

Challenging Bullying

In Sports Clubs

Guidance and Exercises

for Sports Leaders



Child Protection In Sport Unit
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play sport stay safe

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NSPCC 
NORTHERN IRELAND
Cruelty to children must stop. FULL STOP.

Challenging Bullying in Sports Clubs

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Introduction

Sport provides an opportunity for thousands of Children and Young people in Northern Ireland to have fun while facilitating the development of personal, social, emotional and physical skills. Whether involvement is at recreational or elite level, every child has the right to experience sport in a safe environment free from abuse and bullying. Sports organisations, clubs and activity groups have a duty of care towards the children attending their activities, and as a consequence should ensure that the child's welfare is at the heart of the club's activities.



When consulted, children and young people repeatedly tell the NSPCC/Childline that bullying is their number one concern. Therefore sports clubs, just like any other organisation working with young people in a paid or voluntary capacity, need to address the issue of bullying directly.

Leaders and volunteers providing sports opportunities for children, because of their positive role in the young person's life, are well placed to identify a child or young person who may be experiencing or is at risk of being bullied. They may also be the adult that the young person trusts to tell and take action to help protect them.

One important way to protect children and young people is to educate them about keeping safe and encourage them to talk to someone if they are worried about anything. Sports clubs play an important role by helping children to understand ways of staying safe in sport by providing them with information about sources of advice and how to seek help. Numerous information leaflets have been produced with the aim of protecting children and young people however there is limited information available for sports coaches and other adults to enable them to work proactively with children and young people to address the issues around bullying within a sports environment. This resource was put together following a number of consultations with young people about what exercises and approaches would work in a sport setting to address the issue of bullying.

The consultation process involved working with children to identify the most pertinent/relevant messages and the most effective ways to impart this information to children and young people. The information gathered provides clear messages to adults both those who deliver sport and those who support children to take part in sport, about what children want and need from them.

Common sense is the key aspect of keeping young people safe and allowing them to keep their trust in the adults caring for them. It is essential that young people can learn how to take steps to protect themselves in certain situations and that they know how to get help from adults when needed.

Aim

The aim of this resource is to enable Sports Leaders to address issues of bullying with young people in sports clubs.

Objective



To enable Sports Leaders to create a positive club ethos that challenges bullying, by empowering young people to understand the impact of bullying, how best to deal with it and agree standards of behaviour;

and

communicate to young people their rights to keep safe from bullying in their sports club and other environments, while ensuring they know who to turn to seek help.

Outcome

Provide the necessary information and resources that can be used by a Children's Officer/coach to enable them to feel confident in communicating safeguarding messages to young people.

Principles

- Respect for individual children and young people.
- Bullying will not be accepted or condoned.
- Everybody has the responsibility to work together to stop bullying.
- Children should know who will listen to and support them, and how to access Helplines.
- Any reported incident of bullying will be investigated objectively and will involve listening carefully to and supporting all those involved.

Support to the Parents/Guardians/Carers

- Parents/Guardians should be advised on the club policy and practice about bullying
- Any incident of bullying will be discussed with the parent(s)/guardians/carers of those children involved both the person being bullied and the person doing the bullying?
- Parental/Guardian/carers will be consulted on making an appropriate response and verbal/written agreements made as to what action should be taken
- Signposting parents/guardians/carers to information and advice on managing / coping with bullying.
- Support should be offered to the parent(s) including information on other agencies or support lines.

Those who can actually give parental consent is defined by the Children (NI) Order 1995 Article 6 (i) and are as follows:

- Natural mother always has parental responsibility.
- Natural father gains parental responsibility;
 - If married to the mother at the time of birth or subsequently marries her
 - Through an agreement witnessed by solicitor or a Parental responsibility Order
- Post 15 April 2002 if they jointly register the baby's birth.



Terminology

Coach

The term coach is predominantly used in this document but this can be viewed as a sports leader, manager, mentor, trainer, instructor, children's officer.

