



Anti Bullying Guidelines

Bullying and how to respond

Bullying has no place in Scouting. Scouters should promote a positive anti-bullying ethos in their programme section and raise awareness, amongst other Scouters and youth members, that bullying must not be tolerated. By emphasising the Scout Law and Promise, Scouters should create an environment in which youth members are valued as individuals with rights and are encouraged and affirmed.

Bullying behaviour may take place in any setting. In the first instance, it is the responsibility of Scouters/professionals to deal with bullying which may take place within the Association. Scouters should be aware of Scouts who become quiet, withdrawn or who wish to leave the Group. Scouters should maintain attendance sheets and note patterns of irregularity. Scouters need to be alert for signs of any physical, behavioural or any indirect signs that may indicate some of the above abuses. The more extreme forms of bullying behaviour would be regarded as physical or emotional abuse, and are reportable to the statutory authorities.

Bullying incidents should be dealt with immediately and not tolerated under any circumstances.

What is Bullying?

Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression be it verbal, psychological, or physical conducted by an individual or group against others. Bullying is intentional and it includes behaviours such as teasing, taunting, exclusion, tormenting (e.g. hiding possessions, threatening gestures), threatening, spreading rumours, hitting and extortion, by one or more persons against a target.

Bullying contains 7 key features;

- i An intention to be hurtful
- ii The intention is carried out
- iii. The behaviour harms the target
- iv. The bully overwhelms the target with his or her power
- v. There is often no justification for the action
- vi. The behaviour repeats itself again and again
- vii. The bully derives a sense of satisfaction from hurting the target

(NYC1, 2006)

Developing anti-bullying charter and procedures

It is advised that local Scout Groups develop their own anti-bullying charter as well as procedures to be followed should a bullying incident occur.

The anti-bullying charter and procedures should be developed with age appropriate input from youth members. All youth members, Scouters and parents/guardians should be made aware of the charter.

see Bullying Guidance on page 5 of this document provides;

- A sample anti-bullying charter
- Practical steps to prevent and counter bullying
- Guidelines on dealing with parents in instances of bullying

The Effects of Bullying

The effects of bullying can last for some time and can significantly effect an individual's wellbeing, causing poor social development and depression. The outcomes of bullying can include:

Physical injury, headaches, stomach aches.

Stress symptoms such as sleep or eating disorders and panic attacks.

By emphasising the Scout Law and Promise, Scouters should create an environment in which youth members are valued as individuals with rights and are encouraged and affirmed.

Loss of confidence and self-esteem.
Lowered academic achievement.
Exclusion and isolation.
Self - harm.
Consideration of suicide.

It is important for Scouters to take a pro-active role in investigating whether bullying is occurring because many Scouts will not tell. However, a Scout may confide in anyone so everyone should be aware of how to handle such a confidence.

What can you do if a Scout tells you she/he is being bullied?

1. **Listen** ... Calmly and accept what is said. If possible there should be two Scouters present (but this should be informed by the needs of the child), if not leave the door open so passers-by can see the Scouter but not the Scout.
2. **Reassure**That help is available, action will be taken, the Scout was right to tell, it is not his or her fault and it could happen to anyone.
3. Negotiate confidentiality ... Be clear you'll only tell people who need to know.
4. **Ensure the Scout's safety** ... The Scouter must be aware that the safety of the youth member is paramount and this can be maintained through appropriate supervision. Liaise with the parents / guardians in relation to a solution and possible actions.
5. **Tell the Scout that you'll keep her/him informed** ...And how you intend to proceed.
6. **Take notes following the conversation**...Keep on file as these notes will form the basis of the bullying report. Notes should include nature of incident, date, time, location, names of those involved, witnesses, relevant history and Scouter's response.
7. **Make an intervention** ... All actions should be guided by the needs of the child:

Inform the Section Leadership team of your concerns.

Decide who to consult with: Patrol Leader, Group Leader, County Officers, Safeguarding Team, parents, guardians.

Decide who to interview: witnesses, alleged bullies, and uninvolved scouts.
Find out: what, where, when, who, how, why? Act in a non-confrontational manner.

Resolve the problem: Make bullying the responsibility of the group – follow the 'No Blame' group approach (see guideline section)

Alternatively, approach the target and bully (explain why their behaviour is wrong, how it makes the victim feel and request an apology); parents and bully (if sanctions linked to the behaviour are to be employed request the parents to reinforce these).

Keep the Group Leader informed and updated.

Referring on in difficult cases: if it remains unsolved at the Group level it should be referred to the County level if necessary.

