



VALE of GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

# Vale Youth Service Anti-Bullying Policy

Implementation date: July 2023

Review date: July 2025



**Directorate of Learning and Skills**

## **Introduction**

Challenging bullying in the Vale Youth Service (VYS) is a key priority for the Local Authority. We are committed to ensuring that all our young people feel safe, secure and are supported to achieve their full potential. All young people have a right to a 'safe place' and to be treated equally.

In order to challenge bullying effectively we will support all our provisions to become inclusive and engaging environments, with priority placed on wellbeing so young people feel safe. It is imperative young people are taught about building and maintaining respectful relationships and that the values of respect, tolerance and kindness form part of our communities and culture.

In November 2019, Welsh Government published the following guidance documents:

- Challenging bullying. Rights, respect, equality: guidance for parents and carers <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-11/rights-respect-equality-guidance-for-parents-and-carers.pdf>
- Challenging bullying. Rights, respect, equality: Statutory guidance for governing bodies of maintained schools <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-11/rights-respect-equality-statutory-guidance-for-governing-bodies-of-maintained-schools.pdf>
- Challenging bullying. Rights, respect, equality: Statutory guidance for local authorities <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-11/rights-respect-equality-statutory-guidance-for-local-authorities.pdf>
- Challenging bullying: rights, respect, equality. A guide for children <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-11/rights-respect-equality-guide-for-children.pdf>
- Challenging bullying: rights, respect, equality. A guide for young people <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-11/rights-respect-equality-guide-for-young-people.pdf>

These guidance documents contain detailed information on anti-bullying, including online toolkits to support implementation of the guidance at an operational level. All staff should be familiar with these guidance documents as bullying is everybody's responsibility.

In addition, the following supporting documents are also considered:

- Welsh Government Keeping learners safe - The role of local authorities, governing bodies and proprietors of independent schools under the Education Act 2002 [Keeping learners safe | GOV.WALES](#)
- Estyn – “We don't tell our teachers” – Experiences of peer on peer sexual harassment among secondary school pupils in Wales. [Experiences of peer-on-peer sexual harassment among secondary school pupils in Wales - Supporting resources \(gov.wales\)](#)

In 2020 the Council's Learning and Skills directorate in partnership with school representatives drafted new anti-bullying guidance document for all schools and education services in the Vale of Glamorgan. It was deemed imperative to include the voice of pupils in this new guidance document. The Youth Service was requested to support this work by undertaking a series of consultation workshops with children and young people around the topic of bullying and provide recommendations for inclusion.

Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all our children and young people is of paramount importance for the Council, and the Youth Service. Bullying is an issue which is high on the agenda for us all. It is a requirement for the Youth Service to have a policy which clearly sets out their strategies for preventing and responding to bullying behaviours, including those that are based on protected characteristics. This policy is based on the model Anti-bullying Guidance made available by the Vale of Glamorgan Directorate of Learning and Skills.

### **What is meant by bullying?**

There is no legal definition of bullying in Wales or indeed in Great Britain. Therefore, the definition used in this document builds upon widely used principles established in the UK since 1993. Welsh Government guidance defines bullying as:

***Behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts others either physically or emotionally.***

There are a number of distinctive elements associated with bullying. These include but are not limited to the following:

- **Intention to harm:** bullying is deliberate with the intention to cause harm. Those who bully others are often skilled at knowing exactly how to humiliate or hurt their target: picking on key aspects of their appearance, personality or identity that produces the effect wanted. They seek out the area in which they have power over their target.
- **Harmful outcome:** someone or a group is hurt physically or emotionally. They can be isolated, humiliated or made fearful. Their sense of self-worth is reduced.
- **Direct or indirect acts:** bullying can involve direct aggression, such as hitting, as well as indirect acts such as spreading rumours, revealing private information about someone or sharing intimate images with people for whom the information/ images were not intended.
- **Repetition:** bullying usually involves repeated acts of aggression. An isolated aggressive act, such as a fight, is not usually considered bullying. Yet any incident can be the start of a pattern of bullying behaviour which develops subsequently. That is why incident records are so valuable.

- **Unequal power:** bullying involves the abuse of power by one person or a group who are (perceived as) more powerful, often due to their age, physical strength, popularity or psychological resilience.

