

BULLYING TODAY:

A Report by the Office of the Children's Commissioner,
with Recommendations and Links to Practitioner Tools



'Bullying is a nightmare'
Carys, aged 10, Gloucestershire.

Entry to Children's Commissioner's 'Shout' competition, 2006.

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We look forward to continuing to work together.



FOREWORD

Professor Sir Albert Aynsley-Green, Children's Commissioner for England

When my office held a competition – ‘Shout! Turn up the Volume’ – inviting children and young people to tell us what was most important to them, the largest single number of our on-line responses identified bullying as the key issue. Sadly, this was not a surprise. I rarely meet with a child or young person for whom bullying is not an issue. Many children feel passionately about its unfairness and the harm it causes. I share their passion, which is why in Anti-Bullying Week 2005 I made a public commitment to tackling bullying. I set myself three specific tasks. I would:

- Work with children and young people to develop more resources that they could use to understand and reduce bullying.
- Continue to meet with children and young people to hear their views on bullying and what should be done about it.
- Prepare a detailed policy statement examining what is being done against bullying, and what works best.
- Advocate for a significant programme of research.

This report delivers on that commitment. It is a product of my Office's continuing dialogue with children and young people; it describes how they have been at the heart of drawing up new resources; it sets out the current knowledge base; it describes where we need further research; and it makes a series of recommendations for research, practice and policy that I hope will help all of us to drive down bullying.

On the basis of the evidence we have brought together, I am more convinced than ever that beating bullying requires sustained commitment and a flexible set of tools and approaches. It is a long journey, and one which must start early. Patterns of aggression or problems with low-self esteem and poor social functioning are often set stubbornly hard at an early age. We must not give up on any child, but we must also recognise that it is far better to work with carers, families and communities to provide good foundations for children from the outset.

The challenge for adults and children alike is to work towards a society based on rights and respect, not bullying and the selfish abuse of power. I recommend this report as a contribution to everyone working towards that end.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Aynsley-Green'.

November 2006

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report brings together analysis of national and local strategy and frameworks, academic theory and evidence base, and the experiences and views of children and young people to provide a comprehensive picture of bullying today. By offering this overview, the Children's Commissioner emphasises that effective anti-bullying work is far more complex than what happens in individual classrooms. Tackling bullying needs a whole-systems approach.

Anti-bullying work is a generation old, and expresses changing attitudes to children, risk and rights. England's first large-scale anti-bullying project - the Sheffield Project - established the basic template for practice still used today, and so its lessons are still valuable. Its key finding was that whole school commitment to an inclusive whole school policy is the main factor determining the level of success. Some of the challenges it identified, such as the comparative difficulty of changing behaviour among older children, and the different behaviours of girls and boys, are still issues that practitioners and policy makers need to address.

Children's Trusts have a key role in tackling bullying, and a review of a sample of 27 of their Plans suggests that bullying has become core business, partly at the insistence of children and young people. There is increasing concern about hate- or bias-bullying and 'community bullying', and outstanding challenges around data and reporting.

New duties on services have introduced important anti-bullying safeguards, although schools retain considerable autonomy. Wellbeing programmes in schools with inter-agency support from Healthy Schools address bullying directly and indirectly. PSHE remains central to delivering anti-bullying programmes in schools, but it is not a statutory curriculum subject. Early interventions to support positive parenting are increasingly important, and can potentially go to the roots of bullying.

We know that most children and young people are affected by bullying, that bullying is dynamic and that roles change, with particular groups of children and young people being more vulnerable than others, including those with disabilities, SEN and those from minority ethnic groups. In some circumstances, a child or young person's involvement in bullying may be related to deep-seated patterns of aggressive behaviour or low self-esteem. Although most bullying episodes are short, where bullying is severe or long-lasting, the outcomes for those involved can be damaging educationally, physically, socially and economically.

A review of academic literature over the last ten years by the University of York reveals some evidence to confirm the importance of robust and consistent whole-school practice, and the value of child-centred approaches including assertiveness skills and peer support. There is little evidence to support punitive approaches. The total evidence base around bullying, however, is far from comprehensive, and this problem is compounded by a

lack of regularly collected and collated data from schools. More needs to be known about the impact of anti-bullying policies over time and in relation to particular victim groups.

Children and young people have asked the Children's Commissioner to take action on bullying, and he has done so through high-level advocacy, detailed scrutiny, strategic overview and continued direct engagement with children. The Office of the Children's Commissioner has scrutinised the current system for dealing with complaints about bullying in schools, and is launching a discussion document with draft recommendations. The Children's Commissioner's engagement with children and young people has resulted in creation of the 'Journeys' resources, which describe the experience of bullying and present young people's ideas on what works to stop it.

Bullying is a Children's Rights issue, and Children's Rights approaches can make a significant contribution to tackling the problem. Evidence supports the value of involving children and young people in supporting each other and changing peer culture. Case studies of practice in UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools in Hampshire and reflections on peer support and its effectiveness in Suffolk by Helen Cowie illustrate how children are the key to change.

The Office of the Children's Commissioner puts forward recommendations for educational professionals and the wider children's workforce, for schools and local authorities and central government. The importance of listening to and engaging with children and young people runs through most of what is proposed. Recommendations reflect themes emerging strongly from the evidence:

- Empowering children and young people to play a strong role in all anti-bullying activity
- Supporting positive behaviour from early childhood onwards
- Respecting the diversity of children, culturally and individually, and tailoring responses to individual needs
- Supporting the children's workforce to respond effectively
- Supporting children's services to work coherently within an appropriate inspection framework

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Since the late 1970s, bullying among children has been the focus of considerable international research and policy development. Definitions have evolved, but the majority include all or most of the following elements:

- Aggression
- Intentional hurtfulness
- Abuse of power (asymmetric conflict)
- Repetition

These are included in what is probably the most comprehensive definition, by the Australian academic Ken Rigby:

Bullying involves a desire to hurt + hurtful action + a power imbalance + (typically) repetition + an unjust use of power + evident enjoyment by the aggressor and generally a sense of being oppressed on the part of the victim.¹

The 'hurtful action' can take numerous forms, such as name-calling, verbal abuse, spreading of rumours, malicious use of communications technology, ostracising, attacks on property or persons. These hurtful actions can be conducted one-to-one, or a group may persecute an individual or another group.

Bullying is not a specific offence in United Kingdom law. Some European countries, and 19 American states have enacted legislation penalising peer-to-peer bullying in schools, but actions in the UK must be on the grounds of specific breaches of the criminal law such as 'threatening behaviour' (s.4, Public Order Act 1986), or harassment (Protection from Harassment Act 1997), or through civil action on grounds such as trespass against the person.

Though prevalence and behaviour change, bullying is far from being a specifically childhood phenomenon. In fact, there are clear links between the amount of adult aggression to which children are exposed and their involvement in bullying behaviour. It would be unhelpful if the problems children and young people experience with bullying become a way of characterising modern childhood. Children and young people have told the Commissioner that they deeply resent the negative way adult society views them:

*'Teenagers are always seen as being thugs and bullies and you can't go into a shop without getting a funny look.'*²

CHAPTER 1

Action Against Bullying: Beginning the Journey

1 Chapter Summary

Anti-bullying work is a generation old, and expresses changing attitudes to children, risk and rights. This chapter explores how England's first large-scale anti-bullying project established the basic template for today's practice and still provides valuable lessons today.

- **Changing Attitudes** - Systematic bullying prevention has grown out of changes in society's view of children's rights, and children and risk.
- **Initial Analysis and Intervention** - A theoretical model for understanding, tackling and monitoring bullying in schools was first developed in Scandinavia, based on models of aggressive behaviour and behaviour modification.
- **A Model of Practice in England** - England's first systematic large-scale anti-bullying programme in Sheffield adapted the Norwegian model of a whole-school approach with additional preventative and support elements. The Sheffield model remains central to anti-bullying practice in England.
- **Success Factors in the Project** - Commitment of the whole school community is clearly linked to the success of interventions.
- **Key Challenges** - It is more difficult to change the behaviour of older than younger children, girls and boys respond differently, and school-based models may not be directly replicable in community settings.

1.1 Changing Attitudes

The theme of Anti-Bullying Week 2006 is 'The Bystander'. This refers to the fact that bullying is often a group-condoned activity that will intensify or decrease depending on the actions of those who are not the principal aggressors (see 4.3). The week's message to children and young people is therefore simple and direct: 'See it. Get help. Stop it.' For those involved in anti-bullying work, it has a certain irony. Some of the most important 'bystanders' in terms of children's bullying have, until comparatively recently, been adults. Few adults have ever condoned it; on the contrary, it has often attracted severe moral censure and generated intensely protective feelings among parents. But the fact that it has been a feature of so many lives for so long has brought about a sense of fatalism, and even led many adults to regard bullying as a rite of passage: quite literally a school of hard-knocks which, for all its unpleasantness, needed to be endured. It was unrealistic for adults to systematically intervene in children's private social

worlds and impose adult expectations. In effect, adults stood by while children bullied and were bullied.

Over the last 25 years, the situation has changed substantially, and that change has been made possible by broader changes in how childhood is understood and how adults engage with children. Such social changes are deep and complex, but in relation to bullying, two particular developments seem to have been influential.

- *Children and Rights*: growing acceptance of children's rights leading up to and following ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1992 in the UK has brought with it a clearer acknowledgement that children are bearers of rights in the here and now. This has reinforced child-centred practice in seeking to understand the world as children experience it, and respond to their needs and their priorities.
- *Children and Risk*: there has been a shift in society's perception of childhood and risk – children at risk, as well as children as a risk to others. Children's involvement in harmful or potentially harmful activity now tends to generate intense and sometimes contradictory concern – a phenomenon Libby Brooks has recently dubbed 'child panic'.³

1.2 Initial Analysis and Intervention

Anti-bullying work is a sign and a product of these slow and subtle social changes. Yet at key moments its growth has been propelled by evident and compelling tragedy. Professor Dan Olweus, and other Scandinavian academics, had been investigating bullying among children since the early 1970s, and though they had been finding evidence of a large scale problem, they initially found no willingness to act systematically to address it. This changed when the press reported the suicides of three 10-14 year old Norwegian boys in 1982, apparently following severe bullying from their peers. It was public outrage that engaged political will, so that in the autumn of 1983 the Norwegian Ministry of Education instituted the world's first comprehensive anti-bullying programme, covering every primary and junior high school in the country. The programme employed a set of techniques that have since become established as the Olweus Bullying Prevention Programme. It includes an assessment of the frequency and nature of bullying, awareness raising, educating and problem-solving activities and meetings for staff, parents and pupils, higher levels of supervision during unstructured periods of the school day, class/pupil developed rules on behaviours, meetings with bullies, victims and other peripherally involved children and their parents. Ongoing mentoring is provided to the school by a team of specialists including psychologists, counsellors and social workers. For Olweus, the programme's aim is 'to reduce as much as possible – ideally to eliminate completely – existing bully / victim problems in and out of the school setting and to prevent the development of new problems'.⁴

These were high ambitions, which an evaluation of the programme in Bergen appeared to bear out. The evaluation claimed a 50% reduction in students being victimised by peers. After 20 months, the number of students bullying others had reduced by 35% for boys and 75% for girls. Moreover, problems were not simply being displaced beyond the school into the wider community. On the contrary, it appeared that communities around schools benefited from a general reduction in anti-social behaviour, vandalism and theft.⁵ Unsurprisingly, the academic community, educationalists and policy makers internationally were struck by what seemed to be a breakthrough of fundamental importance.

It was no longer possible to claim that bullying was an inevitable part of childhood, over which adults had no power to intervene. The programme offered a model of intervention with a fully-developed theoretical framework based on models of aggressive behaviour and theories of behaviour modification, as well as detailed information about programme monitoring and outcome data, not least in the form of the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire, which has remained a key survey instrument of levels of school bullying. Soon, programmes broadly following the Norwegian model were established in Canada, Germany, the USA, Belgium, Spain and Switzerland. Some of the initial optimism was somewhat chastened by another evaluation of the Norwegian Programme, as implemented in Rogaland, which actually found a 44% increase in boys being bullied by peers.⁶ Nevertheless, systematic anti-bullying work had begun.

1.3 A Model of Practice in England – The DES Sheffield Bullying Project

A number of the factors that had precipitated work in Scandinavia were also present in England by the mid to late 1980s. These included an improving evidence base attracting growing academic interest; increasing dissatisfaction on the part of children's welfare groups with existing protection; media readiness to highlight the problem, including through the most tragic and extreme incidents; and official recognition that the status quo was untenable.

1987 proved to be a significant year in the growth of international anti-bullying scholarship and practice, with a major conference in Stavanger stimulating research across Europe, including England. Some of this research, not least Valerie Besag's *Bullies and Victims in Schools* (1989),⁷ proved to be accessible and influential with a non-academic audience, and so began to raise the problem's profile within wider educational and social policy debates. Charitable trusts and voluntary sector groups became persuaded of the need for further research and action, so that, for example, the Gulbenkian Foundation formed a working party and assisted in the production of a booklet in 1990, 'Bullying – A Positive Response'.

The voices of children and parents were also being heard, largely through parents' groups and specialist children's charities like the Anti-Bullying Campaign and Kidscape. As well as providing research and case level advocacy and advice, these organisations had ambitious campaigning

agendas: they aimed to break the silence around bullying and raise its profile so that schools would finally take serious action. The media was quick to pick up on these campaigning messages and the stories of deep distress and damage underpinning them. Sections of the media presented the issue squarely in terms of failed discipline and vicious youth; others in the media and the arts began to examine its causes and effects.⁸ At the same time, Government was coming under more direct pressure from its own advisory bodies to tackle bullying. The 1989 Elton Report, 'Discipline in Schools', drew attention to the 'considerable suffering' bullying and racial harassment was causing to pupils, and called on headteachers and staff to

be alert to signs of bullying and harassment; deal firmly with all such behaviour, and take action based on clear rules which are backed by appropriate sanctions and systems to protect and support victims.⁹

This combination of academic, professional, charitable and media pressure persuaded government to establish the DES Sheffield Bullying Project – England's first comprehensive anti-bullying program – which ran from 1991-1994 in 23 schools, 16 primaries and 7 secondaries, serving 6,500 students aged 8 - 16.¹⁰ Financial support came not only from the Department of Education and Science, but from the Gulbenkian Foundation. The project's aim was to support schools to implement anti-bullying work, and thoroughly evaluate their success against baseline data and with reference to control schools. Findings and conclusions would lead to an information pack on how to tackle bullying that would be available to all schools. The project's main inspiration was clearly the Norwegian programme, yet it was also in tune with English educational theory. The emphasis it placed on 'whole school' policy development, and its understanding of how this can support co-operative behaviour reflected the analysis and recommendations of the 'Elton Report'.

Out of all the anti-bullying interventions the Project made available to schools, the only part that schools had to adopt was development of a whole school policy on bullying. This was the trunk and root system of any effort to reduce bullying, and without it, none of the optional branches were likely to thrive. The principles for developing the whole school policy in a sound and thorough way were therefore reflected on in some detail. The Sheffield schools agreed that whole school policy development in relation to bullying needed:

- *Comprehensive Consultation*: with teaching staff, non teaching staff, governors, parents and pupils
- *Clear Definitions*: so that bullying could be recognised and acted on consistently
- *Clear Communication*: so that expectations were commonly understood across the school community
- *Openness and Warmth*: so that pupils knew their feelings counted, and that their problems would be acted upon

- *Regular Monitoring*: so that effectiveness over time could be understood and maintained¹¹

The optional interventions made available to schools replicated or adapted many elements of the Olweus programme, while extending the range of group resolution techniques and adding some specific techniques to address racism. Importantly, the Sheffield research team was available to provide help, training and support in implementing measures which in some cases, were outside teachers' existing experience, such as establishing peer support groups. Additional financial support from the Gulbenkian Foundation was available for re-design of playgrounds. One notable absence from the options menu, and a point of difference from the Norwegian programme, was additional support in the development and application of rules and sanctions - perhaps because the setting of clear rules and guidelines was considered integral to whole school policy development.

In summary, the intervention options consisted of:

- Surveying pupils' experience of bullying
- Raising awareness, confidence in reporting and empathy for victims:
 - through the curriculum
 - through specialist creative resources (e.g. literature, videos, theatre groups)
 - through special and regular school events
- Bullying awareness and identification training for all school staff
- Specialist training and support for selected staff to recognise and respond to bullying
- Pupil agreement of codes or 'charters' of safe and respectful behaviour
- Supporting pupils to discuss their experiences and views (Quality Circles, Discussion Groups)
- Developing the assertiveness skills of all pupils, and particularly those who have experienced bullying
- Supporting pupils to support each other (peer counselling)
- Developing pupils' empathy and problem-solving skills (Pikas Method of Shared Concern)
- Bringing staff and parents together in meetings to discuss bullying
- Ensuring adult surveillance during breaks
- Redesigning the physical environment to improve safety, in consultation with pupils¹²

Although schools could choose elements from this range of approaches, the overall aim was to construct a layered approach that can be described as consisting of three elements: prevention, intervention and crisis management.¹³

- *Prevention* - ensuring that management of bullying is incorporated into all the school's administrative, learning, management and planning processes and activities covering both the short and long term.
- *Intervention* – risk assessing the school's physical and social environment for bullying 'hot spots' - times and places where children may feel isolated or lack appropriate supervision – and designing these out physically or through, for example, changes to staff training or buddy-type systems.
- *Crisis Management* - dealing directly with bullying children, using either punitive or problem-solving, counselling-orientated approaches, and ensuring that victims are supported.

1.4 Success Factors in the Project

Conclusive evaluation of the Project against its controls was somewhat complicated by the issuing across England in 1992 of 'Action Against Bullying', a pack produced by the Scottish Council for Research in Education. What the evidence did prove conclusively, however, was that levels of bullying in schools can be reduced significantly. After four terms, the percentage of children in primary schools being bullied fell by an average of 15%, with a fall of up to 80% in the best performing schools. There was no significant change in secondaries.

In both primary and secondary schools, around 80% of children and young people thought that the situation where they were had improved. There was a direct correlation between the level of improvement and the level of staff involvement. The evaluation did not attempt to analyse the project's impact against other school data, such as absenteeism, suspension or academic performance. When researchers returned to four primary schools three years after the intervention had begun, they found that the lowered level of bullying experienced by boys had been maintained, but the level of victimisation experienced by girls was higher than before the Project. (Subsequent interventions have also experienced particular difficulty achieving and maintaining reductions in the level of bullying amongst girls.)¹⁴

As intended, learning from the project formed the basis of a guidance pack for all schools. *Don't Suffer in Silence*, was first issued by the DfES in 1994, when it was requested by over 19,000 schools. Revised editions were published in 2000 and 2002, and a new edition is due to be published in Spring Term 2007. It has been DfES' core guidance document. Evaluation in 2003 showed that it was well-regarded. Of the 25 suggested interventions, schools were most satisfied overall with developing whole school policies, involving parents and working to improve playground safety. Infant and primary schools found 'circle time' the most effective approach. A survey of the nature and extent of bullying within the school was consistently highlighted as important; 83% of secondaries had conducted one, although this fell to 70% for infant schools and 56% for primary schools.¹⁵

1.5 Key Challenges

Why is it helpful to reflect again on what was learned from Sheffield? Partly, perhaps, because of its uniqueness; and partly because it is still a living model. Since the Sheffield Project, there have been no comparable large-scale evaluated programmes in England. This constitutes a serious knowledge gap that needs to be addressed. For the moment, though, the window the programme gives on multi-faceted programmes in primary and secondary schools, how they can be implemented and what can be expected of them, retains a special value. At the same time, the model it sets out, and which has been promoted through *Don't Suffer in Silence*, is the pre-eminent model of anti-bullying practice in English schooling. A clearly articulated, inclusively determined whole-school policy, supporting a range of specialist preventive, reactive and supportive approaches is the model to which most schools subscribe, with varying degrees of vigour and seriousness. Sheffield demonstrated that the depth of the whole school's commitment was more important in determining its level of success than the particular selection of interventions it adopted. Nor has the 'menu' of interventions which the Sheffield team offered to participating schools changed fundamentally. Despite some important additions, adaptations and innovations, notably a growing interest in influencing bystander behaviour, the Sheffield offer is similar to the offer being made to schools today by Behaviour and Emotional Support Teams, Education Psychology Services, Anti-Bullying Teams and voluntary sector and arts-in-education projects.

Sheffield's legacy is strong. Yet it leaves some questions unanswered and makes some assumptions that need to be reviewed against current trends. Crucially, the Project did not succeed in reducing bullying in secondary schools. Partly because its baseline data confirmed that the great majority of bullying was taking place in school premises, the Project concentrated on safety within schools. Yet we know that an increasingly common form of bullying – cyber-bullying - is conducted regardless of time and location; and we know that bullying in the community continues to affect children and young people, and is becoming increasingly important to policy makers (see 2.7 and 4.11). Sheffield's model, though dynamic and multi-faceted, is an institutional model. Moreover, the institution is changing. Every Child Matters, Children's Trusts, Extended Schools and the Healthy Schools programme are affecting how schools are expected to operate and what range of outcomes they are expected to deliver.

