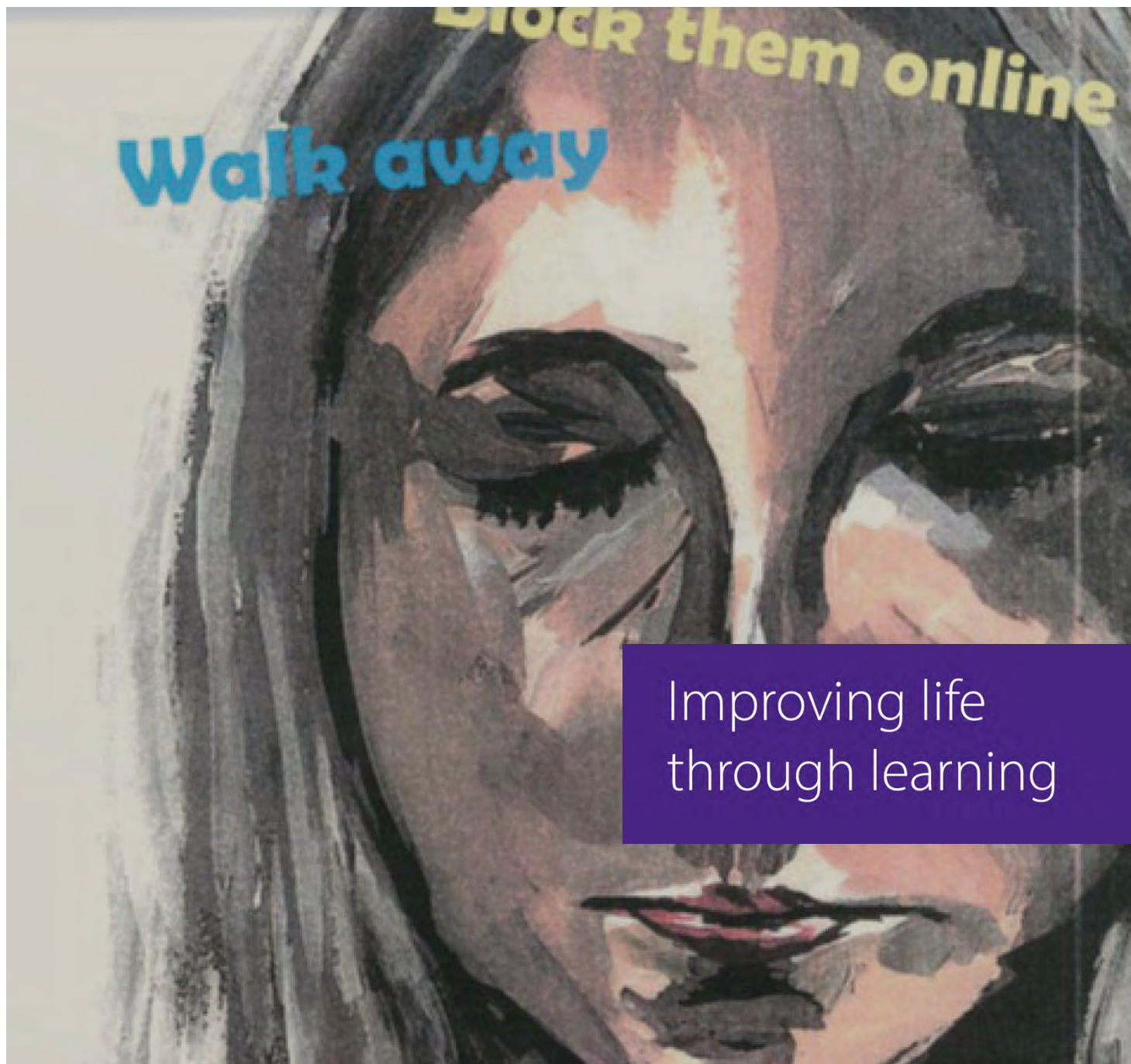


Stirling Council, Schools, Learning and Education

# Stirling's Approach to Respect for All

Preventing and Challenging  
Bullying Behaviours



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# Contents



Introduction .....	2
National and Local Context .....	4
What do we mean by Bullying Behaviours?: A Definition .....	5
Impact of Bullying Behaviours on Children and Young People.....	8
Protecting our Children and Young People from Bullying Behaviours .....	9
Creating the Right Environment: Promoting Respectful Relationships .....	12
Recording and Monitoring Bullying Incidents .....	14
Supporting Self-Evaluation of Guidance and Practice.....	15
Acknowledgements .....	16
Support, Resources and Information.....	17

