Respect for All:
The National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People

Update 2024

Fairness

Equality

Respect

Inclusion

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

"Bullying is face-to-face and/or online behaviour which impacts on a person's sense of physical and emotional safety, their capacity to feel in control of their life and their ability to respond effectively to the situation they are in."

"The behaviour does not need to be repeated, or intended to cause harm, for it to have an impact. Bullying behaviour can be physical, emotional or verbal and can cause people to feel hurt, threatened, frightened and left out."

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Ministerial Foreword

The relationships we develop when we are young can play a formative role in shaping the adults we become. Whilst our hope is that these relationships are mutually respectful and responsible, we know that this is not always the reality. For those young people who experience bullying, this can not only impact on their school experience and their home life, but it can have a lifelong effect.

The seven years since the 'Respect for All' guidance was last updated have been particularly challenging for our children and young people. The ongoing effect of the COVID-19 pandemic can be felt in many aspects of their lives, but crucially, in their ability to build and maintain these important childhood relationships. The Behaviour in Scottish Schools Research 2023 highlighted the impact the pandemic has had in delaying pupils' social and communication skills. The pandemic also drove an increase in online participation in the next generation, where important social cues can be absent, words can be open to interpretation, and from which there can be little respite or escape.

Within this context it is therefore more important than ever that we support all adults with a role to play in preventing and responding to bullying and young people to respond to these new challenges sensitively and appropriately. To reflect the current context, this updated guidance therefore contains more information on issues such as online bullying, prejudice-based bullying, and how to interpret the definition of bullying.

Whilst bullying behaviour is most often considered in a school context, it can happen any time or any place that young people are together, including online. All those who work with children and young people therefore share a responsibility for ensuring they feel safe and supported, able to raise concerns about bullying, and confident that action will be taken in response.

I am proud that the principles of the relational, inclusive approach to anti-bullying, developed in Scotland many years ago, have now been recognised as leading practice internationally. UNESCO and the World Anti-Bullying Forum 2023 presented a definition that embraces many characteristics of our own definition, with particular focus on the emotional, social or physical impacts caused by bullying behaviour, the recognition that not all bullying is an intentional act and the acceptance that even a one-off event can fuel a fear of repetition. This new guidance further recognises, in line with UNESCO, that bullying often reflects wider social contexts, societal structures and norms which can drive power imbalances and reinforce inequalities.

Regardless, I am clear that there is still room for improvement. Education Scotland's thematic inspection highlighted some challenges implementing the previous guidance, which we are addressing in this update.

One of the principal challenges relates to recording and monitoring of bullying behaviour. Since being appointed Cabinet Secretary, I have heard repeatedly that incidents of bullying behaviours, as well as other challenging or violent behaviour, are often underreported, in part due to concerns about how numbers of incidents will be perceived.

I want to be clear that it is the Scottish Government's clear expectation that all reports of bullying should be recorded. When incidents are recorded, it allows you to assess the effectiveness of policy and practice, to monitor recurring patterns or trends, and most importantly, to ensure the necessary support is in place for children and young people.

I fully accept that with more rigorous recording, the number of bullying incidents will likely increase. I am clear that this demonstrates a commitment to transparency and ensures that every allegation of bullying is taken seriously.

Bullying behaviour impacts the wellbeing of our children and young people. Children have the right to live free from violence, abuse, and neglect, which includes protection from violence by other children. Environments that engage with young people, promote respect, celebrate difference and encourage positive relationships and behaviour helps to protect the dignity and wellbeing of every child.

I am committed to creating safe, inclusive, and supportive environments where children and young people can thrive. I know all of you who work with children and young people – in our schools, youth groups or other settings – share that same aspiration. The updates made to this guidance will help your continued work to create inclusive environments that promote safety, respect and wellbeing, and that shape positive outcomes for all of our children and young people.

Jenny Gilruth MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

The national approach to anti-bullying for Scotland's children and young people

Purpose

This guidance sets out the national approach to anti-bullying in Scotland. "Respect for All" focuses specifically on bullying between children and young people and aims to ensure that all sectors and communities, at a national and local level, are consistently and coherently contributing to a holistic approach to anti-bullying, including prejudice-based bullying.

Respect for All is underpinned by the values of:

- children's rights
- fairness
- respect
- equality
- inclusion.

We want all children and young people to feel safe, secure and able to build positive relationships with peers and adults. Respect for All aims to encourage a proactive and inclusive approach to anti-bullying and supports all adults working with, or caring for, children and young people to create inclusive environments where bullying cannot thrive. It aims to drive the implementation of a consistent and cohesive approach to anti-bullying in Scotland and describes how we define bullying and how we approach effective anti-bullying work.

This document replaces previous Respect for All guidance, published in 2017, and supplementary guidance on recording and monitoring bullying incidents published in 2018. This guidance therefore outlines the policy ambition to embed a consistent approach to reporting, recording and monitoring incidents of bullying through SEEMiS or other information management systems in independent schools and organisations working with children and young people.

Who is this document for?

While bullying most often takes place in a school context,[1] it can occur anywhere and therefore this document is for **everyone** involved in children and young people's lives in Scotland. There are particular statutory duties on education authorities and schools (see Appendix 1) and these are reflected in the guidance where appropriate.

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1   Experience of bullying – Health and Wellbeing Census Scotland 2021- 2022 – gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

It is expected that education authorities and organisations will develop their own anti-bullying policy and procedures based on the national guidance set out in Respect for All and set within the wider context of relationships and behaviour policies. It is expected that all individual schools and organisations[2] should develop policies in consultation with children and young people and their parent(s)[3] and teachers and club leaders that reflect their organisational policy. More information on roles and expectations can be found at Appendix 3.

A shared vision

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable and must be addressed promptly and effectively. Bullying should never be seen as an inevitable part of growing up. Children and young people living in Scotland should have equal opportunities to succeed; bullying compromises this ambition.

Our vision is that:

- every child and young person in Scotland will grow up free from bullying and will develop respectful, responsible and confident relationships with other children, young people and adults;

- children and young people and their parent(s), will have the skills and knowledge to prevent and/or respond appropriately to bullying;

- every child and young person who requires help will know who can help them and what support is available; and

- adults working with, or caring for, children and young people will follow a consistent and coherent approach in preventing and responding to bullying from Early Learning and Childcare onwards.

Why is this guidance required?

Bullying can have both long- and short-term effects on children and young people's mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing. It can affect their participation, attainment and inclusion, and can have an adverse and detrimental effect on childhood development, self-esteem, confidence, and future potential.

Bullying can impact on a person's capacity for self-management, their internal feelings of control and their ability to take effective action. Being bullied is traumatic for the individual and may lead to a range of often unhelpful coping mechanisms and behaviours, such as self-blame or physical and verbal aggression.

The impact of bullying behaviour can extend far beyond the individuals directly involved. Other children and young people who witness incidents may be impacted as well as incidents having a broader impact on the culture of a setting. Impacts can also be felt within families and other relationships.

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2   Throughout this document the term organisations will be used to apply to all non-school-based settings where children and young people may attend, including after-school clubs, youth groups, activity clubs and higher and further education settings, for example.

3   Throughout this document the term parent(s) will be used to apply to anyone with parental responsibility, including carer(s) and guardians, those providing a foster or residential placement, corporate parents, or the education authority where full parental responsibility rests with them.

A child who is being bullied may not feel safe, included or respected. A child who is bullied, and those causing bullying, may have wellbeing needs which should be assessed and supported using the eight indicators of wellbeing – Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included as part of the Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) approach.

Failure to prevent and address bullying can lead to poorer mental health and wellbeing in adolescence and also into adulthood.[4] Good anti-bullying practices and policies impact positively on a school's or children's service's ethos and help children and young people feel more included and safe.[5] They can also improve attendance and participation and promote resilience. More information around prevention can be found on page 27.

15-year-old girl "You can't get away from it, the bullying, it's in your head and you can't put that down, or leave it anywhere."

The evidence base

Bullying is a ubiquitous, global problem; UNESCO 2019 found that one in three students had been bullied by their peers at school.

In Scotland, the Health and Wellbeing Census Scotland 2021/22 found that 31% of pupils in P5-S3 had been bullied in the last year. Of those who had been bullied in the last year, 82% experienced bullying at school and 36% experienced bullying online.

There were demographic differences reported in the study. The percentage of children reporting they had been bullied in the last year decreased from P5 to S3. There were differences in where different age groups were bullied, with older children more likely than younger children to report having been bullied online.

Bullying was also more commonly reported by children and young people in the most deprived communities than the least.

Although the Health and Wellbeing Census 2021-22 found those in African / Caribbean or Black / Mixed or multiple minority ethnic groups, and Asian children and young people were less likely than average to report having been bullied in the last year, the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights 2022 report on racially motivated bullying found that 83% of schools failed to record racially motivated bullying incidents.

There are also gendered differences. For example, the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children 2021/22 survey found that in general, displaying bullying behaviour is more prevalent amongst boys than girls. The Health and Wellbeing Census Scotland 2021/22 found that girls were more likely than boys to report having been bullied in the last year.

Research carried out by the University of London found that children and young people with a disability are more likely to be bullied than their peers.

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4   Peer victimisation during adolescence and its impact on depression in early adulthood: prospective cohort study in the United Kingdom (bmj.com)
5   Bullying fosters interpersonal distrust and degrades adolescent mental health as predicted by Social Safety Theory

Additionally, the [2023 Behaviour in Scottish Schools Research](#) found that 27% of teachers in secondary schools, and 6% in primary schools had encountered pupils using digital technology (e.g. computers, tablets, mobile phones) abusively (e.g. malicious posting of comments, photos, videos) in the classroom at least once in the week preceding the survey, reinforcing the problematic nature and scale of the issue.

The [Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA 2022) report](#) also found a higher proportion of students in Scotland reported experiencing a bullying act on at least a weekly basis (10.6%), slightly higher than the OECD average (9.4%). The [Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children 2021/22](#) survey found around one in 10 (11%) boys and girls reported they had been bullied at school at least 2–3 times a month in the past couple of months.

Principles

Based on the legal and policy frameworks in Scotland, the principles of Respect for All are as follows.

- We respect the rights of children and young people.
- We will promote positive relationships and behaviours amongst all children and young people, and adults around them.
- We will work together to develop a culture of mutual respect and responsibility amongst all children and young people and adults around them.
- We will seek to prevent and respond to bullying, through the development and implementation of effective anti-bullying policies and practices.
- We will seek to address any prejudice underlying bullying behaviour, in keeping with statutory duties.
- We will support effective communication, including sharing relevant and proportionate information, where appropriate, in accordance with data protection and human rights requirements.
- We will seek to understand the experiences, and respond to the needs of children and young people who are bullied, as well as those who bully others and those who witness bullying incidents, within a framework of rights, respect, responsibility, resolution and support.
- We will share information where appropriate and work jointly to make sure we are co-ordinated and cohesive in all that we do.
- We recognise bullying can have an adverse/detrimental effect on both childhood development and future potential, and we will aim to ensure that every child and young person living in Scotland will have the same opportunities and an equal chance to succeed.

Legal status of guidance

This framework is non-statutory and is designed to assist schools and organisations in making decisions relating to bullying. This framework is not prescriptive and each situation should be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Public, grant-aided and independent schools are responsible for ensuring that their policies, practices and information take full account of the relevant legal requirements as set out in Appendix 1. It is for education authorities, the managers of grant-aided schools and the proprietors of independent schools to take their own legal advice on such matters, as appropriate.

Additionally, there is a broader policy landscape that underpins the duty of all organisations working with children and young people to prevent and respond to bullying. Many practitioners are also governed by a set of professional standards. These are also set out in Appendix 1.

Understanding bullying and its impacts

What is bullying?

> "Bullying is face-to-face and/or online behaviour which impacts on a person's sense of physical and emotional safety, their capacity to feel in control of their life and their ability to respond effectively to the situation they are in.
>
> "The behaviour does not need to be repeated, or intended to cause harm, for it to have an impact. Bullying behaviour can be physical, emotional or verbal and can cause people to feel hurt, threatened, frightened and left out."

- This behaviour can harm people mentally, emotionally, socially and physically.
- The actual behaviour (for example, actions, looks, messages, confrontations or physical interventions) does not always need to be repeated for it to have an ongoing impact. The fear of behaviour reoccurring may have a lasting impact.
- Bullying is more likely to take place in the context of an existing imbalanced relationship, but may also occur where no previous or current relationship exists.
- Bullying may be carried out by an individual or can sometimes involve a group of people.

Bullying behaviour can include the following.

- Being called names, teased, put down or threatened (face to face and/or online).
- Being hit, tripped, pushed or kicked.[6]
- Having belongings taken or damaged.
- Being ignored, left out or having rumours spread about you (face-to-face and/or online).
- Sending abusive messages, pictures or images on social media, online gaming platforms or phones/tablets.
- Behaviour which makes people feel like they are not in control of themselves or their lives (face-to-face and/or online).
- Being targeted because of who you are or who you are perceived to be (face to face and/or online).
- Increasing the reach and impact of bullying or prejudice through the recruitment and/or involvement of a wider group.