Child/ Young Person

Though a person of any age can experience bullying for the purposes of this document the term reflects the legal definition of a child being any one under the age of 18.

What is Bullying

Bullying falls into the following categories:

- **VERBAL** threatening consequences, spreading rumours, name calling, teasing, making sexual, racist, sectarian remarks, highlighting physical appearance or sporting ability
- **PHYSICAL** kicking, punching, hitting, spitting, biting, tripping, theft or destruction of property and kit
- **EMOTIONAL (often non-verbal)** ignoring, excluding, getting people in to trouble, leaving them out of games, talking behind their backs, staring, writing unpleasant notes/letters/graffiti, writing letters/ text messages or comments on internet sites

In many cases a single person will not occupy the single position of bully, victim or bystander; these behaviours may be adopted alternately by different individuals within a group. One person may therefore move from the position of bully to victim to bystander. Research indicates that unless new behaviours are learned and adopted, an individual may continue to bully throughout their lifetime with damaging consequences for their mental and social well being and their relationships with other people.

Signs and Indicators of bullying

The young person may:

- withdraw from some or all club/sport activities
- become anxious, or lacking in confidence
- begin self harming or attempt suicide
- appear distressed
- have bruises, cuts or scratches and give improbable excuses
- have possessions which are regularly damaged, lost or money that " goes missing"
- be frightened in certain situations i.e. just before changing or when they are about to get on a club bus
- be frightened of walking to or from training
- appear frightened of a particular individual or group
- change their usual routine
- start stammering or stops eating
- cry themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
- feel ill at the thought of going to the club
- begin to do poorly in school work
- ask for money or starts stealing money (to pay bully)
- become aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- be bullying other children or siblings
- be frightened to say what's wrong
- be nervous & jumpy when a cyber message is received

(Adapted from Kidscape)

Understanding the different roles in a Bullying Environment

- **The Bullied**
- **The Bullies**
- **The Watchers/Bystanders**
- **The Don't Care Team**

The Bullied

Bullying can happen to an adult or child. We have already outlined that bullying involves being mentally or physically hurt. The person being bullied may feel scared and upset, they may feel worried because they don't know why it's happening to them. They may begin to believe that the bullying is their fault or that they deserve it in some way. The person may be made to feel different and isolated causing them to resent being involved in the activity or club.



The person being bullied needs reassurance that they have done nothing wrong and the fault is definitely not theirs.

It can be difficult for any of us to talk about our problems and it's no different for a child or young person being bullied. It is important as a responsible adult you understand that the young person may be feeling confused or frightened. Many victims of bullying may have been threatened about the consequences of telling anyone about what has happened to them. If they have demonstrated the courage to talk to someone they need to be reassured that they will be listened to and their concerns addressed in a sensitive manner that does not further victimise them.

The Bullies

There are a variety of different reasons why someone uses bullying behaviour, it may be because they:

- like the feeling of power that bullying someone else can bring
- expect everyone around them to do as they say
- do not fit in with other young people even though they may think they do
- want others to think they are in control
- enjoy making other young people unhappy

There are more complicated reasons why a person may bully someone else, for example they:

- have experienced being bullied themselves
- feel it is one of the few things they are any good at
- feel insecure in their environment

Whatever the reasons behind the bully's behaviour, these are no excuse for bullying. This may be very hard for the bully to understand or accept. The bully may never acknowledge their behaviour is wrong whilst the others around them appear to justify their behaviour.

Coaches may be perceived as bullying young club members by picking on one young person and letting others get away with things. They may also tease young people about something that appears insignificant to the adult but can be perceived as embarrassing for the young person.

The Watcher/Bystander

The young person who looks on whilst someone is being bullied may believe they are causing no harm as they are not actively hitting someone or calling them names. Watchers may offer help after the incident but rarely have the courage to intervene while the bullying is happening. This reluctance to try to help is understandable in some cases as the watcher is also fearful for their own safety. In research carried out by OFSTED called Children on Bullying (2008) 26% of young people stated they would stay and watch someone getting bullied, but say nothing. More worryingly 40% stated they would stay for the fun and excitement.

