5.1.6 Countering Bullying

Contents

Regulation and Standards

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England

The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and their Guidance (Including Quality Standards) 2015

- **Regulation 11: The positive relationships standard**

- **Guide to the positive relationships standard**

- **Regulation 19: Behaviour management and discipline**

- **Regulation 34: Policies for the protection of children**

- **Regulation 45: Review of the quality of care**

Wales

The Regulated Services (Service Providers and Responsible Individuals) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2019 and their Guidance 2019

- **Regulation 15: Personal plan**

- **Regulation 27: Safeguarding policies and procedure**

- **Regulation 80: Quality of care review**

Related Chapters

This guidance must be read in conjunction with:

Countering Bullying Procedure

Tackling School Bullying (Teachernet) website

Bullying UK website

Safe From Bullying in Children Homes website

Children's Commissioner for Wales: Listening to children and young people's experiences of bullying in Wales 2017

1. Guidance for Children

The Government has made tackling bullying in children's homes and schools a key priority and the Department for Education has made clear that no form of bullying should be tolerated. Bullying in our schools should be taken very seriously; it is not a normal part of growing up and it can ruin lives.

It is compulsory for children's homes and schools to have measures in place to encourage good behaviour and respect for others on the part of pupils, and to prevent all forms of bullying. The Department for Education supports children's homes and schools in designing their anti-bullying policies, and their strategies to tackle bullying, by providing comprehensive practical-guidance documents. Regional advisers with expertise in the field of bullying are also on hand to help schools implement the guidance and draw on best practice.

2. What is Bullying?

Bullying occurs when a person or group of people behave in ways which are designed to cause distress or to hurt a person or group of people.

Some times whole organisations can bully.

Bullying can be overt and plain for all to see. It can be subtle and insidious.

Bullying can become part of the culture, recognised or believed by all or a significant number of people as 'acceptable'; it can even be encouraged and rewarded.

Bullying can include:

a.   Name calling, being sarcastic and spreading hurtful rumours;

b.   Assault or physical violence;

c.   Threats and intimidation;

d.   Spitting;

e.   Incitement of others to harass and intimidate;

f.   Destruction or taking property without permission;

g.   Extortion or undue pressure;

h.   Emotional aggression like tormenting and excluding people;

i.   Racial harassment, taunts, graffiti and gestures;

j.   Sexual aggression or harassment, unwanted physical contact or comments;

k.   Comments, threats or actions relating to people's disability;

l.   Comments, threats or actions relating to people's sexual orientation.

Staff and children are capable of bullying; and of being bullied.

3. Underlying Principles

Bullying is something, which happens in a relationship, which involves some form of hurtful abuse of power, resulting in a wilful conscious desire to hurt another person, or to put him/her under stress.

It may be any of the following: -

Bullying can be defined as the behaviour of one person or group, which causes distress to another person or group as a result of physical menace, assault, verbal abuse or threats. Bullying activities may include teasing, horseplay, humiliation, isolation, blackmail and damage to or theft of personal possession etc. A precise definition is difficult, but the key factor is the distress caused to the recipient, rather than the intentions of the bully. It may be any of the following:

Verbal

As in name calling or making personal comments.

Social

For example not being spoken to or being left out of activities.

Material

When possessions are stolen or damaged or extortion takes place.

Mental

As when pressure to conform is applied.

Physical

As in harassment or aggression.

Sexual

As in harassment, aggressive or homophobic bullying.

Racial

As in prejudice or discrimination.

Implicit

When people feel under pressure to behave in a way which they think will please the perpetrator.

Cyberbullying

When multimedia such as mobile phones or social networking sites are used to intimidate or bully others

The seriousness of any bullying will depend on a number of factors:

- How long has the bullying been going on?

- How is it personally affecting the bullied child?

- The number of children involved;

- The degree of planning and provocation.

Any child may be bullied, but bullying often occurs if a child has been identified in some ways as vulnerable, different or inclined to

spend more time on his or her own. This can apply to many children placed in our homes.

Staff must be very clear of their role in supporting children to report incidents, which clearly constitute an assault.

It has been shown through research that children who bully have often been bullied themselves, but bullying may occur because a child is unhappy, jealous or lacking in confidence.

The characteristics associated with both a bully and those who are bullied are to be found in the majority of children within residential establishments.

Staff must also recognise that bullying can bring children perceived or actual "Rewards", including:

- The demonstration of superior power;

- A closer group identity;

- Gaining attention or material gains;

- Venting anger, frustration;

- Compensating for lack of success;

- Excitement from the fear of others.

These "rewards" are the "encouragement" required to continue the behaviour and may lead to its development into a sophisticated mechanism for control, which is both difficult to detect and challenge if it becomes the "culture" of the home.

Sorting out bullying early reduces the chances of bullies getting into trouble later in life. Bullying starts with apparently trivial events such as teasing and name calling which never the less rely on an abuse of power. Such abuses of power, if left unchallenged, can lead to more serious forms of abuse, such as domestic violence, racial attacks and sexual harassment.

