



Renfrewshire Council Children's Services

Anti-Bullying Policy

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1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 This policy sets out the approach to be taken in all Renfrewshire Council education establishments in relation to bullying behaviour and supporting the development of respectful relationships. It applies to all early years' centres, schools and community learning and development provided by Renfrewshire Council. It is the expectation of Renfrewshire Council that private and voluntary sector providers working with us in partnership will uphold the spirit of the policy. This will be communicated as part of any procurement or partnership process.
- 1.2 This policy has been developed to take account of the national guidance on anti-bullying, 'Respect for All – The national approach to anti-bullying for Scotland's children and young people' and builds on the previous policy on anti-bullying which was developed in 2015.
- 1.3 Children have the right to be safe. Bullying impacts on this right and can affect their right to an education.
- 1.4 Our aim is to create environments where bullying cannot thrive. In line with the guidance set out in 'Respect for All', and in order to ensure local ownership of anti-bullying, each establishment is required to develop its own local anti-bullying policy that reflects the Renfrewshire Council Policy as well as the consultation they have carried out with pupils, parents and staff.
- 1.5 Within six months of the launch of Renfrewshire Council's Anti-Bullying Policy, each establishment should have a copy of both Renfrewshire Council's Anti-Bullying Policy and their own local policy available for all staff, parents and carers, and pupils. Copies of these local policies should be provided to the Assistant Director (Education).
- 1.6 Establishment policies should reference the work done to consult with parents, and carers as well as pupils and staff locally. They must reference the local authority policy and lay out what that establishment does to create environments where bullying cannot thrive, including any activities that are specific to that establishment and the pupils who attend.
- 1.7 Establishment policies need not be as detailed as the local authority one, but must be linked to on school websites and within their policy document. A supporting resource from respectme can be found here - <http://respectme.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Policy-thought-to-Practice-2017.pdf>

- 1.8 In the development of this policy, schools obtained feedback from pupils on their experiences and views on bullying in both May and June 2018 and as part of the All Children Study of Wellbeing, undertaken at the end of 2016 across Renfrewshire. The views of parent council chairs, as representatives of their school's parent body, were sought, and a focus group of senior school staff was also held to ensure that the establishment perspective is represented in this policy.
- 1.9 Pupils told us they want to feel safe and have their concerns taken seriously and parents told us they wanted to be included in discussions about bullying. A respect and acknowledgment of this is woven throughout this policy.
- 1.10 Children's services have a well-established and positive partnership with respectme, Scotland's Anti-Bullying Service, dating back to 2009, and that organisation supported the council with the development of the 2015 policy and provided feedback on this revised policy.

2. Principles

- 2.1 Renfrewshire Council believes that a safe, nurturing and respectful learning environment is fundamental in supporting every child to thrive and achieve. The Council recognises the impact that bullying behaviour can have on wellbeing and is committed to preventing, reducing and responding to bullying behaviour in all forms in our establishments.
- 2.2 Renfrewshire Council will promote a culture of positive behaviour and respectful relationships in its establishments.
- 2.3 Children and young people should be encouraged to report incidences of bullying behaviour or suspected bullying behaviour. Every learning establishment must offer a range of friendly, safe and confidential ways for children and young people to raise concerns about themselves or others. This reflects the views and experiences expressed by pupils in the development of this policy.
- 2.4 Renfrewshire Council recognises that bullying behaviour is not limited to the school environment and responding to it effectively needs strong partnership working – between the establishment, pupils, parents and communities.

3. Legislative and Policy framework

- 3.1 The legislative and policy framework in which this policy has been developed includes:
- Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC, updated 2012);
 - Curriculum for Excellence, in particular, the Health and Wellbeing Framework, (Scottish Government, 2004);
 - The Equality Act, 2010;

- The Children and Young People Act, 2014;
- Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act, 2004 and 2009;
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), 1989;
- The Human Rights Act, 1998;
- The Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. (Scotland) Act, 2000;
- Corporate Parenting Policy (Renfrewshire Council 2009);
- Guidance on Developing Policies to Promote the Safe and Responsible Use of Mobile Technology in Schools (Scottish Government, 2013);
- The National Improvement Framework for Education; and
- 'Respect for all – the national approach to anti-bullying behaviour for Scotland's children and young people' (source/date)

4. Definitions

- 4.1 Renfrewshire Council has adopted the definition of bullying used in 'Respect for All':

Bullying is both behaviour and impact: the impact is on a person's capacity to feel in control of themselves. This is what we term as their sense of 'agency'. Bullying takes place in the context of relationships; it is behaviour that can make people feel hurt, threatened, frightened and left out. This behaviour happens face to face and online.

