

# *Bullying*

*Information and advice to support you and your child*



## ***How you can support your child.***

- Listen and believe your child
- Reassure your child that it is not their fault
- Let them know you love them and appreciate how difficult this is
- Empower them to try and deal with the bully
- Parents sometimes tell us that they have approached the bully's family. Be aware that this could put you or your child in danger and is not recommended
- Building your child's self-esteem by concentrating on positive things
- If your child is interested in sports, art, music or anything else, encourage them to join after-school or weekend classes to share their interests and make new friends
- Attending self-defence classes can increase confidence
- Making home life as natural and fun as possible so while things are hard at school they feel secure and confident at home

Bullying can be painful both for you and your child. Parents and other kinship carers tell us things like:

*"What was the nicest thing that happened at school today?"*

and not

*"Were you bullied again?"*

*"My child is so timid and sensitive that he may as well have victim written on his forehead."*

*"I have moved my child's school several times and each time the bullying starts again."*

*"It takes me right back to being bullied myself. I feel like a child myself the moment I step through the school gate."*

***Confidence, self esteem, body language and humour can all deter bullies.***

***Bullying should never be tolerated, but children can learn strategies to deal with bullies.***

***Seeking support is the positive thing to do.***

## ***Bullying***

When children and young people talk about their experience of being bullied, they're not talking about the give and take of normal socialisation. Many children are bullied for being 'different'. It could be due to being tall, small, thin, fat, red-headed, clever or having a disability, special needs or because of gender, religion, sexuality or race.

If 'normal socialisation' escalates to the point that it effects the emotional wellbeing of a child interfering with the rest of their life by:

- making them afraid
- unable to learn
- disturbing their sleep or eating patterns
- causing isolation
- low self-esteem
- depression.

**Then this constitutes bullying: be it physical, verbal or indirect (for example, via mobile phones or the internet).**

Signs that a child or young person may be experiencing bullying may include:

- excuses to miss school or skipping school
- torn clothes and school things missing or broken
- more bruises and scratches than usual.

## ***Location***

Bullying can take place anywhere, but it is most common at home or at school.

## ***Bullying at home***

**Bullying at home can be extremely distressing.**

Home is ideally a safe place. It is important that the child tells someone they trust either within or outside the home and who will support them and put an end to the bullying. It could be a teacher, youth leader, pastoral worker or the parent of a friend.

Cyber-bullying also invades the home. Mobile phones and the internet are being used to bully others through:

- so called, 'happy slapping' – violence recorded on phones and passed around as 'entertainment'
- texting or emails
- explicit sexual pictures being passed around
- death threats.

***Listening, understanding and supporting children who are displaying bullying behaviour is equally important to help them understand that bullying is unacceptable.***

## *Dealing with cyber-bullying and text messages*

Try and seek advice and support from a trusted adult, family member or teacher on best ways of dealing with cyber-bullying. Family Lives advises the following:

- don't reply
- show the message to someone you trust
- keep the message as evidence
- make a note of the sender's number or originating details
- speak to the service provider's 'malicious calls' helpdesk.



## *Bullying outside the home*

Bullying can take place outside the home:

- on the way to or from school
- on the school bus
- in your locality (street, housing estate, park, shopping centre or anywhere else).

There may not be an obvious body or person to turn to.

In situations involving bullying where schools or housing association representatives are unable to help, call the **police**.

### **How you can help**

As a parent or adult carer there are ways you can help:

- listen to your child
- reassure them that it is not their fault and that you will help them deal with it.

If your child is the bully:

- listening, understanding and supporting is equally important to help them understand that bullying is unacceptable.

## ***Bullying at school***

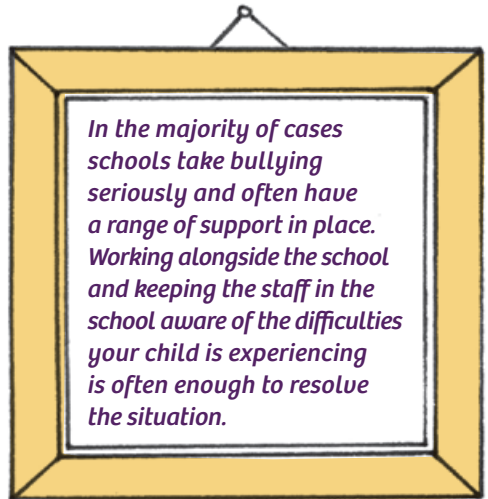
When possible, work with the school for a successful outcome.

Speak to the teacher and arrange a follow-up appointment.

If the teacher is not supportive speak to someone more senior or the head teacher.

### **If unresolved:**

- Keep a written record of incidents and with culprits, times and witnesses if possible
- Ask for a copy of the school's anti-bullying policy. (This is a legal requirement of schools)
- Send a letter to the head teacher including your record asking for a written response within a week to 10 days asking how they propose to deal with the situation. Keep copies of all correspondence. (Schools are legally required to respond to a letter)
- If a response is not received within the stated time, resend the letter with a copy to the Chair of Governors
- If a response is not forthcoming it may be necessary to go beyond the school
- Physical injuries should be recorded by your GP or A&E if severe. Keep details
- If the issue is still unresolved it may be necessary to involve the police.




### **How schools can help**

- Many schools have pupil councils who deal with bullying
- Mentors who are allocated to a child who needs some support
- Provide a named teacher who will support the child and also deal with the bully
- Run a buddy system where a child is allocated to befriend the child in need of support
- School counsellors who support and empower the child to deal with the bully in a different way, to help resolve the situation
- Arrange access to educational psychologists for further specialist support if required.




## *Seeking support is the positive thing to do.*


 Free<sup>1</sup> 24-hour, confidential **Parentline** on **0808 800 2222** for advice, information and support on any aspect of parenting and family life

 Or Skype us via our website – **www.familylives.org.uk**

We offer advice and information as well as extended support for complex and difficult issues.

 **Free textphone** for people who are deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired – **0800 783 6783**<sup>2</sup>

 Personalised email service at – **parentsupport@familylives.org.uk**<sup>3</sup>

 **Online advice and information** on all aspects of parenting and family life

Live chat at **www.familylives.org.uk/livechat**

Give and receive support and advice from other parents and adult family members experiencing similar problems – **www.familylives.org.uk**

Advice and information for professionals working with families at – **www.familylives.org.uk/professionals**

 Face-to-face support groups and workshops. Find out what is available in your area at – **www.familylives.org.uk/localsupport**

<sup>1</sup>From landlines and most mobile networks. <sup>2</sup>Please note, this service is available from 9-5pm Monday to Friday.

<sup>3</sup>Guaranteed reply within three working days.