## Section 1:

# Introduction



**Bullying has a detrimental impact on children and young people's wellbeing. Children and young people have the right to be safe and secure with strong, positive relationships with peers and with adults, in order to thrive and to achieve their full potential.**

**(Respectme, Scotland's Anti-Bullying Service)**

The purpose of this guidance is to refresh local policy in line with ['Respect for All: The National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People'](#).

Through the vision *'to be somewhere everyone can thrive'*, Stirling Council endorses the principles:

- 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 parents/carers, will have the skills and resilience to prevent and/or respond to bullying appropriately,
- every child and young person who requires help will know who can help them and what support is available,
- adults working with children and young people will follow a consistent and coherent approach in dealing with and preventing bullying from early learning and child care onwards.

## The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

*Although neither [the Human Rights Act 1998 nor the UNCRC] specifically mentions bullying, bullying behaviour does breach a number of the articles in both. Alongside this, both outline the responsibilities of adults to protect and safeguard children and young people from bullying behaviour.*

**(Respectme, Scotland's Anti-Bullying Service)**

The 54 articles in the Convention, set standards in healthcare, education, and legal, civil and social services for all children up to the age of 18, which cover four broad areas. These areas are:

- Survival rights
- Development rights
- Protection rights
- Participation rights

The positive impact of healthy relationships, supportive role-models, inclusion, love and respect can be undermined by bullying behaviour and can make it difficult for a child or young person to fully have their rights realised. Developing children's and young people's understanding of how to value and promote a healthy sense of respect for themselves and others can help to reduce the risk of bullying behaviour.

This guidance includes an explicit commitment to addressing all forms of bullying, including prejudice-based bullying. It is designed to support practitioners, parents and carers, club leaders, and children and young people, to be assured that bullying behaviour is not acceptable in Stirling. Central to this is our work to build capacity, resilience and skills in children and young people, and all those who play a role in their lives, to develop environments where bullying cannot thrive. Underpinning this is Stirling's commitment to prevention, early intervention, valuing and meeting individual needs, in line with the principles of *Getting it Right for Every Child*, in order to achieve responsible inclusion for every child and young person.

## Section 2:

# National and Local Context



**This guidance is underpinned and informed by a range of current national legislation, policy and third sector partner guidelines, with some examples provided below.**

### National Legislation and Policy

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
- Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended 2009)
- Children and Young People (Scotland) Act (2014)
- Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) approach
- The Promise (2020)
- National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2021)
- Building the Ambition; National Practice Guidance on Early Learning and Childcare (2014)
- The Equality Act (2010)
- Developing a positive whole-school ethos and culture – Relationships, Learning and Behaviour (2019)
- National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan (2023)
- Scottish Attainment Challenge (2015)
- Developing the Young Workforce: Scotland’s Youth Employment Strategy (2014)
- National Youth Work Strategy 2023-2028
- Mental Health Strategy 2017-2027
- Personal, Social and Emotional (PSE) Review (2019)
- Approaches to Recording and Monitoring Bullying Incidents, A Thematic Review (2023)

### Stirling Council’s Guidance and Plans

- Promoting Positive Relationships and Positive Behaviour Guidance
- Staged Intervention Guidance
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Guidance
- Children's Services Plan 2023 – 2026

### Section 3:

## What do we mean by Bullying Behaviours?: A Definition



*'Bullying is both behaviour and impact; the impact is on a person's capacity to feel in control of themselves...Bullying takes place in the context of relationships; it is behaviour that can make people feel hurt, threatened, frightened and left out. This behaviour happens face to face and online'.*

(Respectme, Scotland's Anti-Bullying Service)

Bullying behaviour has a detrimental impact on children and young people physically and emotionally. **An incident may only happen once** but if the **impact** is that it leaves a child/young person fearful, threatened and/or where it causes perceived loss of control or worthlessness, this is bullying behaviour.

