

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 13 SEPTEMBER 2005

ANTI-BULLYING STRATEGY: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Report by Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members of the present position with regard to the Department of Educational and Social Service's anti-bullying strategy for children and young people and to seek approval for future developments.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At its meeting of January 1998 the Education Committee approved an anti-bullying policy. A review of this policy is now due.
- 2.2 The problems associated with bullying amongst children and young people, both within the establishment setting and within the wider communities in which they live, has received much attention in recent years and there has been a strong pressure to address and ultimately eliminate, the issue. This has received universal support from local authorities, establishments, parents and society at large.
- 2.3 The Scottish Anti-Bullying Network (www.antibullying.net) is an excellent source of information, resources, advice and useful links for authorities, professionals, establishments, parents and children. East Ayrshire Council fully endorses the work of Anti-Bullying Network in all its forms. Its use by professionals, parents, children and young people is encouraged.

3. THE POSITION IN EAST AYRSHIRE

- 3.1 There are many definitions of bullying. For educational purposes one of the most useful is one provided by the Scottish Anti-Bullying Network: "Bullying is long-standing violence, physical or psychological, conducted by an individual or group against an individual who is not able to defend himself in the actual situation". (Roland and Munthe in "Bullying, an International Perspective). Importantly, many workers also identify bullying by its disproportionate effect on the victim.

- 3.2 There is no evidence to suggest that the incidence of bullying is higher in East Ayrshire than in any other part of Scotland. Neither is there any evidence that incidences of bullying are higher in any specific Council area or in any establishment than would be found elsewhere. Notwithstanding this, the education authority is committed to taking the issue of bullying seriously and to ensuring the resources and supports are deployed where they are needed in order to address the problem of bullying.
- 3.3 Within East Ayrshire the application of the Anti-Bullying strategy requires to take account of all relevant legislation such as:
- Children (Scotland) Act 1995
 - Standards in Scotland's Establishments etc. Act 2000
 - Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004
- 3.4 Every establishment within East Ayrshire is required to have an Anti-Bullying Policy, or equivalent, based on the guidance outlined in this policy paper. In particular, such policies should be part of a whole establishment approach and should consider:
- Setting an establishment ethos which rejects bullying
 - Encouraging the reporting of bullying incidents
 - Raising awareness amongst staff, parents and pupils around the whole issue of bullying
 - Articulating the links between the formal and the informal curriculum regarding issues of bullying
 - Providing appropriate support for bullied children and for children who may themselves be engaged in bullying others
 - Mobilising the strengths of the silent majority in all establishments who reject bullying
 - Challenging and changing bullying behaviour when it is identified
 - Being aware of the links between possible racial incidents and bullying
 - Communicating establishment policy on bullying clearly and unambiguously to staff, parents, children and young people
 - Having a clear system for logging and monitoring incidents of bullying and of evaluating the effectiveness of steps taken to tackle incidents (see Appendix 1)
- 3.5 In accordance with national regulations all establishments should have a planned, active and effective programme of playground supervision monitored by promoted staff. Preventative measures should include consideration of vulnerable, or unsupervised areas in the establishment, particularly toilet areas.
- 3.6 All establishments must include a clear statement of their anti-bullying policy in their handbook. However, it is noted that having a policy in itself is not enough. Senior establishment staff will be expected to communicate and reinforce the contents of the establishment policy in an effective manner in order to ensure that staff and pupils are clear what actions are expected of them should incidents of bullying occur.

3.7 There are a range of initiatives which are in place within East Ayrshire which will be helpful to establishments when tackling incidents of bullying. These include:

- Quality Circle Time
- Framework for Intervention (FFI)
- Restorative Practice
- Solution Oriented Establishments and allied approaches

In addition, support and advice is available from:

- Quality Improvement Officers
- Educational Psychologists
- Network Support (with particular reference to the support and advice available through the bi-lingual service with regard to incidents of a racial nature)
- Youth Strategy staff
- Colleagues within the Learning Partnership

In addition, the SCRE document “Bullying at Establishment” identifies a number of useful measures that establishments can use to assist in incident of bullying. Among the most useful of these measures are:

- Counselling from appropriately trained staff
- Mediation with the help of a neutral third party
- Peer counselling where older teenagers support younger pupils
- Buddying schemes where vulnerable children are paired with an older pupil who acts as a caring friend
- Induction schemes for children joining a new establishment which are sensitive to anti-bullying issues
- Adoption of a general approach to the problem of bullying based on:
 - a) Honesty – an acknowledge that the problem exists
 - b) Openness – encouraging young people to talk openly about bullying
 - c) Involvement – recognising that everyone has a part: teachers, parents, pupils and ancillary staff

3.8 In the majority of cases involving allegations of bullying which come to the attention of senior officers and Heads of Service within the Department of Educational and Social Services, the main issue is often not so much the bullying incident but the manner in which the establishment dealt with the incident. Most parents accept that it is not possible to wholly eradicate bullying. Concerns only emerge if the establishment is perceived (rightly or wrongly) not to be taking effective action. It is therefore essential that establishment policies and procedures are clear and unambiguous and that all parents are made aware of them. In this way it will be clear to all parties what steps are being taken should an incident of bullying occur. Establishments are therefore encouraged to:

- Publicise their anti-bullying policy and procedures to all parents
- Be aware that bullying can encompass a wide range of overt and covert behaviours, attitudes, biases and stereotyping

- Be sensitive to the potential for bullying around issues of disability, race, ethnicity, religious belief and sexual preference (homophobia)
- Make it clear to all parents that all reported incidents of bullying will be fully investigated
- Clarify that appropriate actions will be taken in all cases
- Commit to keeping parents fully apprised of establishment actions and their subsequent outcomes
- Consult parents and the establishment boards (or equivalent) when developing or reviewing the policy.

3.9 In dealing with bullying incidents establishments should as a first stage identify whether the matter should be heralded under this policy, or under conventional disciplinary arrangements. In general, cases that display one or more of the following characteristics should be considered as bullying:

- An element of pre-meditation based on a claimed dislike of a particular individual or group
- A series of incidents against a particular victim over a period of time
- A series of incidents against a member of individual children over a period of time
- Disproportionate aggression such as an older child picking on a younger child / children
- Psychological aggression such as ostracism, whispering campaigns, malicious story-telling
- Use of a proxy aggressor such as an older brother, sister or parent or malicious story telling to establishment staff
- Group or gang violence against an individual or smaller group

3.10 The national code of practice “Supporting Children’s Learning” suggests that a bullied child may have additional support needs within the terms of the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004. Accordingly, establishments require a formalised way of assessing children against this possibility. The case of children who are subject to severe bullying, or who are recurrently victimised should be considered by a establishment assessment team, with a view to involving planned measures of support using the strategies in paragraph 3.6 above.

4. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

4.1 East Ayrshire Council remains committed to supporting establishments, parents and young people deal with the consequences of bullying in the most supportive and effective manner. To this end, there will be a regular review of the training and support needs of establishments and every effort will be made to ensure that all establishments have access to appropriate quality training on an on-going basis.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Effective anti-bullying policies and procedures remain essential if the Authority is to meet national and local educational priorities in a manner that ensures quality, equality, access and partnership.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The anti-bullying strategy outlined in this paper will assist the Authority fulfil its obligations under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 and the Standards in Scotland's Establishments etc. Act 2000.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Nil.

8. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

This policy will contribute to the Community Safety Theme of the Community Plan.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 It is recommended that Members of the Education Committee:
- (i) Approve this report as the anti-bullying strategy of the Department of Educational and Social Services
 - (ii) Request the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services to advise all Head Teachers that their establishment anti-bullying policy be reviewed to ensure consistency with the strategy outlined in this paper
 - (iii) Otherwise note the contents of this report

John Mulgrew
Executive Director (Educational and Social Services)

GRS
08 September 2005

Members requiring further information should contact Graham Short, Head of Service: Quality Improvement, (01563 576089).

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Anti-Bullying Policy, Education Committee, (1998)

Implementation Officer: Graham Short

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL SERVICES

ANTI-BULLYING MONITORING FORM

1. Establishment:

2. Name of Victim: _____ Age: _____

3. Name of alleged bullies: _____ Age: _____

_____ Age: _____

_____ Age: _____

4. Ethnic/racial background of victim: _____

5. Gender of victim: _____

6. Nature of incident (s):

7. Action taken:

Form completed by: _____ Date: _____