Key Messages From Initial Analysis and Interventions

- *Intervene early*: primary schools are more likely to achieve substantial reductions in bullying than secondary schools (this appears to be largely for developmental rather than institutional reasons).
- *Work together*: a whole school policy must draw in governors, teachers, non-teaching staff, pupils and parents, and needs leadership to do so.
- *Work iteratively*: a whole school policy depends on a cyclical process moving through consultation, to content, to dissemination, to implementation, to evaluation, to awareness and back through to

- consultation.
- *Work over the long term*: effects fade unless engagement is maintained.
 - *Work broadly*: develop a range of preventative and responsive techniques that meet the wishes and needs of different pupils and different types of bullying situations, including bias-bullying (see 4.7 - 4.10)
 - *Develop or access new skills*: schools need to be able to draw on additional training and support.
 - *Engage the charitable and voluntary sectors*: resources, skills and vision here can stimulate mainstream practice.

1.6 Recommendations

Funding is made available for a large-scale and long-term research study into the impact of school-based and community-based anti-bullying strategies, including how these are or are not meeting specific needs around gender, disability, race and sexuality:

Our evidence base on the efficacy of specific anti-bullying interventions remains patchy. Evidence on 'community bullying' and work to prevent or respond to it is still less robust.

Families, as well as children and young people, should be involved in anti-bullying policies:

The DfES should continue to work with stakeholders to ensure that clear and constructive information on bullying is available to all parents and carers.

Children and young people must be actively involved and engaged in seeking solutions to bullying:

Their ideas must play a significant part in shaping bullying interventions. Children also need to be involved in the development and evaluation of anti-bullying programmes and approaches.

Training on bullying needs to be improved:

The success of anti-bullying policies depends largely on the commitment and skill of teachers and others in the school community and children's workforce.

Inspection frameworks and other policy drivers should be reviewed to ensure robust anti-bullying interventions at primary level:

Current national targets for anti-bullying work only specify children from age 10 upwards, and local targets therefore reflect this, despite what we know of bullying's age-profile, and its susceptibility to change.

Schools should conduct an annual survey of children and young people's experience of bullying:

Guidance and resources should be made available to schools by both local teams and national anti-bullying organisations in support of this policy objective.

CHAPTER 2

Where Are We Now? A Snapshot of Anti-Bullying Work Through Children and Young People's Plans

2 Chapter Summary

Children's Trusts have a key role in tackling bullying. This chapter reviews a sample of their Children and Young People's Plans and finds that bullying has become core business, partly at the insistence of children and young people. There is increasing concern about hate- or bias-bullying and 'community bullying', as well as outstanding challenges around data and reporting.

- **Children and Young People's Plans** - A desk review of 27 Plans enables us to see the strategic judgements informing anti-bullying work at Local Authority level today, and draw out some examples of current practice.
- **Tackling Bullying has a High Priority** - Children's Trusts are making anti-bullying part of their core business.
- **The Voice of Children and Young People** - Children and young people's views are helping prioritise bullying and shape some of the approaches against it.
- **The Evidence Base** – There is strong evidence of a problem, but little systematic evidence of trends or overall extent.
- **New Inter-Agency and Cross-Sector Partnerships Co-ordinating and Delivering Support** - Inter-agency partnerships are developed or developing, and some are responsible for formal strategies.
- **Identifying Problems of Hate- or Bias-Bullying** – Bias-bullying – in terms of race or sexuality – is a problem that Trusts are addressing in terms of improved training and reporting.
- **A Drive to Extend Anti-Bullying Beyond Schools** – Children and young people are identifying problems outside school, and services are aiming to tackle 'community bullying'.
- **Inconsistent Reporting, Incomplete Data and Target Setting** - Evidence of prevalence is sketchy and often qualitative, so targets for improvement are often being set with in the absence of good baseline data.

2.1 Children and Young People's Plans

15 years after the Sheffield Project initiated systematic anti-bullying work in England, what forms is this work taking today? The Children Act 2004 required all¹⁶ local authorities in England to bring their children's services under Children's Trust arrangements and produce a Children and Young People's Plan setting out how services affecting children and young people will meet local needs and the national standards set out in the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services and the Ten Year Childcare Strategy. These Plans give us an opportunity to gauge the priority being given to bullying, how services are tackling it now, and how they plan to tackle it over the coming years.

Plans are presented in very different levels of detail, and with different amounts of supporting information. One therefore needs to be cautious about drawing definitive conclusions from a desk review:¹⁷ for example, simply because one Plan specifies action to combat racist bullying while another does not, it is not necessarily the case that action is being taken in only one area. Partly because of this inherent limitation, the Office of the Children's Commissioner has chosen to study a sample of the Plans. 27 have been selected at random, three from each of the nine Government regions.¹⁸ They allow us to observe the strategic judgements informing anti-bullying work today, and draw out some examples of current practice.

2.2 Tackling Bullying has a High Priority

The simplest observation one can make of the Plans is also the most fundamental: all of them mention bullying, and all but two set out clear commitments to tackling it. This universal recognition and near-universal prioritisation is an encouraging sign that anti-bullying activity is now part of the core work of children's services across England. In 1992, a survey put the number of local education authorities involved in tackling bullying nationally at 18 in total.¹⁹ The growth is dramatic.

2.3 The Voice of Children and Young People

One of the main reasons that bullying features so strongly is that children and young people have identified it as one of their main priorities – as indeed they have to the Children's Commissioner (see 6.1). Asked what would improve their lives the most, reducing bullying came up repeatedly. For children and young people, bullying was:

- Stopping them enjoying school
- Making them afraid to go to school
- Making them worried about transition to secondary school
- Preventing their learning
- Making them unhappy even in pre-school settings
- Causing them worries about staying safe
- Hampering their ability to make a positive contribution
- Making them feel unsafe on the way to school on buses²⁰

In many cases, children and young people said that bullying was either their main concern, or one of most important concerns. Their sense of distress and injustice is often reported directly in the Plans:

*'I've been bullied most of my school life'
'We have the right not to be bullied'
'There should be no bullying people, it hurts people's feelings'
'We are safe from bullying. We are given a fair chance'
'Bullies need to know how it feels to be bullied'
'Bullying can hurt on the inside as well as out!'²¹*

The voices of young people who have experienced particularly high levels of bullying are also reported. Looked After Children had presented their experiences of bullying at a local Safeguarding conference.²² Traveller children raised their particular concerns to another Trust.²³

Children and Young People's Ideas

Encouragingly, the children and young people's view of what needs to happen to solve the problem are also presented. They criticise several approaches for being ineffective:

*'Security cameras often don't work as a deterrent.'
'Exclusion is not the answer as it allows too much free time to get into more trouble.'
'Bullies find out if they have been informed on, even with systems like bully boxes and books.'
'Teachers trying to talk to the person bullying me made matters worse.'²⁴*

Although in one instance children and young people propose a 'zero tolerance'²⁵ response to bullying, their other suggestions emphasise developing empathy, communication and problem-solving skills.²⁶

*'Lunch time clubs so you don't get bullied'
'Talk to the victims and the bullies ... and have workshops on how to deal with it'
'There was me, the bully and a teacher. We agreed a plan and I asked that we didn't speak to each other unless we had to or we had something nice to say.... Now I help mediate between other people.'
'[My Connexions worker and me] were able to talk about the bullying. We looked at ways of tackling the issues and what plan of action would be best for me.... The bullying has stopped and the students involved have become aware of the effects their bullying had.'
'Talk about your problems, don't just hide.'²⁷*

Another local authority notes young people's view that 'peer led approaches [are] the best way to make progress.'²⁸

2.4 The Evidence Base

A small minority of the Plans present evidence of the extent of their local problem with bullying. Where they do, figures are broadly similar. One puts the proportion of young people admitting to bullying behaviour at 24%,²⁹ and another breaks that figure down to 27.8% of primary pupils and 29% of secondary pupils.³⁰ A survey across all secondaries by a local Schools Health Education Unit finds that approximately a third of students had been victimised by bullies. The figures presented by another trust in relation to bullying show that 14% of 15-16 year old girls, and 25% of 15-16 year old boys had experienced violence or aggression in the previous year.³¹

As stated earlier, the fact that evidence is not presented is by no means a guarantee that it does not exist. However, the evidence base does appear to be more robustly qualitative than quantitative, and Trusts have not always been able to draw on up-to-date sources. One Trust cites problems with street-gang bullying on the basis of a survey completed in 1997 (though a new, broader consultation, initiated in 2005, was underway). It is telling that none of the Trusts feel in a position to talk about trends. Despite the array of policies and practices described, and the promise of reductions for the future, there is actually no indication of whether bullying has been rising or falling overall.

How is Bullying Being Tackled?

The Plans show how Trusts intend to tackle bullying at three levels: they describe some intervention methodologies; they describe operational support; and they set a strategic direction. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the strategic nature of the Plans, intervention methodology is described in only a few cases. A helpline for victims of bullying is proposed in one. The presence of police officers in schools – an aspect of the Safer School Partnership approach - is endorsed in another. In one local authority, a media campaign with advertising in schools and at bus-stops will herald a broader set of practices. A couple of plans commit to improved and more easily accessible information for children and parents; while in another three, school charters and standards are seen as a way forward, through locally accredited charter schemes in two, and through improved sign-up to the national *Bullying – A Charter for Action* in the other (see 3.2). Perhaps significantly, most specific mentions are for approaches that equip children and young people with the insight and skills to themselves reduce bullying behaviour. Emotional and behavioural materials and techniques - SEAL and R-Time – (see 3.4) are endorsed in three plans; and peer-delivered support services – buddying or mediating - are promoted in three others. Restorative justice is described being used successfully in one area.

2.5 New Inter-agency and Cross-Sector Partnerships Delivering Support

Operational support in some areas is being led by specialist anti-bullying services. Where training is specified for schools and other services, as it is in 6 of the plans, it appears that delivery or facilitation will largely be through these teams. In at least one instance, the specialist service is not restricted to a development and support role, but actually offers case level support to children and young people who have been involved in bullying as either victims, perpetrators or bystanders.³² Alongside education support services, other children's services are credited as playing key roles in developing models of good practice, particularly, it seems, where Government programmes have created capacity for innovation. The Children's Fund has laid down models of practice in two areas, and the Behaviour Improvement Programme in one area is working with the Youth Offending Team on models of restorative justice.³³ In three more, the voluntary sector (the NSPCC and Diversity Hub) have been crucial in building capacity, including through an Anti-Bullying Alliance-facilitated partnership with the local youth service.³⁴

2.6 Identifying Problems of Hate- or Bias-Bullying

Despite the diversity of the Plans, two strategic priorities for anti-bullying work do appear to be emerging. The first of these is improved protection against bias- or hate-bullying. Of the young people who can be most vulnerable, those in care, or with SEN or disabilities each attract one mention across the plans. It is young people at risk through homophobia and racism, however, who appear most often. 6 plans specify action to address homophobic bullying, 2 through improved reporting and 4 through enhanced training or resources. 13 plans specify action to address racist bullying, 4 through improved reporting, and 9 through improved training or resources.

The second strategic priority is to extend protection from bullying beyond schools and other institutional settings to address conflict, violence or intimidation within communities:

'bullying and intimidation on the street and on public transport'
'racial harassment and abuse within the community'
'gangs in parks'
'help all children feel safer within their communities and be free from fear, bullying and racism'
'prevent fighting and bullying ... immediately after school or on journeys to and from school, particularly tension between (rival schools)'
'taking action against gangs of young people who bully other young people in the street'
'provide community profiles of bullying behaviour'³⁵

2.7 A Drive to Extend Anti-Bullying Beyond Schools

Several factors lay behind the broadening scope of anti-bullying work. The weight given to young people's views is one of these. For children and young people experiencing bullying and intimidation, its location is hardly important. Their message is clear:

'Deal with bullying where we live, not just in school'.³⁶

Children's services are therefore taking the views and interests of children and young people seriously. Crucially though, they are doing so in a changed strategic environment, where there are much higher expectations on all children's services to consider needs holistically and integrate their work thoroughly. In this sense, the Sheffield Project is an exemplar of practice from a more contained time, when schools were emphatically at the centre of anti-bullying work and were not, as a matter of policy, required to work with their local communities and partner services to the same extent that they must today. *Every Child Matters* has brought about a planning and service environment where treating bullying almost exclusively as an in-school problem for schools alone to tackle is not sustainable, and these Plans, as the documents setting out the direction for these integrated services, reflect that change. But anti-bullying practitioners appear to have been in the vanguard of partnership working. Partnerships and inter-agency working groups are well-established. In 6 of the Trusts, an interagency anti-bullying strategy has been agreed, and a further 6 commit to drawing up and implementing one.

The influence of *Every Child Matters* on anti-bullying work has gone beyond encouraging co-ordinated interventions. *ECM* has imposed significant new expectations, which strongly influence the Plans. Two of *ECM's* five outcome areas specify reducing bullying in their aims, and key indicators – currently under review - have been developed from these:

ECM Outcomes Framework

Outcome	→	Stay Safe
Aim	→	Stay safe from bullying and discrimination
Key Indicator	→	% of 11-15 year olds stating they have been bullied in last 12 months.
Outcome	→	Making a Positive Contribution
Aim	→	Develop positive relationships and choose not to bully or discriminate
Key Indicator	→	% 10-19 year olds admitting to (a) bullying another pupil in the last 12 months (b) attacking, threatening or being rude due to skin colour, race or religion). ³⁷

Virtually all Trusts use the five outcome areas to structure their plans. A third directly adopt the outcome framework's key indicators as their bullying reporting measures, either solely or along with other local measures. The increased prioritisation of anti-discriminatory measures by Trusts is clearly responding to this national agenda. More generally, the association of bullying with broader objectives around positive relationships and pro-social activity supports the trend to treat bullying on a community-wide basis.

Achieving these new strategic priorities will be challenging. In relation to keeping children safe from peer aggression in a range of community settings, only one Trust explicitly acknowledges that anti-bullying work is being ambitiously re-aligned within: 'An overarching strategy to cover bullying, harassment and discrimination'.³⁸ More often, anti-bullying work is expanding without any explicit indication that the model of activity will need to change. Though organisations such as BeatBullying are developing and implementing imaginative work in this area, the research base for 'community bullying' is still narrow.³⁹ From being at the margins of practice only fifteen years ago, anti-bullying work is now stepping into areas of policy and practice traditionally more closely linked to policing, community safety, community cohesion, detached youthwork and conflict resolution.

2.8 Inconsistent Reporting, Incomplete Data and Target Setting

Trusts are aware that data to allow them to measure how successfully they meet their new, high ambitions, is not yet generally available. 11 Plans describe the need to improve reporting, including in terms of bias-bullying, or state more broadly that they will establish mechanisms to provide a baseline against which targets for improvement can be set. Where Trusts are already confident that they have good information on the level of the problem and performance trends to date, they can set precise performance objectives. One Trust sets a target of reducing levels of bullying by 10%, so that by 2009, the number of Year 8 students afraid to go to school because of bullying will have dropped to 25.6%, and the number of Year 10 students to 18.6%.⁴⁰ Two Plans commit trusts to developing better detailed knowledge, as well as better overall statistics: for one, this means that it will 'provide community profiles of bullying behaviour and measure effectiveness of anti-bullying strategies in schools'⁴¹, and for another this means that it will improve the detail and consistency of school reporting through adopting a specialist web-based incident reporting service.⁴²

However, given that Trusts are largely adopting *ECM* key indicators, it is not clear how much information will be revealed about bullying of primary school age children. None of the Plans set reduction targets for children under ten years of age, even though one does cite a local questionnaire revealing that bullying peaks in Year 6 (ages 10 – 11).⁴³

Key Points From This Review of Plans

- Anti-bullying has become part of the core business of Children's Trusts.
- High levels of bullying are still being experienced in schools and communities, though the evidence base remains somewhat inconsistent and qualitative.
- The impact to date of local anti-bullying policies in reducing overall rates is not clearly evidenced.
- Clear leadership is well-established in many areas, and there is a commitment to confirming it in many others.
- Partnerships, including with the voluntary sector, have enabled innovative work to take place, and there is now an emphasis on mainstreaming.
- Children and young people's voices are being heard, and their ideas are playing a significant part in shaping interventions.
- Approaches that support emotional insight and resilience and draw on children and young people's ability to resolve problems are finding favour.
- Anti-bullying work has been given additional energy and ambition by the *ECM* process.
- Policies and reporting have become more comprehensive, particularly with reference to different victim groups.
- *ECM* and local experience have combined to set bullying in a broader context of socially undesirable (or anti-social) behaviour.
- Most Trusts are still in the process of assembling reliable data with which to performance manage their strategies.
- Trusts are setting reduction targets that relate to *ECM* key indicators, and these do not cover primary stage children.

2.9 Recommendations

Schools should conduct an annual survey of children and young people's experience of bullying:

Guidance and resources should be made available to schools by both local teams and national anti-bullying organisations in support of this policy objective.

Peer support programmes should be developed:

DfES and Healthy Schools should take steps to ensure that evaluations of peer support programmes such as CHIPS (ChildLine in Partnership with Schools) and Sky-High are shared as widely as possible in order to promote good practice.

Families, as well as children and young people, should be involved in anti-bullying policies:

The DfES should continue to work with stakeholders to ensure that clear and constructive information on bullying is available to all parents and carers.

Children and young people must be actively involved and engaged in seeking solutions to bullying:

Their ideas must play a significant part in shaping bullying interventions. Children also need to be involved in the development and evaluation of anti-bullying programmes and approaches.

Inspection frameworks and other policy drivers should be reviewed to ensure robust anti-bullying interventions at primary level:

Current national targets for anti-bullying work only specify children from age 10 upwards, and local targets therefore reflect this, despite what we know of bullying's age-profile, and its susceptibility to change.

Funding is made available for a large-scale and long-term research study into the impact of school-based and community-based anti-bullying strategies, including how these are or are not meeting specific needs around gender, disability, race and sexuality.

Our evidence base on the efficacy of specific anti-bullying interventions remains patchy. Evidence on 'community bullying' and work to prevent or respond to it is still less robust.

CHAPTER 3

Frameworks, Guidance and Support

3 Chapter Summary

This chapter describes how new duties on services have introduced important anti-bullying safeguards, although schools retain considerable autonomy. Wellbeing programmes in schools and early interventions to support positive parenting are shown to be increasingly important.

- **New Duties and Related Safeguards** – New duties have been imposed on schools and on services for children in care, and anti-discriminatory legislation has added some specific safeguards.
- **Guidance, Information and Inspection** – Schools have wide discretion over how they tackle and record bullying. DfES supports good practice through guidance, while inspection regimes review outcomes.
- **Wellbeing Support Through Schools** – *ECM* has reinforced and extended schools' duty to support children's wellbeing . The Healthy Schools programme has supported schools to do so, including in relation to bullying.
- **Curriculum Support** – PSHE remains central to delivering anti-bullying work. Healthy Schools and Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) have brought significant new capacity and ambition to this curriculum area, linking bullying fruitfully with emotional health and wellbeing and children's voice.
- **Early Child Development and Parenting Support** – Growing international evidence of how attachment and family functioning shape children's social and emotional capacities has stimulated early intervention programmes. These include approaches such as Canada's Roots of Empathy and the UK's Nurse-Family Partnership that have the potential of reducing risks of bullying.

3.1 New Duties and Related Safeguards

Schools

Government has taken welcome steps in recent years to require and support better practice in relation to bullying. The most direct and forceful change has been the introduction through the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 of a duty on headteachers to 'encourage good behaviour and respect for others ... and, in particular, prevent all forms of bullying among pupils' (Section 61(4)). Schools must have a written policy setting out how they tackle bullying, although this may be part of the behaviour and discipline policy. S.175 Education Act 2002 places a statutory duty on local authorities, governors and head-teachers to 'safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils' – though parents may doubt the practical value of these duties in specific cases of bullying (see 6.3). The Education and Inspections Act (2006) re-enacts existing duties, requires more clarity regarding sanctions, including in cases of bullying, and introduces a duty to consult with pupils on the behaviour policy. The Education Act 2005 requires schools to publish an annual profile which addresses the question: 'How do we make sure our pupils are healthy, safe and well-supported?'

Children in Care

Standard 9.6 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services requires that

[t]he fostering service ensures that foster carers are aware of the particular vulnerability of looked after children and their susceptibility to bullying and procedures are in place to recognise, record and address any instance of bullying and to help foster carers cope with it.⁴⁴

Standard 18 of the National Minimum Standards and Regulations for Children's Homes 2002 detail protection procedures in residential care:

The registered person and the staff create an atmosphere where bullying is known to be unacceptable. There is a policy on countering bullying, which is known to children and staff and is effective in practice.

It is worth noting that whereas schools have complete freedom to determine the contents of their bullying policies, residential care policies needs to meet quite detailed criteria. Given such a notable difference of approach, it is worth setting down Standard 18 in full:

The registered person has a policy on bullying which includes:

- A definition of bullying, which is reviewed frequently with staff and children, and which includes bullying by staff and bullying that may occur elsewhere than in the home and which covers different types

of bullying, eg on the grounds of race, gender, disability or sexual orientation, and which includes name-calling.

- Measures to prevent bullying and to respond to observed or reported bullying
- Training for staff in awareness of, and effective strategies to counter, bullying.
- This policy is available and known to both staff and children, including junior, agency and recently appointed staff. The policy is implemented, and monitored for effectiveness in practice. Steps are taken to ensure that the policy is revised where necessary to ensure that staff reduce and respond to bullying effectively.
- Children who are bullied are supported, and children who may bully others are given suitable guidance.
- The registered person regularly carries out recorded risk assessments of the times, places and circumstances in which the greatest risk of bullying (including bullying amounting to abuse by other children) is greatest, and takes action where feasible to reduce or counteract the risk of bullying.⁴⁵

Bias Bullying

Other legislative developments have offered improved levels of protection to groups known to be vulnerable to bullying. Particular duties on schools to protect children from racist disadvantage and discrimination were introduced by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. Accordingly, racist bullying incidents must be collated and analysed – the only type of bullying that requires this. Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1998 was repealed in 2003, following concerns from teachers and others that it was having a detrimental effect on pastoral support for lesbian and gay pupils. The Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005 provided new protection to children with disabilities by requiring schools, as public bodies, to promote disability equality.

