

Bullying hurts and nobody should have to endure it. If your child is on the receiving end of bullying, there are many things that can be done to make life easier.

### What is bullying?

Bullying is repeated behaviour undertaken by an individual that hurts or frightens someone else. It is often deliberate and directed at those that the bully considers to be weaker than themselves. Bullying can take many different guises. It can vary significantly from Primary to Secondary school, and take different forms within the friendship groups of boys and those of girls.

There are different types of bullying and these can be:

- Physical – punching, kicking, spitting, throwing things, taking or damaging belongings, locking someone in or out of rooms, unwanted sexual contact.
- Verbal – insults, persistent teasing, name calling, jokes at the expense of others, tormenting, threats, extortion.
- Indirect - spreading rumours, excluding individuals from activities or encouraging others to exclude them, sending hurtful notes or text messages, using social networking websites to post nasty information.

### Who gets bullied?

Children get bullied for many reasons, some of which can seem very minor to us as adults. A bully will usually find something on the victim to focus on such as:

- Their size - being fat or thin, tall or short
- Being quiet or creative
- Having big ears or a big nose
- Being from a different culture or ethnicity
- Following a different religion
- Having different hobbies and interests
- Wearing certain clothes i.e. ones that are not considered "cool" or clothes that are worn for religious or cultural reasons
- Personal hygiene
- Wearing glasses or braces
- Being homosexual or believed to be homosexual
- Having a Special Educational Need or disability

## What can happen to bullied children?

The consequences of bullying can be widespread and persistent bullying could result in the victim suffering from

- Low self esteem
- Depression
- Shyness
- Isolation
- Self harm
- Threatened or attempted suicide

Children who are being bullied at school will find it hard to concentrate on their school work and there is a possibility that they will not be able to reach their full academic potential because of it.

Young people who are bullied as teenagers are more likely to turn to drink or drugs and can become aggressive young adults. Girls in particular are vulnerable as they may turn to inappropriate outlets of affection which can lead to early sexual activity and unwanted pregnancies.

Some adults who were bullied as children report that they have struggled to form serious, adult relationships. Some report paranoia and anxiety in later life, panic attacks and stress.

## Who bullies and why?

There are many different reasons why people become bullies. Some may simply do it for pleasure or entertainment. Some think that they need to bully to avoid being bullied or some may use it as a way of coping with a difficult situation in their own life. It may be that they want to be considered 'better' than those that they bully or because they have no power within their home and want to try to compensate for this. Others may be from violent or aggressive families and consider that this behaviour is normal.

Whatever the reason behind it, bullies usually attempt to gain power through intimidation and fear. If bullies are not called up on their behaviour then they will believe that violence, intimidation and aggression are acceptable. This attitude will resonate into their adult life.

## What can I do?

Be supportive and recognise the signs of bullying. Signs can include bruises, cuts and scrapes, torn clothes, increased signs of stress or aggression at home or towards siblings, excuses not to attend school, being truant or exclusion from events being organised by other children.

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Bullying thrives on silence and secrecy. Encourage your child to talk about it. Do this gently and casually. Inquire about their general situation at school or their friendships and work your way around to asking them if they are worried or upset about anything that is happening. Express your concern for them.

Your child might deny being bullied or be unsure whether they are being bullied. Be patient and gain as much information as you can. When you discover what has been happening try and stay calm, let them know that nobody deserves to be bullied and that you will work on the problem together. If the bullying is taking place at school you will need to inform them, please see Bullying at school section below for further information on how to do this.

The most useful thing you can do for your child is to help them resist the bullies on their own. If they are self confident and have high self esteem they are less likely to be picked on. Keep a record of incidents and encourage your child to write things down that have happened. This will help you to understand the extent of the problem and may also be an easier way for your child to tell you what is going on.

Your child may prefer to speak to someone else not connected with the situation. There are a number of helplines specifically for children and young people. Please see the Useful Contacts section at the end.

### **My child has a special need/disability**

Bullying is a very significant problem for children and young people who have a special need or disability. Bullies often see these children as an easy target. This could be because they may not be able to defend themselves, or they may not be able to communicate what has happened to them. This means that levels of bullying are higher for these children. If your child has a special need or disability you should be extra vigilant looking for the signs of bullying, depending on where the bullying is taking place you should follow the advice detailed below. SIL provide a specialist information service for families with children who are disabled or have special needs. The service, which is called SIGN, can provide information on services, support and specific conditions and disabilities. SIGN is based at the Ryegate Children's Centre and has an enquiry line. Please see the Useful Contacts section at the end.

