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# **Bullying ... A guide for parents and carers**

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# Welcome

This publication will look at bullying behaviour, both face to face and online. It will help you to address its impacts by giving you the practical skills and confidence to support your child, and deal with bullying behaviour whenever and wherever it happens.

Bullying can have short and long-term effects on the physical and mental wellbeing of children and young people. Bullying can impact upon a child or young person's aspirations, confidence, relationships and quality of life. Problems such as disengaging from school work, clubs and friends, to self-harming and eating disorders can often manifest themselves as a means of coping. Children and young people who experience bullying can also avoid going to school or going online.

But the wider impacts of bullying, and the associated stress it can create, can also affect family members and the wider community. Strained relationships can be caused by disagreements or even feelings of blame or guilt when a child is being bullied. Some parents and carers who have experienced bullying themselves are often anxious that the same thing will happen to their child; even though there is no evidence to suggest that this is the case; and a lack of available help and support, or a determination to deal with the situation alone, can leave families feeling helpless and overwhelmed.

Bullying is an emotional issue for us all, but our relationships with our children are at the heart of us finding a way forward together.

## What do we mean by bullying behaviour?

Bullying is behaviour that can leave people feeling hurt, threatened, frightened and left out. It is a combination of behaviours and the impacts they have.

Bullying can be a range of behaviours, including:

- o Name calling and teasing
- o Being hit
- o Having belongings taken or damaged
- o Being ignored or left out
- o Receiving abusive texts, emails or messages online
- o Having rumours spread about you
- o Being targeted for who you are or who you are perceived to be

This behaviour can harm physically or emotionally and, while the actual behaviour may not be repeated, the threat may be sustained over time, typically by actions such as looks, messages, confrontations, physical interventions, or the fear of these. A bullying incident only has to happen once to have a lasting impact on a person.

We know that bullying takes something away from people; that is one of the things that makes it different from other behaviours. It takes away people's ability to feel in control and take effective action; what we refer to as their sense of 'agency'. We need to keep the focus on giving children and young people this control back when we look to address bullying behaviour.

## Other behaviours

It is important to distinguish between bullying and other types of behaviours. Children and young people will tease each other and fall out from time to time, but this isn't always bullying.

If your child is beaten up or attacked, this is assault not bullying. If someone films this and posts it online it provides evidence that an assault has taken place.

If your child is threatened or coerced into taking inappropriate pictures of themselves or into doing something they don't want to do, this is not bullying; it may be sexual harassment or even sexually abusive behaviour. If your child is targeted by an adult and groomed either in person or online, this is child abuse, not bullying.



## Online bullying

Parents and carers face a number of issues in relation to bullying which takes place online, and we know that it's an area that causes concern.

But bullying that takes place online is still bullying. We can't think of 'bullying' in one respect and 'online bullying' in another – it is still about relationships that are not healthy; relationships which aren't being managed or role modelled well. The behaviour isn't new; it is 'where' it is taking place that's new.

Children and young people have access to smart phones, laptops and hand-held devices, and this technology allows them to communicate in different ways. The behaviour they have always exhibited and experienced goes online with them. They still experience name calling, being left out and having rumours spread about them – but it takes place on social media sites, through online chat, via mobile devices and gaming platforms. Most of their online

interactions are with friends they interact with in other areas, such as at school.

Children and young people see the internet as just another place to go to, to meet with friends and socialise. But they're still going somewhere. In order to help keep them safe you have to take an active interest in what they're doing online – where they're going and who they're interacting with, in the same way that you would if they were going into town, to the sports centre, youth club, or any other physical place.

And that means having an understanding of their online environment and how to make it safe. You can't abdicate responsibility to software or service providers, you need to make sure you're switched on to the ways in which young people are communicating so that if they tell you they're being bullied, you know how to react.

## Understanding mobile technologies

Children and young people are increasingly using mobile phones and the internet to keep in touch, share aspects of their life and make new friends.

Smart phones are different to 'traditional' mobiles in that they have additional features that let you chat to more than one person at a time, share pictures and get fast internet access. Smart phones also use applications that provide direct access to social media and gaming platforms.

'Apps' is short for 'applications' that allow you to do things on your smart phone you would once have only been able to do on a computer. One click or tap on an icon on your screen lets you check the weather, take and edit pictures,

catch up on football scores, play games, log onto Facebook or buy clothes. Some phones have these pre-loaded, while others can be downloaded to your phone, some will cost money and some are free.

