

PREVENTION AND RESOLUTION OF BULLYING POLICY

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1. Policy Statement:

Bullying is a behaviour that will not be tolerated. **[Insert Club Name]** recognises its duty of care and responsibility to safeguard its stakeholders.

It is the policy of **[Insert Club Name]** that bullying will be dealt with as soon as any signs come to the attention of any club member. With extreme forms and cases of bullying there may be a need to link directly to statutory bodies i.e. An Garda Síochána/TUSLA/Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI)/Social Services. Everyone is encouraged to speak to a trusted adult if they have a concern about bullying behaviour

Bullying is behaviour which is intentionally aggravating and intimidating and is conducted by an individual or group against others whether it is verbal, psychological or physical. Examples of bullying include:

- Physically pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching etc.
- Taunting, teasing, name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, persistent teasing and emotional torment through ridicule, humiliation or the continual ignoring of individuals
- Posting of derogatory or abusive comments, videos or images on social network sites
- Racial taunts, graffiti, gestures, sectarianism

- Sexual comments, suggestions or behaviour
- Unwanted physical contact
- Threatening behaviour
- Extortion by one or more individuals against a victim

People with a disability, from ethnic minorities, young people who are gay or lesbian, or those with an intellectual disability are more vulnerable to this form of abuse and are more likely to be targeted.

Bullying is not a once-off incident but based on continuous behaviour by an individual or group. It can affect athletes, volunteers and staff. It is how a victim perceives this behaviour that is important in gauging if behaviour is bullying or not. Other examples of bullying can include but are not limited to:

- Use of technology – mobile phones/social networks/emails
- Spreading rumours
- Being attacked on the basis of gender, race, religion, disability, age or sexuality

This behaviour is not acceptable by anyone and is a breach of Special Olympics Ireland Codes of Conduct and, if observed, the club reporting structure should be adhered to.

2. Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that members of **Insert Club Name** can participate in activities in a safe environment without fear of being bullied; and outline the club's preventative measures and actions for resolution.

The club aims to prevent bullying by endeavouring to:

- Promote a clear 'No Bullying' policy within the club
- Outline and clarify Codes of Conduct with all members of club, this includes athletes, coaches, volunteers and parents/guardians/carers
- Ensure an annual signing of a Code of Conduct for Athletes, Volunteers, Coaches and Families
- Encourage athletes to take a role in preventing and stopping bullying in their club.
- Maintain a log of attendance at training sessions and club activities (determining patterns of absences)
- Ensure adequate supervision at all times
- Reinforcing a culture of speaking up and telling a trusted adult about any bullying behaviour

3. Awareness of this policy

Our Club Safeguarding Officer will raise awareness on a regular basis and build an ethos within the club that encourages individuals to report any incidents of bullying. This approach should be an open discussion about possibilities of people being bullied, focusing on the fact that anyone could be a victim of bullying and that it is not a sign of weakness in a person.

a. How do you know it is happening?

Bullies operate using secrecy, threats and fear. Bullying can therefore only survive in an environment where the victim does not feel empowered to tell someone who can help or in which they feel it is not safe to tell. These are some warning signs which may indicate that an individual might be getting bullied:

- Reluctance to come to a venue or take part in activities.
- Re-occurring absences from training and or club activities.
- Physical signs (unexplained bruises, scratches or damage to belongings).
- Stress-caused illness- e.g. headaches, stomach aches which seem unexplained.
- Fearful behaviour (fear of walking to club, asking to be driven).
- Frequent loss of or shortage of money with vague explanations.
- Having few friends.
- Changes in behaviour (usual behaviours exaggerated, new behaviours - withdrawn, stammering, moody, irritable, upset, distressed.
- Changes in eating habits (not eating or overeating).
- Anxiety (shown by nail-biting, fearfulness).
- Attempting suicide or hinting at suicide.

Sometimes when an athlete with an intellectual disability is being bullied they do not understand what is happening and may think that being treated badly is just a part of their everyday life.