In 2023, Education Scotland's Thematic Review of Recording and Monitoring Bullying Behaviour in schools highlighted the need to ensure all stakeholders have a shared understanding of the definition of bullying. Services and establishments may wish to discuss or revisit the national definition (from Respectme) with children and young people, parents and carers, and other key adults in a child or young person's life.

**Bullying behaviour can include (amongst others):**

- Being called names, teased, put down or threatened face to face or online
- Being hit, tripped, pushed or kicked
- Having belongings taken or damaged
- Being ignored, left out or having rumours spread about you (face to face and/or online)
- Abusive messages/pictures/images on social media/gaming platforms/phone
- Controlling behaviours which make people feel like they are not in control of themselves or their lives (face to face and/or online), e.g. intimidation, playing on someone's self-esteem, coercion, etc.
- Labelling, e.g. name calling, etc.
- Targeting because of who you are or who you are perceived to be (face to face and/or online), e.g. homophobia, sexism, racism, etc.

Sometimes, bullying behaviour has no observable or actual impact on a child/young person. Indeed, the intended recipient may be completely unaffected by the behaviour. However, where the intention is to bully, the behaviour is not ignored, and will be challenged and recorded appropriately. For example, the use of homophobic or other derogatory language may have no impact on the child/young person it is aimed at, but will still be challenged as the language itself is unacceptable and could impact on other people.

## Prejudice-based Bullying

Bullying behaviour may be a result of prejudice that relates to perceived or actual differences. This can lead to behaviour and language that could manifest in different ways. In the Scottish legal system, these are referred to as 'hate incidents' and if a crime is then committed, 'hate crimes'. Schools are responsible for ensuring that curricula are designed to include education about all protected characteristics, ensuring that children and young people have the language, understanding and confidence to respond to prejudice-based bullying effectively. For older children/young people, schools actively facilitate young people's understanding of responsible citizenship and ensure that they are aware of the seriousness and consequences of hate crime.

Prejudice-based bullying includes incidents which have been motivated by one or more of the *protected characteristics* (below), as well as including other prejudices which are not listed in the Equality Act 2010.

All council services working with children and young people will have awareness of the protected characteristics and other prejudices and will take these into consideration in their work with children and young people.

### The protected characteristics in the Equality Act are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

### Other prejudices not listed in the Equality Act:

- Additional Support Needs
- Asylum Seekers and Refugees
- Body Image and Physical Appearance
- Gender Identity
- Gypsy/Travellers
- Intersectionality
- Looked After/Care Experienced Children and Young People
- Sectarianism
- Socio-Economic Prejudice
- Young Carers

In Scotland, there is strong focus on prevention work around Gender Based Violence (GBV) and misogyny. The Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP) national resource and violence reduction programmes such as Mentors in Violence Prevention and the Stirling Women's Aid & Forth Valley Rape Crisis "Prevention" project, support Stirling's children and young people to develop their learning and thinking around healthy, consenting relationships and societal views of gender conformity. Scotland is moving towards the addition of misogyny as a hate crime and council services should take this into consideration in their work with children and young people.

In educational establishments, in addition to recording and monitoring incidents of bullying behaviour on the Bullying and Equalities module on SEEMiS (see Section 7), any incidents of prejudiced-based bullying must be recorded on the Council's Corporate Incident Form. Information can be found at <http://source.stirling.gov.uk/pages/h-s-incident-reporting-2>.

### When is it not bullying behaviour?

Children and young people fall out and disagree with each other as a normal part of growing up. Providing children and young people with opportunities to discuss how they feel, helps them develop resilience in managing their relationships. As adults, we have a responsibility to support children and young people to talk about their experiences and challenges, without us leading their thinking and potentially mislabelling the behaviour. This could escalate a simple fall out to something perceived to be a bullying incident, and adults need to use a common sense approach to manage such conversations supportively and sensibly.



## Section 4:

# Impact of Bullying Behaviours on Children, Young People and Families



Bullying can have both long and short-term effects on the health and wellbeing of children and young people. Being bullied can have a significant impact on an individual and it can lead to a range of coping mechanisms or reactive behaviours.