Smart phones can also connect with other smart phones through Bluetooth technology. This allows people to share music, pictures and be contacted by someone else nearby. Parents and carers need to make sure children and young people's phone settings are as safe as possible. Pass codes should always be set up on phones to stop others accessing online accounts and personal information if the phone falls into the wrong hands.

## Instant messaging/instant chat

Instant messaging allows people to chat to each other online in real time. It is like a text conversation between two or more people where they invite or choose who they want to chat with.

Instant messaging is not the same as a chat room, but children and young people have moved on from traditional 'chat rooms' to using apps that let them message one person directly or chat to a number of people in a group at the same time.

There is no limit on instant messaging. Many phone contracts or top-ups will set limits on the number of text messages you can send, but apps use an internet connection so you are only limited by the amount of 'data' you have. Most of the apps and chat features your child will use will need a connection to the internet.

When you top up your child's phone, they will have access to a certain amount of 'data', which will determine the amount of time they have to access the internet through their phone's 3G or 4G signal – which basically refers to high-speed internet access. For example, your child might have up to 500 megabytes of data per month, which is enough for chatting to friends and using social media platforms. If they download a lot of music or films, they will use a lot more data than this. If you pay the bill, this will result in some very high additional costs; something you need to be aware of. It is very important to talk to your child about their data limits – some contracts will allow you to 'cap' their data usage so they can't go past a certain amount, or for pay-as-you-go phones, you might want to agree how frequently the phone can be 'topped-up'.

## Social media sites

Social networking and social media sites are increasingly being used by children and young people (and by many adults) as a key way of communicating and building relationships, or making new friends online.

Websites such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat and Instagram are online 'communities' of people who share interests and activities, and communicate through the use of messages, videos, discussion groups and blogs. To build a network, individuals can invite people with similar interests to become a 'friend' of their page. Similarly, they can be invited to become part of someone else's network of friends, so the scope for communicating through social networking sites is vast.

You can also decide who sees your information on social networking sites; just the contacts on your friends list, the people they are also connected to, or you can make your information visible to anyone who is online. Making sure children and young people have the appropriate privacy settings is very important.

**The default settings for most social media sites are not private. You need to discuss this with your child, log on with them and make sure their networks are secure – and are only accessible by people they/you know and trust. Their information, pictures and postings are not private unless they specifically make them private. Unless you help them to make their profile or account secure in this way, anyone, anywhere can read it, copy it and share it.**

## Encouraging safe use and responsible communication

Online bullying often takes place in environments where there is little or no adult supervision. You have an important role to play in explaining how you expect your child to behave when using smart phones, laptops or games consoles to communicate. Knowing how to identify when they or others are bullying someone, or are being bullied by someone online will help you to build a safer online environment.

## Important points to discuss with children and young people

### Online relationships are no different from relationships off-line

For most young people, the friends they have online will be people they know, but they might also connect with others they don't know, who share their interests in music, films or football, for example. People online are still real people and they should be treated with the same level of respect and consideration as they would if they were in the same room.

### Be mindful of the fact that you are communicating differently

Without the benefit of being able to read gestures, facial expressions and tone of voice, it is easy to misinterpret what may be seen on the screen; for example typing in CAPITAL LETTERS can often be seen as shouting, and sarcasm doesn't always translate well! Your child might need help in understanding the impact of what they mean and what they actually say. Young people often use pictures and images to express their feelings and to share things they like. Apps like Instagram, Tumblr and Twitter are great for this and can help to remove some of the ambiguity that can come with communicating online.

When used appropriately, mobile devices and online platforms can and do provide excellent opportunities for children and young people to learn and interact with others. Making them aware of how to use them safely will provide a more secure environment for them to enjoy these opportunities.

### Never give away personal information

Don't give out personal information about yourself or another person, their family or friends. This might include where they live, their phone numbers or private email addresses. It is also important never to give private passwords to anyone, including friends or other people that you might trust. This includes keeping passwords from boyfriends or girlfriends; they might say it is about trust, but it might really be about controlling and monitoring who your child is talking to.

