

Fostering

# Countering Bullying

The Trust Board has granted the Chief Executive of the Sandwell Children's Trust the authority to approve this document.

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## Regulations and Standards

The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011

### Regulation 11 - Independent fostering agencies—duty to secure welfare

Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards:

#### STANDARD 1 - The child's wishes and feelings and the views of those significant to them

#### STANDARD 4 - Safeguarding Children

### Scope of this Chapter

This chapter explains the steps that foster carers and staff should take in recognising and dealing with bullying.

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## 1. Introduction

Everyone involved in looking after children shares responsibility for countering bullying and for creating a culture which positively encourages acceptable behaviour and reduces or prevents the likelihood of bullying.

All children and young people have a right to feel confident that this is a safe and healthy environment.

We want to ensure that all children, young people and staff remain safe from bullying behaviour and have the opportunity to thrive and prosper, emotionally and socially.

When bullying is encountered, the agency will ensure that the procedures are in place to allow:

- Reporting and recording of the incident;

- Having concerns or incidents of bullying properly monitored;
- Ensuring appropriate action is taken in response to incidents of bullying and that these are followed up.

This will ensure that people feel listened to and understand that their concerns have been and will be taken seriously.

The agency will provide guidance and training that encourages an understanding and appreciation of what bullying is and how it impacts on self and others.

## 2. Definition of Bullying

Bullying is defined as behaviour or actions of a person, group of people or a whole organisation designed to cause distress or to hurt a person or group of people.

Bullying can take place in a variety of settings including face-to-face, via other people, on the phone or the internet including social networking sites.

Bullying can be:

- Emotional - being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding possessions, threatening gestures);
- Physical - pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence;
- Racist - racial taunts, graffiti, gestures;
- Sexual - unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments;
- Homophobic - because of, or focusing on the issue of sexuality;
- Verbal - name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing;
- Online/cyberbullying - e.g. using mobile phones or social networking sites to intimidate or bully others.

## 3. Prevention

Everyone involved in looking after children shares responsibility for countering bullying and for creating a culture which positively encourages acceptable behaviour and reduces or prevents the likelihood of bullying.

The fostering agency's statement of purpose will include its strategy for dealing with and reporting bullying. The children's guide should also contain information and advice on countering bullying.

Foster carers must be alert to the risk of bullying and should take all reasonable steps to prevent such behaviour. In order to help achieve this, each foster home should have its own strategies for countering bullying, and this should be reflected in the foster carer's safer caring policy.

This will include:

- Implementing clear rules within the household that bullying is not acceptable and what measures will be taken if the foster carers suspect bullying or it is reported to them;
- Providing clarity to children on acceptable behaviours;
- Providing opportunities for children to explore issues of bullying e.g. writing stories or poems or drawing pictures about bullying;
- Encouraging children to read stories about bullying or reading such stories to them;
- Having discussions about bullying and why it matters;
- Being good role models as foster carers.

## 4. Risk Assessment and Planning

If foster carers have any concerns that incidents of bullying have occurred between children within the foster home or that a child in the foster placement may be a victim or perpetrator of bullying at school or elsewhere outside the foster home, they must discuss these with their supervising social worker; who should advise on what actions are necessary to reduce or prevent it.

When bullying occurs within the foster home it may be appropriate to convene a meeting, preferably with the child or children concerned, to discuss strategies to prevent or reduce the bullying. The outcomes of the meeting may include the following:

- The bully (bullies) may be asked to genuinely apologise;
- In serious cases, some form of sanction will be considered;
- If possible, the children concerned will be reconciled;

After the incident/incidents have been investigated and dealt with, there will be continuously monitoring to ensure repeated bullying does not take place.

If bullying takes place in school, the foster carer should take all steps to inform the designated senior person at the earliest opportunity.

If the bullying is persistent or serious, the social worker should be consulted and it may be necessary to conduct a placement planning meeting or a referral may be required under the Safeguarding Children and Young People Procedure and a strategy discussion/meeting convened.

## 5. Notifications, Recording and Review

### 5.1 Minor or Non-Persistent Bullying

Where bullying is not persistent or not serious it should be notified to the supervising social worker at the first opportunity; the supervising social worker will decide whether to inform the child's social worker and what further action to take.

## **5.2 Persistent or Serious Bullying**

Serious or persistent bullying must be notified immediately to the supervising social worker, who will notify the child's social worker within one working day. Consideration will be given to whether a Child Protection Referral should be made, if so, see Safeguarding Children and Young People Procedure.

## **5.3 Recording and Review**

The foster carer must record all incidents of bullying in the daily records of the child who is the alleged victim and the child who is the alleged bully.

The child's placement plan should be reviewed with a view to incorporating strategies to reduce or prevent future incidents.