



BENBURB FOOTBALL CLUB: ANTI-BULLYING GUIDELINES

Bullying can take some children's rights away from them. There have been many different definitions and theories about what constitutes bullying, but it's not helpful to define bullying purely in terms of behaviour. Bullying is a mixture of behaviours and impacts, behaviours that can impact on a person's capacity to feel in control of themselves. This is what is termed as their sense of 'agency'. Bullying takes place in the context of relationships; it is behaviour that can make people feel hurt, threatened, frightened and left out, it strips a person of their capacity for agency.

Bullying may be seen as particularly hurtful behaviour where it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves. It can be a 'one-off' occurrence or repeated over a period of time, and can take many forms including children being bullied by adults, their peers and in some cases by members of their families. Bullying can be difficult to identify because it often happens away from others and those who are bullied often do not tell anyone. Bullying is not always deliberate.

Bullying behaviours can be:

- Being called names, teased, put down or threatened
- Being hit, tripped, pushed or kicked
- Having belongings taken or damaged
- Being ignored, left out or having rumours spread about you
- Receiving abusive messages, threats or comments on social media sites
- Behaviour which makes people feel like they are not in control of themselves
- Being targeted because of who you are or who you are perceived to be

When talking about bullying, it's never helpful to label children as 'bullies' or 'victims'. Labels can stick for life and can isolate a child, rather than helping them to recover or change their behaviour. It is preferable to talk about someone displaying bullying behaviour rather than label them a 'bully' – behaviour can be changed with help and support.

Support for children involved in bullying behaviour:

- Cultivate an ethos where there's an anti-bullying culture – it is especially important that adults are good role models for children.
- Take all signs and reports of bullying very seriously.
- Encourage all children to speak and share their concerns. Help those being bullied to speak out and tell a coach or adult who can support them. Create an open environment.
- Take all allegations seriously and take action to ensure the child is safe. Speak with those being bullied and those displaying bullying behaviour separately.
- Reassure the child that you can be trusted and will help them, although you can't promise to tell no-one else. Explain what will happen next, and how they are going to be kept informed.
- Keep records of what is said i.e. what happened, by whom and when.
- In cases of online/electronic bullying advise children who are being bullied by text, email or online to retain the communication or to print it out. Be clear that online bullying behaviour will be treated seriously as any other form of bullying behaviour, as it can impact on both the child and football.
- Report any concerns to the Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer and complete a Concern Recording Form as part of the Responding to Concerns about a Child Procedure.
- Talk with the child(ren) who have been displaying bullying behaviour. Explain the situation and try to get them to understand the consequences of their behaviour.
- In some cases it might be worth considering seeking an apology from those involved in bullying behaviour (for example where those on the receiving end wish reconciliation). Apologies are only of real value however, when they are genuine.
- Be sensitive and use good judgement when it comes to informing parents/carers of those whose negative behaviour is impacting on others. Put the child at the centre – will telling the parents/carers result in more problems for the child? What are the child's views on parents/carers knowing?
- If appropriate, insist on the return of 'borrowed' items.
- Aim to restore positive relationships and only consider imposing consequences as necessary, e.g. exclusion from the team or particular activity until behaviour standards are improved.
- Encourage and support those displaying bullying behaviour to change this behaviour. Ask them to consider the impact their actions are having.
- Keep a written record of action taken.

These guidelines have been informed and developed with support from *respectme*, their publication 'Bullying in Scotland 2014' and the National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People, Scottish Government 2010. Copyright remains with *respectme* and we acknowledge all and any material taken from www.respectme.org.uk.

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