8. Make a record ...Of facts rather than opinions. Include details from the bullying report (i.e. nature of incident, date, time, location, names of those involved, witnesses, relevant history and Scouter's response), details recounted by others involved, any agreements made, an account of action taken and suggestions for follow up and monitoring.

It is advised that local Scout Groups develop their own anti-bullying charter with age appropriate input from youth members and that youth members and parents/guardians are aware of the charter.

“Given the atmosphere of fear and secrecy which surrounds bullying, and the fact that adult intervention is almost always necessary to stop it, it is crucial that the confidence placed in a [Scouter] by a [Scout] is reciprocated by an unequivocal response”.
(NEHB, 2002)

Some helpful tips:

Agree and implement a charter to counteract bullying and be approachable to receive reports of bullying.

Involve the Court of Honour, Patrol Leaders' Council, Watch Leaders' Council or Venturer Executive, Rover Crew in developing, implementing and monitoring the anti-bullying charter

Reinforce the principles of fair play

Develop positive leadership skills among youth members e.g. Lodge Leaders, Sixers, Patrol Leaders, Watch Leaders, Venture Executive Officers. Rover Crew.

Ensure that roles and responsibilities are shared among as many youth members as possible

Allocate roles and responsibilities to match the physical and intellectual capabilities of the young members.

In circumstances of adult conflict please refer to **Grievance and Dispute Process SID - CCD01**

The Whole Health Booklet has additional resources - (downloadable from our website www.scouts.ie)

Bullying Guidelines

Bullying is usually carried out secretly and in an atmosphere of fear. A youth member who is being bullied may be too afraid to tell anyone about it or may have difficulty communicating that they are being bullied for a variety of reasons. It is important then that Scouters should be aware of the signs that might indicate a scout is being bullied.

Potential Indicators of Bullying;

- Physical signs (unexplained bruises or scratches).
- Damage to personal belongings.
- Having money or personal belongings stolen.
- Frequent loss of subs or pocket money.
- Having few friends.
- Frequently the target of jokes.
- Cyber Bullying – receiving threatening/abusive texts, emails or comments on social networking sites.
- Hesitant of coming to meetings or taking part in activities.
- Fearful behaviour (fear of walking to meeting, taking a different route or asking to be driven).
- Unexplained changes in behaviour (stressed, withdrawn, stammering, moody, irritable, upset, distressed).
- Not eating.
- Anxiety (indicated by nail biting, fearfulness).
- Attempting suicide or hinting at suicide.

NB: There are other possible reasons for many of these indicators.

Preventing Bullying – A whole group approach;

An anti-bullying charter and the group's responses to bullying incidents should be agreed with young people, Scouters and parents. A range of possible responses are outlined below. A whole group approach is recommended. This means working with the bully and with the group of young people to help everyone understand the hurt that the behaviour causes. This makes the problem a 'shared concern' of the group. A whole group approach, where the behaviour and its consequences are discussed by everyone in the group, helps to avoid driving the problem underground or escalating it, as might occur by solely taking a 'punishment of the bully' approach. This is called the 'No blame approach' (see below).

Developing an anti-bullying Charter

An anti-bullying charter is a clear statement that bullying of any form is unacceptable in the group. The charter should be drawn up with the input of scouts and it should be framed in simple language.

The material in this Guidance sheet has been adapted from 'Our Duty to Care' (Department of Health and Children, 2002) and from 'Let's Beat Bullying' (NYCI, 2006).

Sample Charter

- The '.....' Section is a place where every member can feel secure.
- The '....' Section is a place where everyone is respected.
- We do not tolerate physical violence.
- We do not tolerate name calling or verbal abuse.
- We do not tolerate threatening behaviour.
- We do not tolerate nasty jokes, comments or rumours.
- We do not tolerate bullying by text or e-mail.
- We will take bullying seriously and will report any bullying we see to a Leader.
- Tackling bullying is the responsibility of everyone in our section.
- Every member of our section will be treated equally and fairly.
- Every member of our section will be supported and listened to.

Practical Steps to Prevent and Counter Bullying

- Use scouts as a resource in countering bullying and to foster a “permission to tell” culture in the group.
- Let scouts know who they should tell if they are being bullied themselves or if someone else is being bullied.
- Reassure scouts that they will be listened to and that an intervention will be made if they are being bullied.
- Teach scouts to co-operate, negotiate and help others, particularly new or different children.
- Include stories and role plays on how to deal with a bully in ordinary group activities.
- Never tell a scout to ignore the bullying or to take the law into their own hands by retaliating.
- Make every scout aware of how a bullying incident will be dealt with in the group. Parents and guardians should also be made aware of this.
- Apply these procedures fairly and consistently.