The power imbalances and prejudices underpinning bullying

Complex social and relationship dynamics underpin bullying behaviour. There does not always need to be an existing relationship between the children and young people involved, but what is common is for there to be a perceived, or actual, imbalance of power.

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6   Further discussion of physical behaviour is contained at Section 3.

Whilst there can be a number of factors which create aspects of difference amongst children and young people – for example, popularity, physicality or economic advantage[7] – these systemic, societal and structural inequalities often support unequal relationships that can generate and intensify bullying behaviours, making certain groups more vulnerable.

Such structural inequalities can manifest themselves in prejudice-based bullying. Prejudice-based bullying is when bullying behaviour is motivated by prejudice, based on dislike of an individual's actual or perceived identity and reflects wider societal trends of inequality and power. Prejudice comes in a variety of distinct forms and prejudice-based bullying can have wide-ranging impacts on children and young people's health and wellbeing.

Prejudice is escalatory by nature, can be both targeted and non-targeted, and can manifest in a variety of different ways. Not all incidents where prejudice-based behaviour occurs will be bullying incidents; further discussion of behaviour which is not bullying can be found in Section 3.

Bullying behaviours can be related to a variety of characteristics of a child or young person's identity or circumstance, for example, prejudice arising from socio-economic background, family circumstances or a child or young person's appearance. There are a wide range of factors which may come under this heading, such as comments made about someone's body or about wearing particular types of clothing.

The Equality Act 2010 protects individuals with protected characteristics from discrimination, victimisation and harassment and supports progress on equality. In a school setting, the relevant protected characteristics include disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation. The equality obligations placed on education authorities and some schools are outlined at Appendix 1. Schools and education authorities should ensure that policies aimed at creating inclusive environments, preventing or responding to bullying meet these legal obligations.

This guidance provides information about responding to different forms of prejudice-based incidents and bullying behaviours at page 38. The Scottish Government has also produced specific guidance on supporting transgender young people in schools, preventing and responding to gender-based violence in schools, and resources are also available to support schools on responding to racism and racist incidents. respect*me* and LGBT Youth Scotland also published a resource for schools and organisations on effectively challenging homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. These publications provide more bespoke guidance on particular considerations for preventing and responding to these types of prejudice, including actions school staff can take in response.

Intersectionality and prejudice-based bullying

"Intersectionality" recognises that people's identities are multifaceted and therefore their experiences of inequality and discrimination can be shaped by several factors at once. Children and young people may have multiple characteristics, which combine to shape their identities and experiences of the world. Therefore, their experiences of prejudice are unlikely to be homogeneous. For example, a lesbian young woman may experience a form of misogyny interconnected with homophobia that a heterosexual young woman is less likely to experience.

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7   Annual Child and Family Poverty Surveys Wales 2023

It is therefore important to note that children and young people who are affected by more than one form of inequality or discrimination may experience bullying behaviours which are the result of multiple prejudices. School staff, parents and others working with children and young people should consider if and how intersecting inequalities may be a factor in bullying behaviours, and take account of this when determining how to respond.

Structural inequalities refers to the economic, political, social and cultural structures, actions and beliefs that systemise an unequal distribution of privilege, resources, safety and power in favour of the dominant group at the expense of all other groups.[8]

The effect of systematic and structural inequalities is that bullying based on protected characteristics can take place between or within groups that could share or be perceived as sharing the same characteristic.

Internalised prejudice

When children and young people are exposed to stereotypes and discriminatory viewpoints, they can internalise these views. Internalised prejudice can damage their self-esteem, confidence, their sense of belonging and their view of their own intrinsic worth, identity, family and community. In some instances, this may lead children and young people to "play down" or not recognise prejudice-based bullying when they experience it, especially if they share the protected characteristic the stereotypes or discriminatory viewpoints relate to. This means that school staff and organisations may have to take action to address prejudice underlying bullying behaviours, even if the child or young person targeted has not raised it themselves. This may include supporting the child or young person to understand the form of prejudice-based bullying they may have been subjected to and involving them in decisions about how the matter is to be addressed and appropriately responded to.

Intergroup prejudice

Learned prejudices can also result in intergroup prejudice-based bullying, for example, where children and young people from a minority ethnic group at risk of facing racism target other children and young people with bullying behaviours connected to race. In some cases, this could involve using a language not known to school staff observing this behaviour, making it difficult to detect. Girls and young women may also target each other with behaviours reflecting misogyny. It is important to be alert to the possibility of intergroup prejudice and to create an environment which empowers children and young people to recognise different forms of prejudice and feel comfortable to talk about their experiences and raise any concerns.

The evolving nature of bullying: online bullying

In the digital world, online bullying, or cyberbullying, is a significant concern affecting children and young people in Scotland. This form of bullying involves the use of digital technologies, such as social media, messaging platforms, gaming forums, and mobile devices to intimidate, isolate or humiliate individuals.[9]

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8   What do we mean by race and racism? – Promoting Anti-Racist Education in Scotland (glowscotland.org.uk)
9   Left to their own devices - Young people, social media and mental health

Online bullying should always be considered in context as a feature of the relationships involved and powerful emotions evoked, and not merely as a technological issue to be resolved. Online bullying should be seen as related to **where** the bullying occurs, rather than as a different behaviour type; many common bullying behaviours such as spreading rumours, exclusion from group dynamics, and threats can occur both online and offline. However, technology has increased the complexity and reach of bullying through non-consensual image sharing, video footage, photo editing, transient messaging, and fake accounts, creating a new global environment that demands careful, informed, and nuanced handling[10]. Some behaviours, when conducted online, may constitute criminal offences; information on the legal framework can be found at Appendix 1.

Although the Health and Wellbeing Census Scotland 2021/22 found that children and young people were more likely to report having been bullied in-person/face to face at school than online, the landscape of online bullying has evolved significantly for children and young people due to increased screen time, the emergence of new social media platforms, and the growth of online gaming and virtual communities. Anonymous content creators and content that disappears can make bullying harder to detect, whilst the Covid-19 pandemic intensified the volume of online interactions and associated risks. Despite improved digital literacy, cyber-resilience and internet safety awareness amongst young people, the often concealed complexity of online spaces demands heightened adult vigilance and robust safeguarding measures. Online bullying can happen anywhere at any time, making it more pervasive and harder to find respite from than other forms of bullying.

> "Social media spreads sensationalism, so a post made about you publicly can spread like wildfire, and garner abuse from not just the people you know, but malicious strangers around the globe."
>
> (Quote from young person, Scottish Youth Parliament workshop, December 2023)

Online bullying can be as damaging as offline bullying and may have more serious consequences due to the digital footprint, lasting presence, group dynamics, and potential for illegality. Online bullying should therefore be responded to with the same level of seriousness as any other form of offline bullying. Where online bullying is impacting the wellbeing and learning of the children and young people affected,[11] it is central to a whole-school or organisational approach to anti-bullying that these impacts are responded to appropriately.

Supporting pupils' awareness of safe, secure and respectful use of digital devices and services is an important means for a school to support the development of responsible and global citizens, recognising and respecting children's rights, and creating an anti-bullying culture. In schools, this learning can be delivered through the Curriculum for Excellence through the Health and Wellbeing and Digital Literacy experiences and outcomes. Mobile phone guidance for Scotland's schools also sets out the features of a respectful and responsible use of mobile technology policy, including considerations for schools to support digital etiquette, digital rights and safe, responsible and secure use of mobile technology.

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10 A systematic review of digital risk and mitigations in children aged 8 to 12 – Challenges and Opportunities
11 Technology use and the mental health of children and young people

The Health and Wellbeing Responsibility of All Experiences and Outcomes include each and every practitioner's role in establishing open, positive, supportive relationships across the school community to support and nurture the health and wellbeing of children and young people, promoting a climate in which children and young people feel safe and secure and by being sensitive and responsive to the wellbeing of each child and young person.

> "Bullying of any sort should be taken seriously. I agree that online bullying should not be treated as less serious than face-to-face, but every situation need to be responded to in a way that is most supportive and constructive for those involved, and the right response will not always be the same."
>
> (Quote from young person, Scottish Youth Parliament workshop, December 2023)

Bullying, mental health and trauma

The mental health consequences of bullying for children and young people are well documented, and include reports of anxiety, depression, difficulty concentrating, sleep/eating disorders, self-harm, somatic symptoms and suicidality. Bullying can have detrimental effects that persist into late adolescence and beyond, and can contribute independently to mental health problems.

Children and young people can be exposed to experiences which impacts on the likelihood of them displaying or experiencing bullying behaviour. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are highly stressful and potentially traumatic events that occur during childhood or adolescence. These experiences can range from recurring issues like social exclusion or emotional neglect to single events such as physical abuse. While not all ACEs result in trauma, they are strong predictors of bullying behaviour, with greater exposure to ACEs increasing the risk of either engaging in or experiencing bullying during adolescence.

Trauma leaves a lasting, harmful impact on how individuals perceive themselves and the world, making it crucial to respond to trauma in anti-bullying efforts. Creating inclusive environments helps practitioners understand and address the external stressors that can lead to bullying, enabling proactive prevention and effective responses.

Bullying may be a way for some to externalise anger, especially when linked to events like parental separation or family substance misuse. An analysis of the Growing Up in Scotland cohort data found that the risk of bullying others increased when young people were living with only one parent or parents who reported drug or alcohol misuse.[12] Certain groups, such as those with previous trauma, care-experienced individuals, refugees, and those with disabilities or mental health conditions, are at higher risk of experiencing trauma and subsequent bullying.

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12 Sapouna, M. (2024). *Adverse childhood experiences and bullying: Findings from the Growing up in Scotland cohort* [Manuscript submitted for publication]. School of Education and Social Sciences, University of the West of Scotland.

What is not bullying?

Schools and organisations will deal with a variety of behaviours on a daily basis. However, while some of these behaviours may be reported or described by a child or young person, or their family, as bullying, it is important to recognise that not all such behaviour will be bullying or should appropriately be treated as such.

While Section 2 set out examples of behaviour that may constitute bullying, it is recognised that behaviour will be context specific and should be considered on a case-by-case basis. In identifying what response is appropriate, it will often be necessary for staff to use their professional judgement to identify the nuanced differences between types of behaviour. Each set of circumstances will be fact specific, and staff should ensure they have gathered all relevant information before making a determination, remembering that the nature of some behaviours may constitute criminal offences, and advice should be sought from Police Scotland where there are significant concerns.

There is added complexity in that some types of behaviour can overlap and/or without early intervention may escalate. For example, the normalisation of derogatory and pejorative language use or slurs about a social group, and the perpetuation of harmful social or cultural stereotypes or myths, if unaddressed can create a culture that can lead to more intense levels of behaviour, including violence or hate crime, for example. Similarly, bullying behaviour can mirror the absence of positive values, the presence of negative role-models, globally influential figures and social media trends prevalent across popular culture which can promote unhelpful and divisive messaging.

Early intervention and prevention are therefore essential for addressing these behaviours by disrupting the cycle, promoting understanding and empathy, and fostering a culture and ethos that values respect and inclusion. This proactive approach reduces the likelihood of behaviours escalating to more intense levels.

Differentiating bullying from conflict

It is important for children and young people to discuss how they feel and to help them develop the social competence and communication skills needed to help them to manage their relationships. We know that children and young people will fall out and disagree with each other as they form and build relationships. This is not considered to be bullying; this is considered to be a normal part of growing up.

It may be possible to differentiate conflict from bullying by having regard to the relationships and dynamics involved. Conflict is normal and can happen in healthy, happy, equal relationships. Usually at least one party involved doesn't want the conflict to continue unresolved, and will try to take early action to make amends and improve the situation. Healthy relationship conflict is not the same as bullying and is unlikely to lead to bullying as the people involved have a vested interest in restoring equilibrium and staying connected to each other.

Those working with children and young people may be faced with increasing conflict between peers. The Behaviour in Scottish Schools Research 2023, reported staff experiences of young people having less developed social skills compared to previous years following the Covid-19 pandemic. Early and mid-primary students (P1 to P5) who experienced disruptions in their nursery and early school years were noted to lack essential language and social skills, negatively affecting their educational development and behaviour. Secondary school staff also reported deficits in social and communication skills among older students, though to a lesser extent, highlighting difficulties with social interactions and group work due to reduced socialising opportunities during lockdowns.