### **Bullying at school**

Schools are determined to stamp out bullying. By law head teachers must determine measures to prevent bullying among pupils and to bring these procedures to the attention of staff, parents and pupils. If you are concerned that your child is being bullied ask to see the school's anti-bullying policy. You can request a copy from the school and see if they are following the procedure that they set themselves.

# FACTSHEET

You might feel nervous about going into your child's school, especially if you had a bad experience at school yourself, but you need to support your child and you also have a responsibility to make sure the school knows that bullying is happening. Remember, this will no doubt be happening to other children at the school, as well as your own. Knowing your child is being bullied can evoke strong feelings but you will get much more co-operation from school if you can stick to the facts without becoming overly emotional.

If you suspect your child is being bullied at school ask the class teacher (or the head of year at secondary school) if they can keep an eye on the situation and let you know if they have any concerns. Ask what the teacher suggests would be the best way of sorting it out. At a primary school perhaps the supervisors could take a more active role in the playground by keeping an eye on your child and ensuring that people are not excluded from games. If you are not satisfied with the situation, after this initial contact with school, you might want to consider a more formal approach.

There are steps you can follow until you are happy that your situation has been dealt with properly. Some of which are as follows

- Keep a diary of what your child says is happening or ask your child to keep a diary of their own. Include the date and time of any incidents, what happened, any names, how it made your child feel and any evidence (emails, texts etc)
- Write a letter to the class teacher or head of year outlining what has been happening. Include pages from the bullying diary to back up your complaint but only if your child is happy for you to do this.
- Ask for your letter and any subsequent correspondence with the school to be put onto your child's school file, together with a note of all action taken.
- Ask for a meeting with the class teacher or head of year to discuss the issues. Ask what actions the school will take or suggest action. For example you might suggest that contact between the bully and your child is monitored and limited, perhaps by the bully moving to another table or set.
- If the school asks you to go in to discuss the matter, then try to take a partner or friend with you. Make notes of the points you want to make beforehand and be firm and polite. Do not get into an argument.
- Ask for a follow up meeting after a couple of weeks to discuss how things are going.
- After each visit send a letter to the school outlining the points of the meeting and action you have been told they will be taking.
- If you remain unhappy you can ask to see the deputy head or head of the school or alternatively write a letter. Be clear about the issues and what you would like to be done about them. Check out [www.bullying.co.uk](http://www.bullying.co.uk) for model letters that might help you word your complaint.
- If you remain unhappy with the head teacher's response, write to the Chair of Governors.
- If you are still unhappy at this point you can contact the local authority, Sheffield City Council has a Procedure for complaining about schools, please see Useful Contacts section at the end.

As a final and last resort you can write to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families. However they will not normally become involved unless you have exhausted all the other avenues of complaint without success.

In most cases, this will be enough to stop the problem. Schools have a duty of care, and allowing a child to be continually bullied when the school has been alerted to the problem could be seen as a breach of that duty.

Schools have a variety of sanctions which they can use to tackle bullying, these include:

- A verbal warning
- Calling the bully's parents into school
- Detention
- Internal exclusion within school
- Fixed term exclusion
- Permanent exclusion
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If your child is being bullied outside of school by pupils from the same school, it is generally recognised that the school does not have a responsibility to deal directly with the matter. However, you should speak to your child's class teacher to make them aware of the situation. If a physical assault has taken place you have the option to phone the police. Police forces in the UK have school liaison officers who are experienced at dealing with school-related issues.

## **Bullying outside of School**

The government has made tackling bullying in schools a key priority and the school bully has therefore had to find new ways to target their victims, ways which mean that it can take place anytime, anywhere and even intrude into the victims home.

An increasing number of children and young people get bullied outside of school, often by people they know from school but sometimes by pupils from other schools or by people who live nearby. This can be done directly, face to face or indirectly by using mobile phones or the internet.

Schools often refuse to take action on bullying if it happens off the premises but there are a number of things that you can do depending on how and where the bullying is taking place.

## **Journey to and from school**

Although the school may refuse to take action on bullying if it happens off the premises they do have the power to punish bullies if the bullying happens on the way to and from school. If your child is being bullied on the way to and from school by pupils from their school you should write to the school to make a complaint, please see Bullying at school section above for how to do this.

If you are concerned that your child is getting bullied on the school bus advise them to sit near the driver, or if it's an ordinary bus, next to other adults.

