Notifiable Event, see **Delegated Authorities and Notifications Procedure**.

6.3 Recording and Review

All incidents must be recorded in the Home's Daily Log and relevant child's Daily Record.

An Incident Report must also be completed (where it is possible the specific category of bullying e.g. verbal/physical/cyberbullying should be identified and highlighted in the incident report so that different incidents of bullying can be monitored as required).

The Child's Placement Plan should be reviewed with a view to incorporating strategies to reduce or prevent future incidents.

The Home's Manager is responsible for reviewing the incidence and nature of bullying in the home as part regular Quality Audits, see **Monitoring Quality Procedure**.

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