Support for children and young people experiencing conflict

Early intervention and prevention are key elements in ensuring we get it right for all our children and young people. Where concerns are raised about behaviour that is deemed to be conflict rather than bullying, a child or young person may still need support to navigate the conflict or deal with the emotional impact. In a school setting, there are a range of mechanisms to support the wellbeing of children and young people, for example, through the Getting it right for every child wellbeing indicators, Health and Wellbeing Responsibility of All, the Health and Wellbeing aspect of the curriculum and learning in Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP) education. It is important that schools and organisations appropriately involve the child or young person involved for next steps and ensure this is appropriately communicated with relevant staff, and if appropriate their parent(s), to provide reassurance that the young person's wellbeing is being supported..

St. John's Roman Catholic Cluster case study

Headteachers in the St. John's Roman Catholic Cluster in Dundee noticed an increase in peer-to-peer conflict and a decline in social skills and emotional resilience among pupils. To address this, they implemented the Peacemakers Project, which trains Primary 6 students as peer mediators to help resolve minor conflicts without adult intervention. This project, supported by senior pupils and educational psychologists, has reduced low-level conflicts, improved relationships, and enhanced wellbeing and engagement. Children now use common language to resolve disputes, manage their emotions better, and confidently address differences and inappropriate language.

Differentiating bullying from potentially criminal behaviour

There is no legal definition of bullying in Scotland and bullying is not, in itself, considered a crime. However, the nature of certain behaviour that could be perceived as, or reported as, bullying may include behaviour that is criminal in nature.

Understanding the individual facts and circumstances present in any situation is important to distinguish between bullying and potentially criminal offences. Key legislation can be found at Appendix 1, but examples include the following.

Physical behaviour: peer-on-peer violence can be verbal abuse, physical aggression and/or physical violence, which can have both short- and long-term impacts on the mental and physical health and wellbeing of all involved. If there is an intent to cause harm, regardless of whether or not an injury occurs, this may amount to an assault.

Sexual behaviour: when someone is coerced or pressurised to do something sexual or is touched inappropriately, **this is not bullying**. This is sexual assault or abuse and a form of gender-based violence (GBV). More information about the legal framework surrounding GBV, and guidance for schools for responding to GBV incidents, is available within the Scottish Government's [framework on preventing and responding to gender-based violence in schools](#).

Online behaviour: there are various legal provisions designed to protect individuals from online harassment, abuse, and harm. Some online behaviour may therefore be illegal; further guidance on supporting pupils' awareness of safe and secure use of mobile technology is contained within the [Scottish Government's guidance on mobile phones in Scotland's schools](#).
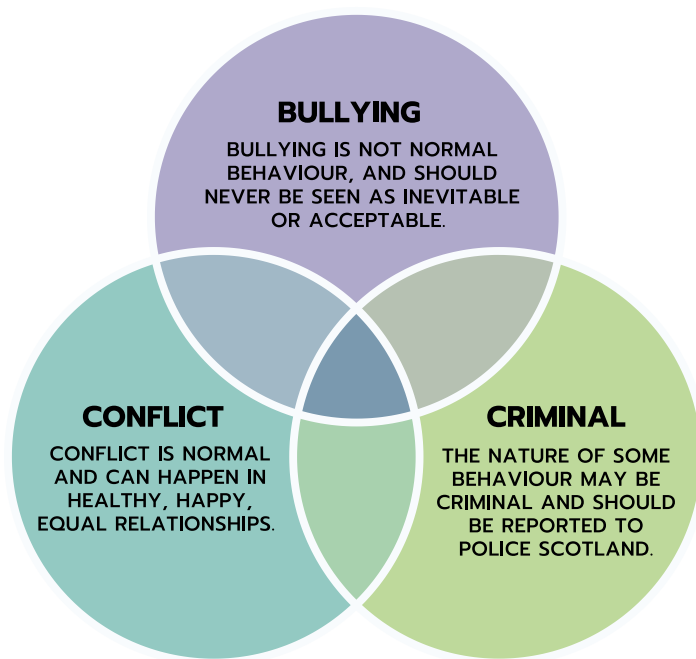
Hate Crime: bullying can be motivated by prejudice similar to hate crime. The distinction between bullying and hate crime is that for hate crime, the behaviour aggravated by prejudice must be motivated by malice and ill-will towards a group of people due to a relevant characteristic or intended to stir up hatred, and be criminal in nature, such as assault, graffiti or a breach of the peace. For example, damage to property through graffiti may constitute a crime and this may be aggravated by prejudice towards an individual who possesses or appears to possess a relevant characteristic protected under the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021. Further information can be found in Appendix 1.

Adults should seek immediate support from Police Scotland if they have reason to believe that a crime may have occurred or that a child or young person has been seriously harmed. Schools/organisations should follow national child protection procedures in these cases, and should work closely with their education authority and colleagues in core agencies (Social Work, Health and Police Scotland) to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children, young people, and staff.

It should be noted that under The **Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act 2019**, a child under the age of 12 cannot be arrested, charged or prosecuted for a crime. However, Police Scotland may still be involved.

The diagram below shows the differentiating behaviours which can sometimes overlap and/or escalate in trajectory.

DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN CONFLICT, BULLYING AND CRIMINAL BEHAVIOUR

BULLYING
BULLYING IS NOT NORMAL BEHAVIOUR, AND SHOULD NEVER BE SEEN AS INEVITABLE OR ACCEPTABLE.

CONFLICT
CONFLICT IS NORMAL AND CAN HAPPEN IN HEALTHY, HAPPY, EQUAL RELATIONSHIPS.

CRIMINAL
THE NATURE OF SOME BEHAVIOUR MAY BE CRIMINAL AND SHOULD BE REPORTED TO POLICE SCOTLAND.

CONFLICT

Usually at least one person doesn't want the conflict to go on unresolved, and will try to take action to improve the situation. It can highlight the importance of the relationship, providing a chance to build on strengths, solve problems, and move forward positively.

Healthy relationship conflict is not the same as bullying and is unlikely to lead to bullying as the people involved have a mutual interest in restoring equilibrium and maintaining connection.

BULLYING

Bullying occurs within social relationships and typically involves an imbalance of power that allows a relationship of dominance and subordination to emerge. Bullying can be intentional or unintentional, occurring once or repeatedly.

Resolution usually requires adult support, meaningful intervention and a change of behaviour in the instigating person. There can sometimes be an escalation from bullying to violence.

CRIMINAL

While bullying is not in itself a crime, some behaviour that may be reported or perceived as bullying could constitute a criminal offence, such as physical or sexual violence, online behaviours or hate crime.

It is not for staff to determine if behaviour is criminal; they should seek immediate support from Police Scotland if they have reason to believe that a crime may have occurred or that a child or young person has been seriously harmed.

Differentiating bullying from structural and social inequalities

It is important that the umbrella term "prejudice-based bullying" should not lead to the dilution or avoidance of the issue of structural inequalities, such as racism, sexism, homophobia, biphobia or transphobia, or prejudice and discrimination towards disability or faith. These can manifest themselves in many subtle and implicit behaviours, including microaggressions, misrecognition, implicit bias and othering,[13] as well as structural and social inequalities.

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13 Othering is a process whereby individuals and groups are treated and marked as different and inferior from the dominant social group.

Behaviours rooted in prejudice should be understood as distinct from bullying as these can be exacerbated by existing power imbalances linked to structural and social inequalities. The approaches to supporting children and young people experiencing or displaying prejudice-based behaviours can be similar to supporting those experiencing bullying. However, misidentification of prejudice-based behaviours as any other type of bullying, or a failure to acknowledge their unique harms linked to structural inequalities, can cause further distress for children and young people and lead to a lack of trust that similar incidents will be dealt with effectively in the future. Staff should therefore be mindful of conflating these behaviours in the support and response offered.

A failure to adequately respond to such behaviours should not only be considered as an issue solely impacting the child or young person experiencing the behaviour. The child or young person displaying prejudice-based behaviours and those witnessing them can also be impacted. Dignity, equality, safety and respect within the learning or social environment can be compromised if not addressed appropriately.

Schools and organisations should take particular care in the recording of incidents relating to prejudice and structural inequalities. The reporting of 'bullying' can lead to the under-reporting of incidents such as racism or homophobia taking place in education[14]. The SEEMiS system available to public schools enables incidents relating to protected characteristics to be recorded distinct from bullying incidents. Independent and grant-aided schools, and other organisations, should ensure they have appropriate mechanisms in place for responding to, monitoring and preventing prejudice-based incidents which are not related to bullying. Further information in contained within Section 5.

Resources available to support schools and organisations respond to structural inequalities are signposted in Section 6.

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14 Responding to Racist Incidents – Promoting Anti-Racist Education in Scotland (glowscotland.org.uk)

Developing your policy

An anti-bullying policy sets out a clear commitment to developing a respectful, equitable and inclusive climate, culture and ethos within an organisation or establishment. Constant reinforcement of the message that bullying is never acceptable helps to create safe and secure environments which are conducive to positive relationships, learning, teaching and play.

All education authorities, organisations, schools, services and clubs providing services to children and young people in the public, voluntary or private sectors should develop an anti-bullying policy that reflects the guidance set out in Respect for All. Public schools are also expected to align their anti-bullying policy with the relevant education authority's anti-bullying policy.

Successful implementation requires the strategic intent of an anti-bullying policy to be translated and embedded into effective, everyday practice. Anti-bullying practice should be focused towards prevention, response and inclusivity, with these positive intentions being consistently experienced by children and young people.

For meaningful impact, full ownership of the policy is essential, including a process of engagement and consultation with the people who are responsible for its implementation. This should be a values-based and inclusive exercise undertaken with the people who will be impacted most by the policy, namely children and young people, their parents, and staff and volunteers. This will help all stakeholders understand what is expected of them, and how they may expect to be supported by education authorities, schools and organisations. Considerations should be given around the particular impacts of bullying relevant to, for example, poverty, care-experienced young people, young carers and young people where English is not their first language. See Appendix 2 for more information.

In keeping with the UNCRC right for children to participate in decisions affecting their lives and for their views to be heard, anti-bullying policies should encourage children and young people as active participants and influencers of the culture and ethos in schools and organisations. Anti-bullying policies should be child-friendly and should be produced through consultation, using a rights-based lens.

What should anti-bullying policies include?

Policies should include:

- the agreed national definition of bullying as set out in Respect for All;
- a statement which sets out the organisational stance on bullying and the scope of the policy;
- strategies and action statements to describe how all forms of bullying will be prevented and responded to;
- a clear statement that bullying is a violation of children's rights and is incompatible with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, now enacted in Scots law;

- a statement of how the application of the policy upholds the statutory equality duties, where it applies, and/or how it will respond to bullying related to the protected characteristics listed in the Equality Act 2010, as well as forms of prejudice and discrimination related to other characteristics, for example socio-economic or appearance-related bullying;
- expectations and responsibilities of staff/volunteers, children and young people and parents to support and uphold the policy aims;
- a clear commitment to promoting and role modelling respectful behaviour by adults in the school or setting;
- the avoidance of using labelling language, i.e. 'bullies', 'victims', 'perpetrators';
- the recording and monitoring strategies that will be used for management purposes in line with the Data Protection Act 2018, e.g. SEEMiS;
- evidence that children and young people have been able to access their right to express their views in matters that affect them, and for these views to be given due weight in both policy development and implementation phases;
- evidence that parents have, in line with their rights, been included and consulted in the policy development process;
- evidence that staff/volunteers have been included and consulted in the policy development process;
- how often the policy will be communicated, evaluated and reviewed with children and young people and their parent(s) and staff/volunteers (it is good practice that this takes place a minimum of every three years); and
- a commitment to training and supporting staff and volunteers.

Schools/organisations subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) are required to assess the impact of their anti-bullying policy in relation to equalities, which they may do through carrying out an Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA). Schools/organisations may also wish to complete the Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA). The Scottish Government has published guidance and useful resources to support the development of a CRWIA for education authorities and children's services.

Engaging with children and young people

Children and young people play a vital role in the reporting of bullying incidents. Inclusive and safe environments in schools and organisations are essential to creating cultures where young people feel safe and able to disclose their experiences and/or concerns.

It is crucial for children and young people to be actively involved in developing anti-bullying policies and practice.[15] Their involvement offers several benefits:*

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15 https://www.gov.scot/publications/decision-making-children-and-young-peoples-participation/pages/guidance/

UNDERSTANDING THE REALITY

Young people are often more attuned to the realities of bullying, providing valuable insights for adults

EMPOWERMENT

Involving them in the process empowers them to take ownership of the solutions and advocate for positive behaviour

PEER INFLUENCE

When young people help create guidelines, they are more likely to promote them among their peers

PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS

They may propose practical, innovative ideas for responding to bullying that adults might overlook

*Source: Feedback from Respect for All engagement sessions

Schools and organisations should consider:

- how have children and young people been involved in the development of the anti-bullying policy?
- how clear are children and young people about a variety of safe pathways open to them on how to report bullying, and what will happen if they do?
- how do children and young people disclose concerns about bullying and trust that these concerns will be taken seriously and adults will intervene effectively?
- how are children and young people actively encouraged to establish youth-led anti-bullying groups/councils and supported by adults to help sustain them?