The links between bullying and disruption in the unit need to be acknowledged, and reducing bullying will help reduce problems in the unit.

Tracking bullying involves looking at how people treat each other and so will improve the atmosphere of the whole unit.

- A sense of community will be achieved only if homes take seriously behaviour, which upsets children as well as staff;

- Promotion of all children/young people within the home counters isolation of individuals by others, nurtures friendships between children/children and supports them to adapt to their living arrangements;

- Support should be offered to children/children for whom English is not their first language to communicate needs and concerns;

- Children/young people should be able to approach any member of staff with personal concerns not just their key worker.

4. Dealing with Allegations/Suspicions

In order to maintain an effective strategy for dealing with bullying each staff group needs to:

Challenge the traditional idea's about bullying e.g.:

- It's only a bit of harmless fun;

- It's all part of growing up;

- Children just have to put up with it;

- Adults getting involved make it worse.

Clear messages must be given that bullying is not acceptable.

Children must be reassured that significant adults involved in their lives are dealing with bullying seriously.

A climate of openness should be established in which children are not afraid to address issues and incidents of bullying.

Residential staff must not use children to control other residents.

All complaints should be taken seriously and recorded in the complaints book. Children should be aware of the options available to them if they feel the matter is not being dealt with satisfactorily.

Respond appropriately. A range of active listening techniques which provide a more helpful response include:

THE LISTENER:	Listening patiently with full attention, encouraging, clarifying, restating, reflecting, validating, summarising.
THE DETECTIVE:	Investigating the situation sensitively and patiently.
THE SUPPORTER:	Seeing their side, acknowledging and allowing expression of their feelings.
THE COACH:	Checking out what help is being asked for and offering practical, realistic help.

Ascertain the nature of the bullying; consider the child's safety at all times.

If the bullying is that of a physical assault, should medical attention be sought? Also consideration should be given in respect of police involvement, are there child protection issues to consider, staff should consult their Line Manager.

Give reassurances. Let the child know you and pleased they have been brave enough to tell, say you believe them and you are sorry it has happened, stressing that it's not their fault.

Offer counselling/support to the bullied and the bullying child.

Anticipate an emotional reaction from the child such as guilt, shame or anger.

Find a quiet place and set aside enough time to talk, approaching the issue as a problem to be solved and as a learning experience.

Staff should always give due consideration and be aware of any underlying issues in relation to Race, Gender and Sexuality. This should be addressed and challenged accordingly.

Field Social Workers should be informed of incidents of severe or prolonged bullying in relation to the Care and Placement Plan. In all cases of physical assault the Social Worker/Team Manager should be informed, and child protection procedures followed as necessary.

Where appropriate, parents should be informed and updated on a regular basis. They should also, when applicable, be involved in supporting programmes devised to challenge bullying behaviour.

All incidents should be recorded clearly and concisely on the child's daily record sheet, and specific incident reports kept within the child's file.

Any injuries should be recorded and cross-referenced in the Accident Book and Accident Recording Forms.

5. Resolving/Reducing Incidents of Bullying

Create an Anti-Bullying climate within the home that is conducive to equality of opportunity, co-operation, and mutual respect for differences. This can be achieved by, i.e.

- Low Tolerance of Minor Bullying "Nipping in the bud" the incidents at the earliest sign;

- Never ignore victims of bullying, always show an interest/concern;

- Publicly acknowledge the bullied child's distress;

- Organise quality groups/circles, which allow children to work together to identify their own problems, causes and solutions with careful sensitive facilitators;

- Encourage interdependence and feelings of mutual respect, reciprocity, compassion and assertiveness.

It is important when addressing Bullying behaviour to avoid accusations, threats or any responses that will only lead to the child being uncooperative, and silent.

Focus on the bully behaviour rather than the child, explore, and where possible deal with the reasons for the behaviour. Staff should regularly carry out recorded risk assessments of the times, places and circumstances in which the risk of bullying is greatest and take action to reduce it.

Assess what he/she does and what he/she gets out of it.

Give a clear explanation of the extent of the upset the bullying has caused, encourage them to see the bullied child's points of view, reward any good behaviour towards other children.

Closely monitor the child (bully and bullied) within the home.

If a culture of bullying continues to prevail and any child feels the issue remains unresolved then staff should ensure that the children are aware of the avenues open to them other than making another complaint through the homes complaints procedure. The child should be given access to; the Children's Rights Service/Officer, Children's Right Organisation i.e. Childline.

6. Incidents of Bullying Outside the Home

Any incidents of bullying reported to staff, which may have occurred at school, should be acted on immediately.

A full account should be gathered including, where possible, locations, times, names of children involved and the names of any teachers who may be aware of the incident.

This should be passed onto the school either to, the designated Teacher for Looked After Children, the Head of Year, or Headmaster.

Staff should ascertain the school bullying procedure, the process of investigation and what will happen next. This should be passed onto the child, staff should also reassure the child, with the schools assurance of their safety on return.

A written report of the incident should be forwarded to the school and a written response requested. This should then be placed on the child's files and a copy forwarded to the child's Social Worker.

Revision History

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End

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