### If you wouldn't say it, don't send it

People can act differently when they're online. Many children and young people don't think they'll get caught bullying someone online, and choose to remain anonymous in an attempt to conceal their identity. Ask your child – would you say this if the person was sitting in front of you? If they answer 'no', tell them not to send it.

### Everything you post can be traced

Everything sent and posted online or through text message can be traced. There's no such thing as anonymity – even a fake email account and user information will have a unique IP address, and you can be traced through this

Remember bullying happens 'to' someone, it impacts on them as a person – it is not a technology issue but a people issue.

or a SIM card. Children and young people need to be aware of the consequences of posting messages online.

### What will happen if you are being bullied online?

Discuss what will happen if your child approaches you about a bullying incident. Some children and young people fear that access to the internet or their phone will be taken away, and this can make them reluctant to come forward. Be mindful of this. Go through the points in the 'Dealing with online bullying' section.

Take an interest in your child's internet and mobile phone use; how they use it, what they do online, what sites they like to visit and why. These general conversations can open up the lines of communication to discuss deeper issues and can provide you with a valuable insight into your child's online and mobile phone activity. Agree a code of conduct; an agreement about how smart phones, laptops or other devices will be used and what will happen if they are misused.

Discuss points such as:

- Sites which are acceptable and unacceptable for them to visit
- Monthly mobile phone expenditure
- Where the computer will be located in the house
- How long they should spend online – what their data limits are and what will happen if they go over these
- Agree that passwords will only be shared with you
- What will happen if your child approaches you with an issue

You can install a filter or software on to your computer which can help to block and monitor inappropriate materials, but a filter does not

offer complete protection and is no substitute for your intervention. Discuss the previous points with your child so they understand how you expect them to behave.

Software such as 'Microsoft Family Safety' can be used for laptops and devices at home. This allows you to set limits on how long your child is online, what times they can access the internet, and allows you to set age restrictions on games or YouTube content. You can also block websites such as Facebook or Twitter if you feel your child is too young to be using them. This software also sends you an email summary each week showing the websites your child has visited.

If your child is a gamer – Xbox Live and PlayStation Plus have parental settings that let you control times, age restrictions and access to the internet through the consoles too, and includes who your child can and can't talk to online. There are great videos online, on sites such as YouTube, that explain how to use these very easily.

Setting up parental settings takes time. It can be tempting to let your child get on with it, but taking the time to sit and find out where they go online, and how you can make it safe, will help you both manage boundaries. It will increase your skills and knowledge of the world they are visiting and will make you more confident to deal with any challenges and issues that arise.

If you take the time to do this, you can feel more confident about how safe your child is online. Hopefully talking to them about where they go and what they like doing will remove some of the fear around the issue.



## Dealing with bullying behaviour

Children and young people are often reluctant to tell adults that they're being bullied. This might be because they are scared of an over-reaction, they don't want to burden parents/carers if there are other things going on in the family, they're embarrassed, or they are worried that telling might make the situation worse.

But there are a number of things you can look out for if you're concerned your child is being bullied:

### Potential signs

- They become withdrawn
- They have scratches and bruises that can't really be explained
- They don't want to go to school or they are having trouble with school work
- They don't want to go out or play with friends
- Their online behaviour changes
- There are changes in how and when they're using their mobile/laptop, etc
- Changes are made in the route they take to school
- They complain of headaches, stomach aches and other pains
- They become easily upset, tearful, ill-tempered or display other out-of-character behaviour

Of course this list is by no means exhaustive, and displaying some of the above symptoms won't necessarily mean that your child is being bullied. But as a parent, you will know better than anyone if there's an unexplained change in your child's behaviour that needs to be explored further.

### So what should you do?

We know that bullying takes something away from people; that is one of the things that makes it different from other behaviours. It takes away a person's ability to feel in control and take effective action. It's important to remember that when you respond to bullying behaviour – your focus has to be on helping

your child to get it back; helping them get back that feeling of being in control and being themselves again.

That's why we have to involve young people – to find out what they want to happen, what they would like to happen, and what they are worried about happening. And sometimes we need to take a lead from them as to what pace we go at. If we can do that, we can help to restore that feeling of being in control.

### Listening

Children and young people appreciate adults who take the time to listen. When it comes to bullying behaviour, listening can help us to understand young people, how they are being affected and what we can do to help.

