

## G.O. Kids Anti Bullying Policy

At GO Kids we expect all young people to feel safe and respected at all times while under our care. We take instances of bullying behaviour very seriously and will respond appropriately when bullying behaviour is observed or reported. All members of staff have a responsibility to recognise bullying behaviour and act.

### What is Bullying?

The following is a definition of Bullying behaviour from [www.respectme.org.uk](http://www.respectme.org.uk) and is used in Scotland's National Approach. Please see [www.gov.scot/publications/respect-national-approach-anti-bullying-scotlands-children-young-people/](http://www.gov.scot/publications/respect-national-approach-anti-bullying-scotlands-children-young-people/) for more information.

Bullying is both behaviour and impact; what someone does and the impact it has on the other persons capacity to feel in control of themselves. We call this 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 and it can happen face to face and online.

Bullying behaviour can harm people physically or emotionally and although the actual behaviour might not be repeated, the threat that it might can be sustained over time, typically by actions: looks, messages, confrontations, physical interventions, or the fear of these. This behaviour can include:

Being called names, teased, put down or threatened face to face and/or online.

Being hit, tripped, pushed, or kicked.

Having belongings taken or damaged.

Being ignored, left out or having rumours spread about you (face to face or/and online)

Sending abusive messages, pictures or images on social media, online gaming platforms or phone.

Behaviour which makes people feel like they are not in control of themselves or their lives.

Being targeted because of who you are or who you are perceived to be (face to face and/or online).

### Is intent required?

Every Bullying incident should be looked at individually. In some cases, children or young people may not be aware that their behaviour is actually bullying. They are perhaps modelling the behaviour of adults or other children and young people, not understanding that it is wrong because they have never been taught otherwise. In these circumstances, the intent to bully may not be present, but the impact and effect on the person being bullied will be no less severe because of this.

It must be explained to the person bullying that their behaviour is unacceptable and why. Intent is difficult to prove and young people can often reframe their behaviour when challenged. It is more important to focus on the behaviour and the impact it had, rather than trying to establish whether someone acted deliberately or not.

Does the behaviour have to be persistent?

The issue with persistence is that the behaviour must take place more than once, but the impacts of bullying can be felt after a single incident.

Bullying does not need to be persistent to influence the mental health and well-being of a child or young person. For those who have been bullied, the fear and anticipation of further bullying can affect their ability to be themselves and interact with others in a healthy fashion. Bullying behaviour and its potential impacts on children and young people should be addressed as they arise. It is vital to respond to the behaviour that you see and the impact this is having, rather than relying on a rigid definition.

How persistence is viewed by one person – for example daily, weekly, or monthly – may be quite different to how it is viewed by someone else, leading to inequality and inconsistency of practice. It isn't helpful to wait and see if a pattern or repetition emerges before taking action. Although bullying is usually persistent, a single incident can have a significant impact on some children and young people by instilling a fear that it might happen again.

### **What about impact?**

Bullying can affect people in different ways, and this should be taken into consideration. If you are unsure if behaviour is bullying, look at the effect it is having on the child or young person. If they are unable to respond effectively and regain their sense of self and control in the situation, adults need to intervene to help restore it. Keeping the focus on impact reduces the emphasis on issues of persistence and intent. What you do about bullying is more important than how you define it.

We should always remember that children will tease each other, fall in and out with each other, have arguments, stop talking to each other and disagree about what they like and do not like. This is a normal part of growing up and should be distinguished from bullying. However, in an environment where this behaviour is left unchecked, it can lead to bullying, making those being bullied feel afraid, uncomfortable, and unsafe in their environment.

All behaviour communicates feelings. Our response should focus on identifying how someone feels and helping them to cope with and respond to those feelings. Children and young people may act out of character when they are being bullied and changes in behaviour can be signals that something is wrong. We need to focus on what someone did and the impact that it had.

**In short bullying is more about the effect that behaviour has on someone than whether the behaviour was intentional or ongoing. We should focus more on the behaviour and how we can prevent it or change it rather than labels and definitions.**

**If one person's behaviour has upset another person, we should do something about it.**

The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child states that

- Article 15 – Children have the right to meet together and join groups and organisations, as long as it does not stop other people from enjoying their rights. In exercising their rights, children have the responsibility to respect the rights, freedoms, and reputations of others.
- Article 19 – children have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, physically, or mentally.
- Article 29 – Children's education should develop each child's personality, talents, and abilities to the fullest. It should encourage children to respect others, human rights, and their own and other cultures. It should also help them learn to live peacefully, protect the environment and respect other people.
- Article 31 -Children have the right to relax and play, and to join in a wide range of culture, artistic and other recreational activities.