The following strategies can be used to respond to an incident of bullying;

The No Blame Approach

This approach focuses on the feelings of the bullying target rather than on blame and punishment. It allows the group to think about the effect of bullying on the target and to come up with a solution to the bullying to prevent it from happening again.

- Talk to the target and allow them to express their feelings.
- Ask their permission to allow their feelings to be shared with the group and reassure that their name will not be revealed.
- Meet with everyone involved – perpetrators and bystanders.
- Ensure the severity of the topic is understood by everyone.
- Share the feelings of the target with the group without identifying the target.
- Ask them to express how they would feel if the bullying was happening to them.
- Ask them for suggestions as to how the bullying can be overcome and prevented from happening again – note all positive responses.
- Hand over responsibility to the group – give them a time frame to implement the solutions proposed and arrange a follow-up meeting.
- Follow up with the group and with target to ensure the plan has been implemented.
- Continue to monitor the situation through on-going dialogue with the whole group.

Additional strategies / interventions may be required depending on the seriousness of bullying incidence, the outcome achieved with the no-blame approach, the involvement of parents, or other particular circumstances that may arise.

Separate the Parties

If it is possible, the perpetrator might be removed to another section for a period while further action is taken. Separating the perpetrator and the target for a time allows for an opportunity to address the situation while ensuring the target is not at risk of continued bullying. This strategy might be used in the more serious incidents of bullying.

Denial of privileges (with the opportunity to redeem one's self) Loss of privileges (e.g. withdrawal of permission to participate in a particular activity or trip) might be used to reinforce the message for the perpetrator that bullying is unacceptable behaviour and that it has consequences. The hope would also be that the perpetrator would, as a result of loss of privilege, understand the impact of their actions or behaviour on the target.

Support Peer Bystanders

Bystanders are those who are not directly involved in bullying behaviour but are aware that it is taking place. Bystanders may do nothing about the bullying out of fear that they themselves may become a target. Although not directly involved in the behaviour, bystanders may intentionally or unintentionally condone the bullying by providing positive reinforcement to the perpetrator by passively observing the bullying, making encouraging gestures, or laughing.

Bystanders play a vital role in creating an anti-bullying environment, therefore everyone in the group should be encouraged to speak up if they observe bullying behaviour or are aware that it is taking place. Bystanders should also be encouraged to befriend the victim of bullying behaviour.

Parental Involvement

If a young person is being bullied their parents / guardians should be made aware of the situation.

Dealing with the parents of a target of bullying;

1. Invite the parents to meet to discuss what has happened based on the information available.
2. Assure the parents that you are pleased that they have taken the time to see you.
3. Allow the parents to express their feelings, uninterrupted.
4. Accept their feelings on the bullying, even if these feelings may seem excessive to you. Use calm supportive language.
5. State categorically that bullying is not acceptable and that you intend to act positively. Assure the parents that you will keep in touch to update them on progress.
6. Keep a record of any meetings and action taken in response to the issue.
(‘Let’s Beat Bullying’, NYCI, 2006)

Dealing with the parents of a perpetrator of bullying

Consideration needs to be given around informing the parents of a perpetrator of bullying as this may make the situation worse or result in excessive parental discipline for the perpetrator. If in doubt advice should be sought from colleagues or support staff.

1. Invite the parents to meet to discuss what has happened based on the information available.
2. Assure the parents that you are pleased that they have taken the time to see you.
3. Inform the parents in a clear objective manner about their child’s behaviour.
4. Ask the parents if they know of any reason for this alleged behaviour e.g. a recent bereavement or home circumstances.
5. Begin with a summary of the group’s anti-bullying policy and emphasise the parents agreement to it.
6. Seek the parents help in communicating the seriousness of the incident to their child and enlist their co-operation.

7. Where necessary, and based on the seriousness of the bullying behaviour, inform the parents of the consequences that the group considers appropriate (e.g. verbal warning, loss of privileges) and enlist their cooperation.

8. Keep a record of any meetings and action taken in response to the issue.

('Let's Beat Bullying', NYCI, 2006)

Note: Careful on-going monitoring of the situation will be required whatever strategy is used.

Suspension or expulsion of the perpetrator

It should be made clear in an anti-bullying policy that, as a last resort only, suspension or expulsion may result for the perpetrator.

If all other efforts made to combat and prevent the perpetrator from bullying others have failed, suspension or expulsion may be the only way to secure the welfare and safety of the target. This should be communicated clearly to everyone – scouts, parents and Scouters.

*(See also Scouting Ireland's Rules of Association)

Date Time

Scouter

Group

Names of those involved

Details of Incident(s)

Action Taken (Warning, Agreement, Mediation, Sanctions, Referral, Other)

Suggestions for follow up

Signature

Date