3.2 Guidance, Information and Inspection

Inspection

Joint Area Reviews (JARs) were brought in by the Children Act 2004 to evaluate how well local services are working together to contribute to children and young people's ECM outcomes. They incorporate the inspection of youth services, and replace the separate inspections of local education authorities, local authorities' social services, Connexions services and provision for students aged 14-19. The process has proved complex and has undergone several changes; indeed the White Paper on Local Government published in October of this year sets out the Government's intention of replacing the JAR with a single performance framework for local authorities from March 2009. However, as currently operating, detailed evidence on bullying is required, including evidence directly from children and young people to establish the level of bullying and what is being done to address it. Specific questions establish the protection from bullying given to children in care.

In assessing pupils' personal development and wellbeing, Ofsted inspectors are now required to ask pupils and parents how effectively bullying is being tackled.

Identifying Good Practice

Government has certainly attempted to influence the quality of school anti-bullying policies, but not by prescription. Instead, it has encouraged voluntary sign-up to good practice standards. In 2003, material from *Don't Suffer in Silence* was supplemented with key findings from Ofsted's *Bullying: Effective Action in Secondary Schools* (2003) to create *Bullying – A Charter for Action*, which schools, in the form of their Chair of Governors, the headteacher and a student representative, were encouraged to sign. Devised and launched in consultation with the Secondary Heads Association, the National Association of Head Teachers, the Anti-Bullying Alliance and others, it was presented as part of a high-profile drive against bullying under a 'Zero Tolerance' theme, and which included TV and poster advertising, as well as extra resources for teacher training. The Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners (2004) sets out the expectation that all schools will subscribe;⁴⁶ and in the 2005 Education White Paper, Government described the *Charter* as 'central to [its] drive to reduce and respond to bullying'⁴⁷. To date, only 4,000 out of around 25,000 schools have subscribed, though many others have referenced it.

Specific and General Tools and Resources

As well as recommending biennial re-issuing of the bullying *Charter*, the 'Steer Report' into behaviour and discipline in schools (2005) recommended that DfES issue further advice on tackling bullying motivated by prejudice, including homophobic and racist bullying.⁴⁸ DfES has responded by expanding the suite of materials available to schools. Advice on tackling homophobia within schools, *Stand Up for Us*,⁴⁹ had been produced for schools in 2004 through the Health Development Agency in support of the National Healthy Schools Standard, and new guidance specifically on tackling homophobic bullying is now in preparation.

In 2006, the Department issued a suite of web-based materials to support schools in tackling bullying around racism, religion and culture. The National Primary and Secondary Strategies have also supported improved practice, with the National Primary Strategies' recent 'Bullying: Policy and Practice' document linking directly with DfES SEAL materials (see below).

Schools can now draw on guidance and good practice from a number of other sources. On homophobic bullying, for example, new materials have been created with the support of the Association of London Government (*Burning*) and the Mayor of London (*Spell it Out*). Locally, some anti-bullying teams are drawing up high-quality resources, and encouraging schools and other children's services to make use of materials produced by local, often youth-led initiatives, such as the anti-bullying pack created by Gay and Lesbian Youth in Calderdale.⁵⁰

The Anti-Bullying Alliance – Regional and National Learning

Sharing and creation of resources and information nationally and regionally has been supported significantly by the Anti-Bullying Alliance, an NCB-hosted umbrella organisation of over 60 statutory and voluntary organisations which, since 2004, has received DfES funding. Its 9 part-time regional co-ordinators promote best practice, encourage partnership working, liaise with the National Strategies and lead on programmes of activity for November's annual Anti-Bullying Week. The Office of the Children's Commissioner worked with the ABA to produce its 'Journeys' anti-bullying classroom resources (see 6.4).

3.3 Wellbeing Support Through Schools

The National Healthy Schools Programme

The National Healthy Schools Programme has been at the heart of Government's attempt to ensure that schools meet children's needs holistically, including in terms of emotional and physical wellbeing. To be accredited to the Healthy School Standard, schools must satisfy requirements within each of the Standard's four themes. Within the Emotional Health and Wellbeing theme, schools need to demonstrate that they have a clear policy on bullying, which is owned, understood and implemented by the whole school community. Other requirements relating to opportunities for social and emotional development, confidential pastoral support and activity to combat stigma and discrimination are also relevant to creating a whole school environment that protects against bullying.

Early evidence shows that fear of bullying is indeed reducing in primary schools involved in the programme.⁵¹ Crucially, the programme is based on partnership between Health and Education, drawing in other relevant services to meet its objectives. Where specialist anti-bullying teams or networks are established, Healthy Schools are in most cases key partners, providing resources, strategic reach and specialist support. For example, the South Manchester Healthy Schools Programme has been running a Race and Health Project with local schools, which includes elements on tackling racist bullying. A programme on homophobic bullying run by the North West Healthy Schools Partnership has resulted in a doubling of the number of reported incidents, and a doubling of pastoral referrals to local services for lesbian and gay students.⁵²

3.4 Curriculum Support

Personal, Social and Health Education in England

PSHE provides teachers with a clear opportunity, and indeed obligation to work on bullying. Within the National Curriculum for PSHE pupils should be taught:

Key Stage 1 'that there are different types of teasing and bullying, that bullying is wrong, and how to help to deal with bullying'

Key Stage 2 'to realise the consequences of anti-social and aggressive behaviours, such as bullying and racism, on individuals and communities ...[and] to realise the nature and consequences of racism, teasing and bullying and aggressive behaviours, and how to respond to them and ask for help'

Key Stage 3 'about the effects of all types of stereotyping, prejudice, bullying, racism, and discrimination and how to challenge them assertively'

Key Stage 4 'to challenge offending behaviour, bullying, racism and discrimination assertively and take the initiative in giving and receiving support'.

Government has recently supported the creation of a National Subject Association for PSHE to enhance the quality of provision, and will work alongside the Association to develop the PSHE Continuing Professional Development Certificate programme. Despite this increased attention to the quality and status of PSHE, and its acknowledged importance in tackling bullying as well as a range of other crucial health and wellbeing issues, PSHE is not a statutory foundation subject at Key Stages One to Four (ages 4 -18).

PSHE as a Statutory Framework – a European Model

This ambivalence towards PSHE – expecting it to deliver critical social and educational outcomes, while allowing it to find a discretionary space among statutory foundation subjects - contrasts with the situation elsewhere in Europe. In Ireland, for example, Social, Personal and Health Education is compulsory in Ireland at both primary and post-primary level, where the syllabuses deal in some detail with bullying. At primary level, the curriculum is divided into three strands – Myself; Myself and Others; Myself and the Wider World – within which there are strand units. The learning objectives relating to bullying show great sensitivity to bystander roles, bias-bullying and the value and pressure of friendship groups. They can be summarised as follows:

SPHE Bullying-Related Learning Objectives⁵³

Class	Strand	Strand Unit	The pupil should be enabled to:
Infants	Myself & Others	My friends & other people	Recognise and appreciate differences and know how to treat others with dignity and respect Recognise and explore bullying behaviour, who is involved and the effects on different people: the bully, the child being bullied, the onlookers, the family of the victim Know that bullying is wrong and know what should be done if one is being bullied or see it happening to someone else
1 st & 2 nd Class	Myself & Others	My friends & other people	Know how to treat people with dignity and respect: ... Recognise and explore bullying behaviour, who is involved and the effects on different people – the bully, the child being bullied, the onlookers Know that bullying is always wrong and what should be done if one is being bullied or sees it happening to someone else.
	Myself	Safety & protection	Identify people, places and situations that may threaten personal safety – bullies
3 rd & 4 th Class	Myself & Others	My friends and other people	Acknowledge that friends often circulate in groups, which can be healthy or unhealthy – <i>inclusive, friendship, supportive, teasing, taunting, being pressurised</i> Respect and show consideration for the views, beliefs and values of others – <i>being just and fair when dealing with others, exploring the role of assumption, rumour, fact and opinion when dealing with other people</i> Recognise, discuss and understand bullying – <i>why people bully, the behaviour that constitutes bullying, the consequences of different types of bullying, learning that bullying is always wrong, the role of the onlooker in a bullying situation, being threatened or bribed by a bully</i>
5 th & 6 th Class	Myself & others	Relating to others	Communicating: Examine the various ways in which language can be used to isolate and discriminate against people

Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL)

A major set of resources to support children's emotional and social development and enable schools to meet PHSE and National Healthy School Standards requirements has been available since 2005. SEAL is a set of teaching materials that provides a whole curriculum framework and is organised into seven themes:

- New Beginnings
- Getting on and Falling Out
- Going for Goals
- Good to Be Me
- Relationships
- Changes
- Bullying

The learning objectives for bullying are:

SEAL Learning Objectives for Bullying⁵⁴

Foundation Stage	Yrs 1 & 2	Yrs 3 & 4	Yrs 5 & 6
I know I belong in my classroom	I can tell you what bullying is.	I know what it means to be a witness to bullying.	I understand how rumour spreading and name calling can be bullying behaviours.
I like the ways we are all different and can tell you something special about me.	I can tell you some ways in which I am the same and different from my friends.	I know that witnesses can make the situation better or worse by what they do.	I can explain the difference between direct and indirect types of bullying.
I can tell you some ways in which children can be unkind and bully others.	I am proud of the ways in which I am different.	I know how it might feel to be a witness to and a target of bullying.	I can explain some of the ways in which one person (or group of people) can have power over another.
I can tell you how it feels when someone bullies you.	I can tell you how someone who is bullied feels.	I can tell you why witnesses sometimes join in with bullying or don't tell.	I know some of the reasons why people use bullying behaviours.
I can be kind to children who have been bullied.	I can be kind to children who are bullied.	I can tell you some ways of helping to make someone who is being bullied feel better.	I know some ways to encourage children who use bullying behaviours to make other choices
I know who I could talk to in school if I was feeling unhappy or being bullied	I know that when you feel sad, it affects the way you behave and how you think.	I know that sometimes bullying is hard to spot, and I know what to do if I think it is going on but I am not sure.	I can tell you a range of strategies which I have for managing my feelings in bullying situations, and for problem solving when I am part of one.
I know what to do if I am bullied	I know some people in and out of school who I could talk to if I was feeling unhappy or being bullied.	I can problem solve a bullying situation with others.	
	I know what to do if I am bullied		

In essence, SEAL holds out the prospect of reducing bullying by increasing two aspects of children's emotional understanding. Through better understanding their own feelings, children will have higher self-esteem and be better able to manage their aggression; and through better understanding the feelings of others, they will be less likely to victimise and more likely to offer help. Approximately a third of schools are now using the resource, and although evidence of outcomes has yet to be established, feedback has been positive. Schools feel increasingly able to shape the materials to their needs, combine with other techniques, such as R-Time (a methodology to promote relational skills), and believe that SEAL constitutes a powerful approach to improving emotional insight and pro-social attitudes and reducing the likelihood of bullying.

'The children ... began to develop a sense of individual and collective responsibility to the school community and each other.'

This was particularly tested by the arrival of an extremely challenging child who had severe emotional and behavioural issues. The confidence and skills that the [SEAL] materials offered to both the children and the staff enabled the school to support the needs of this child and to understand his outbursts.⁶⁵

The learning from SEAL is being used to develop equivalent materials for secondary schools. These are currently being piloted in 50 schools, and look likely to be rolled-out in 2007.

3.5 Early Child Development and Parenting Support

Underlying SEAL and key aspects of primary PHSE in England, as well as their equivalents internationally, is heightened interest in Early Child Development and - more pointedly – a clearer recognition of early aggressive behaviour as the single best predictor of delinquency and social exclusion. European and North American researchers, practitioners and policy makers have therefore been formulating approaches intended to foster developmental resilience. One of the most innovative and intensive of these is the Canadian *Roots of Empathy* (ROE) programme, which was launched in Toronto in 1996 and which now extends over five other Canadian provinces, serving Kindergarten through to Grade 8. Its aims are to develop children's emotional understanding, promote their social competence and increase their knowledge of human development and parenting practices. The 10 month programme involves monthly classroom visits by a parent and his or her infant, who is 'adopted' by the class.

Through reflecting together on the infant's needs and the way she or he communicates these, the children deepen their self-awareness and expand their empathy, in both its cognitive and affective dimensions. This is not, therefore, an anti-bullying programme in any direct sense. Although ROE instructors may at some points invite children to consider the emotions involved in bullying, its approach is at once more indirect and more fundamental. Nevertheless, evaluations of the programme have found that proactive aggression – the type most strongly associated with bullying - is

reduced in 88% of pupils, and that bullying behaviours are significantly reduced.⁵⁶ The results of a four-year accelerated, longitudinal study following children in Kindergarden, Grade 4 and Grade 8, which assesses whether changes endure over time, will be published in 2007.

The National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services (2004) sets standards for children's services in England that take into account the growing evidence for Early Child Development's importance. Standard 2 relates to parenting, and promotes work to support secure attachment:

Children who were judged secure with mother in infancy are found to be more co-operative, more empathic, more socially competent, more interested in learning and exploration, and more self-confident than children who were judged insecure with mother in infancy.⁵⁷

It clearly links developmental delay and the risk of emotional or behaviour disorders with inappropriate child-rearing.⁵⁸ Support for parents during the early years, and indeed throughout childhood, is therefore set down as a requirement to be addressed through universal as well as specialist services.

This requirement has been underlined and developed through recent Government initiatives on social inclusion and 'Respect', both of which place heavy emphasis on early intervention to support parenting, through targeted and intensive programmes such as the Nurse-Family Partnership,⁵⁹ as well as through enhanced universal services working to higher common standards – an aim to be supported by the new National Parenting Academy. If delivered successfully, this improved provision could substantially reduce the number of children whose levels of social competence and emotional understanding put them at risk of bullying or developing bullying behaviours. It would bring a welcome new dimension to anti-bullying strategies, which until now have rarely addressed family functioning.

3.6 Recommendations

Schools should conduct an annual survey of children and young people's experience of bullying:

Guidance and resources should be made available to schools by both local teams and national anti-bullying organisations in support of this policy objective.

Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) materials should be promoted and used in pre-school, primary and secondary settings:

The Children's Commissioner would like to encourage full use of SEAL materials in primary and pre-school settings by offering staff flexible training and recognition through CPD. Secondary schools should reflect fully on learning from the SEAL pilot and roll-out the programme without delay.

Comprehensive anti-bullying strategies should be developed in every local authority, encompassing schools, colleges and community settings:

Strategies should set out and enable coherent partnership working with clear monitoring and accountability arrangements.

Inspection frameworks and other policy drivers should be reviewed to ensure robust anti-bullying interventions at primary level:

Current national targets for anti-bullying work only specify children from age 10 upwards, and local targets therefore reflect this, despite what we know of bullying's age-profile, and its susceptibility to change. The current review of *ECM* indicators may help to address this anomaly.

PHSE to be made a statutory foundation subject at Key Stages One to Four:

Given PHSE's key role in helping children and young people in tackling bullying (as well as other aspects of relationship building and self-care); and given that reducing and managing bullying is critical to creating a learning environment where children and young people can enjoy and achieve, stay safe, be healthy, participate and go on to enjoy economic well-being, it is difficult to understand why PHSE should not be protected through recognition as a statutory foundation subject.

Support the continued prioritisation and investment in positive parenting in the Early Years and throughout childhood:

The Children's Commissioner welcomes the growing recognition of parenting support as a potent means of early intervention, strengthening the resilience of both the family unit and the child.

CHAPTER 4

Who is Involved and How are They Affected?

4 Chapter Summary

This chapter explores what we know about who is involved in bullying and how they are affected. We know that most children and young people are affected by bullying, that bullying is dynamic and that roles change, with particular groups of children and young people being more vulnerable than others. Where bullying is severe or long-lasting, the outcomes of those involved can be damaged educationally, physically, socially and economically.

- **Children's Reluctance to Report Victimisation** – for emotional, cultural and practical reasons, children and young people are often reluctant to report victimisation to adults, though good practice can positively influence their decisions.
- **What We Know About the Extent of Bullying** – although around 10-20% of children and young people are being bullied at school at any one time, over half may have experienced bullying at some point.
- **Children as Bystanders and Potential Defenders** – interventions increasingly appreciate that bullying has a group dynamic that children can change, moving from bystander to defender.
- **Children Who Bully and Their Exposure to Aggression** – generalisations can be unhelpful, but there is evidence to suggest that those who bully have been exposed to unusual levels of aggression.
- **Children Who are Bullied and Isolation and Low Self-Esteem** – victims of bullying tend to have low self-esteem and limited friendship networks, problems which bullying compounds.
- **Why Me? Creating Difference and Victimising Difference** – bullying may seem arbitrary to adults and victims alike. Most distinctions can be exploited as differences.
- **Cultures of Homophobic Abuse** – homophobic abuse starts at an early age, erodes schools' protective ethos and attacks the identity of its victims.
- **Disability, Special Needs and Vulnerability** – health conditions and special needs are associated with higher risk of bullying and may be less able to deal with aggression.
- **BME Victimisation and Islamophobia** – although racism and bullying is under-researched, there appears to be an alarming rise in bullying and harassment targeted at Muslim children.

- **Children at Risk in Institutional Settings & Children in Care** – Evidence suggests that staff need to be aware of the additional risks faced by these children and young people. Stigma and lax attention to confidentiality are associated with in-school victimisation of children in care.
- **Children at Risk in Cyber-Space** – cyber-bullying is the fastest growing type of bullying, and although evidence indicates that ‘new’ people are not involved, a culture of cyber-bullying may spread and involve others.
- **Damaging Children’s Life Chances across All Every Child Matters (ECM) Areas** - there is evidence that exposure to serious bullying hampers children and young people’s achievement of successful outcomes in all ECM outcome areas.

4.1 Children’s Reluctance to Report Victimisation

Definitive statistics on the extent of bullying are elusive. In part, this is due to children and young people’s reluctance to report their persecution. A survey of young people in Bedfordshire in 2004 found that 28% of boys and 22% of girls would keep any worries about bullying to themselves.⁶⁰ Their reluctance is both practical and emotional. Practically, children’s fear that disclosure may expose them to further risk is far from unreasonable. A large scale survey in 1996 which asked pupils about the outcomes once they told somebody about their bullying was not encouraging:

Smith & Shu (2000): Effectiveness of Disclosure⁶¹

	Teachers	Family	Classmates
<i>Effectiveness as percentages when they did something</i>			
The bullying stopped	26.6	21.5	17.3
The bullying got less	28.7	33.9	25.6
Nothing changed	28.3	31.6	46.6
The bullying got worse	16.4	13.0	10.5

Telling the teacher was children’s riskiest strategy. Although teachers were the most likely to stop the bullying, they were also the most likely to make matters worse. With training, clear procedures and an ethos which values being a ‘listening school’, this can improve, and children and young people have told the Children’s Commissioner about the dramatic difference it can make:

‘At our school if you tell a teacher you are being bullied then they sort it out but in the past people have been bullied even worse for speaking out about it and labelled as a ‘grass’ or ‘dobber’ which doesnt help either and we had an anomius survey done about bullying at our school and we got the results back which shoed that

most people don't ask for help about it, because they fear that they will get in bigger 'trouble' with the bully.' (14yr old pupil)⁶²

Children and young people interviewed as part of the Children's Commissioner's 'Journeys' project (see 6.4) also emphasised the risks of telling 'You get bullied for snitching on the bullies', but also explained the sheer emotional difficulty of communicating their experiences.

*'Most of the time [teachers] force you to do discussions and activities. They shout at you if you don't but they don't understand how hard it [is for] us talking about bullying.'*⁶³

Being bullied can feel overwhelmingly humiliating. Victims describe a feeling of being trapped, disempowered and silenced. Refugee children in a Children's Society project designed a picture book expressing this sense of isolation.

Every morning when it was time to go to school, the boy would stay in his bed.

'Tell me what is wrong?'

But the boy would not say....

'Why?' Because! Sometimes the words don't always get on.

'Why?' Asked the mother?

But the boy wouldn't reply.

The Mother and the Boy walked to school. Past fields and trees, amber traffic lights ready to go, cars taking mums and dads to work, bins and playgrounds, a rainbow!⁶⁴

In terms of reported bullying incidents, therefore, it is likely that there is considerable under-reporting, especially amongst older children, who are the least likely to tell an adult.⁶⁵ A school that relies on these alone will not have an accurate picture of the safety of its pupils. To understand the full extent of bullying problems schools need to use appropriate audit and assessment techniques. When they have done so, many have found that 'the adult perception of what was happening ... [was] different to that felt by some of the children.'⁶⁶

4.2 What We Know of the Extent of Bullying

Bullying will always be a difficult phenomenon to measure. But lay discussion has sometimes added unnecessary confusion by conflating different sorts of information from different types of research. On the one hand there is research like that undertaken before and after the Sheffield Project. Its purpose is to assess the current situation, and so it looks at recent experience (the last term or last year) to reveal how many children *are being bullied*. This is the type of information that services need in order to measure and ultimately improve their performance. On the other hand, there are studies which ask about children's experience of bullying at any time, or over an extended period, in order to be able to draw conclusions about the overall impact of bullying on childhood. Inevitably, findings for the second type of question are higher.

Even so, and when apples and pears have been sorted, variations are still substantial.

