

Response to Education and Skills Committee Inquiry into Bullying

Barnardo's

October 2006

1) Introduction

1.1) Barnardo's helps the UK's most vulnerable children have a better start in life, and therefore the chance of a better future. As the UK's leading children's charity, we work directly with over 120,000 children, young people and their families every year. We run 370 vital projects across the UK, including counselling for children who have been abused, fostering and adoption services, vocational training and disability inclusion groups.

1.2) Every Barnardo's project is different but each has the same goal: protecting, nurturing and providing opportunities for the most vulnerable children and young people, over the long term, enabling them to transform their lives and fulfil their potential.

1.3) Barnardo's vision is that the lives of all children and young people should be free from poverty, abuse and discrimination. We use the knowledge gained from our direct work with children to campaign for better childcare policy and to champion the rights of every child. By researching what works for our wide range of childcare professionals, and responding to young people's concerns, we help to offer a better start in life for children and young people across the UK.

1.4) Barnardo's welcomes this consultation. Our response is based on research conducted by the Policy and Research Unit (PRU) which focused specifically on disability, homophobic and racist bullying and links with children and young people's emotional wellbeing mental health.

2) Barnardo's Recommendations

2.1) Strengthened anti-bullying policies

Anti-bullying policies should be endorsed by the whole school structure. All teachers and students need to know exactly why the policy is in place, what it aims to achieve and how it is being endorsed. Adequate training and support should be provided to teachers and students to ensure a culture of tolerance and understanding.

2.2) Increased awareness of sexuality and homophobic bullying

Children and young people are concerned that sexuality and homophobia are not being adequately addressed within the whole school environment. Young people want to see a greater awareness of these issues in school, possibly through PSHE/Citizenship lessons, which could promote greater tolerance amongst peers and be reflected and endorsed in all school policies.

2.3) Greater participation of children and young people

Children and young people should be involved in all stages of the development of policies and strategies to tackle bullying within the school environment. Including young people in the decision making process gives them ownership and as a result policies are strengthened and more likely to be adhered to and bullying tackled in a successful way

2.4) Greater involvement of parents and carers

Parent and carer support is a vital element for success in addressing bullying. Further work should be done with parents to challenge prejudice and intolerance and encourage them to make links with their children's schools to encourage understanding and support of school systems, policies and practice.

2.5) Consideration of other vulnerable groups

Additional groups of children are also vulnerable to bullying and should be addressed in future research and policy. This includes children who are disabled, suffer from learning difficulties or care for disabled siblings or parents. Children in residential care, either through the looked after or youth justice systems, are particularly vulnerable to bullying as a result of their current and previous experiences (The Social Exclusion Unit (SEU, 2003) found that 60% of looked after children reported being bullied in comparison to 17% of children overall). In addition refugee, asylum seeking and economic migrant children are at risk.

2.6) Appropriate support systems

Support systems should be available in school to both the victim of bullying and the bully. Children and young people who bully are often vulnerable themselves and this needs to be addressed in a positive way and not just focus on punishment.

2.7) Greater dissemination of good practice examples

Schools and other organisations working with children and young people should be more actively directed to literature and websites illustrating examples of good practice when tackling bullying. For example, the DfES children and young people's mental health website 'Teachernet' (www.teachernet.gov.uk) contains a number of case studies about behaviour in schools, including specific examples of innovative approaches to tackling bullying.

3) Extent and Nature of the Problem

3.1) How bullying should be defined

3.1.1) In 2004, Barnardo's carried out consultations with young people asking them about the topic of emotional wellbeing and mental health. The key message that arose from the research was that young people saw bullying as the factor most harmful to their mental health.

3.1.2) The majority of definitions of bullying outline the behaviours which constitute bullying and highlight the difference between strength of power. Early definitions have centred on overt forms of bullying, such as physical and verbal bullying (name calling, taunting, threats, mocking, making offensive comments, kicking, hitting, pushing, taking and damaging belongings). Latterly there has been a recognition that social exclusion, indirect verbal bullying or rumour mongering are also bullying. Bullying using mobile phones and the internet is an increasing phenomenon and has been found to be experienced by a number of young people (although there is less evidence of this growth than portrayed by the media).