One young person shared:

*“I messaged a girl in the year below me to tell her I liked her. She screenshot the message and shared it around. I got anonymous messages from people telling me to die. In my classes, groups of people called me names, but too quiet for the teacher to hear. I ended up not going to those classes and going to the park because I just couldn’t take it. I hadn’t done anything wrong, all I did was tell a girl I liked her. I haven’t been able to sit some of my N5s this year as I got too behind in the courses. I told my mum and she wanted to tell the school the reason for me skipping but what was the point? Teachers mean well but what could they have done?”*

Additionally, the impact of bullying behaviour can extend beyond the individuals involved. Bullying can affect a child or young person’s school life, as well as affecting family members and peers.

Those around the individual may experience feelings of powerlessness, struggle with feelings of failure about parenting abilities, and can become excessively fearful about the child or young person’s safety:

*“I had no idea that other boys in his year were sending him these messages on WhatsApp. He told me that in the beginning, he tried to laugh it off as banter but he became so self-conscious about his weight that he didn’t want to take part in PE and was giving his teacher all sorts of excuses. He stopped eating lunch to try to lose weight and I only found out about all of this when his PE teacher phoned me. I couldn’t believe my son was going through this and I didn’t know a thing”.*

Similarly, being a witness of bullying behaviour can affect health and wellbeing and may include feelings of guilt, fear and anxiety.

Failure to prevent and address bullying behaviours can have a detrimental impact on long term physical and mental health and wellbeing, and upon life chances.



## Section 5:

# Protecting our Children and Young People from Bullying Behaviours

**Children and young people have a right to be protected from bullying behaviour – a protection that all adults in their lives, regardless of their roles, share a responsibility to provide.**

**(Respectme, Scotland's Anti-Bullying Service)**

The rights of children and young people are unconditional. Adults are duty-bearers of these rights which are not dependent upon a responsibility and cannot be taken away, earned or used as a reward. All adults in Stirling Council will be mindful of their duty-bearer responsibilities in protecting children and young people from bullying behaviours. To support this, all children's services are encouraged to develop anti-bullying guidelines in the context of their service.

While children and young people can access a range of children's services in Stirling, this guidance recognises that Stirling's educational establishments are likely to be most involved in a child and young person's life. Therefore, expectations with regards to protecting our children and young people from bullying behaviours in educational establishments are specifically noted.

### **What a child or young person can expect from all children's services in Stirling Council**

- That they be treated with respect and that their rights are protected and fulfilled.
- To be listened to, and to have concerns taken seriously.
- That the services they are accessing subscribe to a culture and practice where bullying does not thrive and is not tolerated.
- To be included and involved in developing and refreshing guidance and approaches to preventing and responding to bullying.
- That adults across children's services know how to prevent, respond and report bullying behaviours.
- To be confident that an adult can help and signpost appropriate supports (including concerns around any individual or protected characteristic).

## **Additional Support Needs**

Children and young people are a diverse population with a wide range of needs. This includes children and young people with complex health needs; learning disabilities; sensory impairments, and social and behavioural needs. Children and young people with additional support needs have the same right to be safe and protected from bullying behaviours.

**Children and young people with additional support needs may:**

- be adversely affected by negative attitudes to disability and perceptions of difference,
- be more isolated and not have many friends,
- not understand that what is happening is bullying,
- have difficulties telling people about bullying.

The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended 2009) provides a comprehensive legal framework for the provision of additional, targeted support for children and young people who face barriers to learning. Children and young people with additional support needs may experience bullying differently and may be targeted because of their additional support need. In addition, 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 or young person's learning, including children and young people who are demonstrating bullying behaviour.

## **What parents and carers can expect from Stirling Council**

- That their child will be treated with respect and their rights are protected and fulfilled.
- To be listened to and have concerns taken seriously and to be treated with respect.
- To be included and involved in developing guidance and approaches to preventing and responding to bullying.
- To be confident that professionals are knowledgeable of and can help and signpost appropriate supports (including concerns around any individual or protected characteristic).
- Where appropriate, be made aware of how to make a complaint, and to be supported to do so if necessary.