Specialists usually put the proportion of children subject to bullying in England at any one time at around 10 – 20%, which is broadly in line with other countries for which figures are available. In a Home Office study of youth crime in 2000, 33% of 12 to 16 year olds reporting having been bullied at school in the previous year⁶⁷. A study by Young Voice in 2001 found that over half 13-19 year olds had experienced bullying.⁶⁸ A international study in 2001 found that 12.2% of English 10 to 14 year olds had been bullied in the previous six months.⁶⁹ Research for the DfES in 2003 reported that more than 50% of Primary School children and more than 25% of secondary school children said they had been bullied in the past year.⁷⁰ Local surveys tend to fall within the higher end of this range. A 2005 study of Cheshire students in years 7, 8 and 9 found that 37% had been bullied in the current school year.⁷¹ Importantly, variation between schools, including schools in apparently similar circumstances, can be substantial. Oliver and Candappa's research for DfES in 2003 revealed that in year 8, the proportion of pupils who reported having been bullied varied by school from 17% to 52%. Although it is difficult to arrive with certainty at levels of bullying, research consistently shows that its prevalence and nature changes by age. Bullying increases during primary years, peaking at around age 10, then declines steadily.⁷²

Children and young people consistently report a high level of concern about bullying in terms of their personal safety and emotional wellbeing. From April 2005 – March 2006, Childline received 37,032 calls about bullying, and another 4,018 which were mainly about other issues, but went on to discuss bullying as a problem. This constituted 23% of all calls, making it children's biggest single cause of concern (as it has been for the last nine years). As has already been noted, Children's Trusts have found high levels of unease and victimisation. Solihull has found that 26% of secondary school age students were sometimes afraid to go to school because of bullying.⁷³ Cumbria has found that 46% of girls in years 5 and 6 were sometimes frightened of going to school because of bullying.⁷⁴ When Bath and North East Somerset asked secondary school age children 'What would make the biggest difference to your life?'; 36% said less bullying.⁷⁵ In Doncaster, 'by far the greatest concern to children and young people is the issue of bullying, often by their peers, sometimes by older children.'⁷⁶ The Office of the Children's Commissioner launched a competition in 2006 – 'Shout! Turn Up the Volume' - inviting children and young people to identify the issues that were most important to them. Online feedback identified bullying as an issue for 55% of those who entered, making it the single most significant single area of concern.⁷⁷

The Children's Commissioner welcomes the serious attempts by many children's services to assess the extent of the problem. However, schools and local authorities are not required to record incidents of bullying, and the DfES does not collect data centrally. We therefore have important gaps in our knowledge nationally, and considerable variation in data quality locally. This hampers evidence-based and consistently applied service improvement.

4.3 Children as Bystanders and Potential Defenders

By no means all entrants to 'Shout' were referring to their own experience of being bullied when they highlighted the problem's importance. Many reported seeing it happen in their schools or neighbourhoods, or to family or friends (research indicates that two thirds of children have witnessed it).⁷⁸

Bullying involves many more children and young people than just the bullies and their victims; and it is this growing realisation that has refocused much modern research away from the psychological make-up of the victim and the bully, and onto the social context in which the aggressive behaviour unfolds. For anti-bullying work, the shift to the 'bystander' has the potential of reducing victimisation by supporting children to support each other.

Christina Salmivali, a leading proponent of 'bystander' theory, argues that

[a]s far as bullying is concerned, the mechanisms which maintain the problem, but also the keys for preventing and intervening [in] it, often lie within the peer group.⁷⁹

Her model of bullying describes the different roles performed in a public bullying situation. As well as the victim and bully, there may be:

- *Assistants* - who actively join in the attack
- *Reinforcers* - who give positive feedback to the bully, perhaps by smiling or laughing
- *Outsiders* - who stay back, stay silent and thereby condone the bullying behaviour
- *Defenders* - who try and intervene to stop the bullying or comfort its victim.⁸⁰

Salmivali proposes that this model be incorporated into anti-bullying classroom discussions, so that pupils can identify what role they have played in the past, and what role they wish to play in the future. The intention is dynamic, not descriptive: it hopes to move bystanders from reinforcers to defenders. Although research with children and young people confirms what 'Shout!' suggests – that most disapprove of bullying and sympathise with its victims - we know that when they are bystanders, about half take the role of 'outsiders'⁸¹. Yet where peers do intervene, they can be effective in preventing the victimisation in 50-75% of instances.⁸² Girls are more pro-victim than boys, and children are more pro-victim than young people, the lowest levels of sympathy being reached at about Year 10 (age 14).⁸³

4.4 Children Who Bully and Their Exposure to Aggression

Having accepted that bullying is very often an activity that takes its character and impetus from the group, is there much value in looking at the bully him or herself for 'characteristics'? It would be comfortable, in many ways, to believe that bullies are distinct from other children, but recent research has tended to disrupt old ideas of bullies as predominantly angry, socially maladept and lacking in emotional insight. On the contrary, they will often have good or high levels of affective social competence, and be

popular among their same-sex peers,⁸⁴ although this does not usually translate into academic success at school.⁸⁵ Aggression is a common trait, with positive attitudes to violence, and there is some evidence that a background of conflict, power-assertive discipline, domestic violence, uninvolved fathering (for boys) and a domestic environment in which the child feels that their views go unheard all increase the likelihood of developing bullying behaviour.⁸⁶ There is evidence that children who have been exposed to conflict and violence learn this behaviour as a response to frustration, and that this 'cycle of violence' is perpetuated intergenerationally.⁸⁷

It can be helpful to be aware of these associations in devising anti-bullying interventions, not least to forestall approaches based on caricature. In a review of the effectiveness of international anti-bullying practices, Peter Smith has pointed out that anger management support for bullies is unlikely to be effective, since there is no general evidence of anger problems among children who bully.⁸⁸

We do know that some children and young people who have been bullied go on to bully others.

'Here's my story when I was being picked on and when I picked on them. Being picked on is hard, you feel like you're all alone and no one likes you. But picking on someone is not a nice thing. I didn't like what I was doing. It turned me into someone that I was not, because I hated school so much.'⁸⁹

Such children are a corrective to any tendency to divide children too categorically into 'bad' children who bully and 'good' children who are bullied. Indeed, research suggests that those who move from victim to bully are actually among our most vulnerable children, tending to have low social cognition and being at risk of some of the poorest health outcomes.⁹⁰

4.5 Children Who are Bullied - Isolation and Low Self-Esteem

Identifying the type of children who, through their personal traits, are likely to be vulnerable to bullying is also problematic. Any such attempt must be prefaced at both policy and pastoral level with a clear message that nobody ever deserves to be bullied, and that it is not the victim's fault. Nevertheless, evidence does suggest that victims of bullying may often be somewhat anxious children, with poor social problem-solving skills and a relatively limited ability to read the motivations of others.⁹¹ As a result, they have fewer friends and are more isolated in the playground and other settings.⁹² They also tend to be smaller and weaker than their peers and attackers, with negative attitudes to violence.⁹³ Other research suggests that girls who have been bullied are twice as likely as their non-bullied peers to have been beaten.⁹⁴ Victimisation by peers or adults will be destructive of self-esteem, low self-esteem may increase vulnerability to attack, and the effects may be bi-directional.⁹⁵ The accounts of children and young people who are being victimised show this only too evidently.

'Evere since i was a bout 5 i have allways be bullled. I dont do any thing to them but they just hit me and call me names. But now i blame my slef. And i just let them hit me and call me names.'⁹⁶

Olweus' classification of some victims of bullying as proactive victims has generally been found to be helpful in understanding different behaviours and types of vulnerability. These children may account for 10-30% of victims, and exhibit both reactive and proactive aggression, whereas passive victims only respond with reactive aggression on the rare occasions they react to bullying.⁹⁷ They may be disruptive to other children and react aggressively when challenged, are often hyperactive and have attention problems.⁹⁸ There is some evidence of an association for both bullies and victims between bullying and domestic violence.⁹⁹

4.6 Why Me? Creating Difference and Victimising Difference

One of the most important members of the Friends Against Bullying (FAB) scheme in Sir Jonathan North Community College in Leicestershire is one of its most striking:

Name: Frederina Smith
Form: 9.18 Form Room: G57
Profile: I love playing chess in my spare time. I belong to the Knighton Chess club, and I have won many awards with them. I also like to sing, and regularly do Karaoke. My favourite subject is Maths. I like maths because it has a correct answer, and a formula. My second favourite subject is Physics. I love Electricity and Energy most. They are so good and really interesting. I love the library ... It is my favourite place. I really enjoy FAB because it is somewhere I can be accepted and enjoy myself.¹⁰⁰

Frederina, of course, is a fictional creation and the antithesis of cool. S/he is the outsider who has been welcomed into a group that accepts difference. For FAB, bullying is a way of victimising difference, so the group's core task is to create an environment where people are at ease with diversity in all its forms, and offer the safety of friendship. Friendship's protective power is widely acknowledged,¹⁰¹ and children and young people across the country are indeed offering that friendship through peer support schemes ranging from 'Friendship Benches' to 'Circles of Friends' to 'Buddying'. Yet other children and young people point out the challenge they face: youth culture is simultaneously extremely diverse and extremely exclusive.

'If you're in high school then you'll know exactly wat I'm talking about. I'm talking about the way that most young people are labelled. e.g nerds, jocks etc. just by the way you act and the people you hang with is a huge part in social life and it needs to stop! There is a huge barrier between popular and unpopular. The other day I met someone who had been slitting her wrists due to the fact that people were calling her a freak.'¹⁰²

Social exclusion, where bullies eject their victims from social and friendship circles through ostracising them or 'stealing' their friends, is practised in approximately a third of cases. It is a technique much more likely to be used by girls than boys, and is often associated with broken friendships.¹⁰³ The other abuses of power which constitute bullying can be seen as means towards a similar end. All are means of peer rejection. Through displays of aggression, verbal or physical, a bully can confirm his or her own status within their peer group, and stamp the victim as an outsider. To adult eyes, the distinction that can mark out a child for such rejection can be virtually imperceptible, and even victims themselves are often bemused by why they should have become targets.

'I attend school every day scared of what they are going to do to me next ...I can't think why[.] I'm not pretty or rude I don't boast or wear short skirts'¹⁰⁴

Asked why they thought they had been bullied, primary school children in Leicestershire capture some of this diversity and confusion.

'My curly hair.'

'My strange name.'

'Because I have glasses.'

'I was rubbish at football.'

'Because I am different.'

'He didn't like me.'

'Because I was new in the school.'

'Because of clothes and the property that I owned.'

*'I don't really know because I didn't do anything to them.'*¹⁰⁵

4.7 Cultures of Homophobic Abuse

Bullying which vilifies children and young people through associating them negatively with homosexuality illustrates how in many cases the objective of bullying – confirming cohesion through exclusion – can be more important than the personal characteristics of the victim him or herself. She or he may or may not behave in ways which fail to conform to gender stereotypes, but for the purposes of the bullying, the victim's actual sexual identity is often of relatively little interest. Even among primary age children, for whom ideas of sexuality and identity are unformed or unclear, homophobic abuse is a way of marking out victims as worthless and beyond consideration.

Yet, it would be wrong to imply that homophobic abuse is simply another 'stick' with which bullies can beat their different victims, like 'smelly' or 'ugly', or that its general use removes its specific content. It is a form of bias-bullying, rooted in pernicious assumptions, which puts specific groups of children and young people at risk and attacks fundamental aspects of their identities. More broadly, homophobic attitudes and language support a culture of aggressively gendered assumptions that may increase the risk of sexist and sexualised bullying generally.¹⁰⁶

Evidence of homophobic bullying, mainly through small scale studies, suggests that children and young people identified as lesbian or gay face a higher risk of victimisation than their peers. A Stonewall study of lesbian and gay men's experience of violence in 1996 found that 24% of respondents under 18 years old had been violently attacked by fellow students.¹⁰⁷ Research in Northamptonshire secondaries in 2003 found that 64% of year 9 and 10 students had seen other students being homophobically bullied, and 26% had themselves been homophobically bullied.¹⁰⁸ Though teachers are aware of the extent of the problem (82% of secondary school teachers aware of verbal homophobic bullying, and 26% of physical homophobic bullying), it is perhaps the form of bullying least likely to be self-reported.¹⁰⁹ Disclosure carries risks not associated with other forms of bullying:

'I was being bullied at school. When my dad found out, he was sympathetic, but that's because he didn't know why I was being bullied. Since he found out I was gay, he freaked. Since then, every time he gets angry at me for something he threatens to throw me out of the house. He never used to do that.'¹¹⁰

4.8 Disability, Special Needs and Vulnerability

In 2002, young people in Waltham Forest and Redbridge who had been victims of bullying were asked about its cause or focus. In 43% of cases, the reasons were obscure or apparently individual. Mental health was cited in 5% of cases, physical health in 10%, hospital attendance in 2% and disability in 6% of cases. If one adds to this the 10% who believed that wearing glasses was the cause or focus of their victimisation, young people in 33% of cases believed that their health was an important factor.¹¹¹ The findings fit with other evidence and testimony of how those with ill-health, disability or visible medical conditions can be twice as likely as their peers to become targets for bullying behaviour.¹¹² For example, a retrospective study of adults who stammer found that 83% had been bullied at school, 18% had been bullied everyday, and this related to difficulties making friendships.¹¹³ Physical limitations can be exploited ruthlessly, with severe consequences.

'i can't go to class coz i don't like it coz when i do go in they always call me everthing coz i have one eyes sometime they bully me other that and sometime they just like pushing me around sometime i feel like killing me self.'¹¹⁴

The Children's Commissioner also heard from a young wheelchair user whose peers bullied her by removing the wheels from her chair and leaving her in the rain.

Children, who although not living with a disability or special need themselves, may be made vulnerable to bullying by the fact that they provide care to someone in their family with an illness, disability, mental health or substance misuse problem. Young carers may be taking on practical and emotional caring responsibilities that would normally be expected of an adult.¹¹⁵

Recent research has highlighted the difficulties young carers face, including risk of ill-health, stress and tiredness, especially when they care through the night or have to leave an adult. Many feel bullied or isolated. Young carers tend to underachieve or miss school, and many fail to attain any GCSEs.¹¹⁶

Children and young people with Special Educational Needs do not always have the levels of social confidence and competence, and the robust friendship bonds that can protect against bullying. Children and young people with autism or aspergers have described to the Children's Commissioner how peer rejection and isolation can expose them to bullying:

'I can make friends with adults, but people my age ... don't really talk to me[.]'

'Sometimes I've been bullied and they bully me for no reasons, hit or kick or tease me and I feel angry and chase them.'

Where teachers are not properly trained, the experiences of these children can be even worse:

*'Even with the most basic knowledge I would have stuck out as someone with Aspergers. The kids were fine ... it was the teachers that were the bullies ... from the first day it was a living hell ... that was the first time I felt suicidal ... after three weeks my parents pulled me out [of secondary school]; that was when the Obsessive Compulsive Disorder started.'*¹¹⁷

Nor is it the case that children and young people attending special schools are necessarily secure. In one study comparing the experiences of children with moderate learning disabilities in mainstream and specialist provision, both reported high levels of bullying - around 83% (no timescale and broad definition). Children in special school were more likely to have experienced aggression from neighbours and peers outside school.¹¹⁸

4.9 BME Victimization and Islamophobia

Despite the fact that anti-racism was an element in the Sheffield Project, race and ethnicity were not recorded on the pupil bullying questionnaires. Racist bullying continues to be sparsely researched. Bullying related to religion has received even less attention. Further detailed research into this area is needed, as what we do already know suggests that a serious problem exists. We noted above (see 4.6) that the reasons given by primary age school children for being bullied were often subjective; but this was not always the case.

'Because I haven't got friends and I'm not British.'
*'My colour and religion.'*¹¹⁹

A study in 1994 of 6,000 children found that 17.4% of boys and 18.1% of girls in primary schools, and 12.1% of boys and 6.3% of girls in secondary schools had been called nasty names 'about my colour'.¹²⁰ A survey of

bullying in Islington in 2001 found that 29% of those who had been victims of bullying had been racially insulted.¹²¹ A major survey of secondary schools in 'On Track' areas found that pupils of White and Chinese backgrounds supported statistically higher levels of victimisation than pupils from Black and Mixed Caribbean backgrounds.¹²² Research with young travellers in Cambridgeshire in 2005 revealed that 36% had been bullied while at school, and a subsequent project documented the severity of much of this persecution:

'Sometimes they would ... put things in my hair, spit on me and hit me. One person hit me so hard that I thought I'd break my cheek. They also took my money.'

'I was bullied from my first day at school. Not just by the children, but by the teachers too. I got called all sorts of names like 'Gypsy', 'smelly', 'tramp', 'no good', and 'pig'. I had children throw stones at me, pinch me and punch me.'

'Once [my children] came home beaten up, their coats wet with urine. The bullies had taken their coats into the school toilets and urinated on them.'¹²³

An increasingly fearful and polarised public debate around Islam, integration and terrorism appears to be exposing Muslim children and young people to heightened levels of bullying and abuse. The Office of the Children's Commissioner consulted with a group of children (6 – 13 years) in Newcastle's Bangladeshi community. They described how racist name-calling was common and often overlooked, how they were at particular risk on the way to Mosque wearing their traditional clothes, and how harassment from peers had increased since the July bombings in 2005.

'I wear a scarf and people pick on me.'

'Yes, we are always in danger now as the Muslim community is blamed.'

'My family suffer from racist abuse now.'¹²⁴

They strongly believed that the current negative portrayal of Muslims has helped fuel and sustain this bullying and harassment.

There is research to support the suggestion that where BME children experience bullying, it is twice as likely to be severe.¹²⁵ Moreover, bullying incidents are a subset of the indirect and direct racist hostility which BME children are likely to experience in a number of situations. These bullying attacks may therefore amplify a broader experience of rejection, and impact on a child's sense of cultural as well as personal worth.

4.10 Children at Risk in Institutional Settings & Children in Care

We know that young people sent to Young Offender Institutions have high levels of mental health problems and conduct disorders. Without extremely vigilant supervision and care, custodial settings are likely to generate high levels of bullying. A recent survey by the Youth Justice Board¹²⁶ found that 10% of boys and 13% of girls were bullied during their first few days in custody. During their time in custody 36% of both boys and girls said that they had felt unsafe. 17% of boys and 11% of girls said that on arrival in custody, other inmates had put them through an initiation test. 41% of boys had insulting remarks made about them by other young people and of these, 30% said that this occurred on a daily basis. Just under a quarter of boys said that they had been kicked, hit or assaulted by other young people, a figure which fell to 12% for girls. 9% of boys and 4% of girls had been picked on because of their race or ethnic background. Bullying can occur in a number of locations within a prison, but most frequently in cellular accommodation and in classrooms or education.¹²⁷ Since 1999, all prisons have been required to have an anti-bullying strategy in place, and to appoint an anti-bullying co-ordinator.

Children and young people in care face far greater risks from bullying than their peers, for a number of reasons. The 'difference' of being in care, and indeed the stigma this often still attracts, can expose them to victimisation in the classroom. When teachers fail to treat their care status confidentially this vulnerability is magnified:

'My maths teacher told my whole class I was in care.'¹²⁸

Moreover, we know that children in care are often from backgrounds, or have needs and conditions that are in themselves risk factors in relation to bullying. For example, 13% have physical or mental disabilities¹²⁹ and 27% have statements of Special Educational Needs. As a result, it has been found that 6 out of 10 are bullied in school, as opposed to 1 in 6 in the general population.¹³⁰ Where children and young people are in residential care, bullying may also be a problem. In a recent small-scale study, just under half of the young people interviewed had experienced bullying. Of the 33 reported cases, 3 had occurred in previous placements, 25 were of physical violence, and 20 were verbal attacks.¹³¹ Many of these children and young people will have been taken into care as a result of being abused and targeted by others, including their primary carer, so the aggression they experience through bullying will have compounded these experiences.

4.11 Children at Risk in Cyber-Space

Until recently, bullying has been studied and conceptualised mainly through institutional settings such as schools, sports clubs and custodial settings. But new technologies have changed the way that children and young people associate, and these have brought with them rich new opportunities for friendship, and concurrently new opportunities for bullying – 'cyber-bullying'. Young people who want to defame, humiliate, threaten or harass others,

including other young people, can tap into the range of options that information technology offers, from Internet message boards, social networking and gaming sites, through to e-mails and texts. How does this development affect our understanding of how bullying operates and can be prevented?

The question is far from being purely academic; the problem is large and growing. Though the evidence base is narrow, UK studies indicate that around 20% of young people have suffered cyber-bullying.¹³² Harassment by phone is by some margin the most common means of abuse (14% harassed by text message, 4% by e-mails), and girls are more likely to be targets than boys. The studies confirm that it happens mainly, but not exclusively, out of school hours. Although like most episodes of bullying it usually lasts for around a week, and then stops, prolonged campaigns of harassment are possible. Indeed, the technology makes it possible to magnify the impact of a single attack so that it circulates for a long period of time and is shared across a large group.

*'For example, the thing where people are getting attacked the[n] videoed, and it is being sent around the school. Some people did that at our school and didn't even get expelled!'*¹³³

Cyber-bullying, then, can involve public humiliation - the role of the group and the bystander continue to be important. It can also hit very close to home, literally following children and young people into their bedrooms, indeed following them wherever they go, creating a sense of profound threat and violation. UK studies point to most bullies being known to their victims, but international studies have found the opposite, with bullies taking advantage of the technologies' potential to inflict distress anonymously.

