

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

18 September 2023 / Isabella Atkinson



ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

INTRODUCTION

England Ice Hockey (EIH) is committed to providing a caring, friendly, and safe environment for everyone taking part in our sport. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable within our sport. If bullying does occur, children and parents/guardians should feel confident to report it, and that it will be dealt with promptly and effectively.

It is recognised that bullying is not uncommon amongst children and would encourage clubs to take an active role in managing and addressing such behaviour at the earliest opportunity and lowest possible level, utilising advice from the regional safeguarding lead to decide when to escalate the response beyond informal intervention.

Where bullying is being committed by an adult towards a child, we would always define this as abuse, and it should be dealt with as such.

GUIDANCE

What is bullying?

Bullying is generally defined as the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. Bullying can be physical, verbal, or psychological. It can happen face to face or through cyberspace.

Bullying can be:

- **Verbal:** Name calling, persistent teasing, mocking, taunting, and threats.
- **Physical:** Any degree of physical violence, intimidating behaviour, theft, or intentional damage of possessions.
- **Emotional:** Excluding people, tormenting, ridiculing, humiliation, setting up, spreading rumours.
- **Cyber bullying:** Misuse of digital technologies to bully a person or group. This might be through the use of messages or actions that are threatening and/or intended to cause offence, anxiety or humiliation.

Bullying is typically based on a perceived difference, and causes can include:

- **Racist:** bullying based on ethnicity, skin colour, and language, religious or cultural practices.
- **Homophobic:** bullying based on a child's sexuality.
- **Gender / transphobic:** bullying related to gender identity.
- **Disablist:** bullying based on a child having special educational needs or disabilities.
- **Sexual:** unwelcome sexual advances, comments that intended to cause offence, humiliation, or intimidation.
- **Discriminative:** bullying based on any perceived weakness or difference. This could be because of their gender, age, race, nationality, ethnic origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, disability, or ability. It could also be factors surrounding the way someone looks or the clothes they wear, their family and social situation, hobbies, and interests.

Bullying can occur between an adult and child, children, a parent/guardian, and their own child.

Examples of bullying in sport could be:

- A parent/guardian or coach who places a child under excess pressure.
- An official who places unfair pressure on a child.
- Abuse of a person because of a high or low level of ability.

Cyber Bullying is the misuse of digital technologies or communications to bully a person or group, typically through messages or actions that are threatening and/or intended to cause offence, anxiety, or humiliation.

Behaviour which is classed as cyber bullying includes:

- Abusive comments, rumours, gossip, and threats made over the internet or using other digital communications, this includes internet 'trolling'.
- Sharing pictures, videos, or other personal information without the consent of the owner and with the intent to cause harm and/or humiliation.
- Hacking into someone's email, phone, or online profiles to extract and share personal information or to send abusive or inappropriate content while posing as that person.
- Creating specific websites that negatively target an individual or group, typically by posting content that intends to humiliate, ostracise and/or threaten.
- Blackmail, or pressurising someone to do something online that they do not want to do, such as sending a sexually explicit image.

Some cyberbullying activities could be criminal offences under a range of different laws, including the malicious communications act 1988 and the protection from harassment act 1997. Whilst our clubs and organisations can commit to ensure that club websites and club social networking sites are being used appropriately and deal with any bullying behaviour on these platforms it becomes more challenging when behaviour being reported is happening outside the environment of the club. Clubs have no powers to investigate or intervene in bullying taking place outside the club environment.

Parents/carers and players can be directed to take practical steps, such as taking screenshots as evidence, and accessing resources such as the NSPCC, kidscape, and ChildLine for further advice.

SIGNS AND INDICATORS OF BULLYING

A child may not always ask for help or express their concerns, however there may be signs or behaviours that indicate they may be being bullied. Staff and volunteers should be aware of these signs and raise concerns with the club DSL. Many of these indicators are similar to those presented in other types of abuse, making careful observation and investigation essential.

A child might

- Be unwilling to go to club sessions.
- Present as withdrawn, anxious, or lacking in confidence.
- Feel ill before or during training sessions or feign sickness.
- Start to drop in their level of training or competition.
- Be reluctant to travel with the club or attend club events.
- Have possessions that go “missing”.
- Have unexplained cuts and bruises.
- Ask for money or start stealing money (to pay the bully).
- Be frightened to say what is wrong.
- Become aggressive, disruptive, or unreasonable.
- Develop a stammer or other speech impediment.
- Begin to bully other children or siblings.
- Stop eating, overeat, or develop issues with their appetite.
- Attempt or threaten suicide or begin to go missing from home or other locations.
- Give improbable excuses for any of the above.

PREVENTION

Everybody within the club has a responsibility to work together to stop bullying. It is mandatory for all clubs to adhere to the EIH's codes of conduct, which all parents/carers and Junior players must sign and understand.

Why is it important to respond to bullying?

Bullying is known to have effects on children's health and development and cause them significant harm (including self-harm). EIH believes that everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Individuals who are bullying others need to learn different ways of behaving.

Most bullying incidents are not crimes. But some types of bullying are illegal and should be reported to the police. This includes bullying that involves violence, assault, and theft; harassment or intimidation over a period of time including calling someone names or threatening them, making abusive phone calls, and sending abusive emails or text messages (one incident is not normally enough to get a conviction); and anything involving hate crimes.

PROCEDURES

Incidents or concerns of bullying should be reported to the club DSL. The DSL will decide whether the matter is one of safeguarding, or whether it should be dealt with as an alleged breach of code of conduct or progressed as an anti-bullying matter. Where appropriate that regional safeguarding lead will be contacted.

Where the matter is determined to be a 'simple' case of bullying, the following measures can be implemented:

- Parents/guardians should be informed and may be asked to come to a meeting to discuss the problem.
- Attempts will be made to help the bully to change their behaviour.
- Subject to satisfactory participation by the bully in anti-bullying interventions, and with consent of all parents/carers, try to reconcile the parties by bringing them together. A genuine recognition of the effects of their behaviour and an apology may solve the situation.

- Record the outcome of the reconciliation attempt and advise the parents/guardians of that outcome. If reconciliation fails, is deemed inappropriate in the situation or parents/guardians don't agree to a reconciliation attempt then more formal action may be required.

Anti-bullying resources, which can be undertaken as an off-ice activity with the whole group can be found here: www.thecpsu.org.uk/media/390869/Anti-bullying-activities-2017-update.pdf

FORMAL ANTI-BULLYING PROCEDURES

If bullying is seen to continue despite best efforts to stop the behaviour, or the child or parents/carers refuse to participate in informal resolutions, the club may initiate disciplinary action. In these circumstances the club DSL should refer to the regional DSL for support.

Bullying matters will be formally investigated by a panel of three officers from the club officers/committee. This should include the club DSL. Ideally these will be people to whom the children in question are not personally known. Where there is a conflict of interests, the regional DSL will form part of the panel.

The panel will meet with the child and their parent/guardian alleging the bullying. Allow the child to explain in their own words what has been happening so that full details of the allegation are known. The panel will need to know when and where this has been happening, by whom and whether they think anyone witnessed the behaviour. If the child does not feel comfortable talking to the panel even with the support of their parent/guardian, the child should be allowed to give a written account in their own words. The child's parent/guardian to then provide this account to the panel. If there were any witnesses the same panel to speak to them to determine what they saw and any other information they have. If the witness is a child, the panel to make that contact via the parent/guardian.

The panel will also meet with the alleged bully and their parent/guardian to put the allegation to them and allow them the opportunity to respond to the allegation in their own words. Again, written statements can be accepted if appropriate. If the bullying is admitted, then the panel can make decisions immediately on appropriate actions. If the bullying is denied the panel will need to consider and form a view on what is alleged on the balance of probabilities. This view will be formed on all the available information gained by the panel from all sides, previous concerns and knowledge of the parties involved. At all stages minutes should be taken for clarity and agreed by all as a true account.

POTENTIAL CLUB ACTIONS IF BULLYING IS FOUND

- An apology from the bully and an agreement on future behaviour.
- A formal behaviour contract and ongoing monitoring to prevent repeated bullying.
- Disciplinary action such as a written warning, temporary suspension, or permanent exclusion.

The club should ensure all actions are recorded and that all parties are kept informed on what is happening and the outcomes.