Good listening is 'active listening', which means much more than simply 'hearing' the words. To really understand children and young people we need to pay attention to all of the key elements of their communication. Listen carefully to what they're saying but also how they're saying it, and pay attention to their body language and facial expressions – you can often learn a lot from these alone.

All behaviour communicates how we feel. If your child hasn't told you that they're being bullied but their words, tone, body language or facial expression give cause for concern then take time to talk to them and explore the reasons behind this.

'Active' listening is also about *responding* appropriately to what your child is communicating. For example, they might be reluctant to verbally tell you that they are being bullied but might display subtle cues, such as becoming withdrawn. Noticing this change and taking time to ask your child how they are can help. Your response will make it easier for them to tell you about the bullying and gain your support.

### Things to remember

**Don't Panic!** – Remaining calm supports good listening and is reassuring for your child

**Give your full attention** – This is reassuring and shows you are taking them seriously

**Explain the reasons for your concern** – Sensitively feeding back on what you have noticed might help your child to see how bullying is impacting upon them

**What do they want you to do?** – Exploring this will make your child feel valued and will help you to understand what support they need

**Keep Listening!** – If they are reluctant to talk straight away, remind them that you are always available to listen and they can talk to you at any time

Hearing that your child is being bullied evokes an understandably emotional response. It's difficult to hear, and you are not always at your best.

Sometimes the advice we give at this time isn't necessarily the best advice. Children and young people tell us that if they're being bullied, being told to 'hit back' is a common response. We know it exists as an option, but we also know, by and large, it's not the best or safest option.

It doesn't take into account people that can't or won't hit back; people who are too scared, or who don't like the thought of violence. So there always has to be an alternative. The vast majority of people don't go through life answering challenges and relationship difficulties by resorting to violence, yet we tend to give children and young people this advice.

**There is never one, single, answer when it comes to bullying, it's about knowing how to think about it and how to approach it.**

Sometimes you have to ask your child, 'What do you want to happen?' 'Tell me what you have done so far?' 'What would you like me to do?' 'What do you think would happen if, say, I was to go up to the school and talk to them about it?'

If they are worried that you would make it worse, you might have to try something else because most children just want bullying to stop with the minimum of fuss. You could try, 'What do you think would happen if I spoke to someone's mum?' or 'Is there someone else you can talk to?'

It's about exploring options; thinking about what you can do and sometimes having to say, as a parent, 'look if I'm worried and I don't think you're safe, I'm going to step in', and explain why you are doing it.

The temptation to run off and solve the situation is an understandable one, but we should always take a moment, pause and think, 'how do I give my child back a sense of being in control?', because it's that sense of being in control that has been taken from them, and that has to focus your response.

## Dealing with online bullying

Your reaction to online bullying shouldn't differ greatly from your reaction to a disclosure of any other type of bullying. It's important to focus on the behaviour and the impact it's had, and not get hung up on 'how' or 'where' the bullying has taken place. Remember if your child is being bullied online, it's possible that they're also experiencing bullying offline, at times by the same people for the same reasons; they're not always exclusive.

However, when bullying has taken place online, there are some additional, practical steps you can take to resolve the situation. This is where the time you spend connecting with the places they go to online and the devices they use comes in very useful.

### **Go through any messages, posts or pictures that they have received and kept**

If you feel that any of these messages or pictures can be construed as illegal then keep copies, dates, times, email addresses or phone numbers and take them to the police. Information on bullying and the law can be found on the [respectme](#) website.

### **Ask them not to open any further online or text messages from these addresses and phone numbers, but to allow you to open them instead**

You might want to reply to these messages but be very careful not to respond in a manner which could be seen as threatening or harassing. It may be enough to respond saying that you are an adult and that the messages they are sending are hurtful, causing you and the young person concern, they could be against the law and that they should stop sending them.

### **Change their mobile phone number**

It is important your child knows not to give their mobile number away to people that they do not trust. If you do this and the new number falls into the wrong hands, it may not be because they have been careless but that they have given it to someone they trusted who has then passed it on to others.

### **Change their online profile and make sure it is private**

Log-in names can be changed easily and you need to remind your child only to accept trusted real life friends as online friends. Personal and identifying details should always be kept to a minimum. Profile pictures on social media sites can be changed – designs or cartoon characters can be used instead of photographs and nicknames can be used instead of real names.