The 'Don't Care' Team

These may actually be the majority of people in your club. These are members who do all the other activities like everyone else in the club and will support the club in events and competitions. They are fully aware that bullying is happening in the club they profess to support and love however they believe that as it does not affect them directly they do not need to be concerned or think about it. Although they may know that some team members are having a hard time because of bullying, if it not happening to them or their close friends, they will try to ignore it as much as possible.

Club Ethos

To address bullying successfully a whole club approach is needed; this should include all those involved with the club – coaches, volunteers, officials, young people, parents and other stakeholders. To develop a shared club ethos you require the creation of shared views, beliefs and attitudes that will inhibit bullying. The club must develop a range of strategies and approaches that address bullying in terms of prevention and response, and provides the framework for any anti bullying interventions. The Watchers and the Don't Care Team must take responsibility for their role in allowing bullying to continue and step up to help create a culture within their club to stamp out bullying.

Exercises

The following are links to documents containing exercises on bullying (if you have trouble following the links the documents can be found at www.thecpsu.org.uk):

- [What is bullying behaviour](#)
- [Who to turn to](#)
- [What to do when you know bullying is happening \(role of bystander\)](#)
- [Impact of bullying on the individual](#)
- [What is the perfect environment for bullying](#)

Resources

To access the useful resources listed below please click [here](#) (if you have trouble following the links the documents can be found at www.thecpsu.org.uk under the Resources section) and you can obtain hard copies by contacting the CPSU (NI) on 028 90351135 or emailing pstephenson@nspcc.org.uk for more details:

- [Z-cards for young people](#)
- [Safeguarding posters](#)
- [Safe & Fun business cards](#)
- [Useful contacts for young people](#)
- [Useful contacts for more information](#)
- [Links to Ice-breaker web sites](#)
- [Sample parental consent form to participate in the exercises](#)

When consulting with young people we found that many had participated in anti-bullying exercises or presentations within their school setting. However it is important to reinforce the boundaries of behaviour in a voluntary sport setting.



What clubs can do

Every young person has the right to play sport in a positive environment and feel safe. Sports clubs are ideal places for promoting good behaviour and a positive ethos of support for team members. Demonstrating good behaviour through role modelling provides young people with a safe environment for learning.

As individual coaches/leaders/volunteers adults should:

- Respect every child's need for and rights to a play environment where safety, security, praise, recognition and opportunity for taking responsibility are available.
- Respect every individual's feelings and views.
- Ensure safety by having rules and practices that are carefully explained and displayed for all to see.

Young people should:

- Recognise that everyone is important and that our differences make each of us special.
- Show appreciation of others by acknowledging individual qualities, contributions and progress.

Challenging bullying should be embedded in the culture of the club to enable young people to play sport in a safe environment. Leaders in clubs should agree with young people what is unacceptable behaviour and therefore raise their expectations of how to behave in the club setting with their peers.

Checklist (adapted from NSPCC – Checkpoints)	In place	Not in place
1. The club gives parents information and opportunities for discussion, encouraging them to be involved in the club.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The club develops standards of good practice with young people.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Young people sign a behaviour agreement/code of conduct as part of their membership with the club.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The club asks the parents to complete a parental consent form that includes reference to the clubs code of conduct.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Clubs make it clear to parents that good behaviour of members is expected at all times.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. The club publicises its commitment through: posters, information leaflets/cards, newsletters, web site etc	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. The club has a fair and consistent process for dealing with all bullying incidents. <i>(sample anti-bullying policies on pages 14-16)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Coaches are clear about the standards expected of them and young people in relation to bullying, and sign a code of conduct/behaviour agreement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Legislation and Guidance

Children's (NI) Order 1995.

This law had wide ranging impact on private law – the relationship of children to their families, and public law – the relationship of children to the state in terms of services and child protection.

