

## Anti-Bullying Advice and Guidance

Every child has the right to experience sport in a safe environment, free from abuse and bullying.

People regularly voice their concerns about bullying in sports environments; however victims do not always feel able to disclose the bullying in case it makes things worse or they get kicked off a team or activity. Sports organisations play an important role in creating a positive club ethos that challenges bullying. They should empower young people to understand the impact of bullying and how best to deal with it, and to agree to standards of behaviour.

### A definition of bullying

There is no one definition of bullying but it is usually defined as repeated behaviour which is intended to hurt someone either emotionally or physically, and is often aimed at certain people because of their race, religion, gender or sexual orientation or any other personal characteristic such as appearance or disability.

Bullying can take many forms including:

**Physical** - hitting, kicking, pinching, punching, scratching, spitting or any other form of physical attack. Damage to or taking someone else's belongings may also constitute physical bullying.

**Verbal** – offensive name-calling, insults, racist remarks, sexist jokes or comments, homophobic, transphobic or gender-related jokes and comments, teasing, threats, or using sexually suggestive or abusive language.

**Sexual** – abusive sexualised name-calling, inappropriate and uninvited touching, inappropriate sexual innuendo and/or proposition.

**Indirect** – spreading nasty stories or rumours about someone, intimidation, exclusion from social groups.

**Cyber bullying** – using technology to deliberately harm or upset others. This type of bullying can happen in many ways, using mobile phones or the internet, and could include:

- sending hurtful messages or using videos and images to humiliate
- leaving malicious voicemails
- a series of silent calls
- creating a website about other people to humiliate them
- writing hurtful comments on social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter
- excluding them from chat rooms or messaging forums
- 'happy slapping' – sending videos or images of people being bullied, so others can see

### Bullying and disability

Children and young people with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to being bullied for a variety of reasons. These include:

- the increased likelihood of social isolation
- having fewer outside contacts than non-disabled children, and perhaps having limited access to someone to disclose bullying to
- an impaired capacity to resist, avoid or understand bullying

- being viewed as a 'safe target' for bullies

### **Homophobic and transphobic bullying**

Homophobic and transphobic bullying can be hard to identify because it may be going on in secret. It may include a person being made to feel unwelcome, belittled or harassed (through gossip, name-calling, jokes and other hate acts – both in the virtual and 'real' world.)

Sometimes athletes witness homophobic or transphobic bullying or are subject to such abuse, even if they aren't lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT), they may be reluctant to report it in case the participants, coaches or other adults assume they are also homosexual, bisexual or transgender.

### **Racism**

Young people (and their parents) from ethnic minority groups may have experienced harassment, racial discrimination and institutional racism. Although racism causes significant harm it is not, in itself, a category of abuse. All organisations working with young people, including those operating where ethnic minorities are numerically small, should address institutional racism.

Racism occurs when you are treated differently from others because of your race or ethnic origin.

Common examples are when someone is

- Called names
- Denied training
- Only offered unpopular jobs
- Shouted at
- Bullied

If a coach/instructor/volunteer is found guilty of race discrimination damages are unlimited and it could be a criminal offence.

### **Bullying V. Banter**

#### **Advice for sports organisations, clubs and coaches**

We understand that there can be lots of high spirited behaviour and banter within sports teams or activities. We appreciate that sometimes this is encouraged to help a team bond and to allow team members to get to know each other. However, there is a fine line between bullying and banter. If the banter targets one person and becomes persistent, this then becomes bullying. If it upsets the individual and has potential to damage their passion for the sport, self-esteem, confidence or ability to take part then this becomes bullying.

**To address bullying successfully, a 'whole organisation' approach that includes coaches, volunteers, officials, young people and parents is needed.**

There are a number of policies and procedures that an organisation should have in place to address bullying, both in terms of prevention and response. These include:

- codes of conduct – for parents, for staff and volunteers, and for parents and guardians
- an anti-bullying policy

#### **How sports organisations and clubs can provide support**

Action to help the young person being bullied and to prevent bullying in sport:

- take all signs of bullying very seriously
- encourage all children to speak about the bullying and share their concerns
- help the person being bullied to speak out
- if you are concerned that a young person may harm themselves, seek professional help immediately
- reassure the person being bullied that you can be trusted and will help them, although you can't promise to tell no one else
- keep records of what is said (what happened, by whom, when)
- report any concerns or allegations to the club's child protection or safeguarding officer

## Dealing with the bullies

Action towards the young person or people doing the bullying:

- talk to parents/guardians about the situation
- talk with the bully(or bullies) , with engagement from parents/guardians, explain the situation, and try to get them to understand the consequences of their behaviour
- seek an apology to the person being bullied
- insist on the return of 'borrowed' items and that the bully (or bullies) compensate the person bullied
- impose sanctions as necessary
- encourage and support the bully (or bullies) to change their behaviour
- hold meetings with the families to report on progress
- inform all organisation members of action taken
- keep a written record of action taken.

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