

Appendix 1 – Prejudice-based bullying¹

Children and young people can experience bullying for a variety of reasons; where they live, their sexual orientations, gender, disability, the colour of their skin, what clothes they wear or what team they support. The one thing that these have in common is difference or perceived difference – some children and young people don't see or understand diversity, they still only see difference.

Difference, or perceived difference, can be a catalyst for children and young people being bullied. If you would like to find out more about the different types of prejudice-based bullying listed below, visit our useful links section.

Asylum Seekers and Refugees

Children and young people who are asylum seekers or refugees may be at greater risk of bullying directly and indirectly. Stigma, due to lack of knowledge and understanding of asylum seekers and refugees, together with a reluctance to burden parents with extra worries can allow bullying to continue and go undetected.

Body Image

Body image is hugely important to children and young people and bullying because of body image can have a significantly negative impact. For example, a child or young person who is noticeably over or underweight may find that they are particularly vulnerable to bullying behaviour.

Homophobic bullying

Homophobic bullying is mainly directed towards young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) or young people who are questioning their sexuality. However, it can also be directed at young people who do not conform to strict gender 'norms'. For example, a boy who doesn't like football may stand out as being different. Ultimately, any young person can be homophobically bullied and any young person can display homophobic attitudes, which should be challenged.

Transgender

Is an umbrella term used to describe someone who does not conform to society's view of being male or female. Children and young people who are experiencing confusion over their gender identity may be the target of transphobia. Transphobia at its most basic is the fear of a transgender person and the hatred, discrimination, intolerance and prejudice that this fear brings. This can result in bullying behaviour towards an individual because they are not seen to be conforming to gender stereotyping and 'norms'. If children and young people are experiencing confusion over their gender identity, they may be reluctant to challenge bullying behaviour that could attract further attention to them.

Looked after children

Children and young people who are looked after and accommodated are vulnerable to bullying behaviour for a number of reasons: It may be due to regular changes in schools or where they are placed, which can make forming friendships difficult; they may have poor relationship skills stemming from attachment difficulties;

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inappropriate reactions to situations as a result of learned behaviours; a reluctance to make friends; low self-esteem, lack of role models and a heightened sense of privacy.

Race and Ethnicity

Children and young people from minority ethnic groups, including the gypsy/travelling community, often experience bullying based on perceived differences in dress, communication, appearance, beliefs and/or culture. The status of 'minority' in a school, community or organisation can often make a child or young person the focus for those involved in bullying behaviour. This can arise from a misguided and/or learned belief that they 'deserve' to be treated differently or with less respect.

Religion and Belief

Lack of knowledge and understanding about the traditions, beliefs and etiquette of different faiths, or having no faith, can lead to religious intolerance. Lack of awareness about the differences in practices of religions such as prayer times, dietary requirements, fasting and the wearing of religious clothing or articles of faith can result in misunderstandings and stereotyping, which may fuel bullying.

Sectarianism

Most people understandably associate Sectarianism with religion. The reality of prejudice however means that your family background, the football team you support, the community you live in, the school you attend and even the colour of your clothing can mark you out as a target for sectarian abuse - whatever your beliefs may be.

Sexism and Gender

Gender inequality and stereotyping can leave children and young people, and in particular girls, who do not conform to these norms vulnerable to bullying.

Bullying in the form of derogatory language, online comments and the spreading of malicious rumours can be used to regulate both girls' and boys' behaviour - suggesting that they are not being a real man or a real woman if they do not behave in such a way towards others. Personality traits that do not fit in to the unwritten rules of 'appropriate' male and female behaviour can make children and young people a target for their actual or perceived difference. These terms can be of an explicit gender-based nature and it is worth noting that many can involve using terms for people who are gay and lesbian as a negative towards someone.

This behaviour should not be confused with sexually aggressive behaviour, which is potentially a form of criminal harassment and should be treated as such. For this reason, in Scotland we recommend against using the term 'sexual bullying' as a descriptor in policies or in practice – it is an unclear and reductive term. Sexual assault and exploitation are not types of bullying, they are abuse.

Gender-based bullying – if unchallenged can lead to a deepening of attitudes and behaviour towards girls or those who do not conform to gender norms that can escalate to more abusive behaviours. This behaviour can take place face-to-face, in private and online or sometimes a combination of all of these. What happens or is shared online will directly impact upon a person and that should be our focus. In all probability, online activity will relate directly to an experience or conversation they have had in person.

Successful anti-bullying work focuses on equalities and developing and modelling relationships based on respect and fairness – and this must include gender.

Disablist Bullying

People who bully others may see children and young people with disabilities as being less able to defend themselves and less able to tell an adult about the bullying. The bullying behaviour is likely to be focused upon their specific disability or disabilities, whether they are in mainstream schooling or in specialist provision, and may result in a need for additional support to be provided.

Young Carers

The lives of young carers can be significantly affected by their responsibility to care for a family member who has a physical illness or disability, mental health problem, sensory or learning disability or issues with the misuse of drugs or alcohol. Young carers are at risk of bullying for a variety of reasons. Depending on responsibilities at home, they may find themselves being unable to fully participate in school or after-school activities or 'fun stuff'. This can make it difficult for them to form relationships; it can hinder successful transitions or lead to educational difficulties.

Social and Economic Prejudice

Bullying due to social and economic status can take place in any group no matter how little diversity exists in it. Small differences in perceived class/family income/family living arrangements/social circumstances or values can be used as a basis for bullying behaviours. These behaviours, such as mocking speech patterns, belongings, clothing, hygiene, etc can become widespread through those considering themselves to be in the dominant social economic group or class. Bullying of children who endure parental substance misuse can also be prevalent in some locations.

Under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2010, we have a duty to assess all new policies and guidance to ensure it fulfils our duties under the Act. The Equality Act 2010 sets out a range of individual characteristics that are 'Protected' from discrimination and unfair treatment including bullying. All children have the right to feel safe regardless of Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Marriage and civil partnership, Pregnancy and maternity, Race, Religion and belief, Sex, Sexual orientation. All anti-bullying guidance should include all of the protected characteristics as well as other issues that may see children discriminated against such as body image or socio economic status.

Bullying, whether linked to prejudicial attitudes or not, can sometimes create additional support needs for children and young people. There is specific legislation in this area in the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2009. Further support can be accessed at <http://www.enquire.org.uk/pcp/pdf/ASL-Act-2009-changes.pdf>