*Your child's profile or settings should always be made 'private' so their information and chat is only shared with trusted friends. If pages are 'public', or you leave the default settings in place, they are giving access to anyone who wishes to view their page. Having an agreement on profiles being private should be discussed with your child before they sign up.*

### **Make sure 'Location Services' are turned off**

You should also make sure their social media sites do not have 'Locations Services' switched on – this prevents anyone from finding out exactly where they are

*Remember the default settings for social networking sites are not set to private, so sit down with your child and take steps to make their pages private before they start using them.*

### **Delete comments and posts or 'Block' users/numbers**

You can delete messages if they are nasty, offensive or you just don't want them to appear on your page. You can also deny access to people from seeing, reading, commenting on or posting messages on your page.

Similarly, numbers can be blocked from mobile phones so that you no longer receive calls, texts or messages. In some cases the police will be able to help, but often they will need evidence of the number and will want to see the texts, so they must be saved. Contact your service provider for further information.

### **Report Abuse**

This allows users to report any content, postings or comments that appear on their own page or other sites that they think contravene the terms and conditions of the site, or which they consider to be illegal, offensive, harassing or bullying in nature. Social networking sites rely on users making use of these tools to effectively 'police' the site as they don't have the capacity to monitor each and every profile every day. In general, they advise that nasty comments are ignored and deleted unless they are threatening or illegal, in which case they should be reported to the site administrators and, where applicable, the police.

## The way forward

Once you've established what's happened and how your child is feeling, you need to discuss and agree a way forward together. Approaching a school or other organisation about a bullying incident may seem like a daunting prospect – but remember it's in everyone's best interests to resolve the situation and reach a satisfactory outcome.

Make an appointment to speak to the Head Teacher, senior youth worker or other adult that your child feels comfortable with. Calmly tell them what has been going on – it would be helpful if you have details of when the incidents have taken place – then discuss what you would like to happen next and how you can proceed together.

The school or organisation should not suggest that the bullying is your child's fault, or that they should change their behaviour. Neither should they suggest that your child should move to another class or even move to another school as a solution to the bullying.

If your child is being bullied online, the organisation still has a duty to act. People who are bullied carry the impact with them,

You can also download a CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre) app that stays visible on the webpage and can be clicked to instantly report abuse or get advice – [www.ceop.org.uk](#)

### **Involve other agencies**

When online bullying is being carried out by someone that your child knows and sees on a regular basis, it might be worth involving other agencies. If both parties are at school, it will be helpful to make the school aware of the problems, if they're not already, and involve them in the plan of what to do.

**It is important not to get too hung up on the fact that your child has experienced bullying online, but to recognise that they have been bullied and need the same support as they would if they had experienced any other type of bullying. This support, and their experience of how the situation is addressed and resolved, begins as soon as they tell you that they are being bullied.**

wherever they are. If they inform someone at school, at the youth group or anywhere else that something's happened and they're worried or scared, the adults must respond in a supportive way. Children and young people tend to open up to the people they believe can/will help them.

Don't expect the situation to be fully resolved at the first meeting, that won't always be possible. Neither should you expect the person(s) involved to be automatically excluded. Exclusion alone will rarely change bullying behaviour. Schools and other organisations often employ a variety of methods to prevent and tackle bullying; some will have an immediate effect, others may take longer.

They will also need time to investigate the incidents, so agree a plan of action and set a date to meet again to review the situation. Keep in touch with them and be 'pushy' if you need to be, but try to keep the relationship on a positive basis – this will be more beneficial to all parties in the long run.

You should also ask for a copy of the school or organisation's anti-bullying policy, which sets out how they will deal with bullying behaviour if it occurs. If you have time, it would be useful to get a copy of the policy before your initial meeting so that you can familiarise yourself with these practices.

If the bullying is happening in the community and you need to talk to a neighbour or

another parent, do so tactfully and carefully. Again, it's important to keep the channels of communication open – and remember your child will probably want the situation resolved with the minimum of fuss.

Further information on what to look for in an anti-bullying policy can be found on the *respectme* website: [www.respectme.org.uk](http://www.respectme.org.uk).