If they walk part or all of the way, and they are worried about running into bullies, suggest that they vary their route, or leave home and school a bit later or a bit earlier. Alternatively suggest that they walk with friends. If they feel unsafe you could get them a personal safety alarm.

## What is Cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place online, through a mobile phone or via any other form of digital technology. With an increasing number of children and young people owning mobile phones and having access to the internet Cyberbullying is a rapidly growing trend.

This bullying can take any of the following forms

- Verbal abuse via mobile phones
- Sending insulting or threatening texts/emails/instant messages
- Sending inappropriate videos or photo messages
- Sharing videos of physical attacks on people (happy slapping/blue jacking)
- Silent calls
- Stealing identity i.e. setting up fake profiles or using another person's account without permission
- Theft of phone
- Abusive comments/groups set up on social networking websites such as Bebo, Facebook, Twitter and MySpace
- Videos being uploaded to websites such as YouTube that are intended to humiliate
- Posting photos of individuals on websites without permission that cause embarrassment
- Posting nasty messages in forums of chatrooms
- Spreading rumours
- Blackmail

## What can I do to prevent Cyberbullying?

Prevention is always the easiest way to combat bullying. Advise your child to always be careful when giving out their personal information including their mobile number, email address or online nickname. Suggest that they do not flash their mobile phones in public because they could put themselves at risk of having it stolen. Likewise advise them not to leave it unattended as people could use it without their permission. If someone they do not know asks to borrow their phone they should tell them that it is out of credit or the battery has run out.

If they have online profiles with websites such as Facebook advise them to pick an unusual password and use letters and numbers. Tell them not to use anything that it would be easy to guess like their name or date of birth.

Tell them to be discreet if they sign into their account on to a public computer, if anybody sees them typing in their password it is important that they change it as soon as possible.

Bullying UK, the leading online charity dedicated to providing information and advice on bullying, found that the most vicious gossip and rumours are spread by people who were once your child's friends so it's best to advise them to be careful when telling their friends secrets. They should only tell people things if it wouldn't embarrass them if other people found out about them.

## **What can I do if my child is a victim of Cyberbullying?**

Advise them to

- Not respond as this may encourage the bully
- Save any text, voice messages, emails and tell you about them
- Not answer any calls that are from a withheld number, or from a number that they don't recognise
- Change any online user or nick names to something different
- Block the email addresses or phone numbers of the bullies
- If they receive nuisance calls advise them to put the phone down with the caller still on the line and walk away. If the bully is not getting any response they will find it much less satisfying than if they were immediately cut off or verbally abused. These actions will hopefully deter them from doing it again as the bully will waste their time and their credit

You can also take action:

- Keep a note of the times and dates of abusive messages, calls, emails etc
- SIM cards can be relatively inexpensive so you might want to buy another one with a new number so that the bullies can not contact them
- Complain to host websites and request that information is removed
- If there are a series of incidents or the incidents are part of a bigger picture of bullying then this may amount to harassment which is illegal and you can make a complaint to the police. Although a bully may conceal their phone number, this is information which phone companies will have on their system and it's easy for the police to find out the culprit's phone number. Likewise the police can track a cyber bully's digital footprint down to an individual computer so no bully is safe in cyberspace
- If the individuals bullying your child are pupils at the same school then you should talk to your child's class teacher or head of year about what is happening in case trouble spills over at school

## My child is a bully, what can I do?

If you learn that your child is a bully, try and stay calm. Sit down with them and ask them to explain exactly what has been happening. Ask them why they think they are doing it. Is something upsetting them? Are they doing it to fit in? Are they worried that if they stop, they themselves will get bullied? Are they part of a bigger group that is bullying others?

They may need help from you or the school to change their behaviour. Explain to your child that all forms of bullying are wrong. If they are part of a group that bullies they are still just as responsible as if they were doing it on their own. If the bullying is happening at school, talk to the teachers, lunch time supervisors and other parents. The more information that you find out the easier it will be to address the problem. There are several organisations that offer further information and advice to children and young people that are bullies and their parents, please see the Useful Contacts section at the end.

## Further Information

There is a wealth of information about bullying available for children, young people, parents and teachers.

Sheffield Information Link has an extensive childcare library situated in our shop at 11 Leopold Street. The library was developed to provide parents, carers and professionals with resources to support them on any childcare subject they care to browse with topics from bullying to parenting. Many of the books can be borrowed and there is a wide selection of children's books. The library includes a multilingual resource with many books in dual languages. Membership is free for those wishing to borrow books, although we do ask that you bring proof of ID with you if you wish to take books away. Anyone can come in during opening hours to use it for reference.

