

Anti-Bullying Policy

**Handling situations of Bullying
(With regard to DfE Guidance: Preventing and tackling bullying)¹**

Effective Date: January 2025

Review Date: January 2026

This policy will be reviewed annually by: Lindsey Townsend,
Operations Director

¹

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/623895/Preventing_and_tackling_bullying_advice.pdf

Network Learning Pathways is a trading name of Network Healthcare Professionals

Network Learning Pathways is committed to offering a safe and healthy environment for the young people who attend activities in our provision and as a consequence of wider engagement with the organisation. Challenging bullying and early signs of bullying behaviour effectively will improve the safety and happiness of learners, show that the organisation cares and make clear to bullies that the behaviour is unacceptable.

Safeguarding young people

Safeguarding issues can manifest themselves via child-on-child abuse. This is most likely to include, but not limited to: bullying (including cyber bullying), gender-based violence/sexual assaults and sexting and prejudice-based or discriminatory bullying. Under the Children Act 1989 a bullying incident should be addressed as a child protection concern when there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm'. Where this is the case, provision staff should report their concerns to the LADO. In any case where staff are concerned that a learner is being bullied, a safeguarding form should be completed.

We may need to draw on a range of external services to support the learner who is experiencing bullying, or to tackle any underlying issue which has contributed to a young person engaging in bullying.

Although bullying in itself is not a specific criminal offence in the UK, there are certain instances of harassment or threatening behaviour that could be deemed as such.² If staff feel that an offence may have been committed, they should seek assistance from the police.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally and that is difficult for victims to defend themselves against.

Bullying can take many forms, but the main types are:

- Physical – hitting, kicking, taking belongings
- Verbal - directly by name calling, insulting, making offensive, prejudice-based, discriminatory or homophobic remarks either directly or indirectly, being made the subject of malicious rumours, threats
- Emotional - exclusion from social peer groups, isolation from games and activities
- Cyber bullying – sending malicious emails, messages or text

Bullying may occur in relation to individual characteristics or situations, such as appearance, a health condition, or home circumstances. Bullying can be in relation to the 'protected characteristics' as set out in the Equality Act 2010. These are: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.

² Protection from Harassment Act 1997; the malicious Communications Act 1988; the Communications Act 2003; Public Order Act 1986

There is no 'hierarchy' of bullying – all forms of bullying should be taken equally seriously and dealt with appropriately.

Early signs of bullying

Although the definition of bullying refers to the repetition of bullying behaviour over time, it is crucial to recognise, challenge and record all single incidents of bullying behaviour, including where a learner makes malicious, derogatory, prejudice-based or discriminatory remarks about another person. This allows bullying behaviour to be nipped in the bud. Where learners do not respond to early sanctions or interventions and bullying behaviour is repeated, staff can quickly recognise and respond to emerging patterns of behaviour.

All such incidents should be recorded and reported as a safeguarding concern (for both the perpetrator and the victim) along with the sanctions imposed and interventions put in place. Logs must indicate that the behaviour being recorded is 'bullying' and specify its 'type'. This allows for effective monitoring and analysis of bullying or potential early signs of bullying.

Identifying where bullying can occur

Although in-person bullying can occur during the journey to or from the provision, e.g. extortion or theft of possessions such as mobile phones, most typically it takes place on the premises. At Network Learning Pathways, there is constant supervision of learners, and staff must be vigilant in identifying and dealing with any incidents of bullying as they occur. The provision has the right to regulate the behaviours of learners (as far is reasonable) when they are off site, so staff are empowered to impose sanctions for inappropriate behaviour that takes place on the way to or from the provision, or in the case of bullying, over the internet or phone.

Both boys and girls bully others. Young people who bully others can come from any kind of family, regardless of social class or cultural background. Any young person can be bullied, and certain factors can make bullying more likely:

- Lacking close friends at school
- Being shy
- An over-protective family environment
- Being from a different racial or ethnic group to the majority
- Being different in some obvious respect (e.g. stammering)
- Having Special Educational Needs or a disability.
- Behaving inappropriately, intruding or being an 'nuisance'
- Possessing expensive accessories such as mobile phones or computer games

As well as maintaining a high level of vigilance during the supervision of learners, staff who suspect that bullying is taking place outside of these times or online, should bring any concerns to the weekly staff meeting.

Although the primary purpose of this policy is to protect and defend the young people who come to Network Learning Pathways, it is important to note that bullying can take place not only between learners, but also between learners and staff, parents and staff, or between staff.