3.1.3) Barnardo's research has shown that while some children and young people are bullied because of certain physical characteristics, bullying can take place for any reason or difference. A group of peer researchers trained by Barnardo's research unit consulted with young people across Yorkshire to find out about their experiences. The findings were developed into a series of six posters (Appendix 1) and are available, alongside the written report 'Involving Young People in Research (Tyler, Turner and Mills, 2006), at: www.barnardos.org.uk/bullyingresearch

3.1.4) Barnardo's is committed to challenging the cultures that allow bullying in both personal and organisational contexts. We have a comprehensive bullying policy, recently reviewed and currently undergoing internal consultation, which is signed up to by staff across all levels of the organisation (Appendix 2).

3.2) The extent and nature of the problem of bullying in schools

3.2.1) Barnardo's research found that bullying was the most reported cause of unhappiness in young people and the biggest thing that made them unhappy at school. This was echoed in an Ofsted report (2005) on the progress of schools in promoting young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health. Further research endorsing this view was carried out by the DfES (Oliver and Candappa, 2003). Results showed that 50% of all primary school children and more than 25% of secondary school children said they had been bullied in the last year. The same study showed that 51% of primary school children and 54% of secondary school children thought that bullying was either a 'big problem' or 'quite a big problem' in their school.

3.3) The extent of homophobic and racist bullying

3.3.1) Barnardo's consultation with young people discovered that not only do young people see bullying as the most harmful factor to their emotional wellbeing, but that 'identity related bullying' i.e. bullying someone because they are Black minority ethnic or lesbian, gay or bisexual, is particularly harmful. The views of young people in Barnardo's have been recently supported by the report released by ChildLine (ChildLine, 2006) which reports approximately 2725 young

people call ChildLine each year to talk about sexual orientation and particularly homophobic bullying.

3.3.2) Barnardo's work has also raised the issue that you do not have to be gay to be homophobically bullied. The ever present gender stereotypes often mean that young people are bullied for being gay when they are not. This is emphasised by the changing role of language, for example the diversification of the word 'gay' which young people involved in Barnardo's research frequently used to describe someone/something stupid or not trendy enough (i.e. you wear gay trainers) and which appears to have become a popular slang word to make someone feel daft or inferior.

3.3.3) Many young people feel that the issue of homophobic bullying is not being addressed well enough in school and through the curriculum. Research indicates that because homophobic bullying is often targeted at heterosexuals, many schools do not take it as seriously as other forms of bullying. Young people want to see a greater awareness and tolerance developed, not only about their own sexuality but about wider issues such as having Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual parents, siblings or other relatives.

3.3.4) The majority of research with young people from BME groups shows that these young people are more likely to be victims of bullying than their peers. This has also been supported by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation who established that BME young people are particularly vulnerable to race hate crimes in the community.

3.3.5) Young people involved in Barnardo's research cited skin colour as one of the main reasons young people are bullied. This broad term also encompassed cultural issues, such as dress and language, as well as religion and perception of asylum status, which was viewed particularly negatively.

3.3.6) One of the key issues in schools is the degree to which racial bullying is considered as racism or bullying, and how these perceptions in children affect their responses.

3.4) Why some people become bullies and why some people are bullied

3.4.1) Children and young people can both bully and be bullied at the same time.

However, some groups of children and young people appear to be more likely to experience bullying than others. A key factor identified by young people accessing Barnardo's services was the notion of difference. This could vary from skin colour, religion, disability, dress, sexuality, language, individual appearance or wealth, which could make a young person stand out within the community in which they live and therefore become vulnerable. In addition, research conducted in Northern Ireland by the National Children's Bureau (Schubotz and Sinclair, 2006) on behalf of the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) identified young people who have few friends, or friends who are themselves poorly regarded by peers, as being more vulnerable.

3.4.2) It is well recognised that children who display bullying behaviours are often themselves lacking in self-esteem and a positive sense of who they are, and seek to empower themselves by

diminishing others. Alternatively young people may have learned the behaviour at home, at school or in the community and believe it to be a good way to treat other people. Children and young people involved in Barnardo's research were very quick to identify that a person who bullies may themselves have been a victim of abuse or bullying, at school or in the home, and that this may be a contributory factor to the behaviour they display.

4) Short and long-term effects

4.1) The effect of bullying on academic achievement, physical and mental health, and social and emotional wellbeing

4.1.1) Barnardo's believes that all young people have the right to a balanced and healthy physical and emotional wellbeing. Barnardo's definition of emotional wellbeing and mental health is:

- Having the capacity to build positive relationships and cope with the ups and downs of life.
- Being able to realise your own potential.
- Having the opportunity to develop emotionally, intellectually and spiritually.