Bullying can take many forms, including:

- **Physical** – kicking, tripping someone up or shoving them, injuring someone, damaging their belongings or gestures of intimidation
- **Verbal** – taunts and name-calling, insults, threats, humiliation or intimidation
- **Emotional** – behaviour intended to isolate, hurt or humiliate someone
- **Indirect** – sly or underhand actions carried out behind the target’s back or rumour spreading
- **Online** – using any form of technological means, mobile phones, social networks, gaming, chat rooms, forums or apps to bully via text, messaging, images or video (see appendix 2 for more information on online bullying)
- **Relational aggression** – bullying that tries to harm the target’s relationships or social status: drawing their friends away, exploiting a person’s additional learning needs (ALN) or long-term illness, targeting their family’s social status, isolating or humiliating someone or deliberately getting someone into trouble
- **Sexual** – unwanted touching, threats, suggestions, comments and jokes or innuendo. This can also include sextortion, so called ‘revenge porn’ and any misuse of intimate, explicit images of the learner targeted.
- **Prejudice-related** – bullying of a learner or a group of learners because of prejudice. This could be linked to stereotypes or presumptions about identity. Prejudice-related bullying includes the protected characteristics (including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation). Prejudice can and does also extend beyond the protected characteristics and can lead to bullying for a variety of other reasons such as people’s appearance, socio-economic disadvantage and background.

There are specific types of bullying relating to protected characteristics in accordance with the [Equality Act 2010](#). These can broadly be categorised into the following groups:

- Bullying connected with age
- Bullying involving learners with disabilities, which can include ALN
- Homophobic, biphobic and/or transphobic bullying
- Bullying connected with race, religion and/or culture
- Sexist and/or sexual bullying

We recognise that bullying is closely related to how we respect and recognise the value of diversity. We will be proactive about:

- Seeking opportunities to learn about and celebrate difference
- Increasing diversity within our staff, volunteers and young people
- Welcoming new members to our organisation.

### **What is not bullying?**

Some behaviour, though unacceptable is not considered bullying. We will deal with these instances in accordance with our agreed code of conducts to prevent them from potentially escalating to become bullying. These one-off incidents will be recorded through the Council's Incident reporting procedure in line with our [Complaints procedure](#).

The following examples are cases which would not normally be considered bullying:

- **Friendship fallouts** - a friendship feud may, however, deteriorate into bullying behaviour that is enabled by the fact that former friends have an intimate knowledge of the fears and insecurities of one another. Young people who are targeted by former friends feel the betrayal deeply and are frequently isolated from their former friendship group.
- **A one-off fight** – Welsh Government expects it to be addressed according to our behaviour policy unless it is part of a pattern of behaviour that indicates intentional targeting of another individual.
- **An argument or disagreement** between two young people is not generally regarded as bullying. Nevertheless, they may require assistance to learn to respect others' views.
- **A one-off physical assault** – Welsh Government expects it to be stopped and addressed immediately. Police involvement in cases where physical assault has happened may also be appropriate.
- **Prejudice-related incidents** – A prejudice-related incident can be defined as “Any incident which is perceived to be prejudice or discriminatory by the victim or any other person hearing or witnessing the incident”.

### **Preventing, identifying and responding to bullying**

The Vale Youth Service feels it is important to prevent and challenge bullying as young people should be safeguarded from abuse, feel respected and kept safe as determined by their rights outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). We want to create a positive and kind environment which encourages inclusion and diversity whilst promoting respectful relationships. This policy only works if it ensures that the whole of the Youth Service community understands that bullying is not tolerated and understands the steps that will be taken to both prevent and respond to bullying.

We will seek to raise awareness, prevent and challenge bullying by:

- Developing a code of behaviour that sets out how everyone involved in our organisation is expected to behave, in face-to-face contact and online.
- Holding regular discussions with staff, volunteers, young people and families who use our organisation about bullying and how to prevent it.
- Providing support and training for all staff and volunteers on dealing with all forms of bullying and ensure they know how to apply our anti-bullying policy and procedures.
- Ensure all young people know how to express worries and anxieties.
- Ensure all young people are aware of the range of sanctions that may be applied against those engaging in bullying even if the bullying did not take place on our premises.
- Putting clear anti-bullying procedures in place in a young person-friendly format.
- Not assume bullying does not take place within our provisions and not ignore suspected bullying.
- Create a culture where we respect the fact that we are all different, make sure no one is without friends and where we practice skills such as listening to each other.
- Work with staff and outside agencies to identify all forms of prejudice-driven bullying.
- Actively provide opportunities to develop young people's social and emotional skills, including their resilience.
- Consider all opportunities for addressing bullying including through our curriculum as well as challenging unacceptable language.
- Publish our anti-bullying policy on our website and through our social media platforms.
- Create safe spaces for vulnerable young people and utilise effective listening skills.
- Offer support to those who have been bullied and signpost young people to helplines, websites and other organisations where further bullying support can be received.
- Work with those who are using bullying behaviours in order to address and support them in any problems they may have, this may include some restorative work.

The Youth Service will involve parents/carers by:

- Ensuring they are aware of our Anti-Bullying policy and our Complaints Procedure.
- Ensure they are aware of our code of behaviour and understand that prejudice and discrimination is unacceptable when accessing our provisions.
- Ensure they encourage their children to be friendly and tolerant towards others and to not be aggressive.
- Ensure they know how to access independent advice about bullying.
- Work with parents, carers and the local community to address issues beyond the Vale Youth Service provisions that give rise to bullying.

## **Reporting bullying**

Any bullying incident must be reported, including prejudice-based incidents. Bullying can only be tackled effectively if we know there is a problem. Young people who are being bullied or others who know of or suspect someone is being bullied can report concerns by following our Complaints Procedure which outlines the various steps the complainant can take.

Young people who are bullied or subject to a one-off incident should be encouraged, where possible, to keep evidence of the activity. Evidence may include:

- threats or images sent on or offline by messaging, conversations, notes or images, damaged clothing or other belongings, online conversations or notes
- witness statements or additional evidence from bystanders
- dates and times when things happened
- screenshots

In some cases, bullying may be so severe as to become a safeguarding matter or require involvement of the police. A young person may be in need of multi-agency support or therapeutic intervention. These situations may need to be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSP) or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Officer (DDSP) who will contact the local authority's Learning & Skills Safeguarding Officer.

## **Recording and monitoring bullying incidents**

The Vale Youth Service will record bullying incidents and one-off incidents involving protected characteristics and prejudice-based incidents, outlining the specific types of bullying. We will demonstrate what actions have been taken to challenge bullying and address unacceptable behaviour as well as take action to make improvements when required. We will use the ONE CAPITA system to record the bullying and any prejudice-based incidents, ensuring that we link all learners involved.

The Vale Youth Service will review this policy every three years in consultation with young people and the Learning & Skills Safeguarding Officer.

# Vale Youth Service

## Anti-Bullying

### Our Mission:

We want YOU to feel safe, special, and in control of your life!

### We're all about:

Making friends.

Understanding and respecting each other.

Stopping bullying in its tracks!

### What is bullying?

It's when someone tries to hurt you, again and again, making you feel scared or left out. But we won't stand for it!



### Our Goal:

A place where you can be YOU, and bullying has NO place!

Be YOU! Embrace your unique self.



### Our awesome plans:

Treat everyone with kindness online and offline.

Stop problems before they start.

Our team knows about all types of bullying and is here for YOU.

If you or someone you know is bullied, follow our complaints procedure and report it to a youth worker for support.

You are AMAZING! Let's make the Vale Youth Service the BEST place for everyone. Together, we stand up against bullying!

Everyone's voice MATTERS!

Stay awesome, stay kind!

For more info and cool resources, check out these guides:

"Rights, Respect, Equality Guide for Young People"

"Welsh Government Keeping Learners Safe"

"Estyn Experiences of Peer on Peer Harassment"



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# Vale Youth Service

## Complaints Procedure

### YOU HAVE A CONCERN

All young people have the right to complain about our service.



### RAISE IT WITH A WORKER

Let a youth worker know that you have a complaint. We will try to resolve the issue straight away.



### MAKE A FORMAL COMPLAINT

Complete a VYS complaints form, we will respond within 5 days.



### INVESTIGATION

Managers will investigate, you will be kept up to date.



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