## What if my child is bullying someone else?

Children and young people can become involved in bullying for a number of reasons – there is no such thing as 'typical' bullying behaviour. Again, all behaviour communicates feelings, so it's important that you explore the reasons behind their behaviour, which might include:

- o They don't recognise their behaviour as 'bullying'
- o They are unaware of the impact their behaviour is having on other people
- o They feel challenged and are trying to regain control over a person or situation
- o They do not feel they will be identified or found out as they are posting online
- o They are being encouraged to join in as part of a group and they're going along with it to save face
- o They have experienced bullying themselves and want to avoid being a target
- o They are trying to draw attention to problems they are experiencing themselves
- o They are in a culture where bullying behaviour is acceptable
- o They have 'learned' bullying behaviour from a role model or peer

When you've established the reasons behind the bullying, you have to address their behaviour and the impact that it has had. Children who are bullying others need help to repair relationships; they need help to understand that what they've done is wrong.

Ask them to consider the impact that their actions are having on the other person or people involved. How would they feel if they were being bullied; what if they were the one who was left feeling anxious, isolated and filled with fear when they left the house? If they dreaded logging on to their computer or looking at their phone because they were scared of what messages there might be?

Be prepared to deal with prejudiced attitudes. The behaviour behind the bullying might stem from racism, homophobia or ignorance about a different culture or religion. Addressing this can be difficult, challenging and emotive, but prejudiced attitudes must be explored and dealt with.

Agree what you're going to do to stop the bullying. All behaviour carries consequences and your child has to realise that they are accountable for their actions. At school, this might mean finding a way forward that gives

**The advice for parents whose child is involved in bullying is not that different from the advice given to parents whose child is being bullied. It's natural to be angry and upset, but it's important that you remain calm, take the time to discuss the issue and listen to your child's explanation.**

them the chance to make amends or repair relationships with the other person – but be crystal clear that their behaviour is unacceptable and clearly state how you expect them to behave. Revisit the reasons for their behaviour and support them to change.

You might also want to alert the parents of the other person involved to make sure they're aware of what's been happening and to ensure that their child gets any support they need. It might be helpful to get support for both families from a third party, such as a teacher.

It's important when we deal with children who are bullying that we don't label them. We talk

about their behaviour and we talk about the impact that it has, we don't label them as 'bullies'. There isn't any one stereotypical 'bully'. Bullying is behaviour that makes people feel a certain way – and many of us will have acted in a way that has made someone feel hurt, frightened or left out.

It's much easier to change behaviour if you say, 'when you did that, it was bullying'. You're much more likely to get a better response than if you say, 'because you did that, you are a bully'. You don't change behaviour by labelling people. You change behaviour by telling people what they did, why it was wrong, and what you expect instead.

## What if my child is bullying someone online?

Respond to your child's behaviour first and foremost; help them to see what they did wrong, and the impact it had, rather than focus on 'where' they did it. A consequence of their behaviour might be that they have restricted access to their phone or internet access for a period of time – making the link that poor online behaviour impacts on their online activity.

You may need to explore the fact that some online behaviour can be breaking the law and your child can face the prospect of being charged – for behaviour they wouldn't necessarily be charged for if it happened in school or on the bus. For more information on online bullying and the law – visit [www.respectme.org.uk](http://www.respectme.org.uk).

## Role modelling

The way we, as adults, choose to communicate has a considerable impact on children and young people. Despite what we may think, it's family members that children and young people view as role models, not famous celebrities! This is a huge responsibility and there are a few things to consider when we think about what this means.

Do you show your children how to deal with problems effectively? If you are calm, reasonable and respectful of others, they can learn to act in the same way. But similarly if you fly off the handle or overreact to situations, they can learn that it's okay to act that way.

Does the language you use reinforce that being different is okay? Racist, sectarian, homophobic and other language that promotes negativity towards others can encourage prejudice-based bullying behaviour. We need to show respect for other people and their cultures and beliefs to encourage children and young people – as well as other adults – to value and appreciate difference.

Are you respectful of other people online? Be aware of your own behaviour when it comes to socialising on Facebook or Twitter, or when posting comments on forums or, for example, in relation to news articles.



We also need to ask ourselves about the message we give about gender equality. Bullying in the form of derogatory language, online comments and the spreading of malicious rumours affects both girls' and boys' behaviour. For example, suggesting that behaving in a way that doesn't reflect society's 'norms' means that someone is not a 'real' man

or 'real' woman can lead to boys demanding girls act a certain way and can make boys act in way that is not fair or respectful.