Yet does the reach of cyber-bullying mean that new groups of children and young people are being affected by bullying behaviour, or that the same or similar groups are in conflict through a new technology? The evidence is not yet clear. A Dutch study of primary and secondary pupils suggests that there is a strong link between cyber-bullying and traditional bullying, with enmities and roles established in school or social life being played out in cyberspace. Victims of cyber-bullying, like victims of traditional bullying, for example, tend to have fewer friends, feel less popular than their peers and be prone to greater stress. Worryingly, however, there is a strong victim to bully-victim transition in cyber-bullying which has the potential to result in a 'culture of cyberbullying'.¹³⁴

4.12 Damaging Children's Life Chances across All Every Child Matters (ECM) Areas

As we have seen, the *Every Child Matters* Outcome Framework identifies bullying as something that can stop children and young people Staying Safe - where the target relates to those who 'have been bullied' - and Making a Positive Contribution - where the target relates to those guilty of 'bullying another'. The framework and targets appear to be performing a useful role, but the categorisation is inevitably a simplification. Bullies and their victims

do not sit in distinct categories in terms of the adverse consequences they may experience. Bullying can affect children and young people's potential to achieve all the outcomes.

Be Healthy, Stay Safe

Children and young people who are being bullied are not safe, and their health can suffer significantly. One study found that primary school children who were bullied were more likely to report disturbed sleep, bed-wetting, feeling sad, headaches and stomach aches.¹³⁵ A more recent international study of adolescents has confirmed this picture, and underlined that the seriousness of physical health problems such as headache, stomach ache, backache and dizziness, and psychological problems such as bad temper, nervousness, poor sleep patterns and helplessness, deepens with the seriousness and duration of victimisation.¹³⁶ Long term and intense bullying can lead to a variety of post-traumatic stress disorders.¹³⁷

Changes in behaviour may be evident, but where children do not disclose their victimisation, the reasons for these changes may not. It is therefore important that parents as well as professionals have information that can help them read situations sensitively and intervene appropriately. Parent Line Plus has recently brought out a useful guide for carers: 'Be Someone to Tell: What Can I do if My Child is Being Bullied'. Beatbullying has a Toolkit for healthcare professionals which provides a section on the emotional, physical and behavioural signs of bullying. It goes on to explain how severe cases can lead to self-harming, eating disorders, alcohol and / or drug abuse, self-harming and suicidal thoughts. A 14 year old girl described these reactions to bullying in her response to the Children's Commissioner's 'Shout!' competition:

*'I was bullied all the way through primary school [W]hen I started Comprehensive School I started getting bullied again, I tried to commit suicide, I was close to running away and I cried myself to sleep every night.... The bullying continued and I was self-harming. I felt alone and lost everything because of them.'*¹³⁸

Although there are no authoritative figures for how many children and young people are driven to consider or attempt suicide, the frequency with which it is mentioned in children and young people's testimonies is chilling:

*'I have a friend who I shall call "Mr. X." Anyway recently he took an overdose causing him to go to hospital. Luckily, he had not taken enough pills to take his life but the doctors said if he had had one more he would of died! He told me this in school and I asked him why he did it and he replied, Bullying!'*¹³⁹

*'Bullying is horrible. I have been bullied since the age of 4. When I was 13 I tried to kill myself.'*¹⁴⁰

Between 1998–1999, ChildLine analysed the calls they received about suicide. They received 701 calls where suicidal ideation was the main problem, for whatever reason. In the same period, they received 337 calls

from children whose main reason for calling was bullying, but who said this made them feel like killing themselves.¹⁴¹ Research with young lesbian, gay and bisexual adults in 2000 found that 40% had made at least one attempt to self-harm. Investigations by Neil Marr and Tim Field put the figure of suicides among British children each year because of bullying at 16 or more, a phenomenon they termed 'bullycide'.¹⁴² Depression and anxiety have been closely associated with adolescents who have been bullied¹⁴³ and bullies themselves.¹⁴⁴ Although we have no specific evidence demonstrating the long term health consequences of bullying, the nature and seriousness of its immediate effects would suggest that they can be significant. This is certainly the view of some who have suffered:

*'I'm now emotionally scarred and even a slightly raised voice (in the workplace, in public or anywhere) is enough to scare me and in my helplessness I'm driven to get violent back.'*¹⁴⁵

The prevalence of serious physical injury is not known. Although the great majority of bullying incidents are verbal or relational, particularly among girls, a minority do include assault. Of young people found to have been bullied in Islington in 2001, 20% said they had been beaten and badly injured.¹⁴⁶ 22% of bullied children and young people consulted in East Sussex' 'Straight to the Top' conference in 2005 said they had been physically assaulted.¹⁴⁷ Girls are less likely to suffer physical attack. Small scale research conducted over the Summer term in a South Wales Accident and Emergency department in 1999 revealed that an average of three children a week were seen as a result of injuries caused by bullying. 60% of victims were boys, and 40% were girls. 60% of attacks took place at school, causing cuts and abrasions in 25% of cases, bruising in 20%, and bone fractures in 15%. Some children had been forced to take drugs.¹⁴⁸

Enjoy & Achieve, Make a Positive Contribution, Achieve Economic Wellbeing

Experience of bullying can leave children unable to concentrate on their studies.¹⁴⁹ Motivational difficulties associated with the distress of being bullied can also result in lower than expected levels of achievement.¹⁵⁰ As one might expect, children and young people will try to remove themselves from school if they feel unsafe. 72% of lesbian, gay and bisexual adults have reported a regular history of school absenteeism due to homophobic bullying.¹⁵¹ Parents or carers who find that their child is being bullied and have no confidence in the action the school is taking to protect him or her will in some cases withdraw their child. This can escalate into protracted and bitter disputes (see 6.3). Exclusion is a sanction that schools are prepared to use against bullies in only the most severe cases. In 2004/05, 130 pupils were permanently excluded for bullying, and 7,680 pupils were subject to fixed period exclusions. Such measures will in some cases be necessary to safeguard the safety of the school community, yet they may have the effect of exposing the particular child or young person to greater risk of social exclusion.

Bullied children may not only withdraw themselves from school, but from social interaction generally. They can become isolated and withdrawn, even from their families. Parents of bullied girls interviewed by Parentline Plus return frequently to the way their child's life shrinks as a result of their victimisation: 'She's a prisoner in her own home'; 'she couldn't even step outside our door'; 'My daughter is now too scared to go to school and is rapidly losing confidence, especially in crowded or unfamiliar places.'¹⁵² We know that although 43% of the young people with a disability who do not participate in sport say this is because of their health, 8% do not participate because of bullying or discrimination.¹⁵³ There are outstanding examples of young people who have been bullied and gone on to perform confident roles in social and school life, not least the Diana Award Winners whose anti-bullying work has been inspirational, but for many others, their ability to make a positive contribution to their communities will have been hampered significantly.

There is some evidence to suggest that bullies are more likely than those who have not bullied to become involved in criminal activity later in life. A small scale qualitative survey of young offenders by Kidscape in 1994 found that 62% had been bullies at school, and 23% had been bystanders. Nearly all the bullying had been in gangs. The type of crime to which these young people progressed generally involved both theft and assault.¹⁵⁴ These findings coincide with Professor Dan Olweus' 30 year follow-up studies in Norway that found that around 60% of boys who were bullies at aged 11 to 14 had at least one criminal conviction by the age of 24, and up to 40% had three or more convictions, compared with 10% of the control group who were not involved in bullying.¹⁵⁵

4.13 Recommendations

Bullying needs to be picked up early and 'low level' harassment challenged:

Minor acts of harassment can escalate into more serious or sustained campaigns and teachers and other professionals need to take all incidents seriously and record the events and their response.

Training on bullying needs to be improved:

The success of anti-bullying policies depends largely on the commitment and skill of teachers and others in the school community and children's workforce.

Teaching and training on diversity needs to be improved:

In the light of schools' new duty to promote community cohesion, teachers should be offered further support to raise diversity issues. This should include training and encouragement to use the curriculum flexibly, and should not be restricted to PSHE and Citizenship.

A range of reporting options for children experiencing bullying needs to be made available:

Successful anti-bullying strategies should include a range of reporting options, as well as opportunities for children and young people to seek advice and support from each other. While reporting to responsible adults should be encouraged, there should be opportunities for concerns to be expressed and advice sought amongst peers.

Confidentiality needs to be understood and respected across children's services:

Research indicates that many children and young people in school believe that teachers cannot be relied on to treat their information in confidence. Anti-bullying policies should, in age-appropriate terms, set out the principles of confidentiality within which they operate.

Anti-bullying programmes should support self-esteem in all children and young people and teach assertiveness:

Low self-esteem exposes children and young people to a number of risks, including the risk of bullying. All children's services should emphasise children's involvement as one of the ways through which they support children and young people's confidence and good mental health.

The value of social groups and clubs in enabling children and young people to develop friendships should be recognised, and the importance of association should be reflected within Extended Schools and Youth Matters programmes:

Children and young people's ability to form friendships and cope with changing patterns of friendship will significantly affect their life chances.

Schools should conduct an annual survey of children and young people's experience of bullying:

Guidance and resources should be made available to schools by both local teams and national anti-bullying organisations in support of this policy objective.

As a matter of urgency, further work is needed into the relationship between bullying, children and young people's safety and Islamophobia. There is also an urgent need for the Government to stimulate a serious dialogue on interfaith relationships among children and young people. This needs to be addressed in the context of strategies to further community cohesion.

It is becoming clear that there can be problems in achieving meaningful integration between young people in different faith groups and communities, reflecting those which are prevalent in adult society. Reports from Muslim children and young people suggest that the bullying and harassment to which they are subjected has increased sharply with the rise in tension following major terrorist attacks and the associated recent adverse publicity which fuel stereotypical thinking and racism. It is essential that local and national policy makers understand these children's experiences and adopt policies and a public discourse which reduce risk. One approach we would recommend is participation work to enable young people to find and adopt innovative solutions to these issues themselves; through positive media

activity; through education (by using better the opportunities provided by the citizenship element of the school curriculum and using Extended Schools to support Muslim parents and build educational links with mosques and madrasahs).

Providers of IT products and services used for ‘cyber-bullying’ cooperate with each other and Government to minimise risks, including providing accessible and regular information to children, young people and parents.

The Children’s Commissioner recognises the responsible stance taken by many providers, and welcomes DfES’ convening of key services to review best practice. The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre is also a useful resource. Given the dynamic nature of the technology and children and young people’s appropriation of it, this cyber-bullying taskforce should continue to meet regularly and report on its progress.

There should be continued prioritisation and investment in positive parenting in the Early Years and throughout childhood:

The Children’s Commissioner welcomes the growing recognition of parenting support as a potent means of early intervention, strengthening the resilience of both the family unit and the child. Universal support, along with non-stigmatising specialist support, can help, not only in tackling social exclusion and promoting community cohesion, but also in breaking cycles of violence and reducing other risk factors.

Funding is made available for a large-scale and long-term research study into the impact of school-based and community-based anti-bullying strategies, including how these are or are not meeting specific needs around gender, disability, race and sexuality.

Our evidence base on the efficacy of specific anti-bullying interventions remains patchy.

CHAPTER 5

Anti-Bullying Interventions: What is the Evidence of Their Effectiveness?

A Literature Review Conducted for the Children's Commissioner by:

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5 Chapter Summary

A review of academic literature over the last ten years reveals some evidence to confirm the importance of robust whole-school practice, child-centred approaches and peer support. The evidence, however, is far from comprehensive, and more needs to be known about the impact of anti-bullying policies over time and in relation to particular victim groups.

- **Evidence Reviewed** - a search was conducted of literature published since 1996, with particular emphasis on research reviews.
- **Children and Adults' Differing Views on Bullying** – differences in definitions and perceptions can hamper interventions, so raising awareness and forging agreement on an ongoing basis is essential.
- **Punitive or Problem-Solving Approaches** – there is little evidence that punitive approaches change behaviour, but some that problem-solving approaches can have a positive effect.
- **Supporting Victims** – victims who can respond assertively to bullying are least likely to suffer negative psychological impacts, therefore assertiveness skills and other coping strategies are important.
- **Supporting Children to Support Each Other** – peer pressure can reduce bullying and the harm it causes when engaged through properly managed and age appropriate peer support programmes.
- **Parental Reinforcement** – the extent to which carers support the school's anti-bullying approach will affect its overall success.
- **Flexible and Child Centred Approaches** – the diversity of bullying and the diversity of children mean that one-size-fits all solutions are ineffective.
- **Effective Whole School Approaches** – interventions need to be consistent, not sporadic, inclusive and cross-curricular, not restrictively

targeted and operating in isolation, and need to incorporate regular monitoring, evaluation and adaptation.

- **Key Messages from Research** – inconsistent data collection and collation, and a lack of long-term studies are problems that need to be addressed if practice is to evolve on a firmer basis.

5.1 Evidence Reviewed

A search was conducted of literature published since 1996, with particular emphasis on research reviews. Other key texts prior to this date were also referenced where appropriate. A full description of the methodology is given in the endnotes for this section.¹⁵⁶ The findings presented here are part of a wider set of findings that have informed other aspects of this report and its recommendations.

5.2 Children and Adults' Differing Views on Bullying

Research has shown that teachers underestimate the frequency and severity of bullying and are not sufficiently aware of different forms of bullying.¹⁵⁷ They are more likely to rate physical bullying as more serious and worthy of intervention than other forms of bullying, and believe that boys are more likely to be bullies than girls.¹⁵⁸ The fact that relational or verbal bullying is less observable, both in terms of the perpetrators' and victims' actions or responses, is a factor here. The need for anti-bullying interventions to address staff knowledge and understanding of bullying and its different forms is therefore a critical issue. What is also clear from research is that staff training and education needs to cover *all* staff working in the school environment including those with responsibility for transporting children to and from school.¹⁵⁹

Pupils are also likely to have an incomplete understanding of the different forms bullying can take, and tend to exclude aspects of relational bullying within their concept of bullying.¹⁶⁰ A lack of understanding has implications for levels of reporting, for perpetrators' perceptions of their actions, and for bystanders' views on when or whether they should intervene. Interventions such as classroom posters and videos have been shown to improve children's understanding of bullying.¹⁶¹ Yet research has also shown that awareness-raising cannot be a 'one-off activity': it needs to be a continuous process not only serving to remind pupils and staff about bullying *per se* but also the school's policies with regard to it.¹⁶²

5.3 Punitive or Problem Solving Approaches

There are a number of different approaches to working with bullies to change their behaviours. These range along a dimension from punitive to non-punitive or 'no-blame' and reflect the different perspectives on the aetiology of, or reasons for, bullying. There are, as a result, detractors for each approach and the evidence on the effectiveness of many of these strategies is limited. In addition, there is almost no work which has

compared the effectiveness of different approaches according to factors such as the type of bullying behaviour and the ages and genders of perpetrators and victims.

Examples of punitive strategies include 'bully courts' (in which the bully is put on 'trial' by a couple of teachers and five elected children) and use of a hierarchy of sanctions to punish bullying. Some argue that such approaches are inappropriate and reinforce to the bully that power and dominance (which characterises bullying) is an acceptable form of behaviour.¹⁶³ There is little evidence to support the use of these sorts of approaches in schools.¹⁶⁴ At the other end of the continuum are approaches which are characterised by efforts to help bullies face what they are doing, understand the impact of their behaviour on their victims, and develop alternative patterns of behaviour. This approach has been used in individual and group settings and has been shown to have, at least in the short term, a positive effect.¹⁶⁵ It has, however, been challenged by some researchers on the basis of evidence which shows that bullies lack empathy for their victims.¹⁶⁶

Preventative work with children inclined to bully can include teaching social problem-solving skills, supporting the development of positive ways of dealing with emotional distress, and non-violent ways of resolving conflicts. These sorts of interventions can have a positive effect.¹⁶⁷

5.4 Supporting Victims

It has been argued that the way a child responds to being bullied affects whether or not they will suffer further victimisation.¹⁶⁸ An assertive response is the most effective and also serves to protect the child from any negative psychological impact.¹⁶⁹ In contrast, responding aggressively will tend to exacerbate the situation, and passive responses (for example, ignoring, giving into requests) leave the victim vulnerable to further episodes. An important element to interventions with victims is to improve their coping skills and the way they respond to an incident of bullying.¹⁷⁰ Assertiveness training has been shown to improve pupil confidence, lead to greater use of effective coping strategies, and reduce levels of bullying.¹⁷¹

Furthermore, on the basis of such evidence, researchers have called for the teaching of strategies (behavioural and verbal) to all children to help them deal with or de-escalate bullying situations.¹⁷²

5.5 Supporting Children to Support Each Other

The role of peer intervention and peer pressure in addressing bullying is regarded by some as the key to tackling bullying.¹⁷³ It is, however, often neglected or sidelined in anti-bullying programmes. Indeed, the failure to incorporate interventions with peers/bystanders is viewed by some as a major reason for the limited benefits yielded by such programmes.¹⁷⁴ Peer interventions include bystander interventions (that is, those which seek to increase the rate at which peers intervene in actual incidents of bullying (see 4.3)) and broader peer support.

The role of peers to intervene in bullying situations is under-utilised despite the fact that there is clear evidence that peers' intervention can prevent or stop bullying taking place.¹⁷⁵ Interventions with peers (or bystanders) tend to involve trying to increase empathy towards victims and providing strategies which can be used to intervene. It is easier to promote sympathetic views of victims in younger children than older children.¹⁷⁶ Furthermore, when children have intervened once in a bullying situation, they are more likely to intervene again. Taken together, these facts point to the value of interventions with young children that aim to move them from being bystanders to being defenders.

Bystanders often report feeling powerless and at a loss as to what to do.¹⁷⁷ Schemes by which children develop and practice strategies and clear support from teachers are the two key facets in building up bystander confidence.¹⁷⁸ Younger children will need clearer direction from school staff about the appropriateness of strategies. Among older children, however, what appears to work best is allowing peer groups to develop and practice strategies with indirect or more subtle guidance from the teacher.¹⁷⁹

Peer support systems are a common feature of anti-bullying programmes implemented in schools. Their purpose is to ensure children have access to peer support and to counteract anti-social behaviour and peer group difficulties. Overall, evaluations of peer support suggest that these systems are liked by children¹⁸⁰ and can improve the social climate of the school.¹⁸¹ However, it would also appear that, in their current form, peer support is more likely to be provided by and used by girls and administered by female teachers, and that male peer supporters can themselves be bullied on account of assuming such a role.¹⁸² In order to address this, Naylor and Cowie¹⁸³ argue that peer support should not be an optional extra but, rather, needs to be central to the school's ethos of care. Finally, the effectiveness of peer support is dependent on the quality and level of supervision from school staff.¹⁸⁴ Indeed, as has been recently reported in the tragic case of Jo Geeling,¹⁸⁵ there is a risk that the system can be misused and perpetuate bullying and other anti-social behaviour, and this risk must be properly assessed.

Helen Cowie and colleagues discuss the practice of peer support in more detail in chapter 7.4 of this report.

5.6 Parental Reinforcement

As with pupils and teachers, there is an ongoing need to educate and raise awareness among parents. Parents need to be aware of and show support for anti-bullying policies. In terms of peer or bystander interventions, parents are seen as having an important role in reiterating teaching in school about the importance of supporting victims and intervening in bullying situations.¹⁸⁶ Similarly, interventions with victims designed to improve their assertiveness and coping strategies need to be shared with parents and reinforced at home.¹⁸⁷

5.7 Flexible and Child Centred Approaches

The lack of, or mixed success, of bullying intervention programmes has, in part, been ascribed to the way that interventions have failed to address the whole range of bullying behaviours, and/or the fact that they are not gender- or age-appropriate.¹⁸⁸ For example, using peer support as part of an intervention programme may fit well with the nature of girls' relationships and help-seeking/ providing behaviours but does not work so well with boys, especially younger adolescent boys.¹⁸⁹ In terms of an intervention with a specific bully or victim, Toblin¹⁹⁰ argues for the need for an individualistic, tailored approach which takes account of the nature of the bullying, the victim's responses, and the psychological profile of the bully and victim. Involving children and young people in the development and choice of policies and strategies is a key way by which the appropriateness and acceptability of the components of an anti-bullying programme can be explored and tested.¹⁹¹

5.8 Effective Whole School Approaches

Whole school approaches involving intervention and preventative strategies are more effective than interventions which simply target high-risk children with respect to lowering levels of bullying.¹⁹² Researchers agree that bullying interventions need to 'target the school, classroom, and individual and must be supported by broader structural initiatives'.¹⁹³ In addition, the most effective anti-bullying interventions are those which involve all members of the school community: paid staff (teaching and non-teaching), pupils, volunteers and even members of the local community.¹⁹⁴ Two of the most commonly implemented whole school approaches are the Bullying at School Program and the Whole School Response Program.

The Bullying at School Programme

This enormously influential programme,¹⁹⁵ developed by Professor Dan Olweus, is discussed in chapter 1 of this report.

The Whole School Response Programme

This three-tiered approach - prevention, intervention and crisis management - forms the basis for programmes implemented in English schools, and grew from the Sheffield Project and subsequent DfES guidance. It is discussed in chapter 1 of this report.