The order redefined previous parental rights over children as parental responsibility. The order has widened the scope of being able to acquire parental responsibility by other carers such as grandparents, aunts, or local social services.



These are the 5 cornerstone principles of good practice under the Children (NI) Order:

Paramourncy

The welfare of the child shall be the paramount consideration in any decision made.

Parental Responsibility

Parents have responsibilities towards their children rather than rights over them. A wider range of people can now have parental responsibility.

Prevention

Preventing children from being abused and supporting them to promote their health and welfare.

Partnership

The best way of meeting children's needs is to work with parents and carers, and for agencies to work together.

Protection

Duty to investigate where a child is at risk of significant harm because of a lack of care or actual abuse.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted in 1989 and ratified by the UK in 1991 and in the ROI in 1992. It contains over 40 articles that state some basic values about the treatment of children. Of particular significance are:

Article 2 relates to the equality of all children

Article 3 indicates the best interests principle

Article 6 the child's right to survival and development

Article 12 requires that children have a right to express their views and for those views to be respected

Co-operating to Safeguard Children (DHSSPS Chapter 9.48)

Bullying has been recognised and defined as deliberately hurtful behaviour usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. It can take many forms, but the three main types are physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, theft), verbal (e.g. racist or sectarian remarks, threats, name-calling) and emotional (e.g. isolating an individual from the activities and social acceptance of his peer group). The damage inflicted by bullying can frequently be underestimated. It can cause considerable distress to children, to the extent that it affects their health and development or, at the extreme, causes them significant harm (including self-harm).

Children's Officer/Coach Requirements To Deliver Anti-Bullying Resource To Young People

- Previous attendance at Child Protection Awareness workshop is essential.
- Attendance at the Children's / Designated Officer workshop is desirable.
- Knowledge, understanding and experience of the focus area of the workshop.
- Ability/skills in engaging and communicating with children/young people
- Confident presentation skills – able to explain and present material clearly.
- Good listening and reflective skills.
- Understanding the importance of non-judgemental and non-oppressive behaviour.
- Familiarity with any frameworks, procedures or legislation that might be relevant to the exercises.
- Time to go through the reader and select the method and materials you are most comfortable with.
- Recognition of good practice to have a co-facilitator of a different gender particularly if it is a mixed group, or if the group are a different gender to the Children/ Designated Officer/Coach.
- Be clear/confident about responding to/managing any disclosures or reports of bullying/abuse that arise during or after the exercises.



Due to the very nature of bullying behaviour interventions based on peer influence are the most likely to be effective. Getting the young people to agree standards must clearly be the best way to have them adhered to.

References

NSPCC inform Feb 2008 Tackling Bullying	Services for Children & Young People Listening to the views of children and young people by Christine Oliver and Mano Candappa, Thomas Coram Research Unit Institute of Education 2003
Cyberbullying- Safe to Learn	Embedding anti-bullying work in schools - Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)
Children on Bullying	OFSTED 2008 research into the views of young people on bullying

Kidscape Publications

All the following are available on www.kidscape.org.uk

- **Children Who Bully** – Kidscape 2006
- **Kidscape Anti Bullying Policy for Schools**
- **Long Term Effects of Bullying** – Kidscape 1999
- **Preventing Bullying** – Kidscape 2001
- **Street Sense** – Kidscape 2005

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- Sport NI
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- Kidscape
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- Dromore Amateur Boxing & Athletic Club
- Photography courtesy of Coventry International Children's Games 2005 & 2007, and Sport England.
- Lissara Junior Badminton Club
- Special Olympics Ireland
- Salto Special Olympics Gymnastics club

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Anti-Bullying Policy Sample (1)

Definition:

Bullying is recognised and defined as deliberately hurtful behaviour usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. It can take many forms, but the three main types are physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, theft), verbal (e.g. racist or sectarian remarks, threats, name-calling) and emotional (e.g. isolating an individual from the activities and social acceptance of his peer group). The damage inflicted by bullying can frequently be underestimated. It can cause considerable distress to children, to the extent that it affects their health and development or, at the extreme, causes them significant harm (including self-harm).