### **Prejudice Based Bullying Behaviour**

When bullying behaviour focuses on a part of someone's identity, such as their ethnic origin, religion, gender, or sexual orientation, this is classed as prejudice-based bullying behaviour. Under the Equality Act 2010, Education Services has an obligation to address prejudice-based bullying behaviour and failure to do so may be discrimination. These include age, disability, race religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, transgender status, marital status or pregnancy or maternity.

## **Prevention**

GO kids promotes an open, friendly, and respectful environment for all adults, young people and children using our service. It is made clear from induction (of both children and staff) that bullying is never acceptable. Children and young people are encouraged to speak to the adults if they have any concerns and the staff take the time to get to know the children in order to recognise any red flags that may indicate bullying behaviour.

Staff will always lead by example by discussing any behavioural concerns with the children in a calm and respectful manner. We will never use derogatory language towards the young people or other staff members and will behave in a professional way regardless of emotions/feelings.

Staff will never use physical punishments when dealing with children or adults.

GO kids have a "Buddy" system for new children where an older child can be their go to, should they have any fears.

Adults will discuss bullying regularly with the children to reinforce our Anti Bullying stance and reassure them of the actions that we will take regarding bullying.

Children are encouraged to express their feelings and to listen and to respect other opinions that differ from their own.

Children will be listened to when expressing their feelings. These will be taken seriously and dealt with appropriately.

We ask that all parents/guardians and young people inform a member of staff if they are aware of any bullying happening in the club.

## **How we deal with allegations of Bullying**

When a child discloses that they are being bullied, the member of staff will take the allegation seriously. They will take some time with the child to get a clear understanding of what has been going on.

Where possible (no threat of physical harm) children will be guided through mediation by a member of staff where both children can express their feelings on an incident and listen to the other side. The final outcome of this conversation will be to allow the children to come to a resolution that they are both comfortable with.

Staff will offer advice if children are unable to come to a mutual understanding. Parents will be informed on collection.

Where there is physical bullying (pushing, hitting, tripping etc) the child displaying the behaviour will be removed from the area while another member of staff ensures the safety of the child being bullied. Once all parties have calmed and any injuries have been treated, staff will discuss what happened with both children and any other children who may have witnessed the situation, individually and anonymously to get a full picture of what happened. All findings will be recorded on an incident form which will be shown to and signed by the child's parent/guardian. If a child receives 3 incident forms, they may be excluded from the club.

If the offending child poses an immediate threat to staff and children, they will be separated from the other children and their parent will be called and asked to arrange for them to be collected immediately.

If a child discloses that they are being bullied outside of the club e.g. at school or another extracurricular activity they will ask the child for permission to inform an adult in that setting or the child's parents. It is important to allow the child to make this decision as the bullying they are experiencing is already taking away their sense of self as detailed on the description at the beginning of this document. If the child is against the member of staff telling anyone else, they will gently encourage them to tell someone themselves and advise them that this is the best way to make the behaviour stop. If the bullying is a child protection issue (physical, sexual abuse) then the member of staff must not promise to keep it a secret and must follow appropriate actions according to our Child protection Policy.

### **Follow up**

Staff will continue to monitor any children involved in bullying instances and discuss any concerns as a team. Communication between staff and parents/guardians will be ongoing and any new occurrences will be dealt with appropriately and swiftly.

### **Labelling**

Please note that we do not use the terms "Bully" and "Victim". Labelling a child in either way can have a derogatory effects in the long term as people perceive them as a certain way before getting to know them. It is imperative that we recognise the behaviour as bullying and not the child as a bully. Behaviour can be easily changed through education and personal growth.

### **Additional Resources**

- RespectMe [www.respectme.org.uk](http://www.respectme.org.uk)
- Childline 08001111 [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)
- Parentline 08088002222
- UNICEF [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)
- Enquire [www.enquire.org.uk](http://www.enquire.org.uk)
- Enable Scotland [www.enable.org.uk](http://www.enable.org.uk)
- Hands on Scotland [www.handsonscotland.co.uk](http://www.handsonscotland.co.uk)