## Useful Contacts

### Sheffield Information Link [www.sheffinfoolink.org.uk](http://www.sheffinfoolink.org.uk)

Tel: 275 6699 (out of hours answerphone) • Textphone 249 4939

Email [info@sheffinfoolink.org.uk](mailto:info@sheffinfoolink.org.uk) • 11 Leopold Street, Sheffield, S1 2GY

Mon, Tues, Thurs 9.30am – 5.30pm; Weds 9.30am – 6.00pm; Fri 9.30am – 4.00pm

*For information and guidance on children, young people and family services in Sheffield.*

*SIL produces a range of useful factsheets, including one on Children's Rights, these can be viewed on our website*

### SIGN

Tel: 266 9476 (out of hours answerphone) • Email [sign@sheffinfoolink.org.uk](mailto:sign@sheffinfoolink.org.uk)

Ryegate Children's Centre, Tapton Crescent Road, Sheffield, S10 5DD

Monday – Friday 10.00am – 1.00pm

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**Ask Sid** [www.asksid.net](http://www.asksid.net)

Tel: 275 6699 (out of hours answerphone) • Textphone 249 4939

Email [csd@sheffinfoolink.org.uk](mailto:csd@sheffinfoolink.org.uk) • 11 Leopold Street, Sheffield, S1 2GY

Mon, Tues, Thurs 9.30am – 5.30pm; Weds 8.30am – 6.00pm; Fri 9.30am – 4.00pm  
*Sheffield's Children and Young People's Services Directory. An online directory of services and activities for children, young people, parents and professionals*

**Advisory Centre for Education** [www.ace-ed.org.uk](http://www.ace-ed.org.uk)

Advice Line 0808 800 5793 •

Monday – Friday 10.00am – 5.00pm

*Free and independent advice for parents and carers of children and young people aged 5 – 16 years. Offers free booklets for parents including 'Tackling Bullying'*

**Anti-Bullying Alliance** [www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk](http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk)

Tel: 020 7843 1901

*Website with links to over 50 organisations offering information and advice about bullying to children, young people, parents and carers*

**Anti Bullying Network** [www.antibullying.net](http://www.antibullying.net)

*Website providing information about bullying and how it can be tackled, with sections for young people and parents/families. Section on Cyber Bullying*

**BBC** [www.bbc.co.uk/schools/studentlife/schoolissues](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/studentlife/schoolissues) and  
[www.bbc.co.uk/switch/surgery/advice/your\\_world/bullying](http://www.bbc.co.uk/switch/surgery/advice/your_world/bullying)

*Website with information and advice aimed at young people*

**Beat Bullying** [www.beatbullying.org](http://www.beatbullying.org)

Tel: 0208 771 3377

Email: [info@beatbullying.org](mailto:info@beatbullying.org)

*Website offering advice for parents and professionals with a dedicated website for young people (see next entry)*

**Beatbullying** [www.bbclic.com](http://www.bbclic.com)

*Website aimed at young people that are victims of bullying, those that are worried about bullying and those that are bullies. Includes blogs to share experiences, tips on staying safe and advice on getting help*

**BT** [www.bt.com](http://www.bt.com)

*Website that offers information on dealing with nuisance phone calls*

**Bully Busters** [www.bullybusters.org.uk](http://www.bullybusters.org.uk)

Helpline 0800 169 6928

*Website and anti-bullying helpline to provide support to victims of bullying and their families. Website has sections for children, young people and parents with an online form to ask advice and get support by email*

**Bullying UK** [www.bullying.co.uk](http://www.bullying.co.uk)

Email: [help@bullying.co.uk](mailto:help@bullying.co.uk)

*Website offering advice for young people, parents and schools with specific information on cyber bullying, homophobic bullying and racist bullying*

**Childline** [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

Helpline: 0800 11 11 (24 hours a day, seven days a week)

Bullying Line: 0800 44 11 11

*Website and helpline for children and young people with information and advice*

**Children's Legal Centre** [www.childrenslegalcentre.com](http://www.childrenslegalcentre.com)

Young Persons Helpline: 0800 783 2187

Legal Advice Line: 0845 345 4345

Monday – Friday 9.00am – 6.30pm

*Independent charity providing information and advice on education and the law. Downloadable booklet 'Bullying – A Guide to the Law', also available for reference in the Sheffield Information Link Library*