Examples of how you can involve young people in developing your policy include:*

YOUTH COUNCILS OR COMMITTEES
Establish councils or committees for policy input

SURVEYS AND POLLS
Conduct surveys to gather their opinions

SCHOOL/GROUP FORUMS
Hold forums or meetings for open discussion

COLLABORATION
Work with other schools/ organisations to involve children and young people in anti-bullying work

ONLINE PLATFORMS
Use digital platforms for engagement, such as virtual town halls and online consultations

TRAINING AND EDUCATION
Provide training on guidance development and participation

*Source: Feedback from Respect for All engagement sessions

Valuing their input and providing feedback on how their participation influences the process fosters a sense of ownership and empowerment among children and young people, leading to more effective and comprehensive anti-bullying strategies.

Case study: respect*me* Youth Action Group
The Youth Action Group who co-produced respect*me*'s 'Listen Up!' campaign devised a five-step Action Plan for adults (in schools, youth groups, colleges, after-school clubs, sports clubs etc.) to undertake which included preventative elements, with requests that are all simple and supportive of Respect for All implementation.

1. Register for respect*me*'s Anti-Bullying Learning Academy **free** e-learning modules.

2. Refresh, review and update current anti-bullying policy.

3. Create a pupil forum or anti-bullying committee to inform anti-bullying policy and practice.

4. Create simple, safe pathways for reporting bullying that protect children's rights.

5. Involve children and young people with 'Listen Up! (Respect Our Rights)' in activities and messages for #AntiBullyingWeek (every year).

Alloa Academy case study

Alloa Academy updated its anti-bullying policy to reflect national guidance and the school's evolving needs. Senior leaders involved young people in leading this initiative, prioritising the development of a refreshed policy. Students led workshops, focus groups, and a campaign on peer pressure and role models. They also formed an anti-bullying committee and planned lessons for all classes. Partnership with the University of Strathclyde and parent consultations supported this effort. The new policy, launched by students, has given them a sense of agency and ownership, and has been nationally recognised for its innovative approach.

Engaging with parents

Schools and organisations should make sure parents know where to access their anti-bullying policy, which may be available in the school/organisation handbook or via the website, for example. Schools and education authorities should ensure that this is accessible for all parents. While all schools are expected to have an up-to-date anti-bullying policy in place, should this not be the case, it may be appropriate to refer to the education authority policy. Schools and organisations should provide parents with the opportunity to engage with the policy's development and implementation.

It is vital that schools engage directly with parents and foster a positive environment where they are encouraged to work in partnership to ensure a consistent message relating to bullying is shared between home and school. Parents have an important role in alerting concerns about bullying to school staff and should expect to be listened to and taken seriously.

Effective communication and collaboration with parents are essential to building trust and prevent and respond to bullying. It is crucial to establish clear expectations and foster open dialogue with families to ensure a united approach. This may include:

COLLABORATION AND FEEDBACK	REGULAR COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT	TRANSPARENCY AND REPORTING	INCLUSIVE AND SUPPORTIVE EVENTS
• Establish parental groups to collaborate on developing and reviewing your policy. • Conduct surveys and create opportunities for parents to provide feedback, ensuring continuous improvement of policies and support mechanisms.	• Communicate your policy via newsletters, dedicated webpages, and information sessions with potential guest speakers to educate parents on bullying. • Provide/sign-post to practical tips and guidance, such as tip sheets and roleplaying sessions, to help parents reinforce positive behaviour at home.	• Maintain clear reporting channels and guidelines for addressing incidents, ensuring transparency while respecting confidentiality. • Keep parents informed about how bullying incidents are handled and the outcomes of antibullying initiatives.	• Host family nights and other events that encourage parent participation and open dialogue about bullying. • Ensure events and communications are culturally sensitive and accessible to all parents, considering language barriers and diverse backgrounds.

Source: Feedback from engagement sessions

It is important for schools and organisations to approach conversations with empathy and sensitivity, recognising the emotional impact of bullying on the child and their family. Particular care should be taken when developing particular aspects of a policy, such as those relating to prejudice-based incidents, to engage with those communities directly impacted. This collaborative approach helps build a strong support network, responding effectively to bullying and promoting the wellbeing of all children and young people. It is important that feedback is provided to demonstrate how views have been taken into account, and that these views also be used inform future priorities for engagement.

Schools and organisations may wish to celebrate success stories and recognise parents who actively contribute to anti-bullying initiatives, promoting a culture of involvement. It is important that learning from previous engagements should inform future updates and engagement.

Communicating your policy

Once developed, anti-bullying policy and procedures should be readily accessible, openly communicated and shared widely through a variety of channels to ensure that children and young people and their parent(s) know who they can talk to, what support they can expect from staff/volunteers if bullying occurs, and how bullying incidents will be responded to and formally recorded. If an anti-bullying policy is subsumed within a larger policy, or isn't explicitly titled as the anti-bullying policy, efforts should be made to clearly signpost families to this.

Everyone involved should have a good understanding and clear expectations of their role in developing and implementing the anti-bullying policy. Schools and organisations may have developed specific evidence-based approaches to managing bullying incidents. Where this is the case, everyone involved should be aware of this approach, and understand their role in making the learning or setting environment inclusive, welcoming and safe. For more information about respective roles and responsibilities, see Appendix 3.

Implementing your policy

Education authorities, schools and organisations will have different ways of putting the principles of anti-bullying into practice to reflect local environments and culture. However, the involvement of all stakeholders is vital in converting robust anti-bullying policy into practice.

Successful policy implementation is reliant on relevant staff having sufficient capacity, confidence and competence to prevent bullying from happening in the first place, and to respond effectively to it when it does. Appendix 3 illustrates how the various roles can successfully combine to achieve a whole-setting approach to anti-bullying policy and practice.

Preventing bullying

Anti-bullying policies should not simply focus on steps that will be taken to respond when bullying occurs; preventing bullying is imperative.

Preventative strategies which reduce the likelihood of bullying happening in the first place can be highly effective. Creating an inclusive, safe culture and ethos where the promotion of respectful relationships, development of the skills required to repair relationships where appropriate, and assurance of a meaningful response to all forms of prejudice will help drive a climate where bullying cannot thrive.

There are several approaches through which schools and organisations can work to prevent bullying, including:

- school/organisational culture and ethos, inclusive of youth voice
- policies and practice
- professional learning and development
- high quality learning and teaching
- out-of-school activities, including social skills development.

Engaging with appropriate partners may form an element of both preventative and responsive approaches to bullying. Staff can call on a range of support from within education, health and local authority services, Community Learning and Development and other third sector organisations.

Culture and ethos

The most successful anti-bullying interventions are embedded within a positive climate, ethos and culture that clearly articulates and embeds inclusion, diversity and human rights. By creating inclusive, safe and consistent environments, bullying can be openly acknowledged, candidly discussed and universally challenged as a form of unacceptable behaviour.

Organisational cultures that promote respect, recognise, celebrate and normalise difference, highlight the importance of equalities, social justice and rights, and encourage positive relationships serve as both protective and preventative interventions in anti-bullying work.

Young people consistently tell us about the importance of having good relationships with education staff and other adults involved in their lives. The One Good Adult Job Description describes the skills required by adults to help develop safe, nurturing and encouraging relationships with children and young people.

HM Inspectors have identified five practices that contribute to creating inclusive, safe and consistent learning environments.

1. Effective partnership working helps senior leaders to plan, deliver, monitor, and evaluate approaches.
2. High-quality professional learning builds teacher confidence and skills in responding to bullying effectively.
3. Whole-school universal measures and targeted approaches help to prevent bullying.
4. High-quality curriculum improves understanding of bullying amongst staff, pupils and other stakeholders.
5. Involving children and young people creates a culture of collaboration and respect.

In the context of anti-racism, the Breaking the Mould principles for an anti-racist curriculum, and the Coalition for Racial Equality and Right's guidance on developing an anti-racist curriculum encapsulate expectations and factors that form learning environments that embed a range of vital aspects of social justice, inclusion and rights and the importance of safeguarding all children and young people from harm.

The Inclusion, Wellbeing and Equalities Professional Learning Framework offers high quality professional learning to support more inclusive environments.

respect*me*, Scotland's Anti-Bullying Service, offers free, high-quality training to adults across Scotland and has developed a validated self-assessment toolkit, the 'respect*me* reward', to support schools and settings to evaluate their anti-bullying work and measure its impact. This process uses new data sets gathered from children and young people, parent(s) and staff/volunteers to generate new local intelligence, which is then used to review policy, ensure practice is aligned, and improve outcomes for all stakeholders.

Newark Primary School case study

Newark Primary School experienced an increase in prejudice-based bullying as the school community became more diverse. Senior leaders prioritised building racial literacy and provided staff with training to address and discuss race confidently. The school updated its curriculum to include diverse literature and anti-racist critical thinking. These efforts empowered children to identify and report racist behaviour, promoted cultural learning, and improved staff confidence in handling racial issues. Additionally, trauma-informed practices were implemented to support new learners, creating a supportive and inclusive environment.

Policy and practice

Responses to bullying should sit in the wider context of a school's approach to relationships and behaviour. A school's relationships and behaviour policy is core to communicating the school's expectations of behaviour and how it will manage any situations which arise. The anti-bullying policy should therefore closely align with this broader policy.

There are a range of strategies being used throughout Scotland to improve relationships and behaviour, promote equality and challenge inequality, and develop emotional wellbeing to help prevent and respond to bullying. Examples include mentoring, peer support and bystander education (including Mentors in Violence Prevention for secondary schools and Everyone's Included for primary schools).

Professional learning and development

Professional learning will support staff to follow a consistent approach to anti-bullying in their schools (for example, respect*me* anti-bullying training, the Inclusion, Wellbeing and Equalities Professional Learning Framework and Keeping Trauma in Mind). There is a need to ensure that all staff and adults have access to high-quality Career-Long Professional Learning which will help improve the health and wellbeing outcomes of children and young people that they work with. Professional learning and skills development are an important part of building adult confidence, competence and capacity to recognise, prevent and respond to bullying locally. Information on professional learning and development can be found at Section 6.

All education authorities should include its Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers in discussions about professional learning and implementation of this guidance.

Curriculum

Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) is underpinned by the values of wisdom, justice, compassion and integrity. This is further emphasised by the purpose Scotland's curriculum – to develop the Four Capacities: respectful citizens, confident individuals, effective contributors and successful learners. All aspects of the curriculum hold the potential to embed equality and respect in the school setting and challenge the structures, attitudes and behaviours which cause bullying.

The Health and Wellbeing aspect of CfE offers particular opportunities to support the prevention of bullying. The experiences and outcomes within Responsibility of All emphasises that everyone in a learning community whatever their contact with children and young people share the responsibility for creating a positive ethos and a climate of respect and trust. Learning in health and wellbeing ensures that children and young people develop the knowledge and understanding, skills, capabilities and attributes which they need for mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing now and in the future.

Experiences and Outcomes withinand Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP) education offer opportunities to support children and young peoples' learning and understanding of issues that are age and stage appropriate.

RSHP education is intended to help children and young people build positive relationships as they grow older and presents facts in an objective, balanced and sensitive manner within the framework of curricular values and an awareness of the law. School staff can embed education on healthy relationships and respect using a range of resources and programmes including the Compassionate and Connected Classroom and Cool in School resources, for example.

As well as general learning on healthy relationships and respect, there are opportunities to use the curriculum to address forms of prejudice. This may include:

- opportunities for children and young people to learn about the causes, manifestations, impacts and prevention of prejudice in its various forms (Appendix 2).

- the development of a curriculum which fosters good relations by including meaningful, integrated representation of all protected characteristics and opportunities for organic learning about diverse people, families and communities in society.

- considered learning experiences for children and young people to develop their knowledge and understanding of diversity, rights, and Respect for All.

Aberdeen Grammar School case study

Aberdeen Grammar School involved young people in identifying priorities, leading to a focus on addressing prejudice-based bullying. A working group of students and staff reviewed and updated the Personal and Social Education (PSE) curriculum to cover protected characteristics and current issues like online bullying. The interdisciplinary approach ensures meaningful and relevant content. The revised curriculum has empowered students with the language and confidence to discuss and report bullying, leading to a decline in prejudice-based incidents and fostering a more inclusive environment.

Another important part of the curriculum is about staying safe online which can help prevent online bullying. This may include:

- teaching about respectful online communication and the impact of online behaviour through the Health and Wellbeing curriculum.

- The Experiences & Outcomes for the Technologies area of the curriculum provides an opportunity to educate about the risks of sharing personal information and the importance of good cyber hygiene.

- PSE and Health and Wellbeing lessons can be used to teach about the importance of peer support and bystander intervention strategies, as well as discussing strategies on dealing with the emotional impacts of online bullying.

- cross-curricular activities could be used to reinforce positive online communication, encouraging kindness, respect and inclusivity.