Improving the Efficacy of Whole School Approaches:

Early and On-going Intervention

With age, children can become more sophisticated in their bullying behaviour, making it more difficult to detect and having the potential for a greater negative impact on the victims. Children also become physically

stronger thus increasing the risks of serious injury to victims of physical bullying.¹⁹⁶ It is therefore important that anti-bullying interventions start when children are young.¹⁹⁷

Complete Implementation

Partial implementation of anti-bullying programmes is seen as a key reason for no or only modest improvements in levels of bullying. Sporadic implementation or implementing only some of the strategies or elements of an anti-bullying programme has a significant impact on its success.¹⁹⁸

Whole School Engagement

The engagement of the whole school is also critical.¹⁹⁹ This includes providing time and resources to allow proper implementation of an anti-bullying programme and full involvement and consultation with staff, pupils and parents from the beginning of the implementation process.²⁰⁰

Sustained and Evolving Intervention

While there is some evidence that anti-bullying programmes are effective in the short-term, the impact of the programmes is not often sustained and after two to three years levels of bullying start to increase.²⁰¹ This points to the need for sustained interventions which are refreshed and revised over time.²⁰²

On-going Monitoring and Evaluation

Sustaining and improving interventions comes from adapting and revising specific elements and strategies which form the overall programme adopted by a school. It is important, therefore, that schools build into their programme a system by which they can monitor and evaluate its impact.²⁰³ However, this is often missing from bullying interventions and is seen as a key reason for the mixed, modest or short-term success of interventions.²⁰⁴ A system of monitoring not only highlights successes and failures, thus identifying where new interventions need to be directed, but also serves to maintain awareness and levels of motivation. It is essential that any monitoring or evaluation system is developed in consultation with and reflects the desired outcomes of the intervention held by children and young people and their parents as well as staff.²⁰⁵

5.9 Key Messages from Research

This brief (and selective) review of the literature has sought to assess the current state of knowledge about the types of intervention and support that appear helpful to children. However, the review has also pointed to the limits of current knowledge and the areas in which work is needed to further our understanding of a phenomenon that all evidence suggests is harmful to the wellbeing of children. Some key messages are summarised below:

- Evidence concerning the prevalence of bullying is weak. There is a case for the Department for Education and Skills to require reported incidents of bullying to be provided as part of the performance data collected from schools. This would help to provide an improved if partial national picture.
- Investment is needed in large-scale representative longitudinal research, using consistent and replicable methods, to provide more accurate statistics on prevalence, characteristics, causal connections and trends over time. The self-report method is the most feasible, but has weaknesses, and other corroborating methods will be needed, including observation, interviews and standardised measures. The involvement of parents in this research is rare and we know little about the impact of bullying on family dynamics.
- Although research has provided psychosocial profiles of victims, bullies and bully-victims, and evidence on the short- and long-term impact of bullying on children's welfare, the inter-relationship between bullying and gender, sexuality, disability and ethnicity remains quite poorly understood. Focused research in these areas is at an early stage and the lessons from it need to be incorporated into more mainstream bullying research. Very little is known about the impact of witnessing bullying episodes, even though we know that a wide range of children are affected by it.
- Most bullying appears to take place in or close to schools. This is where children spend a considerable amount of their time. However, schools have also been the major focus for bullying research. We know that bullying also occurs in children's homes and we need to know more about the prevalence and nature of bullying in other youth and community settings. Racist and homophobic bullying, for example, are likely to be equally present in these arenas.
- Many children do not report their experiences to adults and the impact of bullying on the child is often under-estimated. Myths about bullying also persist. Raising awareness over time amongst children, parents and adults working with them about the forms that bullying may take, including those arising from new technologies, is an essential underpinning to anti-bullying strategies.

- Evidence on intervention strategies with bullies is mixed. In general, there is little evidence to support the effectiveness of punitive approaches. There is some evidence to support strategies that aim to change bullying behaviours or prevent the emergence of bullying behaviour in those at risk.
- Helping children to develop assertiveness and strategies for managing bullying incidents may help to raise pupil confidence and reduce or de-escalate bullying situations.
- The potential in peer interventions for stopping bullying incidents has been under-utilised. Initiatives that help children to gain confidence in their power to intervene can reduce bullying episodes and increase feelings of powerfulness in bystanders. Strategies of this kind need to take careful account of the age of children and provide small groups with opportunities to rehearse a range of strategies under adult guidance.
- Peer support systems (including mentoring, befriending and advocacy) are a common feature of anti-bullying programmes. Evaluations suggest they are liked by children and can improve school cultures. However, these are used more by girls and their effectiveness very much depends on the degree of supervision and support from adult staff.
- The mixed success of anti-bullying programmes has been attributed to their failure to address adequately the differentiated nature of bullying or the needs of different children. Involving children in the development and evaluation of programmes may help to address these problems.
- Whole school approaches, involving all members of the school community, appear to be more successful in reducing bullying than targeted initiatives that focus only on high risk children. The sometimes modest improvements achieved through these programmes have highlighted the need for the following conditions to be fulfilled: full rather than partial implementation, whole school engagement, the programme is sustained over time and is carefully monitored and evaluated. Lack of evaluation (incorporating the views of children, staff and parents) is seen as a key factor in the often modest outcomes attained by bullying interventions.

5.10 Recommendations

Peer support programmes should be developed:

DfES and Healthy Schools should take steps to ensure that evaluations of peer support programmes such as CHIPS (ChildLine in Partnership with Schools) and Sky-High are shared as widely as possible in order to promote good practice.

A range of reporting options for children experiencing bullying needs to be made available:

Successful anti-bullying strategies should include a range of reporting options, as well as opportunities for children and young people to seek advice and support from each other. While reporting to responsible adults should be encouraged, there should be opportunities for concerns to be expressed and advice sought amongst peers.

Anti-bullying programmes should support self-esteem in all children and young people and teach assertiveness:

Low self-esteem exposes children and young people to a number of risks, including the risk of bullying. All children's services should emphasise children's involvement as one of the ways through which they support children and young people's confidence and good mental health.

Funding is made available for a large-scale and long-term research study into the impact of school-based and community-based anti-bullying strategies, including how these are or are not meeting specific needs around gender, disability, race and sexuality:

Our evidence base on the efficacy of specific anti-bullying interventions remains patchy. Evidence on 'community bullying' and work to prevent or respond to it is still less robust.

That those engaged in bullying behaviour are challenged and worked with to understand why they behave in this way and supported to change their behaviour:

From the research evidence gathered in this report, it is clear that punitive measures are not the most effective way of dealing with bullying behaviour.

Children and young people must be actively involved and engaged in seeking solutions to bullying:

Their ideas must play a significant part in shaping bullying interventions. Children also need to be involved in the development and evaluation of anti-bullying programmes and approaches.

CHAPTER 6

The Children's Commissioner: Listening to Children, Young People and Parents

6 Chapter Summary

This chapter explains how children and young people have asked the Children's Commissioner to take action on bullying, and how he has done so through high-level advocacy, detailed scrutiny, strategic over-view and continued direct engagement with children.

- **Why Bullying?** – The Commissioner's role is to take action on what matters to children and what affects their wellbeing. Bullying is important on both counts.
- **Using the Children's Commissioner's Position to Highlight the Problem and Encourage Good Practice** – The Children's Commissioner has spoken out consistently about why bullying matters and what needs to happen.
- **Scrutinising Structural Problems Regarding Complaints** – The system of complaints into the way schools deal with bullying has been scrutinised, and proposals for change are being launched for discussion during Anti-Bullying Week.
- **Offering a Strategic Review of Evidence and Practice** – This report offers a strategic review of bullying and bullying policy today.
- **Engaging Directly with Children and Young People - The 'Journeys' Project** – By working with the Anti-Bullying Alliance and children and young people, the Children's Commissioner has created new child-centred resources.
- **Key Messages from the 'Journeys' Project** – Children and young people need to be systematically involved in devising and implementing anti-bullying policies.

6.1 Why Bullying?

The Children's Commissioner for England, Professor Sir Albert Aynsley-Green, was appointed in March 2005 and took up his duties full-time from July 2005. He has summed up his role as that of a children's champion - standing up for children's views and interests in order to improve their lives. It is a role that opens onto such a wide landscape of need that priorities have to be set and hard decisions made. From the outset, though, bullying has been one of the Office of the Children's Commissioner's (OCC) main areas of activity. On what basis? A set of criteria have been applied to children and young people's issues to decide which should be actively pursued. No other area of the OCC's work has met so many of these criteria as decisively as bullying:

Criteria for Deciding the Office of the Children's Commissioner's Intervention

Criteria	Judgement
<p>Strong evidence base?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children and young people are identifying this as an issue There is research evidence describing the problem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Many children and young people speaking out against bullying and describing its harmful affects ✓ Detailed academic literature
<p>Does it affect -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A lot of children in a small way A small number of children in a big way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Large proportion of children affected at some point in various roles and caused distress ✓ Small proportion of children affected by prolonged and serious victimisation and suffer serious harm
<p>Does it affect -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children's rights (UNCRC) Children's outcomes (ECM) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Can damage children's life chances against all ECM outcome areas ✓ Can compromise children's rights under 7 of the UNCRC Articles
<p>Can the Commissioner make a useful contribution with his resources in a realistic timeframe?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A national role enables Commissioner to review consistency of practice and take strategic view ✓ A high profile, 'figurehead' role enables Commissioner to speak up for children who have suffered in silence
<p>Can the Commissioner make a unique or a complementary contribution?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Leading anti-bullying organisations welcome the Commissioner's involvement and are keen to work with his Office
<p>Does it sit coherently with other issues identified in the work programme?</p>	<p>Bullying relates strongly to several other priority areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Children in Care ✓ Discrimination (bias-bullying – racism, homophobia) ✓ Disability (bias bullying) ✓ Mental Health (victimisation as contributory factor) ✓ Youth Justice and Anti-Social Behaviour, particularly community bullying ✓ Safeguarding (serious physical assault and self-harming behaviour)

In his first public statement setting out priorities for his Office, the Children's Commissioner highlighted bullying and the harm it causes, and committed his office to tackling it. His stance clearly struck a chord with children and young people nationally, who contacted his office to describe their experiences of bullying and support his call for determined action. Bullying has attracted a bigger response from children and young people than any other single aspect of his work.

6.2 Using the Children's Commissioner's Position to Highlight the Problem and Encourage Good Practice

The OCC's approach has consisted of four different but inter-dependent elements. The first is encouragement - using the position of the Children's Commissioner's Office to reiterate bullying's importance, break down the silence and stigma that can still obscure the issue, and promote good practice. This has been taken forward through interviews, public appearances and meetings with professionals and Ministers. In these forums, the OCC has consistently argued for multi-layered and evidence-based anti-bullying strategies that fully involve children and young people, and placed the problem of bullying firmly within the context of a society where adults frequently use violence and abuse their power.

6.3 Scrutinising Structural Problems Regarding Complaints

The second element of the Children's Commissioner's approach is detailed scrutiny of systems where problems have been reported. In particular families have been reporting their frustration with the current complaints system in relation to bullying within schools. The Secretary of State asked the OCC to conduct a review and make recommendations. The results of this review, and the recommendations that flow from it are being launched for discussion during Anti-Bullying Week 2006. The draft recommendations propose that:

- The right of parents to complain to the Secretary of State under sections 496, 497 and 497A of the 1996 Education Act should be removed.
- DfES introduce a new statutory requirement for all local authorities to establish independent mediation services for bullying disputes. These would provide mediation where parents and schools are in dispute, as well as child to child mediation.
- Parents be given new rights to a hearing before a governors' committee. This should be set out in primary legislation and the process and powers of the governors clearly set out. As part of the process, the OCC proposes that an independent presenting officer be appointed.
- DfES establish an external independent complaints panel which would act as a replacement for appeals / complaints to the local authority or the Secretary of State. The membership, duties, powers and functions of the new body would need to be defined in statute and / or regulations.

The discussion document is available on the Children's Commissioner's website, and there will be direct engagement with children and young people.

6.4 Offering a Strategic Review of Evidence and Practice

The third element of the Commissioner's approach is strategic review - using the evidence base in all its forms to analyse the current situation and suggest direction for future action. This report performs that review and carries those recommendations.

6.5 Engaging Directly with Children and Young People - The 'Journeys' Project

The fourth, and most fundamental element of the Commissioner's approach is direct engagement with children and young people to hear their experiences and ideas. Their voices and views have informed all levels of the Commissioner's activity, and have led directly to a new series of resources. The OCC engages with children and young people regularly through the Commissioner's visits, incoming correspondence and phone calls, field research, through its recent 'Shout! Turn Up the Volume' campaign and through its Young Assistant Commissioners project, currently being piloted in a Durham College. What children and young people have told us about bullying in all these different ways features in this report.

Clearly, though, more focused discussions have been needed to explore the different forms bullying can take and the ways children and young people experience and respond to it. The OCC therefore worked with the Anti-Bullying Alliance to consult with groups of children and young people who had been affected by bullying. The aim was to bear witness to their experiences and create a classroom resource that passes on, in as direct a form as possible, children and young people's perspectives on their own lives, describing their own problem-solving strategies. From the outset, the OCC was clear that it wanted to take these messages beyond the classroom and use them to inform strategic thinking on anti-bullying practice. Their conclusions therefore form part of the general recommendations put forward by the Children's Commissioner in this report.

The OCC needed to work through organisations with a strong track-record of children and young people's involvement, and a detailed understanding of bullying. It was therefore pleased to be able to work with the Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA) to deliver this project. Different possible formats for the work were discussed, and it was agreed that the learning resource which was to be the consultation's primary product needed to be accessible to children and young people and their teachers, speak directly from the viewpoint of those affected by bullying, and capture the variety and complications of individual cases. The National Service Framework offered a way to do so. It uses 'Journeys', or exemplars, to present individual cases in dynamic, rather than diagnostic terms, illustrating how an effective care pathway will bring services together around the needs of the child, rather than expecting

individual children and families to adapt themselves to the needs of services – a conceptual shift of fundamental importance to the whole *Every Child Matters* programme. The events and stages of each child's journey are unfolded alongside a commentary on themes, evidence and relevant standards. NSF journeys use fictitious characters. OCC and ABA used real stories.

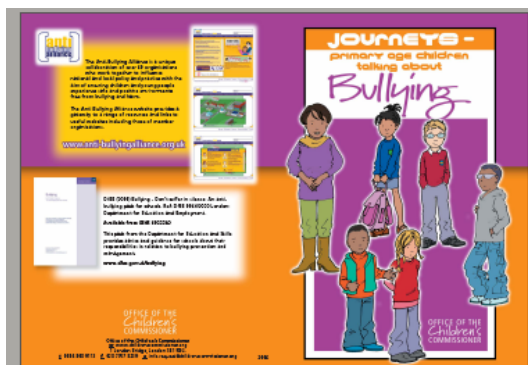
ABA requested one of its members, Young Voice, to conduct the field work for the project. Among the children and young people invited to take part were anti-bullying award winners from the Diana Awards who had shown great resilience and leadership in standing up to bullying in their schools and communities. The range of young people brought into the project ensured that different forms of bullying, and different types of bias-bullying could be explored. Workshops were held in which the project was explained and informed consent sought. It was made clear to participants that it would not be possible to use all the interviews for the final resource, but that, where their stories were used, any details identifying details would be changed, and there would be a check-back process to ensure that the young person was happy with what was being proposed.

The stories that were finally selected were treated with complete integrity, and there was no attempt to neaten the narratives, point the lessons or imply that all the young people saw bullying in the same way: for example, one young person suggests talking to bullies and thinks that many have themselves been bullied, while another young person thinks that bullies do not need help, they just need to be stopped. Workshops with the children and young people in groups enabled them to reflect on their experiences and agree ten Top Tips that could be included as part of the resource. 'Journeys: Children and Young People Talking About Bullying' – put the young people's stories into a comic book format that was suitable for classroom use. 30,000 copies were produced for Anti-Bullying Week 2005, and a copy was sent to every school in England.

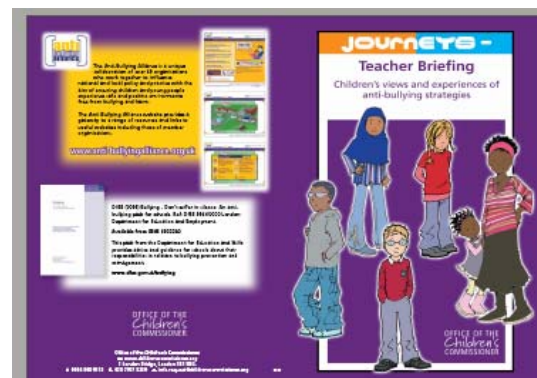
Feedback from the booklet was extremely positive. However, the stories it featured were those of secondary age young people. Given that most bullying takes place among primary aged children it was important to allow their voices to be heard. Again working with the ABA and Young Voice, the OCC conducted the interviews and workshops that have been brought together in 'Journeys: Primary Age Children Talking About Bullying', which is being issued as a web-based resource. As with its predecessor, the stories it features are treated with integrity, and as a result, interesting differences emerge between the way children and younger people experience bullying. Most of the children in this second 'Journeys' are struggling to make sense of their experiences and feelings. Most are not yet able to put the bullying within a narrative framework which can explain it or suggest possible new courses of action. The child who has been best able to move through the experience, even to the extent of helping others who are being victimised, is emotionally resilient, and appears to have been equipped with an understanding of what bullying is and what she can do about it. It underlines the importance of early work with children to explain bullying and the actions children should take if affected.

The OCC also talked with children and young people to ask them how they thought the two 'Journeys' resources could be used, what they have found works well against bullying generally in their schools, and what works badly. This formed the basis of the Teacher Briefing that provides good evidence of how schools are now using many different methods. However, although the children and young people could recognise what was being implemented, many, especially at secondary level, criticised its effectiveness. They told us that too much anti-bullying policy is formalistic, superficial, impractical and detached from their experiences. Many complaints turned on commitment and quality. Children and young people were being told how serious bullying was, but teachers did not allow enough time for them to discuss their concerns or disclose comfortably. Individual teachers are still handling information in ways that expose children to risk for 'snitching', or are treating children with scepticism rather than openness. Children and young people's clear message is that top-down anti-bullying strategies can compound the very lack of trust and communication between students and adults within schools that allows bullying to thrive.

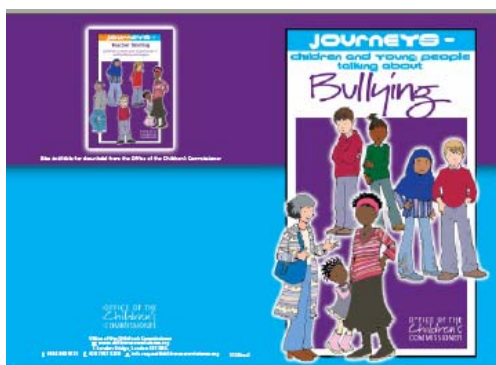
All 'Journeys' material can be downloaded from The Children's Commissioner website – (www.childrenscommissioner.org)



Journeys (Primary) 2006



Journeys (Teacher Briefing) 2006



Journeys (Secondary) 2006

6.6 Key Messages from the 'Journeys' Project

Successful anti-bullying approaches will:

- Include the whole school body
- Encourage and facilitate participation by children and young people
- Offer practical options on steps to take.
- Show sustained visible commitment and ethos
- Help those who bully to change their behaviour
- Keep safe anyone who reports being bullied or a bystander who intervenes
- Successfully reintegrate someone who has been bullied and, where possible, the child who has bullied
- Accept the complexity of the behaviour and avoids simplistic solutions.
- Be reviewed regularly

Unsuccessful anti-bullying approaches will:

- Fail to sustain the effort
- Fail to make the bullied child feel safer
- Fail to change the perpetrator's behaviour
- Fail to understand the complexity of bullying – there are not two distinct groups, bullies and victims, but some young people can be both or at times, move from one group to another
- Fail to involve and engage pupils in the programme to confer ownership.
- Fail to address repeated and ongoing bullying
- Fail to recognise serious underlying problems in a child who is bullying.
- Fail to recognise that bullying may extend beyond school
- Fail to retain pupils' confidence and trust
- Fail to respond to bullying incidents consistently
- Humiliate or expose children

6.7 Recommendations

Children and young people must be actively involved and engaged in seeking solutions to bullying:

Their ideas must play a significant part in shaping bullying interventions. Children also need to be involved in the development and evaluation of anti-bullying programmes and approaches.

Bullying needs to be picked up early and 'low level' harassment challenged:

Minor acts of harassment can escalate into more serious or sustained campaigns and teachers and other professionals need to take all incidents seriously and record the events and their response.

Training on bullying needs to be improved:

The success of anti-bullying policies depends largely on the commitment and skill of teachers and others in the school community and children's workforce.

Teaching and training on diversity needs to be improved:

In the light of schools' new duty to promote community cohesion, teachers should be offered further support to raise diversity issues.

A range of reporting options for children experiencing bullying needs to be made available:

Successful anti-bullying strategies should include a range of reporting options, as well as opportunities for children and young people to seek advice and support from each other.

Anti-bullying programmes should support self-esteem in all children and young people and teach assertiveness:

Low self-esteem exposes children and young people to a number of risks, including the risk of bullying. All children's services should emphasise children's involvement as one of the ways through which they support children and young people's confidence and good mental health.

Peer support programmes should be developed:

DfES and Healthy Schools should take steps to ensure that evaluations of peer support programmes such as CHIPS (ChildLine in Partnership with Schools) and Sky-High are shared as widely as possible in order to promote good practice.

Families, as well as children and young people, should be involved in anti-bullying policies:

The DfES should continue to work with stakeholders to ensure that clear and constructive information on bullying is available to all parents and carers. Schools should use all opportunities to involve parents in agreeing anti-bullying policies, understanding them and learning from awareness-raising activities.

That those engaged in bullying behaviour are challenged and worked with to understand why they behave in this way and supported to change their behaviour:

From the testimony and research evidence gathered in this report, it is clear that punitive measures are not the most effective way of dealing with bullying behaviour.