**CyberMentors** [www.cybermentors.org.uk](http://www.cybermentors.org.uk)

*Website managed by young people for young people with online help and support*

**Department for Children, Schools and Families** [www.dcsf.gov.uk/bullying](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/bullying)

*Website intended to show pupils, their families and teachers how to tackle bullying in schools. Offers an advice pack for teachers on combating bullying*

**Digizen** [www.digizen.org/cyberbullying](http://www.digizen.org/cyberbullying)

*Website with information and advice on recognising and tackling cyber bullying*

**Educational Action Challenging Homophobia** [www.eachaction.org.uk](http://www.eachaction.org.uk)

Action Line 0808 100 0143

Monday – Friday 10.00am – 4.00pm

*Helpline and website for children and young people who are experiencing homophobic bullying*

**Kidscape** [www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)

Parents' Helpline 0845 120 5204

Monday – Friday, 10am – 4pm

*Helpline and website dedicated to protecting children from bullying with sections for children and young people, parents and professionals. Has a host of advice booklets that can be downloaded or are available to view in the Sheffield Information Link Library. These include 'Preventing bullying! A Parent's Guide'; 'Stop bullying! Practical advice for everyone'; 'You can beat bullying! A Guide for Young People' and 'Don't Bully Me! It's Wrong'*

**Mencap** [www.dontstickit.org.uk](http://www.dontstickit.org.uk) or [www.young.mencap.org.uk](http://www.young.mencap.org.uk)

*Website for children and young people with learning disabilities who are experiencing or worried about bullying. Runs a campaign, Don't stick it, Stop It! to combat bullying. Has a section for parents and teachers with a factsheet 'Bullying and children with a learning disability'. This is also available to look at in the Sheffield Information Link Library*

**Need 2 Know** [www.need2know.co.uk/relationships/bullying](http://www.need2know.co.uk/relationships/bullying)

*Website for young people with advice, shared experiences from victims of bullying and dedicated section to tackling cyber bullying*

**Parent Lifeline**

Tel 272 6575

Monday – Friday 9.00am – 1.00pm & 7.30pm – 11.30pm

*Locally based helpline for parents and carers to talk about any problems or worries, large or small. Also runs parenting courses*

**Parentline Plus** [www.parentlineplus.org.uk](http://www.parentlineplus.org.uk)

Tel 0808 800 2222 • Textphone 0800 783 6783 (24 hours a day, seven days a week)

*A free and confidential helpline for parents and a comprehensive website that offers information on a variety of parenting topics including bullying*

**Sheffield City Council** [www.sheffield.gov.uk](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk)

Tel: 272 6444 (Mon - Fri 8.00am – 6.00pm) • Minicom 273 5028

Email [firstpoint@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:firstpoint@sheffield.gov.uk) • Howden House, Union Street, Sheffield, S1

Mon – Fri 8.30am – 5.30pm

*For a comprehensive guide to the School Complaints Procedure*

**Sheffield Young People's Centre (NSPCC)** [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

Tel 228 9200 • Fax 228 9229

Email [sheffield@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:sheffield@nspcc.org.uk) • 35-37 George Street, Sheffield, S1 2PF

Mon, Tues, Thurs & Fri 9.00am – 5.00pm; Weds 9.00am – 6.00pm

*Local NSPCC centre for young people aged 9 – 18 years offering children's rights and advocacy, independent visiting, therapy and counselling, one 2 one advice or information and a lesbian, gay & bisexual group*

**Stop Text Bullying** [www.stoptextbully.com](http://www.stoptextbully.com)

*Website aimed at children and young people dedicated to tackling bullying done via mobile phones, emails and the internet*

**Teachernet** [www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour/tacklingbullying/](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour/tacklingbullying/)

*An online resource for teachers with publications available to download including 'Safe to Learn: embedding anti-bullying work in schools'*

**Young Minds** [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

Parent Information Service helpline 0808 802 5544

48-50 St. John Street, EC1M 4DG

Mon & Fri 9.30am - 4.00pm

*A national charity committed to improving the mental health of all children and young people under 25. Offer a helpline for parents/carers concerned about their child's wellbeing as well as advice on the website for children, young people and parents*

**Your Teenager** [www.yourteenager.co.uk](http://www.yourteenager.co.uk)

*An online reference point offering advice and information to parents on all issues related to bringing up teenagers, including what to do about bullying*