



CO-ORDINATOR  
Frank Brady  
Telephone: (094) 9541117/9542103  
Fax: (094) 9542101  
E-mail: [youthreachballinrobe@eircom.net](mailto:youthreachballinrobe@eircom.net)



Further Education Centre  
The Neale Road  
Ballinrobe  
Co. Mayo

## Anti-Bullying Policy

### Rationale

This policy was formulated for the following reasons:

- To promote positive behaviour.
- To allow Youthreach to function in an orderly and harmonious way.
- To enhance the learning environment where young people can make progress in all aspects of their development.

### Aims

- It is hoped that our anti bullying policy will first and foremost prevent bullying in Youthreach.
- This policy will also highlight the fact that all forms of bullying are unacceptable to Youthreach management, staff, participants and parents.
- To encourage and support young people when disclosing and discussing incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To develop appropriate procedures for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying.

### Scope

This policy applies to activities and events that take place:

- During centre hours (including break times)
- Going to and from centre
- On centre tours/trips
- During extra-curricular activities



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Furthermore, Youthreach Ballinrobe reserves the right to take action against bullying perpetrated outside the centre which spills over into the centre.

## Definition of Bullying

Bullying is repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical conduct by an individual or group against others. Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour, which will not be condoned, can scarcely be described as bullying. However, when the behaviour is systematic and ongoing it is bullying.

## Definition of Cyber-bullying

Cyber-bullying is aggression conducted by an individual or a group against others- such aggressive behaviour being committed via electronic means or via exclusion from electronic communities or interactions.

Cyber-bullying includes (but is not limited to) the communicating via electronic means with the objective of causing hurt, fear, embarrassment, humiliation, alarm and/ or distress to one or more persons. Cyber-bullying includes the use of mobile phones and the internet with the objective of upsetting someone. It may take the form of general insults or impersonation, defamation or prejudice-based bullying.

## Types of Bullying

### (a) Participant Behaviour

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### **Physical Aggression:**

This behaviour includes pushing, shoving, and punching, kicking, poking and tripping people up. While young people commonly engage in 'mess fights', they can often be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain.

### **Damage to Property:**

Personal property can be the focus of attention for the bully; this may result in damage to clothing, learning material or interference with a persons personal belongings.

### **Intimidation:**

Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation: it is based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. Particularly upsetting to victims can be the so-called 'look' – a facial expression which conveys aggression and/ or dislike. Use of threats, including demand for money, threatened abuse or verbal abuse is all forms of bullying.

### **Isolation:**

This form of bullying behaviour is when a person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or the entire class group. This practice is usually initiated by the person engaged in bullying behaviour. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the victim on boards or in public places, by passing around notes about or drawings of the victim or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard.

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## **Name Calling:**

Persistent name-calling directed at the same individual(s), which hurts, insults or humiliates should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Most name-calling of this type refers to physical appearance.

## **Slagging:**

This behaviour usually refers to the good-natured banter which goes on as part of the normal social interchange between people. When slagging extends to very personal remarks aimed again and again at the one individual about appearance, clothing or involves references of an uncomplimentary nature to members of one's family, then it is bullying. Slagging through offensive jokes whether spoken or by mobile phone through texting or multimedia messaging is another form of bullying.

## **Bullying of Youthreach Staff**

Bullying of centre staff can be by means of physical assault, damage to property, verbal abuse and any form of verbal or physical threats and are not acceptable in the centre.

### **(b) Adult Behaviour**

This pertains to all Youthreach staff and parents or guardians. An adult may, unwittingly or otherwise, engage in, instigate or reinforce bullying behaviour in a number of ways:

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- Using sarcasm or other insulting or demeaning forms of language, making negative comments about appearance or background.
- Humiliating directly or indirectly a participant who is particularly academically weak, disruptive, or vulnerable in other ways.
- Using any gesture or expression of a threatening or intimidatory nature, or any form of degrading physical contact or exercise.

### **Effects of Bullying**

People who are being bullied may develop feeling of insecurity and extreme anxiety and thus may become more vulnerable. Self-confidence may be damaged with a consequent lowering of their self-esteem. While they may not talk about what is happening to them, their suffering is indicated through changes in mood and behaviour. It is, important to be alert to changes in behaviour as early intervention is desirable.

### **Indications of Bullying/Behaviour – Signs and Symptoms**

The following signs/symptoms may suggest that a participant is being bullied:

- Anxiety about travelling to and from Youthreach– requesting parents to drive or collect them, changing route of travel, avoiding regular times for travelling to and from Youthreach.
- Unwillingness to go to Youthreach, refusal to attend.
- Deterioration in educational performance, loss of concentration and loss of enthusiasm and interest in Youthreach.
- Pattern of physical illness (e.g. headaches, stomach aches)
- Visible signs of anxiety or distress – stammering, withdrawing, nightmares, and difficulty in sleeping, crying, not eating, vomiting, bedwetting.

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- Spontaneous out-of-character comments about either participants or teachers/staff.
- Possessions missing or damaged.
- Increased requests for money or stealing money.
- Unexplained bruising, cuts or damaged clothing.
- Reluctance and/or refusal to say what is troubling him/her.