## **What children, young people and their families can expect from educational establishments**

- Every establishment will refresh, develop and maintain their own anti-bullying guidance based on Stirling's guidance and the Scottish Government's 'Respect for All'. This will be refreshed, developed and maintained in consultation with children and young people, parents and carers.
- There will be a proactive, nurturing and relationship based culture and ethos where bullying behaviours are not tolerated.
- That children and young people can talk in confidence about any concerns they have.
- That incidents of bullying behaviour will be listened to, resolved proactively, using a respectful approach that takes into account the wellbeing needs of both the person experiencing the bullying behaviour and those demonstrating bullying behaviour.
- That accurate recording of bullying incidents has taken place to address behaviours promptly.

## Section 6:

# Creating the Right Environment: Promoting Respectful Relationships



In Stirling's *'Promoting Positive Relationships, Positive Behaviour'* guidance, a nurturing, relationship-based approach is recommended as best practice in fostering a culture where positive, respectful relationships are central to learning, participation and wellbeing. It recognises that all adults interacting with children and young people have a role to play in establishing positive relationships that promote healthy social and emotional development and that these relationships should be reliable, predictable and consistent where possible.

All Stirling Council services supporting children and young people will consider the protected characteristics when evaluating their approach to positive relationships and in developing strategies for a respectful, equitable and inclusive culture and ethos.

Enabling children and young people to develop their learning and thinking around friendships, relationships and the potential breakdown of these should be an integral part of learning and teaching in all educational establishments.

Respectme, Scotland's anti-bullying service, suggests the following actions to engage children and young people's learning and thinking around bullying behaviours and further strengthen organisational messages to service users that bullying behaviours will not be tolerated:

<b>'Ground Rules'</b>	Can be devised by children and young people focusing on how they interact with each other and what they will do if they experience bullying. These will differ depending on the ages of the children involved, but may include statements such as: "We will respect each other and our differences." and "When we see someone being bullied we will try to help." These can usefully be prominently displayed for all to see and if bullying behaviour occurs or relationships are negative, the behaviour can be checked by reminding children and young people of the statements.
<b>Activities such as role-play, art work, drama and literature</b>	Can provide further reinforcement that bullying is wrong and provide an empathetic approach to those who have been bullied or those who witness bullying.
<b>Visual reminders</b>	Such as posters and badges also provide reinforcement. These can be displayed around the organisation and also be on school or organisational websites if possible. A clear visual commitment to equality and diversity gives a clear message.

<p><b>Discussion</b></p>	<p>Around themes such as <i>what is bullying, who would you tell</i> and the <i>impacts of bullying</i> can help to develop attitudes and create an environment where bullying is unacceptable. Examples can be taken from the media or put forward by the children and young people themselves. Get young people to discuss how bullying is perceived in popular culture either using art, drama, as part of presentations or class themes. They can also explore issues such as prejudice, racism and homophobia.</p>
<p><b>Peer Mediation</b></p>	<p>Is a problem solving approach to bullying led by young people? They are trained to provide guidance and mediation to other children and young people when bullying occurs. This can provide a helpful environment where there is no imbalance of power. Peer mediation will only be suitable to deal with certain types of bullying behaviour. Children and young people who are being picked on or teased, being called names or being put down, being ignored, left out or having rumours spread about them may benefit from this process. However it is not suitable in all cases. For example, violent incidents, incidents based on difference or perceived difference and unlawful practices would require the support and intervention of adults. It is important to make these distinctions clear to all children and young people who are providing mediation and ensure that support is available for all concerned. It is important to be mindful of the impact that being exposed to bullying and other serious behaviours can have on children and young people. Any peer support systems will have robust and clear adult guidance and support to be effective.</p>
<p><b>Role-modelling</b></p>	<p>And self-awareness amongst adults is also important. The relationship between adults and children and young people will also mirror these values. Children will model their behaviour on what they are witnessing and adults will aim to always be mindful of this. Lead by example. If you judge and criticise, children and young people will think this behaviour is acceptable and will follow your lead. Let children know that bullying is never acceptable and explain why. Talk to children and young people and, most importantly, listen to them. Show children respect and they are more likely to respect others.</p>



## Section 7:

# Recording and Monitoring Bullying Incidents

Accurate recording of bullying incidents helps to ensure that an appropriate response has taken place. Recording will also support us to monitor the effectiveness of our anti-bullying guidance and practice and support us to review and update as appropriate.