Staff may wish to involve children and young people in the design and delivery of lessons/sessions.

In research by YouthLink Scotland on cyber resilience, young people told us:

- Online safety should be discussed regularly with young people with adults they can trust and who can help them seek support.
- Young people want information and support on online safety from primary school age to reflect that is when they often gain access to their own devices and social media accounts[16].
- Online safety work must be engaging and fun. This makes it more memorable for young people.
- Youth workers can play a key role in supporting young people to discuss and understand online safety.
- Young people want opportunities for peer education so they can share their learning with other young people.

Think B4 You Type: anti-bullying toolkit

Think B4 You Type is a free toolkit to help staff support secondary school-aged children and young people to design and lead their own campaign around online bullying. It is designed for use in schools but is helpful for any adults working or volunteering with groups of children to prevent and respond to bullying. Templates, useful resources and case studies are also included in the toolkit.

Responding to bullying

To instil confidence that bullying is taken seriously, it is important for schools and other organisations working with children and young people to take a consistent approach to responding to concerns or allegations of bullying behaviour.

Step 1: Reporting

There are different ways in which a school or organisation may become aware of potential bullying behaviour.

- It may be raised by the child or young person who believes they are being bullied.
- It could be raised by another child or young person who has witnessed behaviour they perceive as bullying.
- It could be raised by a parent or other family member.
- It could be observed by a member of staff or adult volunteers/youth leaders.

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16 The minimum age to create accounts on most social media platforms is 13.

It is essential that children, young people and family members feel empowered to report allegations of bullying incidents. Their confidence to raise concerns will be informed by a number of factors including their understanding of the process for reporting, the transparency and rigour of the process for investigating allegations and confidence in the actions that will be taken in response.

There should be clear information within a school or organisation's anti-bullying policy of the mechanisms through which allegations of bullying should be reported. Given some children, young people and families may be concerned about the potential for escalation of behaviour if they are found to have reported behaviour, consideration should be given to whether it would be appropriate to have mechanisms for anonymised reporting, alongside other reporting mechanisms.

Staff or volunteers who observe bullying should follow their internal procedures for raising concerns about behaviour. All adults should be adequately informed of the details they are expected to provide to the person responsible for recording, which will be related to the content of the recording system.

Step 2: Recording the incident/concern

It is recommended that once an incident or concern has been raised, this should be logged on a school's or organisation's recording system as soon as possible. For public schools, in accordance with the education authority's advice on recording and monitoring personal data; this is ideally within three working days.

It is not necessary for an allegation to be substantiated before it is recorded. Rather details of the reported incident should be recorded, capturing information about the behaviour that took place, who was involved, where and when it is reported to have happened, any potential underlying prejudice, including details of any protected characteristics, and whether the impact indicates any wellbeing concerns or the need for additional support. An investigation into the incident should follow, as set out in the following section, with the recording system being updated throughout the process on the outcome of this investigation, and any action taken as a result.

What information should be recorded?

It is important that a thorough picture of the bullying incident be recorded. When recording potential bullying incidents, the following information must be included:

- the children and young people involved, as well as staff/volunteers or any other adults who witnessed the incident or were involved in the initial response;

- where and when bullying has taken place;

- the type of bullying experienced, e.g. name-calling, rumours, threats;

- any prejudice-based attitudes or behaviour presenting;

- details of any protected characteristic(s);

- consideration of personal or additional support needs and wellbeing concerns;

- the outcome, including if the issue was resolved, not resolved or unfounded;

- the impact of the incident, including consideration of personal or additional support needs and wellbeing concerns; and

- actions taken including resolution at an individual or organisational level.

In line with the UNCRC (including Article 12, children and young people have the right to an opinion and for it to be listened to and taken seriously, and Article 16, children and young people have the right to a private life), where possible, the content of this record should be agreed with the child or young person. In cases where the recording system does not allow for this level of detail and monitoring, schools/organisations may want to review their systems.

Evidence from the Behaviour in Scottish Schools Research 2023, HMIe's thematic inspection on recording and monitoring bullying incidents, and a 2023 summit on recording and monitoring incidents in schools, indicates that those working with children and young people can be reluctant to record bullying incidents. This can be for a variety of reasons, including concern about inaccurately labelling children as 'bullies' or 'victims', or a fear that a higher number of incidents recorded could reflect poorly on the school or organisation.

If a school/organisation has very few or no recorded incidents of bullying, it may suggest that children and young people do not feel comfortable reporting incidents or there is staff uncertainty over recording concerns.

The Scottish Government is clear that recording concerns or allegations of bullying plays a crucial role in ensuring all those working with children and young people support their wellbeing. All reports made about bullying should therefore be recorded.

Accurate recording of bullying incidents serves a number of important purposes.

- It demonstrates that bullying is taken seriously, that children are listened to and is the first step in protecting children from bullying.
- It enables monitoring of specific incidents to ensure that an appropriate response has taken place and that the correct support is in place for children and young people.
- It enables monitoring of recurring patterns or trends, thereby encouraging early intervention and making improvements in policy or practice at a local level.
- It enables schools and organisations to assess the effectiveness of their policy and practice, which should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

Where bullying has an element of discrimination or abuse based on a protected characteristic, this should be recorded as part of the incident report. SEEMiS enables the person entering the data to identify and record multiple types of incidents ('nature of incident') under one incident. There is also the ability to record a range of 'perceived reasons for the incident', including if there is a belief that this incident is motivated by racism, sexism, ableism, transphobia, or homophobia and whether any protected characteristic has been targeted. This enables public schools and education authorities to analyse data to identify intersectionality which may be linked to the behaviour.

It is expected that organisations will use a digital recording system where possible and adhere to data protection principles. Public schools should refer to their own Data Protection Team within the education authority regarding local procedures for obtaining permission to record personal data. Other organisations supporting children and young people should refer to their own data protection policies.

Depending on the setting, different systems will be available to record bullying incidents.

For education authorities and public schools, the Bullying and Equalities Module within the SEEMiS system has been identified as the most appropriate tool for such schools and education authorities to record and monitor bullying incidents. Education authorities will have local guidance on recording and monitoring, and public schools should refer to this when developing their approach. Further information on training and support is available in the resources and support section. Where Community Learning and Development staff are working within schools and have access to SEEMiS, they should record incidents on the system but only where protocols have been agreed within the education authority and/or the school.

Independent schools, grant-aided schools and children and young people's organisations should have robust recording and monitoring systems in place that capture the information set out above.

Whole-school/organisation approach to recording and monitoring

Bullying can be a sensitive topic for staff, children and young people and parents, due to the connotations associated with the term. Parents and young people may have concerns about unfounded allegations being on their record. It is therefore important to build understanding among the whole school community of what will be recorded, how and why.

Labelling children and young people as 'bullies' or 'victims' can be disempowering and is unhelpful in supporting them to change their behaviour, or in scaffolding their recovery from a bullying experience. It is advised that stigmatising language be avoided when recording concerns about bullying behaviour. SEEMiS for example uses the language 'child displaying bullying behaviour' and 'child experiencing bullying behaviour.'

Labelling an action as bullying behaviour, rather than labelling the person themselves, distinguishes the behaviour from the individual and is a more effective way of helping a child or young person to develop empathy skills and reflect upon their behaviour. This can support and effect change, without stigmatisation. Challenging bullying behaviour in an authoritative, respectful way does not diminish its seriousness or impact and helps to maintain adult focus on the behaviour being the problematic issue, rather than the individual themselves.

All organisations should make parents, children and young people aware of their complaints procedures including any review or appeal process.

Step 3: Investigation

Bullying is a combination of behaviour and impact and should be addressed with compassion and professional curiosity when investigating incidents. Although bullying is often persistent, a single incident can have a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of children and young people and instil a fear that it might happen again. Impact on the individual/group's health and wellbeing and/or learning and school environment can be established through an investigation of alleged, observed or reported bullying incidents.

The National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 (updated 2023) makes clear that individual agencies are responsible for ensuring that their staff are competent and confident in carrying out their responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting children's wellbeing. We expect teachers and all those working with children to identify and act on any concerns to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child or young person concerned, in line with their local child protection procedures.

A helpful approach would be to ask:

- what was the behaviour?
- what impact did it have?
- what does the child or young person want to happen?
- what do i need to do about it – for example, is there a child protection concern?
- what attitudes, prejudices or other factors may have influenced the behaviour?

Once an investigation has concluded, the system should be updated with the outcome of the investigation. This should include whether the incident was found to be resolved, not resolved or unfounded. Where an incident is found to be bullying, schools should record what supports/interventions were put in place for both for individuals/groups affected by the behaviour and those displaying the behaviour.

If the incident is not bullying, but due to other factors such as changing friendship groups or interpersonal conflict, it can still be difficult for a child or young person and their parents. In these situations it is important for those involved to understand that even though the incident is not bullying there will still be a response from staff who can work with the child or young person and potentially peers to improve the situation.

Understanding responsibility to respond

The pervasive nature of bullying means that it can take place in a variety of locations and situations making it difficult for schools and organisations to hold clear boundaries on where their responsibilities begin and end. For example, situations can begin online and follow the child or young person into the school day or vice versa. For a school to investigate an allegation of bullying, it is likely there will have to be some connection to the school day. However, given the blurring of such boundaries, there is a need to understand that the impacts of such incidents can affect learning, participation and wellbeing and the school or organisation may require to support the child or young people involved even if they do not need to investigate and respond to the incident itself. While in a school or organisation's care, there is a responsibility to support children and young people's wellbeing.

However, while schools and organisations have a role in outlining appropriate standards of behaviour in their setting, outwith the setting and online it must be clear in any policies that no one party is, by default, the responsible party to investigate pupil to pupil interactions which take place online and outwith the school day.

Schools and organisations should clearly set out to parents the limitations of the locus of their responsibility to investigate an incident that has taken place away from the school premises, out of hours or online. However, they should detail how they will support the health and wellbeing needs of the child or young person whilst in their care.

Staff members must ensure that appropriate support is provided within school or organisation to the child or young person(s) involved, even when there is no duty to investigate the incident itself.

Step 4: Responding to bullying incidents

All responses to alleged bullying incidents should be child-centred and reviewed individually, rooted firmly in the values of rights, fairness, respect, equality and inclusion. Consideration should be given to how to support the child or young person experiencing the bullying behaviour, and also the person displaying this behaviour, to prevent similar behaviour happening in the future.

A school's relationships and behaviour policy is core to communicating the school's expectations of behaviour and how it will manage any situations which arise. It is likely that a range of different practices may be adopted before finding one that is an effective response, as what works for one person may not work for another.

Schools and organisations should be clear on how they will communicate their response to all relevant parties (children and young people involved and their parent(s)). There may be instances where privacy concerns relating to the other child or young person involved means information cannot be shared with the person affected. This lack of information may make the child or young person affected, or their family members, feel that nothing has been done in response to the incident. In such instances the need to respect privacy should be explained and reassurance given that corrective action has been taken.

Supporting the young person experiencing bullying

When supporting a young person who is experiencing bullying, it is crucial to listen to them, take them seriously, understand the impact the behaviour is having on them, and reassure them that the bullying taking place is not their fault. Children and young people need adult help to maintain perspective when they are feeling bullied to reduce the mental impact on them. Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) and the National Practice Model, including the wellbeing assessment, should guide the support offered.

Where there is not a child protection concern, staff should gain consent from children and inform them, where possible, before contacting families. Where there is not a child protection concern, the child is over the age of 12, has sufficient maturity and understanding[17] and no criminal offence has been committed, they may decide that they do not wish for their parent(s) or families to be informed.

Support can include:

- **active listening/counselling/talking**. This can help them process what is happening, cope with the emotional impact of bullying and think about potential solutions, any consequences of these and support available.

- **reporting bullying**. Encourage them to share their experience with a trusted adult and report the bullying to the relevant authorities, such as school, youth leaders or the online platform where the bullying occurred.

- **peer support**. Peer support groups can provide a safe space for them to share their experiences and feelings.

- **developing a wellbeing plan**. Agreeing next steps, monitoring progress and making adjustments to the plan, particularly if initial actions are not successful.

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17 Age of Legal Capacity (Scotland) Act 1991 (legislation.gov.uk)

Children and young people value choice when responding to bullying. Adults can support children and young people to explore a range of options that may suit them, and help them to make informed choices, whilst being aware of any potential consequences of their decisions. The child or young person should be included in decision-making about any plan put in place.

If a child or young person discloses that they are being bullied in multiple settings (at school and an after-school club, for example), staff should follow agreed local processes and procedures regarding confidentiality and sharing of information, respecting the child and young person's right to privacy, and in line with Getting it right for every child GIRFEC information sharing guidance, relevant data protection legislation and National Guidance for Child Protection. Data protection law allows relevant personal data to be shared lawfully if it is to keep a child or young person at risk safe from neglect or physical, emotional or mental harm, or if it is protecting their physical, mental, or emotional wellbeing. Public schools should contact their education authority for more information on this.

