West Sussex County Council: Action Against Bullying

‘Safeguarding Children and Young People’

Anti-Bullying Strategy

2015-2018
West Sussex County Council Children and Young People’s Service

Anti-Bullying Strategy and Operational Plan

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NB: The strategy and operational plan has been developed in consultation with various WSCC services; voluntary sector representatives; children, young people and parents/carers.

The steering group will be responsible for the implementation of the operational plan and for monitoring the overall achievements of the strategy and an annual review of both will take place to enable the work to reduce bullying across West Sussex is effective and appropriate.
Introduction:

Welcome to “Action Against Bullying” the Anti-Bullying Strategy and Operational Plan for West Sussex.

West Sussex County Council (WSCC) believes that all forms of bullying are unacceptable and should not be tolerated. We want children and young people to stay safe from bullying and discrimination across West Sussex. We also want everyone who works with children and young people to take bullying seriously and know how to resolve it positively; we seek to empower people to challenge, remedy and prevent bullying, creating a culture where every child and young person is treated with dignity and respect, as well as, children and young people themselves, taking their responsibility seriously to treat others in the same way.

What is “bullying”?

It is important to ensure that there is a clear definition of what bullying is across services, schools and communities, so that the right support and interventions are delivered to children and young people to help build resilience and coping mechanisms to enable them to thrive and reach their full potential.

In West Sussex we have adopted the Department of Educations (DfE) definition of Bullying as laid out in ‘Preventing and Tackling Bullying’ document, March 2014.

‘Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally’.
(DfE 2013)

This definition has been further enhanced by using National Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) research which suggests there are five essential components of bullying behaviour; the first three are shared with general aggressive behaviour, with the final two components demonstrating characteristics that set it apart from other aggressive behaviour:
The Anti-Bullying Strategy and Operational Plan builds on the effective practice WSCC already has in place to prevent and respond to bullying behaviour and is an important tool to help ensure children and young people feel safe in West Sussex; we want to make sure we are working together to tackle bullying, promote respect and help our children and young people reach their full potential.

**WSCC Achievements to date:**

Over the past six years WSCC and partner agencies, who work with children and young people, have worked hard to gain a better understanding of bullying.

We have listened and heard from different children and young people across West Sussex who have told us what they think about bullying, the effect it has on them and what makes them feel safe from bullying.

They tell us that they do not always feel safe at school and that bullying can take place anywhere in our community, so addressing bullying is therefore not just an issue for schools, but also for parents and carers, all organisations working with children and young people, and the wider community.

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1. **Intention to harm**: bullying is deliberate, with the intention to cause harm; friends teasing each other in a good-natured way is not bullying, but a person teasing another to upset them is bullying

2. **Harmful outcome**: one or more persons are hurt physically or emotionally

3. **Direct or indirect acts**: bullying can involve direct aggression, such as hitting someone, as well as indirect acts such as spreading rumours

4. **Repetition**: bullying involves repeated acts of aggression: an isolated aggressive act, like a fight, is not bullying

5. **Unequal power**: bullying involves the abuse of power by one or several persons who are (perceived as) more powerful, often due to their age, physical strength or psychological resilience

*(NSPCC 2010)*
Since 2008 we have introduced and developed a wide range of help and support mechanisms including:

- The introduction of a West Sussex multi-agency steering group to focus on raising awareness of Anti-Bullying across the county;
- The launch of the ‘Action Against Bullying’ support line and referral process;
- The delivery of one to one intensive support interventions;
- The development and delivery of the targeted group intervention ‘Brakes’;
- Encouragement to schools to engage in the annual Anti-Bullying Week (November), this has become well established in most schools across West Sussex
- Supporting many schools to establish peer mentoring or buddy schemes, Anti-Bullying programmes or Anti-Bullying ambassadors/groups who meet regularly and embed Anti-Bullying work in the school.
- Providing information and advice to schools on best practice and supporting positive Anti-Bullying policy development;
- Providing information, advice and guidance to parents and carers about bullying to enable them to support their children and communicate with schools more effectively when dealing with bullying;
- The Development of the WSCC E-Safety Strategy;
- The continued development of the county’s young people’s web site ‘Yourspace’, which provides information, advice and signposting to other Anti-Bullying support organisations, both nationally and locally placed; including supporting the annual Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA) Anti-Bullying Week;
- Completing a number of surveys to find out about bullying across West Sussex from children, young people and parents/carers; using the information collected to help inform the development and design of services and targeted interventions.

This document follows on from and continues this work, aiming to support a joint approach through partnership work to address bullying, wherever and whenever it involves children and young people. Specifically setting out how the local authority and its partners will tackle bullying.
National and Local Context:

Local authorities and schools have a duty to 'safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people'.