4.1.2) Barnardo's recognises that bullying impacts on a number of areas of a young person's life, including their physical and mental health and their social and emotional wellbeing. In line with the NHS National Electronic Library for Mental Health, Barnardo's recognises a number of health problems associated with bullying. These include sleeping difficulties, bed wetting, feeling sad, headaches, stomach aches, irritability/poor concentration, depression, suicidal ideation, self-harm, somatic symptoms, anxiety and social dysfunction.

4.1.3) With the majority of bullying occurring in school, it is not surprising that this has a subsequent impact on a young person's education. Young people report difficulties with concentrating on school work, being afraid to go to school and experience psychological and physical distress at the thought of having to do so. As a result young people describe bullying as one of the main reasons for continued absence from school. Truancy can be a less frightening option than attendance.

4.1.4) There is great debate about the effect of resilience in young people for coping with bullying behaviour as it is widely understood that bullying affects some young people worse than others. Children who have a stable home, with supportive parents and a reliable friend network are reported as being more likely to cope with bullying behaviours and focus on other areas of their lives in comparison to young people whose home lives are also chaotic and have fewer people which they can turn to.

4.2) Whether and how the effects of being bullied persist into adult life

4.2.1) Health problems connected with bullying can continue into adult life. Victims are more likely to be depressed, anxious, lonely, have low self-esteem and feel less comfortable with the opposite sex. Adults can have vivid memories of being bullied and recurring memories can cause long-term psychological distress.

5) Tackling the problem

5.1) The Government's policy on bullying

5.1.1) Under the children Act 2004 and Every Child Matters, all professionals who work with children and young people are expected to work towards the five national outcomes for children: Be Healthy, Stay Safe, Enjoy and Achieve, Make a positive contribution, Achieve economic wellbeing. Bullying can certainly hinder and ultimately prevent these from happening if not addressed.

5.1.2) The 2004 Healthy Schools initiative takes a whole school approach to improving children's experience of education. Promoting the emotional wellbeing and mental health of young people has been core to this, particularly in encouraging pupils to understand and express their feelings, while building their confidence and emotional resistance. By identifying vulnerable individuals and groups, appropriate strategies can be put in place to support them.

5.1.3) The Race Relations Act 2000 requires schools to work towards stopping racial discrimination, including racist bullying.

5.2) How schools deal with bullying

5.2.1) Bullying research and work today remains grounded in the work of Olweus, who developed a number of methods through which to consult young people about their experiences. The most significant was the theory of the 'whole school approach' to bullying, as adopted in 2004 by the Department of Health and the Healthy Schools approach. The 'whole school approach' places emphasis on the structure of the school and proposes that schools will be more successful at tackling bullying if there is a commitment to do so from all levels of the school structure – from the classroom to management. This starts with identifying a definition of bullying agreed by all.

5.2.2) Schools have introduced a number of methods to tackle bullying when it occurs. Every school is now required to sign up to 'Bullying – A Charter for Action'. Additional methods include peer support schemes, worry/anxiety boxes for young people to raise awareness of their issues anonymously, bully courts, mentoring schemes, school councils and teachers with specific responsibility for bullying behaviours or more general palliative care.

5.2.3) Those who bully often have low self-esteem and feel insecure and are being bullied themselves elsewhere. Bullying is unacceptable behaviour and needs to be prevented. One of the best ways of preventing bullying is to work with children and young people to develop their emotional skills and coping strategies so they have a range of alternative behaviours to bullying.

5.2.4) Creating a positive environment where children can learn while developing personally in line with the Every Child Matters outcomes, is a good way to ensure that the opportunities for bullying are minimised and bullying is not tolerated when it does occur. Effective implementation of anti-bullying policies is a crucial part of preventing and dealing with bullying. Pupils need to be clear that such policies are not just words, but a statement of expected behaviours from the whole school community.

5.2.5) Once schools introduce anti-bullying policies they often witness an increase in the reporting of incidents, which at face value appears to indicate that bullying has increased as a result of the policy. In fact it is about creating a culture in which young people feel safe to disclose. Once this is in place, bullying that has remained hidden for so long often begins to emerge. This enables it to be dealt with appropriately and the levels of bullying should then begin to reduce.