Supporting the child or young person displaying bullying behaviours

Children and young people who exhibit bullying behaviour need adult support to understand the underlying thoughts and feelings driving their actions, and to develop healthier responses and relationships. It is crucial to help them recognise the harm their behaviour causes, repair relationships when possible and desired, and challenge prejudicial attitudes through education and building empathy.

Responses should focus on challenging behaviour, encouraging reflection and preventing reoccurrence. A school's/organisation's relationships and behaviour policy should set clear expectations of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, and the associated responses, including consequences, which staff can utilise, and staff should respond to bullying in line with this policy.

Responses will vary depending on the children or young people and the nature of the incident. While individual responses will vary, there should be consistency in all approaches by focusing on repairing the harm caused where possible and preventing it from happening again. Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) and the National Practice Model, including the wellbeing assessment, should guide the support offered.

For young people displaying bullying behaviours, adult support can include:

- **active listening**. To understand what is lying behind the behaviour and help them develop healthier ways to cope with difficult feelings.
- **education**. Promote empathy and kindness, and help them understand the impact of their actions and why their behaviour is unacceptable.
- **parental involvement**. Where appropriate, and with the young person's consent, engage parents in monitoring the situation and guiding more positive behaviour.
- **restorative actions**. Encourage them to make amends and repair harm, where appropriate.
- **developing a wellbeing plan**. Setting out responses, monitoring progress and making adjustments to the plan, particularly if initial actions are not successful.

It is important that the appropriate support is put in place for **all** children and young people involved in a bullying incident. In some instances, this will include children and young people who have witnessed an incident. This may be through pastoral support and could include counselling, peer support, solution-oriented approaches or restorative practice.[18] Consideration should also be given to any additional factors that may impact upon a child or young person's wellbeing, including whether any additional support for learning input is required. More information on ways to support children and young people can be accessed via respect*me* and Education Scotland. Guidance on techniques such as restorative practice and solution-focused approaches can be found in Included, Engaged and Involved 2.

Additional Support Needs

The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 provides a comprehensive legal framework for the provision of additional, targeted support for children and young people who face barriers to learning. Social emotional or behavioural needs which can arise from bullying, may be considered an additional support need if the bullying is having an impact on the child's or young person's learning. This includes children and young people who are demonstrating bullying behaviour as well as those who may be on the receiving end of it.

Children with additional support needs may experience bullying differently and may be targeted because of their additional support needs. They may face additional barriers to understanding or communicating about bullying they are experiencing. Practitioners should fully take into account the additional support needs, including how support needs intersect, and the principles of inclusion in order to deliver sensitive and holistic measures that address bullying. This includes consideration of how children and young people's views can be included in decisions about what will happen next, and how planned outcomes and actions are communicated clearly to children and young people in a way that works for them following an incident.

Prejudice-based bullying

Preventing and responding to prejudice-based bullying will require a line of enquiry that directly addresses the prejudice(s) that has motivated the bullying behaviour. This will include proactively challenging the root causes of different forms of prejudice – such as harmful stereotyping, stigma, negative perceptions, and 'othering' – through the Four Contexts for Learning. It will also include fostering good relationships between different groups, for example working with children and young people with disabilities to raise awareness of disabilities and their impact amongst their peers.[19]

Schools and other organisations need both 'reactive' and 'proactive' measures in place to address prejudice-based bullying and should be mindful that distinct forms of prejudice may require targeted interventions. The reporting of bullying, without the inclusion of prejudice, can lead to the under-reporting of hate incidents such as racist incidents. Staff should be mindful that issues of structural inequality are not diluted or avoided when responding and reporting prejudice-based bullying.

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18 School Bullying: a Social Justice Issue? How Restorative Approaches May Prevent Future Violence
19 Children in Scotland – Inclusion Ambassadors

Reactive approaches in response to prejudice-based bullying

A 'reactive' (or responsive) approach to prejudice-based bullying would include interventions that equip staff with the necessary tools and information to effectively address prejudice-based incidents when they occur. This includes:

- an anti-bullying policy that includes the seven protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010 relevant to school education (see Appendix 2) and provides clear information about recording procedures, next steps for staff, and processes for child-led family engagement.
- provision of pastoral care for those who have reported that they are experiencing prejudice-based bullying.
- staff consistently responding to manifestations of prejudice, such as pejorative and derogatory language use, or harmful stereotypes.
- well-planned mechanisms for responding to prejudice-based incidents and ensuring they are not repeated.

Schools and organisations should consider whether there are particular patterns of behaviour within their communities, and take proactive or preventative steps to address systemic or structural aspects of school culture or group ethos which may enable prejudices to develop. These steps should be embedded across the curriculum and the whole-setting, as opposed to only standalone events and assemblies that can risk exacerbating prejudice-based behaviours.

Online bullying

Responses to online bullying should be informed by an understanding of such behaviour as a human relationships and wider social interaction concern, rather than merely a technology-enabled phenomena.

Although the devices and platforms allow young people to communicate with their peers at a much faster rate than previous generations, we should also be aware that there is a significant correlation between experiencing online bullying and loneliness among adolescents.

When responding to online bullying in the short term, a young person should be made aware that they are able to use the platform safety settings to reduce the volume of content and messages they are receiving, where appropriate signposting to sources of assistance. Staff can then also support the young person from an emotional/relationships perspective.

Schools and organisations should be clear in their communications and policies that the same standards of behaviour are expected online as they are offline. Inappropriate online behaviour, including bullying, the use of inappropriate language and the soliciting and sharing of nude or semi-nude images and videos, should be subject to the same principles as offline behaviour. Teachers and schools, when managing incidents of concern which take place online, should follow the local child protection policy, ensure they have contacted the designated safeguarding lead when an incident raises a safeguarding concern, with the safeguarding lead contacting Police Scotland as necessary.

Managing incidents of concern which take place online

If staff suspect an electronic device contains bullying material, they should inform the Headteacher or SMT, who will then handle the situation with parents or Police Scotland. In Scotland, teachers do not have the statutory right to search students, and should not investigate the content of devices, as this could raise safeguarding, data protection and potentially other legal issues. More guidance is available for school staff in the Scottish Government's guidance on mobile phones in Scotland's schools.

Step 6: Monitoring

Monitoring data on bullying incidents can provide valuable information on the scope and scale of the issue; the data can help identify numeric trends, specific issues around equality and diversity and other relevant data/patterns which may help organisations, schools and education authorities to prevent and respond to bullying incidents efficiently.

This information should be used to identify whether there are trends that indicate specific interventions would be beneficial or where improvements to policy or practice could be made. It can also be used to help identify how effective interventions are, whether there are matters which would benefit from training opportunities and where good practice can be shared locally.

An increase in reports of bullying, including prejudice-based bullying, does not necessarily mean an increase in such behaviour in the setting. This can sometimes be attributed to previous under-reporting of incidents and an improvement in staff confidence in identifying and reporting behaviours following professional learning, policy developments and improvement plans.

Areas that schools, organisations and education authorities may wish to give particular consideration to when monitoring bullying incidents are:

- number, type, location, year group and timing of bullying incidents and whether there is change over time.
- incidents of prejudice-based bullying and whether there is a change over time.

All education authorities have access to the SEEMiS Business Intelligence (BI) Reporting Tool which allows them to view and filter data recorded in the Bullying and Equalities module e.g. how many incidents of specific incident type have occurred across the authority and where incidents are occurring in their schools, for example. These reports can also be made available to individual schools for their own school data, should the education authority choose to make the reports accessible to them.

As approaches vary across Scotland as to how or if education authorities use the Bullying and Equalities module, it would be for individual schools to contact their authority for further information on access to these Business Intelligence reports, if they cannot currently do so.

The most granular level of monitoring data is best carried out at individual school/ organisation level, where it can be best understood and used to support the improvement of targeted support and interventions that can be applied in a focused, responsive way. Schools and organisations are also best placed to recognise the unique nuances of geography and demographics.

Recorded incidents of bullying should be monitored by the Senior Leadership Team of a school/children and young people's organisation on a regular basis. In a school setting this should be more than once a term.

Education authorities should monitor incidents to identify whether individual schools may require any bespoke support to address particular behaviours. They should also monitor trends across the whole education authority.

It is recommended that education authorities monitor school-based incidents at the end of each term. Data should not be analysed in isolation. The local context and other relevant information should be considered alongside the statistical evidence.

Resources and support

Support for children and young people

respect*me*, Scotland's Anti-Bullying Service, has information available for children and young people to help them understand what bullying is, and what their options are if they are being bullied.

Childline offers direct emotional and practical support for children and young people about bullying at school or any other issues. Childline can also be contacted free on 0800 11 11.

Young Scot provide a range of information to build young people's understanding of what they can do if they are being bullied, including support for online bullying.

Reach provides information and advice to children and young people who have, or might have, an additional support need on their rights.

Support for parents

respect*me*, Scotland's Anti-Bullying Service, has a range of information resources and training opportunities to increase parent awareness of bullying behaviour and to consider the different ways they can respond if their child is being bullied, or is involved in the bullying of others. These resources also offer guidance on how schools and parents can work together to create inclusive environments and provide effective support for children and young people.

ParentLine Scotland can help parents or family members think about the best way to deal with a situation where their child is being bullied or is displaying bullying behaviour. Parentline Scotland can also be contacted free and in confidence on 0800 028 2233.

Parentclub provides information to support parents where their child is being bullied at school.

Connect works with with parents, parent groups and educators, providing information, advice and training.

National Parent Forum of Scotland is a volunteer-led organisation that works to ensure that parents play a full and equal role in education.

Enquire provides advice for parents of children who have, or might have, an additional support need.

Coordinated by the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER), Advocacy for Race Equality in Schools Scotland (AdRESS) is an advocacy and advice service launched to support parents and carers whose child has experienced racist incidents or racially motivated bullying in school.

Enquiries can be made by telephone on 0330 122 4600 or by email at support@ adresscotland.org. They can also be submitted through the online contact form on the AdRESS website (www.AdRESSScotland.org) where further information and resources can also be found.

The NSPCC has published advice for parents on keeping children safe online.

Support for schools/organisations and education authorities

Support and guidance is available from respect*me*, Scotland's Anti-Bullying Service, which offers free training to all those with a role to play in the lives of children and young people to prevent and respond to bullying effectively, aligned to 'Respect for All'.

respect*me* have developed a template anti-bullying policy which can be adapted by schools, organisations or education authorities to meet their local circumstances. The template policy can be accessed from respect*me*'s website.

Education authorities will have local guidance on recording and monitoring, and public schools should refer to this when developing their approach.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has published key guidance relating to the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty:

* Equality Act 2010: guidance
* Equality and Human Rights Commission guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty for Scottish public bodies
* Equality and Human Rights Commission Technical Guidance for Schools in Scotland

The Scottish Government has published key guidance and resources to support schools:

* Preventing and responding to gender-based violence: a whole school framework
* Resources to support schools when responding to racism and racist incidents
* Supporting transgender young people in schools: guidance for Scottish schools
* Guidance on mobile phones in Scotland's schools

SEEMiS has produced a number of resources to support staff using the system. This includes help pages outlining the functionality of the Bullying and Equalities module, a video walking staff through the process of recording an incident as well as resources on using the Business Intelligence reporting tool. The resources are available from the SEEMiS website.

Support and training

* Keeping Trauma in Mind by Education Scotland aims to help create a trauma informed and responsive education workforce that is capable of recognising where people affected by trauma and adversity and to be able to respond in ways that prevent further harm and support recovery.
* respect*me* and LGBT Youth Scotland resource for schools and organisations on effectively challenging homophobia, biphobia and transphobia
* respect*me* – free online anti-bullying training and resources
* SEEMiS has developed technical guidance and a short video to support school staff who are responsible for inputting data into the module.
* Education Scotland training on relationships (including professional learning available on the Inclusion, Wellbeing and Equalities Professional Learning Framework)

- Anti-racist professional learning, such as Building Racial Literacy, and guidance on promoting anti-racist education

- LGBT inclusive education resources and professional learning

- I Am Me Scotland – Education platform offering resources and training on a range of issues including child exploitation online, vaping, county lines, bullying and tackling prejudice against disability

- Action on Prejudice resources including activity packs, research, action plans, policy documents and more resources shared by partners from across Scotland. They all relate to taking action against discrimination, hate crime and prejudice.

Online bullying

- Legislation relevant to aspects of online safety, including the safe and responsible use of mobile phones, can be found in Appendix C5 of the Scottish version of the online safety policy tool for schools, 360 Degree Safe Scotland. The 360 Degree Safe Scotland self-review tool is free to use and is intended to help schools review their online safety policy and practice.

- If you're worried about online abuse or the way someone is communicating with a child online, you can report it through the National Crime Agency's Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) command. Children can also report inappropriate content themselves.

