

ANTI-BULLYING ALLIANCE: AGREED NI POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

The following policy recommendations have been developed by the Anti-Bullying Alliance through our Advisory Group, which consists of NSPCC, Ditch the Label, NASUWT Teacher's Union, Red Balloon, the National Children's Bureau, Stranmillis University College, Professor Lucy Betts, Childnet, Kidscape, Mencap and Wandsworth Borough Council. They have also been agreed upon among our core members in our Northern Ireland working group.

You will find out six policy recommendations listed in the next section. **They span across 2 key areas:**

- **Anti-bullying training**
- **Evidence and data**



If you would like to discuss the recommendations or find out more about our work, please contact:

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ANTI-BULLYING TRAINING

1. Initial Teacher Education should include mandatory content on how to prevent and respond to bullying. This training should continue throughout employment.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Currently there are no requirements for trainee teachers to undertake any anti-bullying training at all. Many become teachers without even a basic understanding of the definition of bullying let alone the skills to prevent and respond to it.



UK wide research shows that many teachers do not feel equipped to tackle bullying. 42% of teachers interviewed in one study reported not feeling equipped[1]. In our own research, 40% of bullied young people surveyed said access to a supportive teacher trained in dealing with bullying would have made a difference.

2. All schools should have a designated anti-bullying lead responsible for oversight of the school's anti-bullying policy and practice.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

The impact of bullying on children and young people's mental health can be devastating, lasting long into adulthood[2]. Those with mental health issues are also more likely to experience bullying, and to bully others[3]. It's important that schools assign anti-bullying leads, who are trained and equipped to fulfil the role.



3. Professionals from services that regularly encounter children who may disclose bullying must have anti-bullying information and training available to them including GPs, youth services, CAMHS, social care services, foster carers, care home staff etc.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Services such as GPs, social workers, Accident and Emergency Departments are often the first professionals to hear from children about bullying and they need to be able to provide good quality information and advice that is accurate, relevant, and age appropriate.



1 - Spencer, K. (2014) 'Teachers Need More Anti-Bullying Training', Sky News, 14 November.

2 - <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/ioppn/news/records/2014/April/Impact-of-childhood-bullying-still-evident-after-40-years.aspx>

3 - Wolke, D., S.T. Lereya, and N. Tippett, Individual and social determinants of bullying and cyberbullying, in Cyberbullying and youth: From theory to interventions, T. Vollink, F. Dehue, and C. McGuckin, Editors. 2015, Psychology Press: New York.

EVIDENCE AND DATA

- 4.** Improve recording methods for bullying incidents in school to allow for data to be collected and analysed on a NI-wide scale.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

We are pleased that schools have a duty to record bullying incidents at school under the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016. However, we see further opportunity regarding collating this data on a NI-wide scale in terms of identifying trends and targeting interventions.



- 5.** The government should commission research on the prevalence of bullying among children and young people in Northern Ireland, including current intervention and prevention strategies.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

There is an urgent need for large-scale research in Northern Ireland on bullying, its impact on children and young people, and current intervention and prevention strategies. The most recent research of this nature was commissioned by the Department of Education in 2011.



- 6.** Once a baseline has been established through research, the government should undertake an anti-bullying survey, conducted annually, to understand the nature and extent of bullying in Northern Ireland. This survey should capture data about:

- Groups more at risk of experiencing bullying including children with SEND, children in receipt of free school meals, LGBT young people, children with a visible difference, young carers, care experienced young people and other protected characteristics
- Method and motivation of bullying
- Where bullying is taking place (e.g. online, in school and home to school transport)

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

In order to effectively tackle the issue of bullying, we need to have a 'live' picture of bullying trends, as well as measuring successful strategies. We need to gather data on a regular basis, looking at those most at risk of bullying, such as those characteristics protected under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act, and where and how the bullying takes place.