These signs do not necessarily mean that a participant is being bullied. If a participant displays a number of the above signs an investigation is warranted in order to establish **what** is affecting the participant.

## The Victim

Any participant through no fault of their own may be bullied. It is common in the course of normal interaction for participants to tease or taunt each other. However, at a certain point, teasing and taunting may become forms of bullying behaviour. The participants who are most at risk of becoming victims are those who react in a vulnerable and distressed manner. The seriousness and duration of the bullying behaviour is directly related to the participants continuing response to the verbal, physical or psychological aggression.

## The Bully

It is generally accepted that bullying is a learned behaviour. Participants who bully tend to display aggressive attitudes combined with a low level of self-discipline. They lack any sense of remorse often they convince themselves that the victim deserves the treatment meted out.

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Participants who bully can also be attention seeking often they set out to impress bystanders and enjoy the reaction their behaviour provokes. They tend to lack the ability to empathise. They are unaware or indifferent to the victim's feelings. Others seem to enjoy inflicting pain. It is of note that many bullies suffer from a lack of confidence and have low self-esteem.

It is not uncommon to find that participants who engage in bullying behaviour are also bullied. They tend to be easily provoked and frequently provoke others.

### **Preventative measure For Centre**

- Ensure anti-bullying policy will be in place and regularly reviewed.
- Make sure communication between participants and staff will be clear and open.
- Bullying workshops will be delivered by staff members or external service providers or drama groups to participants or a combination of the above. A survey is given yearly; survey results will be examined for signs of bullying.
- Identify and supervise all "high risk" locations where bullying might go on.
- Have all staff committed to tackling bullying throughout the organisation.
- The progress of every trainee is discussed at every staff meeting and any potential bullying is highlighted and dealt with at that time

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- Provide discussions, presentations or training programmes on bullying and related issues of assertiveness training and building self esteem.
- Ensure that kindness, respect and tolerance will be advocated throughout the centre.
- Always emphasise that bullying behaviour is unacceptable and wrong.

## Procedure for Handling Bullying Disclosures.

### For participants:

- a. Always remember it is not your fault. It is the bully that has the problem not you.
- b. Break the Silence and tell someone you trust.
- c. If an adult is bullying you, look for help from another adult that you can trust.
- d. Never use violence. It never solves anything and usually makes the situation worse.

### For Adult/Staff

1. **Listen:** Allow the participant to tell their story in their own words. Be calm and objective, avoid displaying shock or disbelief and accept what is said.
2. **Take notes:** This will form the basis of a report for dealing with the incident; it should be kept on file (Serious Incident Form)

Included details such as:

- Nature of the incident
- Date
- Time



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- Location
- Names of those involved
- Names of witnesses
- Any other relevant History
- Staff's response

3. **Reassure the participant:** The participant needs to be told that help is available and action will be taken to stop the bullying. Remind them that bullying is not their fault and that there is nothing wrong with them.

4. **Assure the participants safety:** Be satisfied that the participant is not in immediate danger of physical injury. If there is a risk, parents/guardians should be contacted to collect the participant or arrangements made to keep the potential assailant from carrying out an attack.

5. **Negotiate Confidentiality:** outline to the participant that in certain circumstances it will be necessary to talk to the participants involved in the bullying as well as parents/guardians, witnesses, other staff as appropriate. Explain, that only the people that need to know, will be told. Be clear about how you will build in safeguards for the victim's safety and privacy where possible.

6. **Information:** Inform the participant that they will be kept informed and how it is intended to proceed.

7. **Report:** Refer the situation to the centre Co-ordinator.

8. **Decide who to consult:** Information and advice may be necessary from the following:

- Staff originally consulted by the participant
- parents/guardian of victim
- parents/guardian of bully
- outside agencies

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9. Once consultation has taken place with the appropriate person/s the following guidelines should inform your practice:

Decide whom to interview:

- Witnesses
- Alleged Bully or Bullies
- Other participants not involved in situation
- Seek answers to what? Where? When? Who? How? Why?
- Take a calm unemotional, problem solving approach.
- Deal with conflict in a non-aggressive, non-confrontational manner.

## 10. **Resolve the problem**

Victim and Bully:

Many bullying incidents can be resolved by explaining to the bully what is wrong with their behaviour and how it is affecting the other person.

In the vast majority of cases an agreement to stop and an apology to the victim will be forthcoming. Bringing the different parties together to achieve reconciliation can have a very positive outcome for both participants. This process will be mediated by staff members.

Parents/Guardians/Bully:

In cases where bullying requires imposition of sanctions the involvement of parents/guardians is crucial. Agreement will be sought from parents/guardians and the participant responsible

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in relation to future behaviour. The resolution may include appropriate external intervention.

### Make a record

An accurate record will be kept of all incidents of bullying and steps undertaken to deal with specific incidents. This will be descriptive, objective and should avoid giving opinions. It should include:

- a. Serious Incident Form
- b. Details recounted by others involved.
- c. The nature of any agreement made between the parties including parents. This should be signed by the parents/guardians and the participants involved, and kept as part of the centre records.
- d. An account of any action taken by the centre, for example mediation, sanctions, referral to counselling/psychological services.
- e. Suggestions for follow-up and monitoring of the situation.

This policy was reviewed on the 10<sup>th</sup> June 2014.