The schools bullying complaints system must be revised to reflect the findings from the Office of the Children's Commissioner's consultation on complaints systems:

Trust between parents and schools is crucial to effective anti-bullying work. Yet the Office of the Children's Commissioner has found that the current complaints system is unsatisfactory and in many instances entrenches positions rather than advances children's best interests.

CHAPTER 7

Children's Voice and Children's Rights – Case Studies of Participative Approaches

7 Chapter Summary

This chapter explains why bullying is a Children's Rights issue, and how Children's Rights approaches can make a significant contribution to tackling the problem. Evidence supports the value of involving children and young people in supporting each other and changing the peer culture.

- **Bullying is a Children's Rights Issue for the Children's Commissioner** – A rights-based perspective illuminates not only the harm bullying causes, but the ways it should be prevented and managed.
- **The Wide Benefits of Involvement** – Evidence from this report supports the practical importance of children and young people's involvement in anti-bullying approaches, and reinforces the wider case for democratic learning environments.
- **Case Study: Rights Respecting Cultures in Action** – Hampshire schools taking part in UNICEF's Rights Respecting Schools programme have generally experienced reduced levels of conflict and improved problem solving behaviours.
- **Case Study: Children and Young People's Involvement Through Peer Support** – Though different forms of peer support bring different benefits, evidence suggests that it can be effective in changing behaviour, enhancing children's perception of safety at school, emotionally supporting bullying's victims and improving the skills and confidence of the children and young people providing support.

7.1 Bullying as a Children's Rights Issue for the Children's Commissioner

The evidence considered in this report points to the importance of ensuring that children and young people are full participants in devising, implementing and reviewing anti-bullying strategies. The case can stand on a purely pragmatic basis because of factors specific to bullying. A great deal of victimisation takes place in forms, times and places that elude adult detection. Indeed, there are times when adults may quite literally not understand what children and young people are talking about. One London teacher described to the Office of the Children's Commissioner how she asked her class to list and explain the slang terms they were using amongst themselves so that she was aware of when language was being used in aggressive or bullying ways. Children and young people are the bystanders who best know when bullying is happening and are best positioned to

respond. Whether they do respond is influenced most strongly by what they perceive to be the attitude of their peers rather than what they know to be the attitude of adults.

The case for young people's involvement, though, is far wider. The Children's Commissioner regards bullying as a children's rights issue. It is an act of persecution which, depending on its form, will engage one or several of the Articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Article 16 – 'no child shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his or her honour and reputation' – e.g. spreading rumours.

Article 19 – 'States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child' e.g. physical or verbal bullying.

Article 28 (1) - (e) 'take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates' e.g. victims of bullying self-excluding.

Article 28 (2) - 'States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity' [and in conformity with the UNCRC] e.g. ensuring treatment of bullies and those who are bullied under anti-bullying policies is not degrading or humiliating.

Article 29 (d) - Education should include 'the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin' e.g. discriminatory bullying.

Article 37 (a) - 'no child shall be subjected to torture, or other inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment' e.g. bullying by teachers.

Article 39 - 'States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of: any form of physical neglect, exploitation or abuse; torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; or armed conflicts. Such recovery and reintegration shall take place in an environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child' e.g. the health consequences of bullying and the need for help through appropriate specialist services such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.

Crucially, the UNCRC not only illuminates children's rights to protection, it also gives them the right to have a say in decisions which affect them (Article 12), including how bullying should be tackled. A children's rights perspective sees children and young people as responsible actors in their own lives.

7.2 The Wide Benefits of Involvement

Encouragingly, there are signs that a culture of involvement is starting to take root in children's services that has the potential of significantly improving protection against bullying. While some children's services have historically been more active than others in seeking out and considering children's views, *Every Child Matters* has raised the bar for all children's services, which now need to show how they will support children and young people to Make a Positive Contribution - to the services they receive and the communities of which they are part. In the context of schooling, DfES has promoted participation's benefits, stating that where it happens effectively pupils and students are set to:

- Become more active partners in their education, including evaluation of their own learning;
- Participate in creating, building and improving services to make them more responsive to their needs and those of the wider community;
- Make a difference in their schools, neighbourhoods and communities;
- Contribute to a cohesive community;
- Learn from an early age to balance their rights as individuals with their responsibilities as citizens; and
- Develop, through the way they are involved, the knowledge, understanding and skills they will need in adult life.²⁰⁶

The principal driver which DfES has applied to this process of change is the Healthy Schools Standard, a strand of which requires evidence of 'children's voice'. Healthy Schools Partnerships have provided advice, audits and monitoring to support schools in expanding participative approaches.²⁰⁷ One of the areas in which Healthy Schools has provided most support, and in which schools and children and young people report most satisfaction, is the increased use of peer support as a way of dealing with stress and conflict, not least in the form of bullying.

'Playground friends organise games at playtime and help children who are sad and lonely.'
*'It's as if you are putting the kindness back in.'*²⁰⁸

This chapter presents two case studies of children and young people's involvement. The first looks at a children's rights approach. UNICEF's Rights Respecting Schools programme, and Hampshire County Council's Rights, Respect and Responsibilities initiative are bringing the UNCRC into classrooms as a living document that values children, trusts children and encourages them to value each other.

The second, provided by Professor Helen Cowie and colleagues at the University of Surrey, describes in detail the theory and practice of peer support, and illustrates it through work currently underway in Suffolk. It shows how the harm done by bullying can be reduced and school climate can be improved.

7.3 CASE STUDY ONE

Children's Rights – Schools and the UNCRC (Knights Enham and Portway Junior Schools, Andover)

Research for the Office of the Children's Commissioner has found that three quarters of children and young people are unaware of the Convention and the rights which it affords them²⁰⁹ - something which in itself infringes Article 42, the right to be informed of the Convention and its meaning. Partly to address this situation, UNICEF is piloting a Rights Respecting Schools (RRS) programme in over 50 schools, to be rolled-out nationally in Spring 2007. The programme does more than simply allow space for learning about the UNCRC: it promotes learning through the concepts and values of the Convention, embedding it across schools' policies and curriculum in the expectation that children's overall learning and behaviour will improve. RRS has complemented and supported the pioneering work of Hampshire County Council's Rights, Respect and Responsibilities (RRR) initiative, which was inspired by a visit to Canada to see how a children's rights initiative in Cape Breton was assisting with conflict resolution in schools with high levels of aggressive behaviour. RRR has now provided training to approximately 350 primary and 25 secondary schools since 2004. Like the UNICEF scheme, it is less a content-driven programme, than a standards and quality framework. RRS accreditation has introduced a mechanism for assessing that quality: Hampshire schools were the first in the country to be awarded UNICEF's RRS Level 1 accreditation, and look likely to be the first to achieve Level 2.

The Office of the Children's Commissioner has visited two of Hampshire's Level 1 schools, Knights Enham and Portway in Andover, and been given the opportunity to observe school business and talk with children and teachers. Both schools stress how working through the UNCRC has helped them draw together elements of their work and the curriculum which had previously seemed disparate. RRR directly supports Healthy Schools Standards, and draws on and extends areas of learning within Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) such as self-awareness, managing feelings, motivation, empathy and social skills. Beyond supporting PHSE and Citizenship learning objectives, teaching through the Convention allows the schools to make connections between subjects as diverse as geography and history in ways that children find engaging and motivating. Fundamentally, the Convention helps make sense of the whole experience of being at school – attendance, conduct and learning. It connects being a young citizen who has rights and responsibilities, with being a child learning in a community of others; and it connects what children learn within this community with the life outside of it, and the rights and responsibilities of other adults and children.

'It affects me a lot because we have our rights wherever we go. We have rights in our school at home and everywhere.'

The commitment of both schools to using participatory learning styles pre-dates RRR, but it appears that by nurturing 'rights-respecting' philosophies, they have been able to increase pupils' confidence and willingness to take part in decision-taking. Formal participation mechanisms – school councils – are strong in both schools. The election process is understood and valued, as is the process between elections through which council members report back regularly to their classmates and continue to take up the issues they raise. All pupils know that they have a right to have their views heard and taken into account.

'Everyone's got something to say, if you ask them right.'

In one school, this had developed into pupil-led 'Speak Out' clubs, where pupils were encouraged to form clubs about the things that interested them. In another, pupils had been involved in the appointment of staff. Something shared by both schools, and basic to the RRR approach, is a charter mechanism through which each form agrees a classroom charter of rights and responsibilities which all its members sign. Unlike the model class charters put forward in SEAL, these are framed in terms of rights and responsibilities, not 'promises', and are signed by the teacher as well as the children. A typical charter reads:

Hampshire RRR Class Charter

Our Rights	Our Responsibilities
To feel comfortable in class	To keep the classroom tidy
To talk, when it helps with our work	To make sure our talking doesn't disturb others
To play with thing at indoor playtimes	To look after games, toys and all equipment
	To play fairly
To be spoken to politely	To speak politely
To be safe	To act safely
To have our feelings respected	To respect others' feelings
To be good and to learn	To be careful not to distract other people who are working
To be listened to	Not to speak over the top of other people

Other charters are in place, or in development, to set standards for lunchtimes or use of indoor and outdoor spaces. The charters, like information material and project work on the UNCRC, are displayed prominently around the schools.

Behind the charters' specific detailing of rights and behaviours is a sophisticated awareness of Convention Articles and their meaning which goes far beyond rote learning. The children the OCC met on its visit could

explain how as children become adults they become more independent, so not all of the UNCRC rights continue to apply. They could bring together the right to play (Article 31), with their responsibility for keeping off the grass when it might be damaged and pointing out hazards in the playground. Other rights that the children recognised as important were the right to have their views listened to and taken into account (Article 12), the right to a good education (Articles 28 and 29), the right to a family life (Article 6), the right to non-discrimination in application of Charter rights (Article 2) and the right to a good standard of health and healthy food (Article 24).

Children saw bullying as a Convention issue mainly because it could interfere with their right to education. Pupils in one school had drawn up a 'Zero Tolerance' statement against it, and pupils in both had been active in reviewing their school's anti-bullying policy. However, for the most part, anti-bullying work in these schools is not articulated through a distinct mechanism or series of activities; rather, it permeates the schools through the constantly reiterated theme and practice of respect for others, and respect for difference, which the RRR approach runs through all aspects of school life. For example, one school allowed one of its pre-RRR anti-bullying schemes (playground monitors) to fade away, because children's behaviour had become so markedly more pro-social and less aggressive that it simply became un-necessary.

Interestingly in relation to bullying, children were strong in their support for privacy (Article 16). In both schools, circle time was one of the most potent techniques used against bullying, and pupils trusted that what they shared at these times would not be taken outside the circle and used against them. In one school, this was supplemented by a one-to-one confidential listening technique, 'Bubble-Time', suggested in SEAL. By demonstrating that they are 'listening schools' which respect children's personal details, both schools have become 'telling schools', where children are more willing to seek help and advice. The specialist emotional support service used in one of the schools was an accepted part of the school environment. Children knew that 'what's said in the room, stays in the room'.

Although the full impact of the Hampshire programme is not yet entirely clear or consistent, particularly in secondary schools, independent evaluation and Ofsted inspections of participating schools have been extremely promising.²¹⁰ Pupils feel cared for and valued, they are more mutually supportive and outward looking, less adversarial, have improved problem-solving skills, higher order thinking, greater social and self-understanding, higher self-esteem and are more likely to attend. Teacher motivation has increased considerably, making for more effective rights modelling behaviour in classrooms. Over the period of its participation, one of the schools visited has seen its SATs rise from 133 to 231, its absence level fall from 8% to 6.6% and the number of children excluded fall from 8 to 2. Bullying has declined substantially, and the few remaining incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively. Teachers report that children who in the past would have been intimidated by bullying behaviour are responding assertively using 'rights-respecting' language: 'Stop that. I have the right to play.'

7.4 CASE STUDY TWO

Peer Support: Why and How it Works

Helen Cowie University of Surrey
Nicky Hutson University of Surrey
Oz Oztug University of Surrey

Peer support in schools describes a range of methods through which pupils' potential to be helpful to one another can be fostered through appropriate training and supervision. By implementing a peer support system, the strengths and resources of young people can be harnessed to enrich their own lives and those of others in their school, their families and their community.²¹¹ Although no national statistics are available, many schools now employ some form of peer support system. In a survey of 148 schools in England using the DfES anti-bullying pack Don't Suffer in Silence, Smith and Samara²¹² found that 52% of schools reported using befriending schemes; 51% using mediation by peers; and 52% active listening or counselling-based approaches.

Primary school peer support schemes generally involve training peer supporters to look out for fellow pupils by acting as Buddies or Befrienders. Secondary school schemes often involve peer supporters working in a lunchtime club, 'drop in' room, a younger aged tutor group, or in 1-to-1 contact with a pupil for one session or over a longer period of time.²¹³ The schemes evolve and change in line with local needs and pupil perceptions of the effectiveness and acceptability of this type of intervention.²¹⁴ With advances in technology, methods also take account of distance-learning types of support, including use of the internet and e-mail support.²¹⁵

Peer Counselling

The earliest types of peer support were grounded in a counselling model. Pupil helpers were trained (usually by a qualified counsellor or psychologist) to use active listening skills to enable peers to deal with such interpersonal issues as being bullied, feeling left out, being worried about friendships, feeling unsafe and insecure at school. Regular supervision (whether by a qualified counsellor or by the teacher who managed the peer support scheme) was an essential feature. Peer counsellors were likely to see users of the service in a specially designated room just as counsellors see their clients in a private consultation.

Befriending

Most peer support services have now evolved into befriending schemes (also known as buddying or mentoring) that involve active listening skills and a person-centred approach during training, but which, in their implementation, adopt a much more informal approach. This change in practice has often been peer-led, with the peer supporters themselves reporting that both they

and the users of the schemes have difficulties with a formal counselling approach and prefer the anonymity of an informal befriending scheme. Usually befrienders are same-age peers or older pupils, who are selected by teachers on the basis of their friendly personal qualities. In some systems, existing peer supporters are also involved in the selection and interviewing of volunteers. Usually there is some training in interpersonal skills, such as active listening, assertiveness and leadership. Teachers frequently report that the school environment becomes safer and more caring following the introduction of a befriending scheme, that peer relationships in general improve and bullying decreases.²¹⁶

Conflict Resolution/Mediation

Conflict resolution/mediation is another method in which peer supporters, in the role of neutral third party, assist voluntary participants to resolve a dispute.²¹⁷ There must be a follow-up meeting at which participants review the success or otherwise of the solution and acknowledge their willingness to make adjustments if necessary. As with other forms of peer support, at the heart of the process of conflict resolution/mediation, we find the quality of active listening and the ability to respond genuinely and authentically to the needs and feelings of the participants in the mediation. It is essential for the peer mediator not to deny or repress strong emotions usually present during and after a conflict, but to have the strength to allow them to emerge and be shared in a sympathetic, supportive environment. At the same time, they need to go beyond empathy to a rational problem-solving stance so that the disputants can move through their conflict into a resolution. Typically, over 80% of disputes mediated by peers result in lasting agreements.²¹⁸

Student Councils

Another peer support initiative in the UK involves Student Councils. Student Councils can be used to deal with problems that arise in the school, and initiate methods to improve the school climate. Student Councils are normally led by a group of peers who start by generating a series of 'school rules' for their peers to follow, which the whole school sign up to. The guidelines are then presented to the whole school during school assembly, and a Student Council is then comprised, to rule over the guidelines. Students on the Council are generally elected by the student body, and some are appointed by staff. The Council then convenes once a week and is presented with social problems at school to which Council members then provide solutions. Other students evaluate how well the Council fulfils its role throughout this process. The idea of Student Councils is that decisions about issues within the school are made via a democratic group decision-making process.

Peer Support and the Internet and Intranet

Peer supporters in the UK have begun to develop systems that ensure confidentiality by working anonymously through their school's intranet.²¹⁹ Typically, small groups of peer supporters work together on a rota system to respond to emails during designated timeframes, so that everyone who uses the scheme will receive a quick response. Peer supporters also have a useful role to play in evaluating existing web-based resources to help bullied children and are often more pragmatic than adults about the most appropriate and realistic ways of responding to bullying, for example, by recognising that any reaction should not be over-punitive and should take account of the need to co-exist with peers. The internet as a peer support tool for finding information on bullying has great potential for young people, especially with boys who are often under-represented in the ranks of peer supporters.

Peer Support in Practice

Training peer supporters invariably simulates real incidents that have happened in school. Peer supporters practice by responding to the incident, in a supportive and non-judgemental way. Below, is a case study of some peer support training in action.

Out and About: Peer Supporters Practice Ways of Tackling Common Forms of Bullying

(This scenario was created collectively during a training session by PALS from Northgate High School Ipswich).²²⁰

In this scenario, three girls, in the presence of an audience of fellow peer supporters, enact an everyday situation in which a peer supporter can try out a number of interventions to help a pupil who is being bullied in the corridor during break time.

The incident

Gemma and Nicky are saying nasty things about everyone who passes by. They make rude comments about what people are wearing and deride their appearance. Anne, who is new to the school, approaches them and timidly asks the way to the sixth-form block where she is meeting her sister, Stephanie. Gemma and Nicky burst out laughing, mimic the way Anne speaks and repeat the words 'sister' and 'Stephanie' with exaggerated lisps. They then give Anne vague directions and block her way as she tries to move on past them. Anne reacts fearfully and clearly does not know what to do next. She retreats in a dejected way.

Freeze

At this point, the trainer, Jill, asks the audience of peer supporters to suggest some options for action on the part of a peer supporter who would like to intervene. The scenario is re-enacted with each of the options and the audience and the role-players are invited to discuss their feelings and perceptions.

Option 1: Confront the bullies

Sarah, a peer supporter, confronts Nicky and Gemma publicly. They in turn become very aggressive and tell her loudly to mind her own business. The confrontation is now being observed by a growing number of bystanders. The audience and the role-players discuss the outcome. Anne reports that she feels humiliated and disempowered. The audience conclude that Sarah has unwittingly escalated the situation and made a private matter public. She has also failed to show empathy for Anne's feelings. Anne may well be targeted again by Gemma and Nicky.

Option 2: Offer immediate help to the pupil who is being bullied

Katie, another peer supporter, intervenes to help Anne by offering to take her personally to the sixth form block. Gemma and Nicky jeer angrily as Katie leads Anne away. As before, a number of bystanders gather round to watch.

The audience and role players discuss the outcome. The advantage of this intervention is that it takes Anne out of a difficult situation but at the same time it makes Anne look weak and ineffectual. Gemma and Nicky have become angry and so may pick on Anne the next time they see her. Katie, like Sarah, has brought unwelcome attention to Anne and may make life worse for her. Again, the intention was good but the outcome may not be successful.

Option 3: Offer help in private to the pupil who is being bullied

Nimmi, another peer supporter, waits until Anne is on her own, as she retreats away from Gemma and Nicky. Nimmi accompanies her to the sixth form block and helps her to find her sister. On the way, she checks that Anne is all right, shows empathy for what she has just experienced and finds out what Anne herself would find most helpful as she settles into her new school. Nimmi has information on clubs and lunchtime activities that Anne may find interesting. She has also demonstrated her sensitivity to Anne's feelings and has shown respect for her privacy by talking to her in confidence away from public view. The audience and role players discuss this outcome and conclude that this is the best of the three options for all involved.

Research Evidence and Evaluations of Peer Support in the UK

Generally research has found that:

- Peer support systems are helpful to those who are being bullied,
- Pupils as a whole appreciate the presence of a peer support system in their school even if they do not actively use it,
- Many teachers and pupils report that a peer support system improves the ethos of the school and enhances perceptions of safety and well-being.²²¹

However, some problems have been documented with peer support schemes. There can be difficulties in establishing and maintaining systems of peer support. Some adults are reluctant to share power with young people,²²² and some school environments can be so challenging that the

work of peer supporters is ineffective.²²³ Where dissatisfaction is expressed, it often refers to a failure on the part of teachers to acknowledge peer supporters' expertise, a lack of supervision or training, and not allowing peer supporters enough responsibility. Cowie and Naylor²²⁴ (1999) found that time could be a problem for teachers, as they needed to devote their own time to managing the support systems and training peer supports, and in the majority of cases, this work was voluntary.

However, the value of peer support schemes should not be underestimated. Any attempt to enhance peer relations and school climate is beneficial in itself as it raises awareness of the issues that the school faces. Furthermore, recently peer support has contributed to government strategies and initiatives that demonstrate commitment to involving young people in decisions that affect their lives, for example, *Every Child Matters* and *Working Together: Giving Children and Young People a Say*.²²⁵ The opportunity to be a peer supporter is viewed by some as an important pathway for the inclusion of children and young people in policy-making²²⁶ and is central to the vision of initiatives such as the Anti-Bullying Alliance. There is great scope within these initiatives for researchers to build on the framework available from the research to date, and embark now on a variety of more thorough studies on the effectiveness of this kind of involvement and participation on the part of young people and to evaluate successes and failures in their implementation.

7.5 Recommendations

All schools should consider the benefits of UNICEF's Rights

Respecting Schools Programme:

Rights-based programmes in schools have the potential to enhance pro-social behaviour and self-esteem, and to reduce classroom aggression and disaffection.

Peer support programmes should be developed:

DfES and Healthy Schools should take steps to ensure that evaluations of peer support programmes such as CHIPS (ChildLine in Partnership with Schools) and Sky-High are shared as widely as possible in order to promote good practice. Development of peer support should take full account of learning from DfES' ACiS (Active Citizens in Schools) pilot programme and the work of Volunteering England.

Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) materials should be promoted and used in pre-school, primary and secondary settings:

The Office of the Children's Commissioner would like to encourage full use of SEAL materials in primary and pre-school settings by offering staff flexible training and recognition through CPD. Secondary schools should reflect fully on learning from the SEAL pilot and roll-out the programme without delay.

Confidentiality needs to be understood and respected across children's services:

Research indicates that many children and young people in school believe that teachers cannot be relied on to treat their information in confidence. Anti-bullying policies should, in age-appropriate terms, set out the principles of confidentiality within which they operate.

Children and young people must be actively involved and engaged in seeking solutions to bullying:

Their ideas must play a significant part in shaping bullying interventions. Children also need to be involved in the development and evaluation of anti-bullying programmes and approaches.

8 FULL RECOMMENDATIONS

- **To Education Professionals and the Wider Children’s Workforce**
- **To Government, Schools and Local Authorities**
- **To Government**
- **To Government and IT providers**
- **To Everyone Engaged in Anti-Bullying Work**

8.1 **To Education Professionals and the Wider Children’s Workforce, the Children’s Commissioner recommends that:**

Bullying needs to be picked up early and ‘low level’ harassment challenged:

Minor acts of harassment can escalate into more serious or sustained campaigns and teachers and other professionals need to take all incidents seriously and record the events and their response. Aggressive and demeaning language, e.g. homophobic or sexist language, can erode the protective ethos of a school and needs to be challenged. Engaging with children and young people in understanding and tackling this culture is crucial.

Training on bullying needs to be improved:

The success of anti-bullying policies depends largely on the commitment and skill of teachers and others in the school community and children’s workforce. The National Minimum Standards for Children’s Homes require staff training in bullying. Knowledge of bullying is required for Qualified Teacher Status. However, the comprehensiveness of initial teacher training is unsatisfactory. Where services are successful in managing bullying, there is a continuing commitment to in-service training, and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) around bullying is valued.

Teaching and training on diversity needs to be improved:

In the light of schools’ new duty to promote community cohesion, teachers should be offered further support to raise diversity issues. This should include training and encouragement to use the curriculum flexibly, and should not be restricted to PSHE and Citizenship.

A range of reporting options for children experiencing bullying needs to be made available:

Successful anti-bullying strategies should include a range of reporting options, as well as opportunities for children and young people to seek advice and support from each other. While reporting to responsible adults should be encouraged, there should be opportunities for concerns to be expressed and advice sought amongst peers. Anonymised systems through which problems can be reported will increase the likelihood of victims or bystanders seeking help. Children and young people can best advise adults on how comfortable they feel with the range of options, and how these should be implemented in practice.

Confidentiality needs to be understood and respected across children's services:

Research indicates that many children and young people in school believe that teachers cannot be relied on to treat their information in confidence. Anti-bullying policies should, in age-appropriate terms, set out the principles of confidentiality within which they operate. Initial teacher training and in-service training and CPD should be reviewed to ensure that all teaching and support staff understand and abide by up to date guidance on the circumstances in which information can and should be shared.²²⁷

Anti-bullying programmes should support self-esteem in all children and young people and teach assertiveness:

Low self-esteem exposes children and young people to a number of risks, including the risk of bullying. All children's services should emphasise children's involvement as one of the ways through which they support children and young people's confidence and good mental health. Targeted work on assertiveness skills with children and young people identified as being at risk from bullying should be considered in all anti-bullying strategies, and schools should ensure that they are able to link with specialist services in complex cases.

The value of social groups and clubs in enabling children and young people to develop friendships should be recognised, and the importance of association should be reflected within Extended Schools and Youth Matters programmes:

Children and young people's ability to form friendships and cope with changing patterns of friendship will significantly affect their life chances. It is important that programmes value and support this emotional and social aspects of learning.

Schools should conduct an annual survey of children and young people's experience of bullying:

Guidance and resources should be made available to schools by both local teams and national anti-bullying organisations in support of this policy objective.

8.2 To Government, Schools and Local Authorities, the Children's Commissioner recommends that:

Peer support programmes should be developed:

DfES and Healthy Schools should take steps to ensure that evaluations of peer support programmes such as CHIPS (ChildLine in Partnership with Schools) and Sky-High are shared as widely as possible in order to promote good practice. Development of peer support should take full account of learning from DfES' ACiS (Active Citizens in Schools) pilot programme and the work of Volunteering England.

Families, as well as children and young people, should be involved in anti-bullying policies:

The DfES should continue to work with stakeholders to ensure that clear and constructive information on bullying is available to all parents and carers. Schools should use all opportunities to involve parents in agreeing anti-bullying policies, understanding them and learning from awareness-raising activities.

Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) materials should be promoted and used in pre-school, primary and secondary settings:

The Office of the Children's Commissioner would like to encourage full use of SEAL materials in primary and pre-school settings by offering staff flexible training and recognition through CPD. Secondary schools should reflect fully on learning from the SEAL pilot and roll-out the programme without delay.

Comprehensive anti-bullying strategies should be developed in every local authority, encompassing schools, colleges and community settings:

Strategies should set out and enable coherent partnership working with clear monitoring and accountability arrangements.

All schools should consider the benefits of UNICEF's Rights Respecting Schools Programme

Rights-based programmes in schools have the potential to enhance pro-social behaviour and self-esteem, and to reduce classroom aggression and disaffection.

8.3 To Government, the Children's Commissioner recommends that:

Funding is made available for a large-scale and long-term research study into the impact of school-based and community-based anti-bullying strategies, including how these are or are not meeting specific needs around gender, disability, race and sexuality:

Our evidence base on the efficacy of specific anti-bullying interventions remains patchy. Evidence on 'community bullying' and work to prevent or respond to it is still less robust. In order for school-based work to become consolidated on a firm basis, and community-based work to expand with credible tools, this deficit needs to be addressed.

As a matter of urgency, further work is needed into the relationship between bullying, children and young people's safety and Islamophobia. There is also an urgent need for the Government to stimulate a serious dialogue on interfaith relationships among children and young people. This needs to be addressed in the context of strategies to further community cohesion:

It is becoming clear that there can be problems in achieving meaningful integration between young people in different faith groups and communities, reflecting those which are prevalent in adult society. Reports from Muslim children and young people suggest that the bullying and harassment to which they are subjected has increased sharply with the rise in tension following major terrorist attacks and the associated recent adverse publicity which fuel stereotypical thinking and racism. It is essential that local and national policy makers understand these children's experiences and adopt policies and a public discourse which reduce risk. One approach we would recommend is participation work to enable young people to find and adopt innovative solutions to these issues themselves; through positive media activity; through education (by using better the opportunities provided by the citizenship element of the school curriculum and using Extended Schools to support Muslim parents and build educational links with mosques and madrasahs).

The schools bullying complaints system must be revised to reflect the findings from the Children's Commissioner's consultation on the complaints systems:

Trust between parents and schools is crucial to effective anti-bullying work. Yet the Office of the Children's Commissioner has found that the current complaints system is unsatisfactory and in many instances entrenches positions rather than advances children's best interests. The system lacks independence and fails to offer a mediation track through which disputes can be settled. The Office of the Children's Commissioner is consulting on the complaints system and the document can be found on the web-site (www.childrenscommissioner.org). Final proposals will be submitted to the Secretary of State early in 2007.

Inspection frameworks and other policy drivers should be reviewed to ensure robust anti-bullying interventions at primary level:

Current national targets for anti-bullying work only specify children from age 10 upwards, and local targets therefore reflect this, despite what we know of bullying's age-profile, and its susceptibility to change. The current review of *ECM* indicators may help to address this anomaly.

PHSE to be made a statutory foundation subject at Key Stages One to Four:

Given PHSE's key role in helping children and young people in tackling bullying (as well as other aspects of relationship building and self-care); and given that reducing and managing bullying is critical to creating a learning environment where children and young people can enjoy and achieve, stay safe, be healthy, participate and go on to enjoy economic well-being, it is difficult to understand why PHSE should not be protected through recognition as a statutory foundation subject.

The continued prioritisation and investment in positive parenting in the Early Years and throughout childhood:

The Office of the Children's Commissioner welcomes the growing recognition of parenting support as a potent means of early intervention, strengthening the resilience of both the family unit and the child. Universal support, along with non-stigmatising specialist support, can help, not only in tackling social exclusion and promoting community cohesion, but also in breaking cycles of violence and reducing other risk factors.

8.4 To Government and IT providers, the Children's Commissioner recommends that:

Providers of IT products and services used for 'cyber-bullying' cooperate with each other and Government to minimise risks, including providing accessible and regular information to children, young people and parents:

the Children's Commissioner recognises the responsible stance taken by many providers, and welcomes DfES' convening of key services to review best practice. The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre is also a useful resource. Given the dynamic nature of the technology and children and young people's appropriation of it, this cyber-bullying taskforce should continue to meet regularly and report on its progress.

8.5 Finally, the Children's Commissioner recommends to everyone engaged in anti-bullying work:

That those engaged in bullying behaviour are challenged and worked with to understand why they behave in this way and supported to change their behaviour. From the research evidence gathered in this report, it is clear that punitive measures are not the most effective way of dealing with bullying behaviour.

Children and young people must be actively involved and engaged in seeking solutions to bullying and their ideas must play a significant part in shaping bullying interventions. Children also need to be involved in the development and evaluation of anti-bullying programmes and approaches.

CHAPTER 1

- 1 Rigby, K. 2002. *New Perspectives on Bullying*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- ² Entry to Office of the Children's Commissioner's 'Shout: Turn Up the Volume' competition, 2005.
- ³ Brooks, L. 2006. *The Story of Childhood: Growing Up in Modern Britain*. London: Bloomsbury.
- ⁴ Olweus, D. 1993. *Bullying at School: What we Know and What We Can Do*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- ⁵ Olweus, D. 1991. 'Bully / Victim Problems Among School Children; Basic Facts and Effects of a School-based Intervention Program' in Pepler, D. and Rubin, K. (eds) *The Development and Treatment of Childhood Aggression*. Hillsdale NJ: Erlbaum, pp. 411-448.
- ⁶ Roland, E. 1993. 'Bullying: a Developing Tradition of Research and Management' in Tatum, D. (ed) *Understanding and Managing Bullying*. Oxford: Heinemann Educational, pp.15-30, cited in Rigby, K. 2002. *A Meta-Evaluation of Methods and Approaches to Reducing Bullying in Pre-Schools and Early Primary School in Australia*. Canberra: Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department, pp.49-50.
- ⁷ Besag, V. 1989. *Bullies and Victims in Schools: A Guide to Understanding and Management*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- ⁸ The media continue to be interested in bullying nationally and locally, and have played a practical and constructive role in a number of instances: for example, the Daily Mirror has supported Bullying Online's survey of people's experience of bullying, to be launched in Anti-Bullying Week 2006; and the Liverpool Echo is one of the funding partners of the local Bully Busters website.
- ⁹ Recommendations 28.1, 28.2 and 28.3; cited in Sharp, S, and Smith, P. 1991. 'Bullying in UK Schools: the DES Sheffield Bullying Project'. *Early Child Development and Care*. 77:47.
- ¹⁰ The research team was Peter Smith (project director), Yvette Ahmad, Michael Boulton, Helen Cowie, Martin Gazzard, Ian Rivers, Don Pennock, Sonia Sharp, David Thompson and Irene Whitney.
- ¹¹ See Sharp, S and Smith, P (1991), *op. cit.*, p.50.
- ¹² For a full account and classification of interventions, see Stevens, V., De Bourdeaudhuij, I. and Van Oost, P. 2001. 'Anti-Bullying Interventions at School: Aspects of Programme Adaptation and Critical Issues for Further Programme Development'. *Health Promotion International*. 16, no. 2:155-167.
- ¹³ Tattum, D. 1997. 'A Whole School Response: From Crisis Management to Prevention'. *Irish Journal of Psychology*. Vol. 18, pp.221-232.
- ¹⁴ Carney, A. and Merrell, K. 2001. 'Bullying in Schools: Perspectives on Understanding and Preventing an International Problem'. *School Psychology International*. 22, no.3:364-382.
- ¹⁵ Smith, P and Samara, M. 2003. *Evaluation of the DfES Anti-Bullying Pack*, DfES Brief No. RBX06-03.

CHAPTER 2

- ¹⁶ Though trusts rated as 'excellent' were not required to produce CYPPs (The Children and Young People's Plan (England) Regulations, 2005, regulation 9), all opted to do so.
- ¹⁷ For detailed field research on CYPPs, with particular reference to children and young people's involvement in them, see Office of the Children's Commissioner. 2006. *Children and Young People's Plans: A Review of the First Year*. www.childrenscommissioner.org.
- ¹⁸ The following Plans were studied: Barking and Dagenham, Barnet, Barnsley, Bath and East Somerset, Bedfordshire, Bexley, Birmingham, Bournemouth, Blackpool, Bracknell Forest, Bradford, Brighton, Bury, Calderdale, Cambridgeshire, Cornwall, Coventry, Cumbria, Darlington, Derby, Durham, East Sussex, Gateshead, Hertfordshire, Leicester, Lincolnshire and Solihull.
- ¹⁹ Skinner, A. 1992. *Bullying: an Annotated Bibliography of Literature and Resources*. Leicester: Youth Work Press.
- ²⁰ Children and Young People's Plans are referred to simply by local authority name and page number. Respectively: Barnsley p.24; Cumbria p.57 and Solihull p.12; Barnsley p.31; Bournemouth p.13-14; Bury p.28, Bath p.13 and Lincolnshire p.32; Bath p.18 and Beds p.18; Blackpool p.34.
- ²¹ Respectively: Bournemouth p.34; Derby p.20, Gateshead p.20; Solihull p.12, Cambridge

p.45

²² Barnsley p.27

²³ Cambridgeshire p.29

²⁴ Bournemouth pp.32-4

²⁵ Barnsley p.24

²⁶ Messages from children and young people on whether they favour punitive or problem-solving approaches vary greatly. Groups in Newcastle and Peterborough consulted by the OCC as part of this report, favoured strong penalties.

²⁷ Respectively: Bradford p.53; Bedfordshire p.18; Bournemouth p.6; Cambridge p.45.

²⁸ Brighton p.16

²⁹ Brighton p.32

³⁰ Bracknell p.27

³¹ Bedfordshire p.15

³² Durham p.27

³³ Bexley, p.27; Coventry, p.27; Gateshead, p.21

³⁴ Solihull p.54; Durham, p.35; Derby, p.35

³⁵ Respectively: Barnet p.14; Barnsley p.27; Solihull, p.15; Bexley p.39; Bradford p.53;

Calderdale p.37; East Sussex p.xxi/ 63

³⁶ Derby p.20

³⁷

<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/files/16EE5ADDD79458F67747C0706D7AE742.pdf>

³⁸ Bury p.29

³⁹ Griffin, R. and Gross, A. 2004. 'Childhood Bullying: Current Empirical Findings and Future Directions for Research'. *Aggression and Violent Behaviour*. 9:379-400.

⁴⁰ Cambridgeshire, p.47

⁴¹ East Sussex, p.xxi / 63

⁴² Gateshead, p.4. The system in question is Vantage Technologies' 'Sentinel' database, which was first used in England by Rotherham LEA, and which permits pupil self-reporting.

⁴³ Solihull p.14

CHAPTER 3

⁴⁴ Department of Health. 2002. *National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services*.

⁴⁵ Department of Health. 2002. *National Minimum Standards for Children's Homes*.

⁴⁶ Department for Education and Skills. 2004. *Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners: Putting People at the Heart of Public Services*.

⁴⁷ Department for Education and Skills. 2005. *Higher Standards, Better Schools for All: More Choice for Parents and Pupils*.

⁴⁸ Department for Education and Skills. 2005. *Learning Behaviour: the Report of the Practitioners' Group on School Behaviour and Discipline*. Recommendations 3.1.5 and 3.1.6.

⁴⁹ NHS Health Development Agency. 2004. *Stand Up for Us: Challenging Homophobia in Schools*.

⁵⁰ Calderdale p.70

⁵¹ Warwick, W et al. 2004. *Evaluation of the Impact of the National Healthy Schools Standard*, Thomas Coram Research Unit and NFER

⁵² North West Healthy Schools Partnership. 2005. *Healthy Schools Partnerships: Making a Difference*

⁵³ Edited version of a summary in: OECD. 2006. 'National Policy: Ireland, International Network on School Bullying and Violence'. www.oecd-sbv.net/templates/article.aspx?id=366

⁵⁴ Department for Education and Skills. 2005. *Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning: Say No to Bullying*. Theme overview. www.bandapilot.org.uk/pages/seal/downloads/books/pns_seal133805_bullying_ovrww.pdf

⁵⁵ Anti-Bullying Alliance. 2006. 'Social Emotional Aspects of Learning: the Sparhawk Experience'. Case study. This Norwich school was involved in piloting the resource.

⁵⁶ Roots of Empathy. 2005. 'Roots of Empathy as a Foundation for Citizenship and Character Education in Ontario schools'.

www.rootsofempathy.org/ontarioCEreportFINAL.pdf

⁵⁷ Department of Health. 2004. *National Service Framework for Children, Families and Maternity Services: Core Standards*.

⁵⁸ Department of Health. 2004. *National Service Framework for Children, Families and Maternity Services: the Mental Health and Psychological Well-being of Children and Young People*. Standard 9, Section 3.

⁵⁹ H.M.Government. 2006. *Reaching Out: an Action Plan on Social Exclusion*. Section 3, Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

⁶⁰ Bedfordshire p.15

⁶¹ Smith, P and Shu. S. 2000. 'What Good Schools Can Do About Bullying: Findings from a Survey in English Schools After a Decade of Research and Action'. *Childhood: A Global Journal of Child Research*. 7, no.2:205.

⁶² Entry to 'Shout' competition, 2006.

⁶³ Office of the Children's Commissioner. 2006. *Journeys: Teacher Briefing. Children's Views and Experiences of Anti-Bullying Strategies*. www.childrenscommissioner.org.

⁶⁴ Children's Society. 2003. *The Boy Who Said No*, Voices Project.

⁶⁵ Mishna, F. and Alaggia, R. 2005. 'Weighing the Risks: a Child's Decision to Disclose Peer Victimization'. *Children and Schools*. 27, no. 4:217-226.

⁶⁶ Anti-Bullying Alliance. 2006. 'South East Anti-Bullying Alliance: Local Authority Case Studies'. p.28. These are the views of a primary school in West Sussex on introducing the authority's Action Against Bullying audit toolkit.

⁶⁷ Flood-Page, C., Campbell, S., Harrington, V. and Miller, J. 2000. *Youth Crime: Findings from the 1998/99 Youth Lifestyles Survey*, Home Office Research Study 209.

⁶⁸ Katz, A., Buchanan, A. and Bream, V. 2001. *Bullying in Britain: Testimonies from Teenagers*. East Mosley: Young Voice.

⁶⁹ Morita, Y. 2001. 'Cross-national Comparative Study of Bullying, Kaneko Shobo', cited by Smith, P. 2005. 'Definitions, Types and Prevalence of School Bullying and Violence'. International Network on School Bullying and Violence. OECD. <http://oecd-sbv.net/Templates/Article.aspx?id=103>. The level in the Netherlands was 13.9%, in Norway 10.0% and in Japan 9.6%.

⁷⁰ Oliver, O and Candappa, M. 2003. *Tackling Bullying: Listening to the Views of Children and Young People*. Childline and Department for Education and Skills.

⁷¹ Cheshire p.3

⁷² Morita, Y. 2001. *op. cit.*

⁷³ Solihull p.34

⁷⁴ Cumbria p.57

⁷⁵ Bath p.13

⁷⁶ Doncaster p.24.

⁷⁷ Bullying was one of the eleven issues of concern that children and young people could select.

⁷⁸ Smith, P. and Shu, S. 2000. *op. cit.*

⁷⁹ Salmivalli, C. 2002. 'Making Use of the Peer Group Power in Preventing and Intervening in Bullying'. UNESCO. http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=6915&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

⁸⁰ Salmivalli, C., Lagerspetz, K., Bjorkqvist, K., Osterman, K., and Kaukiainen, A. 1996. 'Bullying as a Group Process: Participant Roles and their Relations to Social Status Within the Group'. *Aggressive Behavior*. 22:1-15.

⁸¹ Smith, P. and Shu, S. 2000. *op. cit.* See also O'Connell, p., Pepler, D. and Craig W. 1999. 'Peer Involvement in Bullying: Insights and Challenges for Intervention', *Journal of Adolescence*. 22:437-52.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Eslea, M. and Smith, P. 1994. 'Developmental Trends in Attitudes to Bullying'. Poster presented to the Thirteenth Biennial meetings of the International Society for the Study of Behavioural Development, Amsterdam; available on Mike Eslea's 'Bullyweb' <http://www.uclan.ac.uk/psychology/bully/files/amsterda.pdf>

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CHAPTER 5

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Table 1 Search term sets

Set 1	Set 2	Set 3
Child/children	Bully/bullies	Review
Young person/people	Bullied/bullying	
Adolescence/adolescent(s)	Aggression/aggressive	
Teenager(s)/teenage	Violent/violence	
Juvenile(s)	Victimisation	
Youth		

In order to source literature covering social care, a search was also made of Social Care Online (search term: bullying), managed by the Social Care Institute for Excellence. Two further electronic databases were then searched for their coverage of UK literature relating to children and young people. These were Child Link and ChildData. In order to work within the technical confines of these databases, the search terms were modified to 'bullying' for Child Link, and to 'childhood bullying', and then to 'bullying' and 'intervention programmes', for ChildData. Finally, hand searches of key journals and outputs from leading researchers/research teams were conducted.

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CHAPTER 7

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