Co-operating to safeguard children Chapter 9.48

Bullying is not an accepted behaviour towards anyone at **Name of Club** be they child, coach, volunteer or parent.

Anyone found to be bullying others will be dealt with seriously both in regards to the behaviour exhibited and the reasons for the behaviour.

The possibility of people being bullied will be discussed openly within the Club and all young people and staff/volunteers informed of both the Clubs' views on bullying and ways in which bullying can be prevented / stopped. It should be emphasised that anyone can be the victim of bullying and that being or feeling bullied is not a sign of weakness and does not make the victim a less valuable person.

Action to be taken if a child states they are being bullied:-

- Child to be given time to say how they are being bullied and reassured they are right to tell.
- Adult / Children's Officer to keep the young person informed of their proposed action and to take into account child's feelings and perspective.
- The child's parents can be informed of your concerns and response.
- Chairperson / Leader of the club to be informed of any incident of bullying so that policies and practices can be reviewed on a regular basis.

Anti-Bullying Policy Sample (2)

The Individual

- Respect every child's need for, and rights to, a play environment where safety, security, praise, recognition and opportunity for taking responsibility are available.
- Respect for every individual's feelings and views.
- Recognise that everyone is important and that our differences make each of us special.
- Show appreciation of others by acknowledging individual qualities, contributions and progress.
- Ensure safety by having rules and practices carefully explained and displayed for all to see.

Bullying

- Bullying will not be accepted or condoned. All forms of bullying will be addressed. Bullying can include:
 - physical pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching etc
 - name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, persistent teasing and emotional torment through ridicule, humiliation and the continual ignoring of individuals
 - racial taunts, graffiti, gestures, sectarianism
 - sexual comments and /or suggestions
 - unwanted physical contact
- Children from ethnic minorities, children with a disability, young people who are gay or lesbian, or those with learning difficulties are more vulnerable to this form of abuse and may well be targeted.
- Everybody has the responsibility to work together to stop bullying – the child, the parent, the coach, the youth worker, the sport's official.
- Appropriate forums should be established within the organisation, including children, parents, youth workers and other agencies, to address, monitor and stop bullying.
- Commitment to the early identification of bullying and prompt, collective action to deal with it.
- Policy and practice should be agreed through consultation with clubs, parents and children.
- Children should be encouraged to take a role in stopping bullying in their community.
- Policy and practice should be reviewed regularly in the light of changing needs and changes adopted by other agencies (e.g. schools).
- Coaches will have access to training on bullying.

Support to the Child

- Children should know who will listen to and support them.
- Any advice and assistance should be given by an appropriately trained and experienced worker.
- Children should have access to Helpline numbers.
- Children should be told what is being recorded, in what context and why.
- Systems should be established to open the door to children wishing to talk about bullying or any other issue that affects them. Barriers to talking need to be broken down to enable children to approach adults.
- Anyone who reports an incident of bullying will be listened to carefully and be supported, whether the child being bullied or the child who is bullying.
- Any reported incident of bullying will be investigated objectively and will involve listening carefully to all those involved.
- Children being bullied will be supported and assistance given to uphold their right to play and live in a safe environment which allows their healthy development.
- Those who bully will be supported and encouraged to stop bullying.
- Sanctions involving long periods of isolation, or which diminish and make individuals look or feel foolish in front of others, should be avoided.

Support to the Parents/Guardians

- Parents/Guardians should be advised on local policy and practice about bullying.
- Any incident of bullying will be discussed with the child's parent(s)/guardians.
- Parental/Guardian advice on action will be sought and agreements made as to what action should be taken.
- Information and advice on coping with bullying will be given.
- Support should be offered to the parent(s) including information on other agencies or support lines.