Recording systems will include information on:

- The children and young people involved, as well as staff or other adults,
- Where and when bullying has taken place,
- The type of bullying experienced, e.g. name-calling, rumours, threats,
- Any underlying prejudice including details of any protected characteristic(s),
- Consideration of personal or additional support needs and wellbeing concerns and,
- Actions taken including resolution at an individual or organisational level.

It is likely that educational establishments will be mostly involved in the recording and monitoring of incidents. In line with current national expectations, the Bullying & Equalities module on SEEMiS must be used by educational establishments to record information promptly. In 2023, Education Scotland's [thematic review](#) of Recording and Monitoring Bullying Incidents highlighted some challenge areas around the use of the module. Consultation with Stirling's ASN Support Coordinators highlighted ways in which support can be strengthened around using the module, resulting in a refresh of the procedural guidance document available to establishments.

Any prejudiced based incidents must also be reported through the Council's Corporate Incident forms.

## Section 8:

# Supporting Self-Evaluation of Guidance and Practice



**An anti-bullying policy provides consistency in process, action and practice. Any member of staff, parent, child or young person should be able to read a policy and know what they can expect and also what is expected of them. Policy development is a journey, a values based journey to create environments where bullying does not thrive.**

**(Respectme, Scotland's Anti-bullying Service)**

These guidelines emphasise the need for council services who have contact with children and young people to create and maintain guidance that reflect both local and national priorities around respect and positive relationships. Schools and nurseries can use the advice below to support their review of anti-bullying guidance.

To begin this process, the following questions can be asked:

- Does the service have a current anti-bullying guidance that reflects messages in this document, and in the national framework, 'Respect for All – A National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People'?
- How well are relevant stakeholders involved in the guidance development?
- To what extent does the service – including children, young people and their families – have ownership of the vision, aims and values of the guidance?
- What is the plan and timescale for developing or refreshing the guidance?

In developing guidance, consideration can be given to self-evaluation of:

- Whole-service training and involvement,
- Culture and practice,
- Parental/family engagement,
- Recording, monitoring, continuous improvement and learning,
- Response, support and the voice of children and young people.

The 'Policy through to Practice' booklet provided by Respectme <https://respectme.org.uk/policy/principles-for-policy-development/> guides educational establishments through self-evaluation and the refreshing, creation and maintenance of guidance. Other council services are encouraged to adapt and contextualise the support provided by Respectme in the booklet in order to create and maintain guidance relevant to their service.





## Section 9:

# Acknowledgements

This guidance was initially published in 2018 with thanks to contributions from colleagues from Schools, Learning and Education; Respectme; Clackmannanshire and Stirling Child Protection Committee; Forth Valley NHS; Stirling's Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament; children and young people from across our educational establishments and parental views from our ASN Parents' Reference Group.

This 2023 refresh was guided by Respectme, Scotland's anti-bullying service with the views of staff, young people from Wallace High School, and parental views from the ASN Parents' Reference Group, incorporated.



## Section 10:

# Support, Resources and Information

- [Respect Me](#)
- [Children First](#)
- [Parentline](#)
- [Childline](#)
- [Education Scotland](#)
- [LGBT Youth Scotland](#)
- [SAMH](#) (Scottish Association for Mental Health)
- [Zero Tolerance](#)
- [Enquire](#)
- [Enable Scotland](#)
- [Knowledge Exchange Centre for Nomadic Communities](#)
- [Changing Faces](#)
- [Show Racism the Red Card](#)
- [CSREC](#)
- [White Ribbon Scotland](#)

## Review of Stirling's Approach to Respect for All: Preventing and Challenging Bullying Behaviour

	Date	Lead Officers(s)
<b>Produced</b>	October 2018	Sarah Anderson, Team Leader
<b>Updated</b>	November 2023	Fiona Moffat, Education Development Officer
<b>Review</b>	November 2026	

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