

## **Anti-Bullying Policy**

### **What is Bullying?**

Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression be it verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against others.

It is behaviour that is intentionally aggravating and intimidating and occurs mainly in social environments such as schools, clubs and other organisations working with children and young people. It includes behaviour such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting and extortion behaviour by one or more children against a victim.

### **How would you know if a child is being bullied?**

All bullies operate using furtiveness, threats and fear. Bullying can therefore only survive in an environment where the victim does not feel empowered to tell someone who can help or in which it is not safe to do so. The following indicators are warning signs that a young person might be getting bullied.

- Reluctance to come to a venue or take part in activities
- Physical signs (unexplained bruises, scratches, or damage to belongings)
- Stress-caused illness - headaches, and stomach aches which seem unexplained
- Fearful behaviour (fear of walking to a meeting, going different routes, asking to be driven)
- Frequent loss of, or shortage of, money with vague explanations
- Having few friends
- Changes in behaviour (withdrawn, stammering, moody, irritable, upset, distressed).
- Not eating
- Attempting suicide or hinting at suicide
- Anxiety (shown by nail-biting, fearfulness, tics) *There are other reasons for many of the above*

### **Who should deal with bullying?**

While the more extreme forms of bullying would be regarded as physical or emotional abuse and are reported to the health board or An Garda Síochána, dealing with bullying behaviour is normally the responsibility of all Leaders within the club / organisation.

### **How can it be prevented?**

- Ensure that all members follow the code of conduct, which promotes the rights and dignity of each member.
- Deal with any incidents as they arise.
- Use a whole group policy or 'no-blame approach', i.e., not 'bullying the bully' but working with bullies and the group of young people, helping them to understand the hurt they are causing, and so make the problem a 'shared concern' of the group, (see below)
- Reinforce that there is 'a permission to tell' culture rather than a 'might is right'.
- Encourage young people to negotiate, co-operative and help others, particularly new or different children
- Offer victim immediate support and put the 'no blame approach' into operation.

- Never tell a young person to ignore bullying, they can't ignore it, it hurts too much.
- Never encourage a young person to take the law into their own hands and beat the bully at their own game
- Tell the victim there is nothing wrong with them and it is not their fault

**Forms of Bullying:**

**Child to Child** – includes physical aggression, verbal bullying, intimidation, or isolation.

**Adult to Child** – includes the use of repeated gestures or expressions of a threatening or intimidating nature, or any comment intended to degrade a child.

**Adult to Adult** – includes verbal aggression towards other adults in order to achieve a beneficial outcome for own self or own child.

**Child to Adult** - includes repeated gestures or expressions of a threatening or intimidating nature by an individual child or a group of children.