In 2012 Ofsted published “No Place for Bullying” a report focusing on how bullying behaviour within schools needs to be prevented and tackled effectively; the report indicated that ‘bullying continues to be a significant issue for pupils, disproportionately affecting those who have a disability or special educational need and those who are, or are perceived to be, gay’. Language that discriminates against these groups was common in many of the schools Ofsted visited.

National research on bullying suggests that:

- Over 40,000 children and young people across the UK have called Childline about bullying in 2014
- 350,000 online visits from children looking for information on bullying in the past year
- 1 in 4 contacts from children aged 11 and under was about bullying
- Nearly 1,000 children called over concerns about a friend or someone they know being bullied.

(Childline 2014)
31% of young people aged 14 had experienced verbal bullying (higher than any other form of bullying)

"Characteristics of Bullying Victims in Schools” (DfEs 2010)

20% of young people had experienced bullying or threats via email, internet chatrooms or text messages.

(Tesco Mobile survey 2005)

25% of calls to Childline related to concerns over sexual orientation, homophobia or homophobic bullying

(Childline Survey 2006)

82% of children with a learning difficulty are bullied

(Mencap Survey 2007)
What are West Sussex children and young people saying?

67% of West Sussex Secondary school pupils highlighted that verbal and physical bullying was collectively the most common form of bullying they encounter

(WSCC survey 2013)

In West Sussex 38% of secondary school pupils stated they have experienced some form of bullying when at school

(WSCC survey 2013)

67% of primary school children said they have experienced some form of bullying in school

(WSCC survey 2013)

Children and young people in West Sussex are stating that Disability (74%), Race (14%) and Sexual Orientation (15%) are the most common reason for being bullied

(WSCC survey 2014)

25% of West Sussex young people disclosed that they have bullied other young people

(WSCC survey 2013)
Effects of Bullying

Bullying can affect everyone; those who are bullied, those who bully, and those who witness bullying and is linked to many negative outcomes; it undermines confidence and self-esteem, destroys a sense of security and marginalises those groups who may be particular targets for bullies. NSPCC 2010 research states that:

**Children and young people who are bullied:** are more likely to:

- Experience negative physical and mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, increased feelings of sadness and loneliness, changes in sleep and eating patterns, and loss of interest in activities they used to enjoy. These issues may persist into adulthood.
- Decrease their academic achievement and school participation. They are more likely to miss, skip, or drop out of school.
- Have suicidal thoughts and a small number might retaliate through violent measures later in life.

**Children and young people who are bullies:** are more likely to:

- Engage in violent and other risky behaviours into adulthood
- Abuse alcohol and other drugs in adolescence and as adults
- Get into fights, vandalism, and drop out of school
- Engage in early sexual activity
- Have criminal convictions as adults
- Be abusive toward their partners, spouses, or children as adults
With this research in mind, it is therefore vital to gain more information about those children and young people who are particularly at risk of bullying so that policy interventions and preventative approaches can be based on good evidence and targeted at the right groups and individuals.

Evidence has also revealed that children and young people who are badly bullied in school are more likely than others to be bullied out of school as well, so, to tackle bullying successfully the whole community and all services for children and young people need to work together to change the culture so that bullying is unacceptable. For Local Authorities and schools this is a statutory obligation.

**Children and young people who witness bullying – (Bystanders) are more likely to:**

- Have increased use of tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs
- Have increased mental health problems, including depression and anxiety
- Poor attendance at school
West Sussex Strategic Approach

The overarching outcome West Sussex intends to achieve is that of ‘reducing incidents of bullying across the county’ and aims to:

1: Raise Awareness of bullying by:

- Ensuring an effective partnership approach is taken with a focus on raising awareness of bullying in regards to individuals; operational services and strategic outcomes
- Actively participating in projects and activities to promote an Anti-Bullying ethos across the county, for example championing the annual National Anti-Bullying Week.

2: Have a clear route of getting ‘Help’ by:

- Providing appropriate and accessible information to all children and young people of West Sussex
- Ensuring that the range of support for children and young people is promoted effectively to professionals, parents/carers and children and young people themselves.

3: Provide adults working with children and young people the skills to deal with bullying by:

- Supporting organisations to develop and implement effective policies and practices
- Ensuring organisations work in partnership and share best practice in their approaches to tackling and preventing bullying

4: Actively listen to the ‘voice’ of children and young people by:

- Providing opportunities for children and young people to talk about bullying
- Involving children and young people in developing solutions to reducing bullying across West Sussex