5.2.6) Barnardo's believes that schools need to be aware of the importance of the participation of young people in the development of policies and strategies to tackle bullying within the school environment. Including young people in the decision making process is to give them ownership and as a result policies are more likely to be adhered to and bullying tackled in a successful way. Barnardo's, as part of the Anti-Bullying Alliance, supports the development of activities and areas of policy making that children and young people can be involved in, such as:

- Involving pupils in decisions about how to tackle bullying
- Identifying priority issues that need to be addressed (which will often include bullying)
- Involving pupils in the development and delivery of the taught curriculum, which can focus on aspects of bullying and discrimination
- Peer support including mediation, listening, advocacy and mentoring for those experiencing, or at risk of, bullying or being bullied
- Reviewing, auditing and developing anti-bullying policy and practice and giving feedback to Ofsted
- Volunteering and supporting others in the wider community to promote inclusion and reduce bullying

5.3) How parents can help if their children are being bullied or are bullying others

5.3.1) Unfortunately many young people still see disclosing to parents as an ineffective way of tackling bullying. Young people in Barnardo's research were aware that telling parents could often make the situation worse and cause bullying to increase. Alternatively young people said parents would tell them 'to ignore it' believing this would encourage it to stop.

5.3.2) To combat bullying a partnership of understanding needs to be developed, not only enforced in the classroom, but also in the home. Children learn from and are most greatly influenced by their parents, therefore parent and carer support in addressing bullying is vital. Working with parents to build self-esteem and challenge prejudice and intolerance can be an effective way to teach children and young people about respecting others values and opinions and reinforcing the schools ethos in the home. Most parents welcome and support anti-bullying policies, therefore involvement in school systems, such as parents' evenings and keeping abreast of the school ethos through newsletters and bulletins is vital to ensure children receive the same messages both within the school and wider communities.

5.4) What support and guidance the DfES provides to schools and to those affected by bullying and how effective they are

5.4.1) Since 1998, schools have been required by law to have a written anti-bullying policy. An anti-bullying pack was subsequently published by the DfES in 2002 giving guidelines for drafting such policies and implementing a range of preventative strategies. Since 2004 all schools have

been encouraged to sign up to 'Bullying – A Charter for Action' devised by the DfES Anti-Bullying Alliance. This encourages measures such as 'worry/anxiety boxes', peer mentoring/buddying systems to encourage children to talk about their concerns whilst being confident they will be dealt with in a safe and effective manner. More recently the DfES produced the pack 'Don't Suffer in Silence: An anti-bullying pack for schools'; a comprehensive resource guide of anti-bullying materials and strategies.

5.4.2) Barnardo's believes an element of caution should be taken here to ensure that bullying policies are fully endorsed at all levels of a school environment. The policy should be signed up to at all levels and not adopted to 'tick a box'.

5.5) The role of other organisations, such as non-governmental groups, in providing support

5.5.1) A number of organisations are now involved in the campaign to eradicate bullying. Many of these operate under the umbrella organisation the 'Anti-Bullying Alliance'. This includes Barnardo's, NSPCC, NCH, ChildLine, Kidscape and Victim Support, amongst many others. Established in July 2002 by the NSPCC and NCB, the Alliance brings together 65 organisations into one network with the aim of 'reducing bullying and creating safe environments in which children and young people can live, grow, play and learn'. It aims to raise the profile of bullying and the effect it has on the children and young people involved, to develop a widespread understanding of what bullying is and to equip children, parents and staff with the skills and knowledge to address the issue effectively.

References

ChildLine (2006) *Calls to ChildLine about sexual orientation, homophobia and homophobic bullying*. ChildLine casenotes: A series of report on issues facing children today. London. NSPCC. www.childline.org.uk

Ofsted (2005). *Healthy Minds: promoting emotional health and wellbeing in schools*. London. Ofsted

Oliver, C and Candappa, M (2003) *Tackling Bullying: Listening to the views of children and young people*. London. DfES.

Olweus, D. Limber, S. and Mihalic, S.F (1999) *Blueprints for Violence Preventions, Book 9: Bullying Prevention Programme*. Boulder. Colorado, USA: Centre for the Study and Prevention of Violence

Schubotz, D and Sinclair, R (2006) *'Being part and parcel of the school' The views and experiences of children and young people in relation to the development of bullying policies in schools*. Northern Ireland. National Children's Bureau.

