



Anti-Bullying Policy

**We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.
This policy was last reviewed on: 15th February 2021**

We recognise that:

- Bullying is “behaviour, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group physically or emotionally.” *Safe from bullying in youth activities*, DCSF 2009.
- One person or a group can bully others
- Bullying can include:
 - verbal teasing or making fun of someone
 - excluding children from games and conversations
 - pressurising other children not to be friends with the person who is being bullied
 - spreading hurtful rumours or passing round inappropriate photographs/images/drawings
 - shouting at or verbally abusing someone
 - stealing or damaging someone’s belongings
 - making threats
 - forcing someone to do something embarrassing, harmful or dangerous
 - harassment on the basis of race, gender, sexuality or disability
 - physical or sexual assault (although all sexual incidents and all but very minor physical incidents constitute abuse and must be dealt with in accordance with child protection procedures).
 - bullying causes real distress. It can affect a person’s health and development and, at the extreme, can cause significant harm
 - people are often targeted by bullies because they appear different from others

Dealing with bullying:

We all have a role to play in preventing bullying and putting a stop to bullying.

The purpose of this policy is:

- To prevent bullying from happening in our organisation, as much as possible
- When bullying does happen, to make sure it is stopped as soon as possible and that those involved receive the support they need
- To provide information to all staff, volunteers, children and their families about what we should all do to prevent and deal with bullying.

We will seek to prevent bullying by:

- Setting out the “dos” and “don’ts” in terms of how everyone involved in Switch Midlands is expected to behave.
- Holding regular discussions with staff, volunteers, children, young people and families who use Switch Midlands to ensure that they understand our anti-bullying policy. These discussions will focus on:
 - group members’ responsibilities to look after one another and uphold the behaviour code
 - practicing skills such as listening to each other
 - respecting the fact that we are all different
 - making sure that no one is without friends
 - dealing with problems in a positive way
 - checking that the anti-bullying measures are working well.
 - making sure that staff, volunteers, children and young people, and parents and carers have clear information about our anti-bullying policy, complaints procedure, code of behaviour and anti-bullying procedure.

When bullying occurs, we will respond to it by:

When bullying does occur, a clear consistent response is essential. There is no one right method that can be applied to resolve all incidents of bullying. A number of interventions should be available all with the shared goal of ensuring that they protect the child / young person being bullied and challenge those who are bullying in a manner which will not add to the cycle of fear and anger but makes it clear that bullying is unacceptable.

Assessing the nature of the incident

When trying to assess the nature of an incident and the type of response needed, the following factors should normally be taken into account:

- Has the child / young person who is experiencing distress been subjected to repeated incidents of unacceptable behaviour?
- Is there evidence that behaviour is planned / pre-meditated?
- How do the child / young person perceive themselves in relation to those allegedly involved?
- How distressed is the child / young person and what effect is the situation having on their self-esteem, feelings about attending the school / service, motivation and relationships with peers, physical well-being etc?
- Who was involved in the alleged incident?
- Where did / do the alleged incidents take place?
- Are there any witnesses?
- Is there any background to the alleged incidents?
- Who reported the incident and to whom?
- How do others involved in the incident perceive it?

- What explanations do they give?
- What is required to resolve the difficulty now and in the future?
- Is the alleged incident sufficiently serious to warrant police involvement?

Any steps should be investigated in a timely manner. Delays should only occur at the end of a day or a session and, where possible, investigation of an incident should be carried out within three working days. Appropriate measures should be put in place to support all those involved. Any disciplinary measures should be in line with Switch Midlands' behaviour and disciplinary policy. Perpetrators need to understand that the incident will be recorded, that the behaviour is not acceptable. Actions should consider the age of those involved, the repetition and nature of incidents, the level of premeditation, the numbers involved, knowledge of individuals involved, the level of distress caused and the location and time of the incident. Parents and schools of those involved should be informed of what has happened and negotiate appropriate support.

Information should be collated and analysed to identify trends, such as "hotspots", particular types of bullying that awareness raising and / or actions can help prevent future occurrences, evaluate what strategies work best in which cases and train staff accordingly etc. A report should be given to Switch Midlands Directors on a regular basis especially to inform those involved when the anti-bullying policy is reviewed. Monitoring of those involved should take place and appropriate follow up agreed.

Record keeping and GDPR

Generally, in order to ensure that there is no breach of data protection regulations when gathering and storing information, our data officer will ensure that data is:

- Fairly and lawfully processed
- Processed for limited purposes
- Adequate, relevant and not excessive
- Accurate
- Not kept for longer than is necessary and disposed of securely
- Processed in accordance with the data subject's rights
- Secure