Children are very good at knowing who they can and can't talk to. Our challenge as adults is to be someone that they look up to for all the right reasons; someone they can respect, not fear.

## Helping your child to cope

There are valuable things you can teach your child regardless of whether bullying is taking place. We know that children and young people will fall out and disagree with each other as they form and build relationships. This is a normal part of growing up and they have the natural ability to bounce back from this type of behaviour.

Children and young people can be more resilient than we give them credit for, but they have to learn from the adults in their lives. Role modelling, consistency and seeing how you cope and respond to little things, lets children and young people know that you will listen

and value them and help them to develop the skills to recover from bullying behaviour. But if bullying is ignored it can strip away at this resilience, making it harder for them to talk about it, look for help and cope with the impacts.

Children and young people need secure relationships around them. They need love, praise and recognition. They need to learn how to socialise and have friendships and interests in and out of school. These are the things that give them the ability and the support needed to cope with difficulties; the things that promote mental wellbeing and provide them with skills they will use and value all of their lives.

## Conclusion

There is no easy answer when it comes to bullying behaviour. Every situation is different; the reasons behind the behaviour will differ, and each incident will require an individual approach, regardless of whether it's happening online, face to face, or both.

Children can be embarrassed or scared of what will happen if they tell an adult that they're being bullied. They need to be confident that you will take them seriously and *listen* to them. They want to know that you will help to make the bullying stop without over-reacting and by considering their feelings and what they'd like to happen next. And this might mean agreeing not to do anything except monitor the situation

for a while, which can be difficult, but children and young people tell us that often it helps just to have told someone.

If they do want you to act, make sure you agree a way forward *with* your child, give them a say in how they would like the situation to be dealt with – and remember they'll probably want a minimum of fuss.

You need to help your child regain a sense of control over their life again. Show them that you can listen and let them know they can ask you for help when they need it. Working at your relationship together can make all the difference.

# What children and young people tell us about bullying

**Children and young people are usually very clear about what they want to happen when they tell someone. Listening to their concerns and reflecting on their feelings and experiences can help you to address the situation sensitively and effectively.**

Experience shows that this advice often makes the problem worse. Bullying is a problem which needs a helpful and considered response

**Ignoring bullying doesn't make it go away**

**Sometimes all we want you to do is listen**

Simply taking time to listen can help a child or young person who is being bullied to feel better. Having shared their concerns and being confident that you won't do anything further at this stage will help to reassure them that they can approach you again

**Telling can be tough**

Bullying behaviour attacks self-esteem. You need to be sensitive to this and reassure your child that they have done the right thing by telling you

**Names can hurt me**

Name-calling can be just as hurtful as any other forms of bullying

**We don't want a big fuss – we just want the bullying to stop!**

This message is loud and clear from young people of all ages and backgrounds. Fear of an over-reaction fuelled by anger or anxiety is a common barrier to reporting bullying. Recognising this will help you to resolve the situation together

**I don't want my bullying to be a burden**

Simply taking time to listen can help a child or young person who is being bullied to feel better. Having shared their concerns and being confident that you won't do anything further at this stage will help to reassure them that they can approach you again





If your child is being bullied and would like to speak to an adult in confidence, they can contact **ChildLine** on **0800 1111**

If you are worried about your child and would like to talk to someone in confidence, you can call **ParentLine Scotland** on **08000 28 22 33**

For further information:

**respectme, Scotland's Anti-Bullying Service**

respectme's website offers practical advice and guidance for adults on addressing bullying behaviour. There is also a section specifically for children and young people offering practical advice on what to do if they're being bullied.

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

**ChildLine**

ChildLine's website has a bullying section for young people and adults.

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

**Childnet International**

Childnet International works in partnership with other organisations to help make the internet a safe place for children and young people.

**[childnet.com](http://childnet.com)**

**Cybermentors**

A social networking place where children and young people can talk about bullying with mentors their own age.

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

**CEOP**

The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre website provides information and advice for online safety.

**[ceop.police.uk](http://ceop.police.uk)**

**T: 0844 800 8600**

**E: [enquire@respectme.org.uk](mailto:enquire@respectme.org.uk)**

**W: [www.respectme.org.uk](http://www.respectme.org.uk)**

** [www.twitter.com/\\_respectme\\_](https://www.twitter.com/_respectme_)**