Social Exclusion Unit (2003) *A Better Education for Children in Care*. London. Social Exclusion Unit

Tyler, P. Turner, C. and Mills, H (2006) *Involving Young People in Research: Final report on the Policy and Research Unit service user-led bullying research project*. Barnardo's. Essex.

Appendix 1

Included in paper copy of submitted response.

See also www.barnardos.org.uk/bullyingresearch

Appendix 2

Children's Services Policy Manual- Safeguarding and Protecting Children Policy	SPC 05.02
Safeguarding children in specific circumstances: Bullying	Date 26/09/06
Review Date: 22/2/07	
Contact: Bob Cook, Principal Manager	
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Safeguarding children in specific circumstances:

Bullying

Introduction

- 5.2.1 Bullying is universal and long standing in schools and communities. It hurts and harms those subjected to it, sometimes significantly and can have both short and long term impacts on health and well being.
- 5.2.2 Bullying is difficult to address because
- Groups develop hierarchies in which some members are ridiculed or scapegoated.
 - Both adults and children have the potential to be bullied and bully, have witnessed bullying and may have colluded with bullying by not challenging it, often for fear of also being subjected to bullying.
- 5.2.3 Policy must challenge the cultures that allow bullying in both personal and organisational contexts.
- 5.2.4 Bullying may be defined as deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. It can take many forms but the three main types are
- physical, (e.g. hitting, kicking, theft),
 - verbal (e.g. racist or homophobic remarks, threats, name calling)
 - emotional (e.g. isolating the individual from the activities and social acceptance of their peer group).
- 5.2.5 The damage inflicted by bullying can frequently be underestimated. It can have multiple impacts that cause considerable distress to children, affect their health and development or, at the extreme, causes them significant harm (including self harm and possibly suicide).

Principles

- 5.2.6 Everyone has the right to live, work and play free from fear, harassment, intimidation or violence.
- 5.2.7 Everyone has the right to be treated with respect and to have their individual qualities and contributions recognised and valued.

Service Requirements

- 5.2.8 All services must develop and regularly review rigorously enforced anti bullying strategies that are compatible with partner agencies. This is particularly critical for children who are living away from home
- 5.2.9 All Barnardos services are required to work in partnership with children and young people using their service to develop practical responses to assist children and young people with bullying, being bullied and being around bullying. Where appropriate parents or staff from other agencies should be involved.

Requirements for managers.

- 5.2.10 Cultures of bullying amongst service users are less likely to flourish in a service with an open and safe management culture for staff, volunteers, carers etc.
- 5.2.11 Managers should facilitate this by ensuring the full implementation and understanding of corporate whistleblowing and anti harassment policies, by positively using the CS supervision policy and core standards (esp. participation).
- 5.2.12 Managers must develop
- Cultures that identify and address processes of bullying.
 - Clear expectations for staff
 - Systems that support staff in challenging bullying
 - Cultures that value difference whilst also addressing insensitive use of language, humour etc.

Requirements for staff

- 5.2.13 Staff are required to report, record, respond and review situations where bullying takes place
- 5.2.14 Staff must use supervision to identify instances where bullying occurs and how best it can be challenged. Where staff themselves feels bullied whistleblowing procedures should be used.

Best practice with children and young people

- The safety of a child or young person is to be addressed as a priority.
- Work should take place where the child or young person feels safe.
- Children should be listened to with the purpose of fully understanding what has happened, context and history.
- The impact on the child or young person is to be addressed and significant harm is to be immediately reviewed as a safeguarding issue.
- The needs, strengths, resilience and support systems of the child are to be assessed as part of identifying options for the child to address his or her specific situation.
- Bullying behaviour should be challenged.
- An action plan involving parents, the child, teachers and others where appropriate to be agreed.
- The experience of those witnessing bullying should be taken into account. It is probable that issues of fear and powerlessness are present and need to be addressed.

Learning organisational requirements.

5.2.15 Services are encouraged to communicate learning (positive and negative) to the lead ADCS for safeguarding for addressing by the Safeguarding Children Strategy group.

Links to further guidance.

5.2.16 The following internet sites have information and resources that address bullying.

- [Dfes](#)
- [Childline](#)
- [Teachernet](#)
- [Kidscape](#)
- [Parentline plus](#)
- www.bullying.co.uk
- www.internetsafetyzone.com
- www.stoptextbully.com
- www.bullyfreezone.co.uk
- www.anti-bullyingalliance.org