- For more information on setting up devices and accounts see Education Scotland's Cyber Resilience and Digital Safety page.

- You can report distressing online content to the Report Harmful Content website, including threats, bullying, suicide or self-harm content, violent content and porn.

- Children and young people can report nude images and videos of themselves online and get them removed through the Report Remove tool on the Childline website.

- Children and young people can also use Take It Down, which is a tool from the National Center for Missing and Exploited children. This can be used to remove images and videos, or to stop images from being shared online.

- The Revenge Porn Helpline helps support people aged 18 and over who have had intimate images shared online without their consent.

- You can also report distressing content seen on social media directly to the platform you saw it on. Go to the platform's help section to find out what to do.

- You should report child sexual abuse content to the Internet Watch Foundation.

- If you feel someone is abusing, exploiting or likely to exploit a child or children, or you believe a child or young person is at risk of being a victim, call Police Scotland on 101. If you think they may be in immediate danger, dial 999 and speak to the police immediately. The Police Scotland website has more information on what happens when you make a call, and how to get in touch by text or via contact Scotland-BSL.

Appendices

Appendix 1

The legal framework and policy landscape

There are a number of legal obligations on education authorities and schools that must be considered as part of their approach to preventing and responding to bullying.

Legal framework:

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 (the "UNCRC Act")

Following the introduction of the UNCRC Act, it is now unlawful for a public authority in Scotland, which is likely to include education authorities and some schools, to act (or fail to act) in connection with a relevant function, in a way which is incompatible with the UNCRC requirements. Although there is not an express right not to be bullied within the UNCRC, a number of rights are upheld through the furtherance of anti-bullying work. This includes the right of every child to live free from violence, abuse, and neglect, which includes protection from violence committed by other children, and places emphasis on their rights to education, health, and participation in decisions affecting their lives. Grounding anti-bullying efforts in this framework of rights ensures a holistic approach that respects and protects the dignity and wellbeing of every child, and reinforces the importance of creating safe, inclusive, and supportive environments where children can thrive.

The UNCRC requirements as incorporated by the UNCRC Act, should be considered by all public authorities in Scotland who are carrying out a relevant function, as set out in the Act. However, public authorities are encouraged to take a children's rights approach regardless of the legal source of their duties. The UK has been a signatory to the UNCRC since 1991 and regardless of the scope of the legal duties in the UNCRC Act, the UNCRC is at the heart of GIRFEC and the Scottish Government's commitment to ensuring that all children and young people have the best possible start in life.

Schools and education authorities should avoid basing policies on a single UNCRC article without considering broader implications. The UNCRC supports taking effective action against bullying to protect children's health and safety, and education authorities should take all appropriate measures to protect children from violence, including peer violence.

Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 protects individuals with protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) from discrimination, victimisation and harassment and supports progress on equality. The Equality and Human Rights Commission has published guidance on the Equality Act 2010. Discussion of the applicability of the Equality Act 2010 in relation to prejudiced-based bullying is contained at Appendix 2.

Education authorities and some schools in Scotland are subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).[20] This comprises the general equality duty as set out in the Equality Act 2010, and the Scottish specific equality duties which are set out in the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 (2012 Regulations). The general equality duty requires due regard in the exercise of functions to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. The purpose of the specific equality duties is to help public authorities better perform the general equality duty. Education authorities and the schools that are subject to the PSED have an obligation to ensure that policies aimed at preventing bullying or responding to the consequences of bullying meet the needs of the general equality duty.

Not ensuring consideration of equality can lead to unlawful discrimination, greater inequality and worse outcomes for particular groups of people in our communities. The general duty requires equality considerations be built into the design of policies and practices and the delivery of services, and for these to be kept under review. The EHRC has issued guidance on the PSED for Scottish public bodies.

Listed authorities, including education authorities and some schools, have legal obligations under the PSED as service providers and employers. Of note when developing and implementing policies to address bullying is the specific duty requirement to assess the equality impact of proposed and revised policies and practices (regulation 5 of the 2012 Regulations).

Chapter 6 of the technical guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty: Scotland describes what is required from public bodies in carrying out an equality impact assessment. It sets out a number of steps including assessing the potential impact by considering whether the equality evidence indicates potential differential impact on each protected characteristic group or provides an opportunity to improve equality in an area; taking account of results in developing proposals and ensuring due regard when making decisions about the policy and its implementation, documenting decisions, publishing results and monitoring the actual impact of the policy.

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20 Public Sector Equality Duty: specific duties in Scotland | EHRC (equalityhumanrights.com)

Online bullying

There are various legal provisions designed to protect individuals from online harassment, abuse, and harm. Some online behaviour may be illegal under the following legislation:

1. **The Equality Act 2010**: this Act prohibits discrimination, harassment, and victimisation based on protected characteristics, such as race, disability, and sexual orientation, which can encompass certain forms of online bullying.

2. **The Communications Act 2003**: Section 127 of this Act makes it an offence to send grossly offensive, obscene, or menacing messages through public electronic communications networks.

3. **The Malicious Communications Act 1988**: this Act covers the sending of letters or other articles with the intent to cause distress or anxiety, including online communications.

4. **The Protection from Harassment Act 1997**: this Act provides protection against a course of conduct amounting to harassment, which can include repeated online bullying incidents.

5. **The Defamation and Malicious Publication (Scotland) Act 2021**: this Act modernises the law on defamation, allowing individuals to seek redress for harm caused by false and damaging online statements.

6. **The Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm (Scotland) Act 2016**:[21] criminalises the non-consensual sharing of intimate images.

7. **The Online Safety Act 2023**: creates a number of new offences, including encouraging or assisting serious self-harm, cyberflashing, sending false information intended to cause non-trivial harm, threatening communications, intimate image abuse.

These legal provisions can empower parents, young people, schools, authorities, and Police Scotland to take action against online bullying. Understanding that these laws exist can help adults working with, or caring for, children and young people to recognise when behaviour crosses legal boundaries and to take appropriate steps to protect them.

Legislation relevant to aspects of online safety, including the safe and responsible use of mobile phones, can be found in Appendix C5 of the Scottish version of the online safety policy tool for schools, 360 Degree Safe Scotland. The 360 Degree Safe Scotland self-review tool is free to use and is intended to help schools review their online safety policy and practice.

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21 Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm (Scotland) Act 2016 (legislation.gov.uk)

Hate crime

Hate crime is the term used to describe behaviour which is both criminal and rooted in prejudice or which is intended (or can be considered) to stir up hatred. In Scotland, the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021 criminalises behaviour based on prejudice towards those with the following characteristics:

- age
- disability
- race
- religion
- sexual orientation
- transgender identity
- variations in sex characteristics.

Where bullying occurs that is also linked to prejudice towards one of the above groups, this could also constitute a hate crime[22], under certain circumstances based on conduct and motivation.

Bullying can be motivated by prejudice similar to hate crime. The distinction between bullying and hate crime is that the behaviour motivated in prejudice must be criminal in nature, such as assault, graffiti or a breach of the peace. For example, damage to property through graffiti may constitute a crime and this may be aggravated by prejudice towards a relevant characteristic. Sharing of discriminatory materials may, in some cases, constitute an offence of stirring up hatred.

The Lord Advocate has issued guidelines about which category of offence will be reported to the Procurator Fiscal for consideration of prosecution. Children who do not come within these guidelines may be referred to the Children's Reporter or made subject to Police direct measures, depending on the circumstances. The Procurator Fiscal and the Children's Reporter discuss cases which are subject to joint referral and the Procurator Fiscal will decide where the case is best dealt with.

Age of Criminal Responsibility

Some behaviour displayed by a child or young person may constitute a criminal offence. School staff should have a general awareness of the Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act 2019 which increased the age at which a child is considered to have the capacity to commit a crime from age 8 to 12. This means that children younger than 12 cannot accrue convictions or criminal records. The 2019 Act removes the ability to refer a child to a children's hearing on offence grounds, and makes it possible to only refer a child under 12 to a children's hearing on welfare and protection grounds. It provides specific investigatory powers for the police, to enable incidents of seriously harmful behaviour by under-12s to be investigated.

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22 Information note on hate crime

Policy landscape

This guidance takes account of the wider policy context that supports children and young people's health and wellbeing.

Some of the other key drivers for the current guidance are:

- Getting it Right for Every Child
- National Child Protection Guidance for Scotland 2021 – Updated 2023
- Learning in Health and Wellbeing, including Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP) Education
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Trauma
- One Good Adult: Job Description

Professional Standards

Many professionals who play a role in the lives of children and young people will be governed by a set of professional standards. These include:

- the General Teaching Council for Scotland – The Professional Standards for Scotland's Teachers and Code of Professionalism and Conduct (CoPAC)
- the Common Core of Skills, Knowledge and Understanding and Values for the 'Children's Workforce' in Scotland
- the Scottish Social Services Council Codes of Practice
- the Health and Social Care Standards

The values and principles set out by the Standards Council for Community Learning and Development for Scotland are in step with this revised National Approach.

Appendix 2

Prejudice-based bullying

This section provides information regarding different forms of prejudice-based bullying behaviour. This includes those related to the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010 as well as broader characteristics or circumstances which may be the target of bullying behaviours.

Equality Act 2010

There are nine characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010. These are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

Part 6 (chapter 1) of the Equality Act 2010, which deals with school education, does not apply to the protected characteristics of 'age' and 'marriage and civil partnership'.

Age: Part 6 (chapter 1) of the Equality Act 2010, which deals with school education, does not apply to the protected characteristic of 'age', however, people are protected from discrimination on the grounds of age in other settings including workplaces and further education.

Disability: the Equality Act 2010 defines disability as a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Increased knowledge and understanding about disability and the barriers and challenges they can face can help reduce bullying. The language and behaviour used may be a result of a lack of understanding about the nature of a person's disability. People who bully others may see disabled people as being more vulnerable and less able to defend themselves or tell an adult about the bullying.

Gender reassignment: the term 'gender reassignment' is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 and refers to those who propose to go through, are going through, or have gone through a process for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex.

The term 'transgender' or 'trans' is a term used to describe people whose gender is not the same as the sex they were assigned at birth. Gender identity is a person's innate sense of their own gender.

Transgender people face significant societal prejudice largely because they are perceived as not conforming to gender stereotypes, expectations and norms. As a result, transgender young people can be particularly vulnerable to bullying.

Transphobic bullying is behaviour or language which makes a young person feel unwelcome or marginalised because of perceived or actual transgender identity or transgender expression. This can manifest in many ways including verbal abuse and slurs or deliberately mis-gendering them. A young person may also experience transphobic bullying if someone is perceived to be transgender or someone they are associate with is transgender, i.e. a parent, relative or other significant figure. The Scottish Government has published guidance on Supporting Transgender Pupils in Schools, which includes information on transphobic bullying.

Marriage and civil partnership: Part 6 (chapter 1) of the 2010 Equality Act, which deals with school education, does not apply to the protected characteristic of 'marriage and civil partnership', however people are protected from discrimination on the grounds of marriage and civil partnership in other settings including workplaces and further education.

Pregnancy and maternity: young parents can experience bullying because of the stigma and judgement that is still associated with young parenthood. Staff should be aware of the increased possibility of bullying in relation to a young pregnant person or young parent and that this can occur face to face as well as online. Schools and organisations should be cognisant of their anti-bullying practice and approach and ensure young people receive adequate information and guidance around this topic. For those who are pregnant/young parents, this can add to what is already a potentially highly emotional and stressful time. The Scottish Government has published guidance on Supporting young pregnant women and young parents in school.

Sexual orientation: bullying based on sexual orientation is largely motivated by prejudice towards lesbian, gay or bisexual people, and those sexual orientations or gender identities which are not heterosexual or heteronormative. Homophobic or biphobic bullying is when a young person's actual or perceived sexual orientation is used to exclude, threaten, hurt, or humiliate them.

Any young person can be homophobically bullied, irrespective of their actual sexual orientation. Sometimes young people can be homophobically bullied because others think that they are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT), because they have LGBT family or friends or, often, because they are seen as different or not conforming to gender stereotypes. Transgender children and young people can therefore also experience homophobic bullying.

Homophobic or biphobic language and jokes around the school can create a climate of homophobia; for example, the use of the word 'gay' to mean substandard or have negative connotations. This type of language is prejudice-based and should therefore be addressed as part of a school culture and ethos which promotes equality and inclusion. Scottish Government and Time for Inclusive Education have produced guidance for school staff to support the implementation of LGBT Inclusive Education.

Racism and race: under the Equality Act 2010, race includes colour, nationality (including citizenship) and ethnic or national origins. Children and young people from groups who are at risk of experiencing racism may experience racist attitude and behaviour based on perceived differences which reflect wider societal patterns of inequality, power imbalance and discrimination. Prejudice towards the minority ethnic group a child or young person belongs to – or to which people assume they belong – in a school, community or organisation can often lead to a child or young person experiencing bullying behaviour. Racist behaviour and incidents can arise from a misguided and learned belief that children and young people from minority ethnic groups are less valued and 'deserve' to be treated differently, or with less respect.