Effects of bullying

Victims may be reluctant to attend a place of education and are often absent. They may be more anxious and insecure than others, having fewer friends and often feeling unhappy and lonely. Victims can suffer from low self-esteem, low self-confidence and negative self-image, looking upon themselves as failures – feeling stupid, ashamed and unattractive.

Victims may present a variety of symptoms to health professionals, including fits, faints, vomiting, limb pains, paralysis, hyperventilation, visual symptoms, headaches, stomach aches, bed wetting, sleeping difficulties and sadness. Being bullied may lead to depression or, in the most serious cases, attempted suicide. It may lead to anxiety, depression, loneliness and lack of trust in adult life.

Raising and reporting concerns

Learners may raise and report concerns they have about bullying by speaking directly to any member of staff at any point during the day. At Network Learning Pathways we aim to create a safe environment where young people can openly discuss the cause of their bullying, without fear of further bullying or discrimination. Staff must ensure that they do not offer to keep any concerns raised confidential but work with the learner to address their concerns in an appropriate manner.

Parents/carers and members of staff may also raise concerns and where this occurs, a staff member should speak to the Head of Service in the first instance. For further support, they may wish to contact their trade union or professional association for support and advice. Any parent who feels that their concerns are not being sufficiently dealt with may follow the 'Complaints Procedure', details of which are contained within the provision, online and always available on request.

Dealing with bullying – prevention and intervention

Bullying will be discussed as part of the curriculum and will be directly challenged and discussed with young people by staff. Participation in the annual anti-bullying week in November may form the basis of the taught curriculum. The Anti-Bullying Charter will be discussed with all young people at the start of their time with us and revisited at the start of each term. Staff will actively encourage young people to talk about bullies and bullying and about any bullying issues affecting them. Bullying in any form will not be tolerated. All young people will be challenged on behaviour that is tantamount to bullying from the low-level persistent put-downs to physical, mental and verbal attacks. The 'Behaviour Policy' outlines the specific strategies and sanctions that exist at Network Learning Pathways for dealing with misbehaviour and bullying.

All incidents of bullying must be recorded as a safeguarding concern. For learners that are being bullied, the safeguarding records should be used. For learners that are bullying, behaviour records should be used. The entry should include the type of bullying, the sanctions and interventions put in place and the outcome. This information can then help us to monitor and review occurrences of bullying and the effectiveness of sanctions in place to address them.

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Monitoring

By using information from safeguarding records, we will be able to monitor the effectiveness of our bullying policy. Success will be measured by:

- The number of incidents of bullying being recorded declines as each term progresses
- The number of repeat-offences of bullying are significantly less than first offences
- There are no unresolved cases of bullying

The Head of Service should access, and review occurrences of bullying recorded on a regular basis and act on any concerns. Discussion of this should be built into the staff team meetings. The Head of Service will report key information and analysis of bullying incidents to the Directors on a termly basis.

Maintaining a High Anti-Bullying profile

- All new staff read and understand the Anti-bullying Policy
- The 'Network Learning Pathways Anti-Bullying Charter' is displayed in all rooms
- All staff are encouraged to maintain a high level of vigilance around the likelihood of bullying taking place and to challenge and report all incidents
- Staff training is undertaken on a regular basis
- Opportunities are given for staff to discuss concerns during regular staff meetings
- Opportunities to discuss possible issues of bullying with schools, learners, parents/carers and referring agencies are encouraged at all times
- The Head of Service analyses behaviour records relating to bullying, discuss with the staff team monthly and reports to the Directors termly.

Links to other policies

Behaviour Policy

E-Safety Policy

Safeguarding and Children Protection Policy

Staff Code of Conduct

Complaints Policy

Anti-Bullying Charter

At Network Learning Pathways we are committed to working together to create an environment where no form of bullying is tolerated.

We will:

Encourage and help our young people to treat each other with respect and kindness.

Supervise young people at all times and challenge any bullying that we see or hear.

Impose appropriate sanctions for bullying.

Record all incidents of bullying and if necessary, discuss concerns with parents / carers and schools.

Talk about bullying as part of our planned curriculum and at other times.

Discuss, monitor and review our Anti-Bullying Policy on a regular basis.

If you feel you are being bullied, you can:

Speak directly to any member of staff at any time

Let us know in confidence, that you have a concern that you want to discuss.

If you tell us you are being bullied, we will:

Deal with all bullying concerns quickly, sensitively and effectively, and help ensure that the bullying does not continue.

Support you while the issue is being dealt with and afterwards.

If a parent / carer or school has a concern about bullying, they can contact us to discuss it at any time. All concerns will be dealt with in line with our Anti-Bullying Policy, copies of which are available on request.