The Bully may be:

- A parent who pushes too hard.
- A coach who adopts a win-at-all costs philosophy.
- A young player who intimidates inappropriately.
- An older player who intimidates inappropriately.
- An official who places unfair pressure on a person.

b. Who should deal with it?

Everybody in the club has a responsibility to work together to prevent and stop bullying. If a club participant becomes aware of any bullying occurring it should be brought directly to the attention of the Club Safeguarding Officer who is the appropriate person to manage any issues that may arise and may link in with the Regional office.

4. How to deal with bullying?

Bullying is in breach of the Code of Conduct; it could be dealt with through disciplinary procedures but initially there may be more effective ways of dealing with the matter; a more informal and conciliatory approach. However extreme forms and cases of bullying - may need to be reported to the statutory bodies.

a. Guidance on steps to be taken by the Club Safeguarding Officer

- Individual being bullied should be given time to describe what is happening to them.
- They should be reassured that they are right to tell someone.

- Club Chairperson to be kept informed of any incident and actions to be taken but otherwise confidentiality to be maintained.
- Keep the individual and/or their families informed of proposed actions and responses.
- Take into account feelings and perspective of individual who is being bullied.
- All conversations to be documented and kept in the Club Safeguarding Officer's confidential records.
- A 'No Blame' approach to be worked through on a club level whilst maintaining individuals' confidentiality.
- If there is a resolution, continue raising awareness and promoting good conduct.

b. Supports for Parents / Guardians / Carers

Insert Club Name will support parents / guardians / carers in the following way:

- They will be advised of the club's prevent and resolution of bullying policy and practice.
- Any experience of bullying behaviour will be discussed with the child / athlete's parents / guardians / carers.
- They will be consulted on action to be taken (for both victim and child / athlete displaying the bullying behaviour) and we'll agree on these actions together.
- Information and advice on coping with bullying will be made available.
- Support will be offered to parents / guardians / carers including information from other agencies or supports

5. Definitions

The Northern Ireland Anti -Bullying Forum (NIABF) define bullying as: *"the repeated use of power by one or more persons intentionally to harm, hurt or adversely affect the rights of another or others."*

Bullying can be peer-to-peer, adult-to-child or child-to-adult.

- **Cyber Bullying** is the use of technology to harass, threaten embarrass or target a person. This type of bullying is becoming more frequent as the bully can have access to their victims at any time and young people spend so much of their time online. Cyberbullying can allow bullies to hide behind a screen and not face their victims, often offering anonymity and reduced risk of being caught; sometimes giving them more courage. For their victims it can feel like there is no escape.
- **Physical bullying** involves hurting a person's body or belongings. It can be direct aggression by hitting, kicking spitting at or punching someone; or it can be tripping or pushing someone. It is also the act of taking and/or damaging someone's belongings.
- **Verbal bullying** can be difficult to identify and often occurs when there are no witnesses or adults present. Bullies will persistently insult their victim to belittle or hurt them; often focusing on differences. This includes name calling and taunting.
- **Gesture bullying** is a non-verbal way of threatening, intimidating or ridiculing a person. It can include making rude or mean hand gestures which

communicate a message of intent to harm or insinuates something about a person. It can also be a constant stare which maintains a continuous threat to someone.

- **Exclusion bullying** occurs when someone is intentionally made to feel like they are not part of a group or when someone tells others not to be friends with them. Social exclusion may also involve spreading rumours to isolate people from a group.
- **Extortion bullying** is a way of taking something from someone that they do not want to give or getting them to do something they do not want to do by threatening, forcing or blackmailing.

6. Useful contacts

NSPCC Helpline 0808 800 5000

Sticks and Stones 087 9015199 or www.sticksandstones.ie

ChildLine UK 0800 11 11 / www.childline.org.uk

ChildLine Republic of Ireland 1800 66 66 66 or Text Talk to 50101, www.childline.ie

Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum www.niabf.org.uk

Kidscape www.kidscape.org.uk

Anti-Bullying Alliance www.antibullyingalliance.org

Anti-Bullying Centre DCU www4.dcu.ie/abc/index.shtml

Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC) www.ispcc.ie/shield