Children and young people from Gypsy/Traveller communities may be at greater risk of bullying. Some bullying behaviour against these groups may be of a racist nature which, given that race is a protected characteristic, can contravene equality legislation and have hate crime implications. Perceived risks about bullying and parents' own experiences of discriminatory and racist behaviour may lead to low levels of enrolment and poor attendance for Gypsy/Traveller children and young people as well as early exit from formal education. Other Traveller and Roma families may have similar concerns.

Resources are available to support schools on responding to racism and racist incidents.

Religion or belief: people who have a religion or belief, as well as those who do not, are protected under the Equality Act 2010. Religious, belief- or faith-based discrimination may manifest through actions or words directed towards a person of faith or a faith community, for example, anti-Hinduism, antisemitism or anti-Sikh discrimination. Discrimination can also happen within groups who share the same religious belief, for example, Muslim or Christian sectarianism.

Prejudice may centre on aspects of traditions, beliefs and etiquette of different faiths and can lead to religious intolerance. 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 lead to bullying.

In some cases, racism is the underlying factor in religious discrimination against people from minority ethnic communities. For example, learners who are not Muslim may experience Islamophobic bullying or anti-Hinduism as a result of racially stereotypical assumptions linked to their skin colour or other aspects of their appearance.

Sex (including sexual harassment, sexism and misogyny): the Equality Act 2010 protects people from being treated differently because of their sex. Girls and young women can be subjected to a range of behaviours by boys and young men because of gender inequality. This includes sexism, misogyny, sexual harassment, and other forms of gender-based violence (GBV). Sexism is discrimination or discriminatory language which seeks to belittle women and girls. Misogyny is the hatred of women, often expressed with hateful, sexualised language which aims to imply that women are inferior. Sexism and misogyny create a context where GBV can thrive. Girls and young women often experience bullying which is based on sexism and misogyny. Girls experiencing more than one form of inequality are at higher risk of being subjected to misogyny, which can often be combined with racism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, and other prejudices.

Sexual harassment is distinct from the behaviours above and can include catcalling, wolf whistling, sexual language and sexualised intimidation or threat. It is important that sexual harassment is treated as GBV. The Scottish Government has published [guidance to support schools in preventing and responding to gender-based violence.](#)

Many of these behaviours are caused by gender inequality – unequal social power between girls and boys – and create a context which can allow serious forms of violence to take place. It is often unseen and unreported.

Bullying which draws on misogyny can also be directed against boys and young men For example, 'you throw like a girl'. Even when directed at boys, it still draws on the degradation and belittling of women, and thus causes girls further harm. It can be linked to homophobia.

Other characteristics

The following characteristics may be the target of prejudice-based bullying; while they are not explicitly protected by law under the Equality Act 2010, there are aspects of the characteristics that may be caught depending on the circumstances. Irrespective of this, a robust response should be taken to any form of bullying. It is important for schools to consider whether there are patterns of bullying behaviour within their school communities which could be addressed by providing learning for children and young people about inequality and diversity.

Additional Support Needs: these can arise for any reason and be of short- or long-term duration. Additional support may be required to overcome needs arising from a school learning environment; health or disability; family circumstances or social and emotional factors, and therefore may relate to a protected characteristic. A child or young person may be bullied because they have an additional support need and crucially, being bullied can also lead to an additional support need. Some with additional support needs may be protected under the disability protected characteristic.

Children and young people with an additional support need may not realise that the behaviour happening to them is bullying. Staff should therefore be alert for behaviour that may constitute bullying, without the responsibility solely being on the child or young person to report it. Staff are able to report bullying incidents on SEEMiS without a child or young person reporting it.

Asylum Seekers and Refugees: children and young people who are asylum seekers or refugees may be at greater risk of bullying. Some bullying behaviour against these groups may be of a racist nature which, given that race is a protected characteristic, can contravene equality legislation and have hate crime implications. Stigma, due to lack of knowledge and reluctance to burden parents with extra worries can allow bullying to go undetected and continue.

Body Image and Physical Appearance: this can be hugely important to children and young people and significantly negatively impact their wellbeing. Body image and physical appearance can also be a highly sensitive area in which school staff will need to carefully consider their responses. In some cases, bullying relating to body image and physical appearance may intersect with a protected characteristic, such as race or disability, for example being bullied for female body/facial hair, facial deformities and scars (potentially from war/torture).

Care Experienced Children and Young People: [care experienced children and young people](#) can be particularly vulnerable to bullying. Children and young people can face bullying behaviour simply because they are care experienced and seen in some way as 'different'. Children and young people who are cared for away from home can also experience bullying behaviour in their residential care home, at school and in their community. Care experienced children and young people may not always have a stable support network to turn to when experiencing bullying. For some children and young people forming positive relationships with peers and adults can be more difficult due to their early childhood adversity. Developing trusting and supportive relationships between children, young people and practitioners is required to address bullying of all forms and in all settings.

Family and household circumstances: children and young people may experience discrimination for their family situation. For example, if the child or young person is from a single-parent family, a blended family or has a relative who is in a same-sex relationship. Bullying of children who endure parental substance use can also be prevalent.

Family imprisonment: children and young people affected by family imprisonment are at risk of bullying for a range of reasons. Keeping in contact with a family member in prison can mean children and young people miss time at school, clubs, and socialising with friends. Having to explain or make excuses for their absence can pose challenges for peer relationships. Children and young people affected by imprisonment can also often feel left out in peer discussions about parents or other family members. The stigma of having a family member in prison can lead to children and young people trying to keep the experience hidden from their peers. This can make it difficult to form and maintain peer relationships. Where children and young people choose to disclose their family member's imprisonment, or where this information is shared by others in the community or the media, the stigma of imprisonment can make them a direct target of bullying behaviour.

Forces children: children from armed forces and veteran families can face significant challenges due to forces life. They may experience frequent moves around the country which for some are challenging due to the loss of friendships and disruption to education. Deployments and separation from parents are also events that can happen due to forces life. Some families may move up to once every two years which means children and young people re-establishing themselves in a new school and some feel there is no point even trying to make new friends which can lead to isolation. This group can sometimes feel different from their classmates and can be bullied for a number of reasons such as having a different accent, or simply for being in a forces family. Having a parent being away can also add to the emotional difficulties a child or young person may feel as they may not want to open up about the difficulties they face to their non-serving parent. Research has shown that children who attend schools which are more educated about military life face less bullying and discrimination, so it is important schools understand their lives more and are able to support this group.

Mental health stigma and discrimination: children and young people may feel uncomfortable to speak about their mental health for fear of the consequences. Fear of [stigma and discrimination](#) can prevent an individual from sharing their mental health concerns. Judgemental preconceptions about mental health may endorse negative stereotypes which can impact someone who experiences mental health problems, potentially making them feel worse about themselves and hindering recovery.

Sectarianism: most people understandably associate sectarianism with religion, which is a protected characteristic. The reality of prejudice however means that family background, supporting particular football teams, where a child or young person lives, which school they attend or the colour of clothing they wear can be a target of sectarian abuse, regardless of the individuals' beliefs. In Scotland, sectarianism is most often related to Protestant and Roman Catholic divisions within Christianity but can also relate to other religions, for example, Sunni, Ahmadi and Shia Muslims within Islam, and Orthodox and Reform Jews within Judaism.

Socio-economic/poverty prejudice: poverty contravenes a number of articles laid out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and denies children and young people many of their rights.

Bullying due to socio-economic status can take place in any community. Small differences in perceived 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, accents, belongings, clothing, etc., can become widespread through those considering themselves to be in the dominant socio-economic group. Where poverty-related bullying is witnessed or experienced, it is based upon the consequences of poverty, such as: poor appearance or lack of school uniforms, shoes and PE kits; type of clothing worn on non-school uniform day; lack of money to socialise with friends, being in receipt of free school meals; and not being able to have 'sleepovers'. [Schools and organisations need to be aware and compassionate around both the emotional and financial consequences of poverty](#) and how it affects children and young people in all areas of their life.

Young Carers: the lives of young carers can be significantly affected by their responsibility to care for a family member or friend to illness, disability, mental health problems or an addiction. Young carers are at risk of bullying for a variety of reasons. Carers Trust survey work indicates that 36% of young carers who responded had been bullied about their caring role. Depending on their caring responsibilities, 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 and sustain relationships with peers; it can hinder successful transitions or lead to them not achieving their educational potential.

Appendix 3 – Roles and expectations

Education authorities

- In consultation with stakeholders, including children and young people and their parents and staff/volunteers, develop and implement an **organisational** anti-bullying policy in step with the principles and values that underpin Respect for All, as set out in Section 1.

- Explicitly refer in the policy to protected characteristics and how due regard will be given to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

- Embed within anti-bullying policy action that will be taken to promote equality, diversity and children's rights.

- Provide access to anti-bullying professional learning/training and materials to support all those who work with children and young people in the organisation.

- Make organisational and local anti-bullying policies readily accessible to all, including children and young people, to ensure they are clear on action being taken to prevent bullying, and know how to report a concern about bullying.

- Ensure recording and monitoring of bullying incidents across all settings and use the information gathered to shape and inform future responses.

Schools and organisations

- In consultation with stakeholders, including children and young people and their parent(s) and staff/volunteers, develop and implement a **local** whole school/ service anti-bullying policy that, where appropriate, reflects its education authority or governing body policy, and is in step with the principles and values that underpin Respect for All, as set out in Section 1.

- Explicitly refer in the policy to protected characteristics and set out a commitment to challenging all forms of prejudice-based bullying. For those subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty, this should explicitly include how they will give due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

- Develop and implement good practice to promote a climate, culture and ethos of fairness, equality, inclusion and respect in line with Respect for All and related national guidance on promoting positive and respectful relationships and behaviour.

- Make organisational and local anti-bullying policies readily accessible to all, including children and young people, teachers and staff, and parents/carers to ensure they are clear on action being taken to prevent bullying, and know how to report a concern about bullying.

- Ensure a range of safe and easy pathways for children and young people, staff and parents/carers to report bullying, and that recording and monitoring at local level is undertaken.

- Embed within anti-bullying policy action that will be taken to promote equality, diversity and children's rights.

- Ensure recording and monitoring of bullying incidents across all settings where possible, and use the information gathered to target preventative approaches, assess effectiveness of policy and practice, ensure the correct support is in place.

- Provide access to anti-bullying professional learning/training and materials to support all those who work with children and young people in the setting.

- Respond to incidents of bullying on an individual basis using SEEMIS or alternative recording systems to proactively case-manage each situation. Employ a respectful, proportionate and holistic approach, adopting responses which take account of the impact of the incident as well as any underlying prejudice or other negative attitudes.

Children and Young People

- See bullying as a violation of children's rights and treat people with respect.
- Be aware of anti-bullying policies and practices in schools, clubs and groups attended and know how to report bullying behaviour.
- Where safe and appropriate, challenge bullying behaviour.
- Share concerns with a trusted adult and/or peers and work collaboratively with adults and peers to help create safe and positive environments where bullying cannot thrive.
- With adult support, set up a youth-led anti-bullying group in your school, club or group.

Parents

- Listen and take children and young people's concerns seriously.
- Be aware of anti-bullying policies and practice, including complaints procedures, in any school/clubs/groups attended by their child or young person.
- Share any concerns about a child as early as possible with a teacher, practitioner or coach.
- Engage directly, or through school Parent Forum/Parent Council or other appropriate forums, to contribute to and learn about anti-bullying policy and practice.
- Role model respect and promote safe, positive, supportive and respectful relationships for children and young people. Reflect this in all interactions with school/club staff and volunteers.

Staff and Volunteers

- Listen and take children and young people seriously.
- Act in accordance with the relevant professional standards and codes of conduct, e.g. GTCS Standards, Common Core CLD/youthwork/volunteer adult SSSC. Share concerns appropriately within your organisation/service and seek support where necessary.
- Understand both local and organisational anti-bullying policy and procedures and act in accordance with these.
- Embed the promotion of equality, diversity and children's rights in own professional practice, seeking training relevant to these areas.
- Role-model respect and promote safe, positive, supportive and respectful relationships. Reflect this in all interactions with children and young people and their parents.

Appendix 4 – Acknowledgements

The Scottish Government would like to thank all members of the Respect for All Working Group for their commitment, expertise and support throughout this process:

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- Glasgow City Council
- NASUWT
- NPFS
- NSPCC
- Parent representative
- Police Scotland
- respect*me*
- School Leaders Scotland
- Scottish Secondary Teachers Association
- Scottish Youth Parliament.

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- Scottish Catholic Education Service
- Scottish Council of Jewish Communities
- SEEMiS
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Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba