



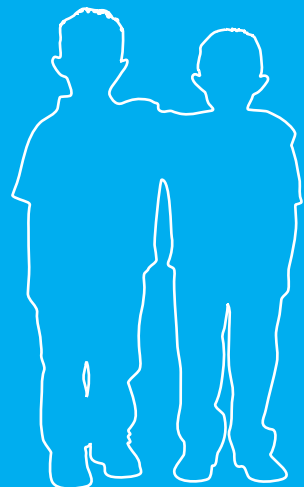
# BULLYING

Information for Parents & Carers

Bullies  <sup>®</sup>ut

## No matter how it is defined, bullying is abuse. It cannot be simply brushed aside as a ‘normal’ part of growing up

Within our society education is compulsory and all children and young people have the right to receive their education free from humiliation, oppression and abuse. It is therefore the responsibility of all adults to ensure that this takes place in a caring and protective environment.



Sadly, bullying is widely practised throughout our schools and most who work in education will agree that it is widespread and persistent. Whether your child is attending school for the first time or going through a transition period, it can be an extremely anxious time for parents and children alike.

Year after year, studies show the main fear of young people about to start school (especially secondary school) is the threat of bullying. For many, this fear is a sad reality.

“They set up a Facebook page against me and told everyone in school. It was horrible. They put nasty things on there and threatened me. I kept making myself sick”

Lauren, 11

Many parents and carers struggle to determine the best course of action to approach the school, support their child and ultimately stop the bullying, and whilst there is no simple answer or quick fix, the information in this booklet may be able to help.

## What is classed as Bullying?

Bullying is not always easy to define. At BulliesOut, we define bullying as the ‘wilful, conscious desire to hurt, control, threaten or frighten someone. It is when someone or several people, repeatedly over a period of time, do or say unpleasant things to another person or group of people, or keep teasing them in an unwanted way.’

“No-one knew she was bullying me and I was too scared to tell. She called me horrible names”

Jade, 14

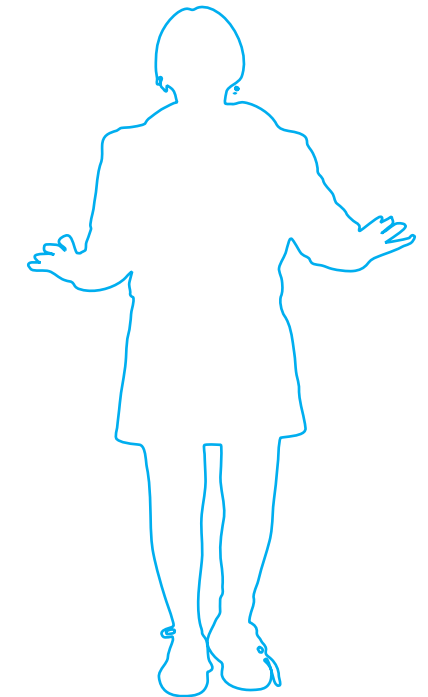
### Bullying can be:

**Physical** - Hitting, kicking, punching, slapping and other forms of violence. It also includes destroying personal belongings.

**Verbal** - Name-calling, teasing, sarcasm, taunts, threatening language, nasty comments, and offensive and/or sexual remarks.

**Indirect** - Dirty looks, excluding from groups, graffiti, malicious gossip, starting or spreading rumours, intimidation.

**Cyber** - Cyber is the term used to refer to bullying and harassment by use of technologies through means of email, instant messaging, text messages, blogs, mobile phones, pagers, and websites.

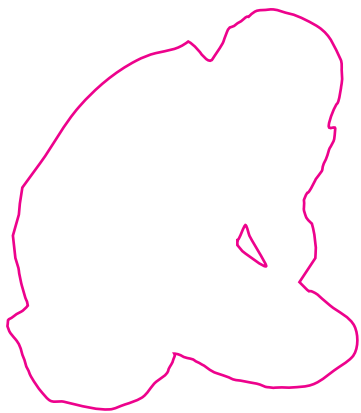


**Indirect bullying** - Also called emotional bullying, seems to be more common than other forms of bullying and the comments from young people tell us this type of bullying is the most difficult to deal with and the hardest to prove.

## Impact

Bullying is bad enough when it happens just once, but when it is consistent it can become a very serious problem. Being bullied can seriously affect a person's physical, emotional, academic and social well-being.

Children who are bullied often experience extreme fear and stress, feelings of loneliness, humiliation and insecurity.



Bullied children cannot learn effectively in an ongoing climate of fear. Research shows that the emotional effects of bullying can last well into adulthood.

Bullying is a very stressful ordeal - one that many people find it hard to speak about. Those being bullied continually ask 'why me?' They may feel ashamed and embarrassed that they can't stand up to the bully and deal with what is happening to them.

Bullying that is left unchallenged also harms the bully. He or she learns that they can get away with it and get what they want by using violence, aggression and threats. Kidscape carried out a survey with young offenders which indicated that many had been actively involved in bullying at school.

### Persistent bullying can result in:

- Depression
- Low self esteem
- Loneliness
- Isolation
- Poor academic achievement
- Poor social skills
- Truancy
- Self harm
- Threatened or attempted suicide

## Is Your Child Being Bullied?

This is a question many parents ask and because of the stigma attached to bullying (that it is a sign of weakness), many children do not admit to being bullied.

A child may indicate by their behaviour that he or she is being bullied.

### The following may be signs that your child is being bullied:

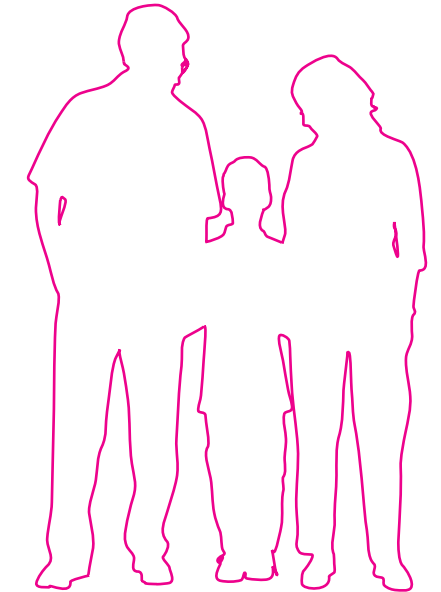
- Perpetuated complaints of illness - headaches, stomach ache etc
- Missing school altogether
- School work not up to usual standard
- Coming home with possessions missing and/or damaged
- Unexplained bruises, scratches or cuts
- Using a different route

between home and school or asking to be taken to or picked up from school for no apparent reason

- Cry themselves to sleep and/or have nightmares
- Come home hungry (bully has taken lunch/lunch money)
- Feeling irritable, easily upset or particularly emotional
- Lack confidence, become withdrawn, start stammering
- Become anxious or depressed
- Seem lonely and isolated
- Bed wetting (mainly found in younger children)
- A change in eating habits

As there could be other reasons for these symptoms, try to avoid jumping to conclusions.

Could there be anything else bothering your child - such as changes in your family?



**"I felt stupid for not fighting back. Why was I letting this happen to me?"** Tom, 14

## How You Can Help Your Child

Finding out that your child is being bullied is a stressful and distressing experience and it is natural for a parent to feel anger, confusion and guilt. Helping a child turn a bullying situation around is difficult for many parents and carers. Watching a child suffer unleashes a wide range of emotions - and the first impulses may not be best. Other parents feel helpless in the face of school authorities, or wonder how to help the child cope. We know that the whole family needs to be helped to understand what is going on, and how to move forward.

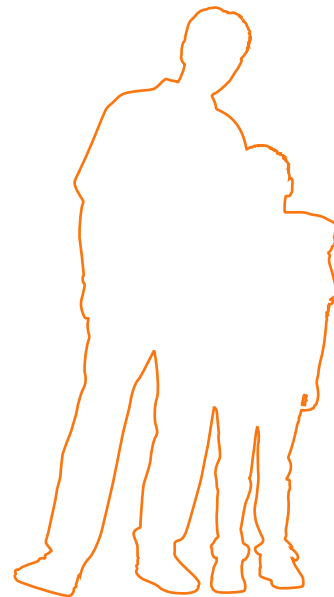
Bullying has been compared to a form of brainwashing, with the sufferers believing that somehow they deserve to be bullied. Those who are bullied feel vulnerable and powerless

and if the bullying has been going on for some time, their self esteem may be damaged.

If you suspect your child may be being bullied, ask them directly. Children who are being bullied are often reluctant to talk about what is happening to them and often suffer in silence. They may even deny it at first. Encourage your child to talk to you by letting them know you are worried about them and want to help and support them, whatever the problem.

No-one can deal with bullying on their own and no-one should have to. Effective solutions usually require involving parents, teachers and most importantly, the children themselves.

Remember, if you didn't know your child was being bullied, then the school may not have realised it either - or they may have heard conflicting accounts of the incident. If the school doesn't know what is going on, they can't do anything about it. Avoid doing anything irrational as this won't help anyone. A good relationship with you and the school should help the situation.



- The first and most important step is to listen to your child. Don't dismiss the bullying as 'part of growing up'. Reassure your child that the bullying IS NOT their fault. Keep telling your child that you love them and will support them. Encourage them to tell you how they feel. Whilst talking about it might not solve the problem, it can help your child to offload heavy feelings
- Keep a diary of incidents and take photographs of any injuries. A written record makes it much easier to verify facts. A copy of our 'bullying diary' can be downloaded from our website [www.bulliesout.com](http://www.bulliesout.com)
- Inform the school. Whilst your child might try to persuade you otherwise for fear of making the situation worse, often the most frustrated complaint of schools when dealing with bullying is that they wished they'd known about it sooner. Your child's form tutor or head of year should be available and open to discussing matters with you as they arise
- Avoid interrogating your child as soon as they get home about what may have happened today and instead communicate your willingness to listen to news - good or bad - at any time. Reiterate and focus on your child's strengths and find opportunities to build confidence and self-esteem, such as through the arts, sports and other activities they enjoy. Help your child focus on their positive aspects
- Take the time to calmly and methodically talk through the situation with your child, asking them what they would like you to do and agree a plan of action together
- Don't encourage your child to fight back. While this may feel like a justified response, your child could end up getting hurt. They may also get caught and punished, instead of the bully

## How You Can Help Your Child

- Think before you act. Approach the school calmly. As parents and caring adults, it is our natural instinct to charge off to the school and demand the issues be resolved. However, this may leave children feeling even more powerless and fearful of the consequences, such as retribution from the bully. Focus on feelings. A child who is upset needs to be put first and taken seriously
- Request a copy of the school's Anti Bullying Policy. By law, every school must have one and it will outline how the school aims to prevent and respond to bullying
- During your meeting with the school, make a note of what action the school intends to take. Keep in touch with the school and let them know if things improve or continue
- If you are not happy with the teacher's response, do not give up. The welfare and education of your child is important and schools have a duty of care towards their pupils. If your child's education suffers as a result of the bullying and the school ignore this, you have a right to say you believe the school is failing in its 'duty of care'

In its '***Bullying - Don't Suffer in Silence, An Anti Bullying Pack for Schools***', the Government states that "Head Teachers must, by law, have a policy to prevent all forms of bullying among pupils. Challenging bullying effectively will improve the safety and happiness of pupils, show that the school cares and make it clear to bullies that the behaviour is unacceptable."

If your child continues to be bullied and you are unhappy with the way the school is dealing with it and feel that the school is failing in its duty of care towards your child, you should take things further. Ensure that you follow the school's complaints procedure and keep copies of all correspondence.

Write a letter of complaint to the Head Teacher. Send a copy to the Board of Governors. The name and address of the Chairperson of the Board of Governors should be available from the School Secretary.

If the Governors are unhelpful, you can complain in writing to the Director of Education at your Local Authority.

As a last resort, write to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (England) or the Minister for Lifelong Learning, Welsh Assembly Government (Wales). This department will not respond to, or investigate your complaint until you have exhausted all other avenues.

If you are still unhappy with the situation, you may wish to consider sending your child to a different school. However, before you do this, make sure your child is feeling more confident. If your child is still vulnerable, this could be spotted at the new school and the problem may start again. Developing their skills and confidence can be very helpful.



Templates of letters are available under the parents section of our website [www.bulliesout.com](http://www.bulliesout.com)

## Is Your Child A Bully?

It can be very upsetting to be told your child is a bully. However, bullies have to learn that their behaviour is unacceptable and if they continue to bully, there are consequences.

If you find out your child has been bullying others:

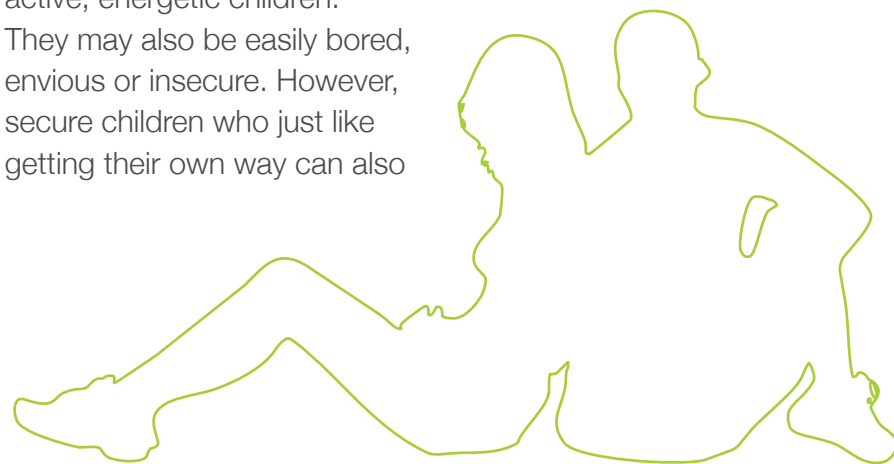
- Try and stay calm
- Try not to become angry and defensive
- Find out exactly what your child has been doing
- Ask if they have ever done anything like this before

Although they should be given plenty of help and encouragement to change, they cannot be allowed to get away with tormenting others. Talk to teachers, playground supervisors - the more information you can find out the

easier it will be to find out why your child has been bullying others and what can be done about it. There could be a reason why your child is behaving in this way. For example, has there been a recent change or disruption in your child's life? Is your child being bullied as well?

Through his long term studies, Dan Olweus found that children who bully can be high spirited, active, energetic children. They may also be easily bored, envious or insecure. However, secure children who just like getting their own way can also

become bullies. The root cause for bullying is linked to a sense of power and control. As parents, we should remember that bullying is unacceptable behaviour and it is important our children understand this. Parents need to be strong and take immediate action (such as, admonishment or losing privileges) if they find out their child is a bully.



## Helping the Child Who Bullies

- Talk to them and see if they have any idea why they are bullying
- Reassure your child you still love them and that they are not bad. It's their behaviour you don't like and you will help them change this
- Try to understand the reason for your child's behaviour. Maybe they have trouble managing strong emotions such as anger or frustration
- Ensure your child is aware of the hurt his or her bullying behaviour is causing others
- Try to find out if there is something in particular bothering your child and help them sort it out
- Work with your child to find a way for them to make amends for the bullying
- Develop clear and consistent rules within your family for your child's behaviour. Praise and reinforce your child for following rules and use non-physical, non hostile consequences if they break the rules
- Set boundaries and limits. If your child shows any sign of aggressive behaviour, stop it immediately. Help your child find other non-aggressive ways of reacting
- Teach your child the difference between assertiveness and aggression
- Talk to your child's school and let them know your child is making an effort to change his or her behaviour. They may have some helpful suggestions
- Explain to your child that other children may try and provoke a bully - especially one who is trying to change. If this happens, encourage your child not to respond aggressively and to walk away





## Myths About Bullying

If you talk to them about the bullying, friends and relatives may say some of the following to you. They mean well, but are wrong. Bullying is NEVER a good thing. It is damaging for all involved.

### **Bullying is the same thing as conflict...**

Wrong. Bullying is aggressive behaviour that involves an imbalance of power or strength. Often, bullying is repeated over time. Conflict involves antagonism among two or more people. Whereas any two people can have a conflict (or a disagreement or a fight), bullying only occurs where there is a power imbalance - where one child has a hard time defending himself or herself.

### **Most bullying is physical...**

Physical bullying may be what first comes to mind when adults think about bullying. However, the most common form of bullying - both for boys and girls - is verbal bullying (e.g. name-calling, rumour spreading). It is also common for young people to bully each other through social isolation (e.g. ignoring or leaving a child out on purpose).

**It is important for children and young people to understand the difference between conflict and bullying and to learn how to resolve conflict**

### **Bullying isn't serious. It's just a matter of 'kids being kids'...**

Bullying can be extremely serious. Bullying can affect the physical, emotional, academic and social well being of those who are bullied. Children who are bullied are more likely than other children to have lower self-esteem; and higher rates of depression, loneliness, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts. They also are more likely to want to avoid attending school and have higher school absenteeism rates. Recent research on the health related effects of bullying indicates that sufferers of frequent bullying are more likely to experience headaches, sleeping problems, and stomach ailments. Some emotional scars can be long-lasting.

### **Bullying doesn't happen at my child's school...**

Bullying is more common at some schools than others, however it can happen anywhere. Research by BulliesOut in 2007 showed that 66% of young people admitted to being bullied with 85% of the bullying taking place at school. The best way to find out about bullying at your child's school is to ask the pupils themselves.

### **Tell him or her to hit the bully back - harder...**

Bullies tend to be bigger than those they pick on. Telling your child to 'hit back' may result in them getting seriously hurt. Hitting back also sends out the message that violence and aggression are acceptable.

### **They will just have to learn to stand up for themselves...**

By the time most children admit they are being bullied, they are at the end of their tether. If they could have dealt with the bullying, they would have. Asking for help and support is not a sign of weakness but a recognition that they cannot deal with the situation alone.

### **Bullying is 'character building'...**

Bullying is not character building. It is physical and emotional abuse. Bullying can damage a person's self esteem making them distrustful.

### **Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me...**

Bruises left by kicks and punches fade and heal but the emotional scars left by name calling can last forever. Adults of all ages often tell us they can still remember the bullying jeers of their childhoods.

### **That's not bullying, it's teasing...**

There is a fine line between teasing and bullying. Once a person is hurt by the teasing, it is no longer a bit of fun and should be stopped.



## Why do some children bully?

Bullies don't just appear from out of the blue. Research has shown that although some bullies tend to have difficulty making friends, they do gain a certain level of popularity and peer status for their actions. They may see bullying as a way of being popular, or making themselves look tough and in charge.

Some bullies do it to get attention or things, or to make other people afraid of them. Others might be jealous of the person they are bullying. They may even be being bullied themselves. Some bullies may not even understand how wrong their behaviour is and how it makes the bullied feel.

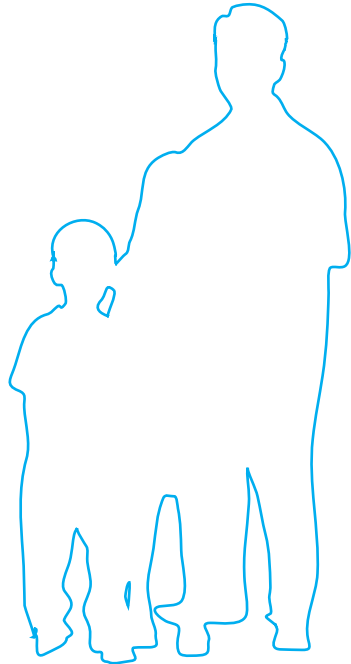
Many bullies have had a bad experience themselves or they feel unhappy and/or insecure with their lives. Whilst this doesn't condone what they do, understanding what might be behind their behaviour can sometimes help the situation.

Bullying is like an addiction. Bullies become 'addicted' to the power and control they have over others.

**"He kept on and on and on. The punches weren't so bad. It was the comments that hurt more"**

Tom, 16

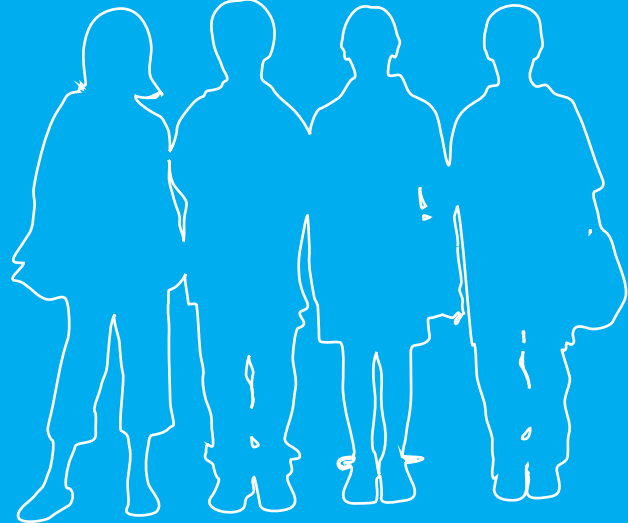
If you think bullying is 'ok' or part of growing up, then maybe the comments throughout this booklet will make you realise it isn't. The comments are from young people who have spoken to our Online Mentors. Their names have been changed to protect their identities.



## Ways to Avoid Bullying

- Encourage your child to talk to you as much as possible - about the positive and negative things. Be willing to hear what has gone on in their day.
- Children become more confident when they have opportunities to develop emotionally and socially. Encourage your children to become involved in after school activities, sports, etc
- Drama is a great way for kids to develop confidence
- Create a balanced view of the world. Whatever children focus on will create their perception of the world. News, adult TV programmes and films, violent video games, an adult-focus on negativity and an unsafe world creates fear
- A good support network in school and at home is crucial

**"I can't take anymore. I just want it to stop"**  
Lucy, 14



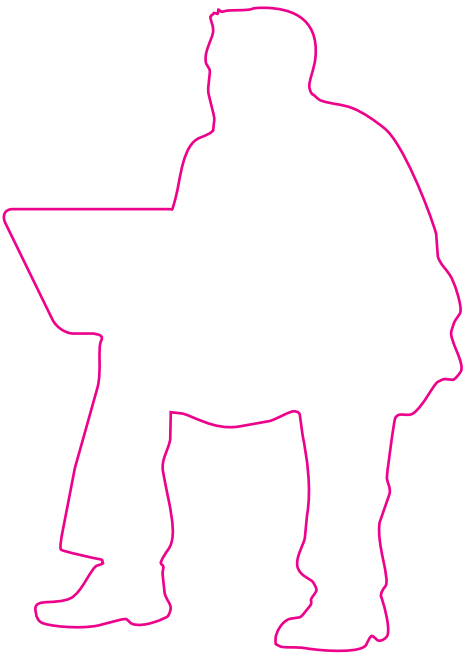


# Cyber Bullying

Cyber bullying is the term used for bullying through the use of technologies such as:

- Text message bullying
- Picture/video clip bullying (via mobile phone cameras)
- Phone call bullying
- Chat room bullying
- Bullying through instant messaging - IM (MSN)
- Bullying via websites (gaming, social networking)
- Emails
- Hateful messages sent anonymously or signed: 'I hate you, everyone hates you'
- Bashing Websites: 'vote if you think X is fat and ugly'
- Death threats sent anonymously to a child
- Stealing or guessing a child's password
- Hacking into their computer
- Pretending to be someone they know and tricking them into saying things

For further information on online safety visit:  
[www.ceop.police.uk](http://www.ceop.police.uk)  
[www.eye-pat.org.uk](http://www.eye-pat.org.uk)



# Differences with Cyber Bullying

**24/7 contact**  
No escape at home.

**Impact**  
Massive potential audience reached rapidly. Material can be disseminated very quickly. Can potentially stay online forever.

**Perception of anonymity**  
Perceived anonymity can mean that a person will be more hurtful than in the 'real' world.

**Profile of target/bully**  
Can be changed, making it difficult to trace the person displaying the bullying behaviour. May set up a 'false profile' for their target.

## What we and/or our children should do:

If you receive a rude image or message about someone else, do not forward it. You could be assisting the bullying or breaking the law

Tell someone and keep the messages as evidence

Don't respond to abusive messages. This may only encourage the bully

Think before you send pictures by email or mobile phone. They can spread far beyond your circle of friends

Treat your password like your toothbrush. Don't let anyone else use it and change it regularly

Keep a record of messages or pictures. You may need them for the Police, ISP or mobile phone company to trace the bully

## Understanding our own feelings

Emotion manifests itself in various ways, through changes in facial expression, smiling, sneering, crying, blushing, and so on, but also in complex behaviours like shouting, running away, hugging or lashing out.

How we respond to our own feelings sends a clear message to our children about how they should respond to theirs.

- Feelings are not bad, it is how we deal with them that counts
- Showing your child that you can be upset or angry but can manage these difficult emotions gives a clear signal that it's ok to have negative emotions and they can be dealt with

**"I don't want to go to school anymore. They make my life hell. No-one listens. I want to end it all"**

Ray, 14



BulliesOut was established in May 2006 and provides help, support and information to individuals, schools, youth and community settings affected by bullying.

To enable us to do this, we have developed the following initiatives:

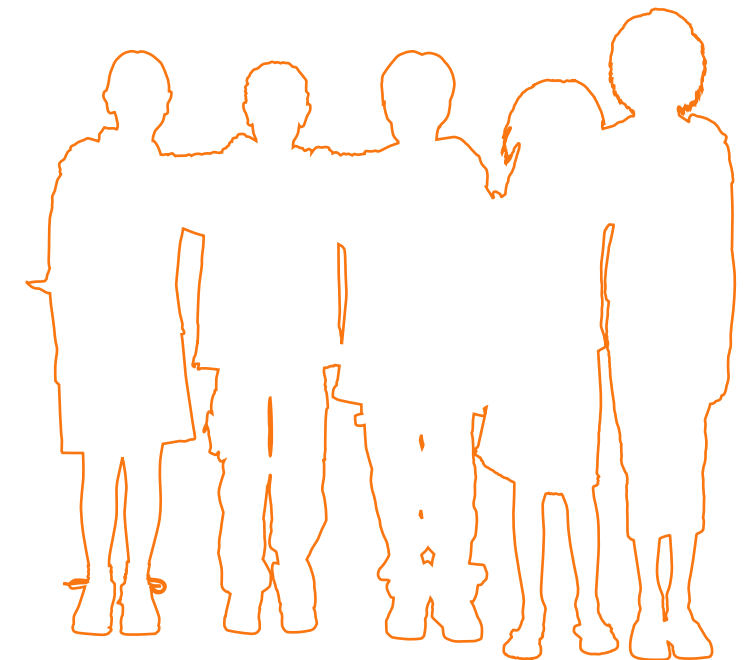
- Peer Mentor Training
- Interactive Awareness Workshop
- Hand of Courage Creative Workshop
- Parents Awareness Workshop
- Professionals Awareness Training
- Information Booklets/Flyers/Literature
- Online Mentors

If you and/or your child are concerned about bullying, come and chat to our online mentors.

Available daily our Mentors are there to speak with you in our safe, secure online forum. All chat is anonymous and all

Mentors are trained. If you prefer, you can post a message on one of our message boards or email our Mentors at:

**[mentors@bulliesout.com](mailto:mentors@bulliesout.com)**.



**In our world, there is NO BULLYING allowed!**



## HOW YOU CAN HELP US?

- Volunteer with us
- Fundraise for us
- Make a donation
- Corporate Sponsorship
- Shop Online (using our unique link)
- Donate old mobile phones

Further initiatives can be found under the fundraising section of our website [www.bulliesout.com](http://www.bulliesout.com)



**e:** [mail@bulliesout.com](mailto:mail@bulliesout.com) **w:** [www.bulliesout.com](http://www.bulliesout.com)

**t:** 029 2056 8947 (please note, this is not a helpline)

**a:** Unit 16, Sbectrwm, Bwlch Road, Fairwater, Cardiff, CF5 3EF

supported by:



The High Sheriffs' Association of England & Wales



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