- 4.2 This behaviour can harm people physically or emotionally and, although the actual behaviour may not be repeated, the threat may be sustained over time, typically by actions, looks, messages, confrontations, physical interventions, or the fear of these. This behaviour can include:

- Being called names, teased, put down or threatened face to face/online
- Being hit, tripped, pushed or kicked
- Having belongings taken or damaged
- Being ignored, left out or having rumours spread about you (face-to-face and/or online)
- Sending abusive messages, pictures or images on social media, online gaming platforms or phone
- Behaviour which makes people feel like they are not in control of themselves or their lives (face-to-face and/or online)
- Being targeted because of who you are or who you are perceived to be (face to face and/or online).

- 4.3 Bullying can happen face to face and online. Renfrewshire Council will address online bullying effectively when we address it as part of our whole anti-bullying approach, not as a separate kind of bullying. This is about where bullying happens, not what happens.

- 4.4 Bullying behaviour may be a result of prejudice that relates to perceived or actual differences. Prejudice-based bullying is when bullying behaviour is motivated by prejudice based on an individual's actual or perceived identity; it can be based on characteristics unique to a child or young person's identity or circumstance. These differences include, but are not limited to, the protected characteristics covered by the Equalities Act 2010:
- Age;
 - Disability;
 - Gender reassignment;
 - Pregnancy and maternity;
 - Race;
 - Religion and belief;
 - Gender; and
 - Sexual orientation;
 - Marriage and Civil Partnership
- 4.5 In line with the Equalities and Human Rights Commission's technical guidance for schools in Scotland, 'Age, and Marriage and Civil Partnership are not protected characteristics for the schools provisions. We recognise, however, that children may still experience prejudice related to these characteristics.
- 4.6 Prejudice-based bullying behaviour is not restricted to these categories. It may also result from perceptions about a child or young person for other reasons, such as their socio-economic background, being looked-after, being a young carer, being an asylum seeker or refugee, body image or other family circumstances. Appendix A provides a more detailed summary of prejudice-based bullying.
- 4.7 In line with 'Respect for All', Renfrewshire council acknowledges that not all disagreements between children and young people are necessarily bullying in nature and establishments should consider the definition set out in this policy when investigating and resolving allegations of bullying behaviour. There is no legal definition of bullying in Scotland and, as such, bullying is not a crime. Some behaviour which may be treated as bullying may actually be criminal in nature bullying. Threatening someone to do something sexual is not bullying - it is sexually aggressive behaviour and a form of gender-based violence. Bullying can be motivated by prejudice as can crime. A hate crime is when a crime has taken place, such as assault, graffiti or a breach of the peace that has been motivated by prejudice.

- 4.8 Renfrewshire Council recognises that all children and young people have the right to be safe and bullying is breach of their Rights. Children and young people have the right to have their views taken into account and to enjoy all of the protection and expectations outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).
- 4.9 Pupils stated that they value clarity on what is bullying and what is not. Pupils who took part on the consultation agreed with the definition and this should be in all local policies.

5. Renfrewshire Council's approach to bullying behaviour

- 5.1 Renfrewshire Council expects all educational establishments to create environments where bullying cannot thrive. Renfrewshire Council aims to foster a culture and ethos of respect and responsibility, in an environment where all adults, children and young people are able to play an active part in preventing and responding to bullying behaviour.
- 5.2 Environments where bullying cannot thrive are ones where pupils and the community play a part in school life. Children's rights are promoted and respected. Diversity is celebrated and there is a shared understanding of what behaviour is acceptable and what is not. Pupils expressed a clear desire to be listened to and to be involved in how schools respond to and prevent bullying. This is a core part of creating environments where bullying cannot thrive.
- 5.3 Leadership is a vital component of success. How an establishment responds to bullying is reflective of the culture and ethos in the school. This is set by those who lead through role modelling and setting an example in their establishment.
- 5.4 'Respect for All' provides guidance for local authorities, schools, third sector organisations, parents, and children and young people both in terms of what they should expect from others but also what is expected of them. It can be found here - <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/11/6766>
- 5.5 Schools and organisations can also access 'Policy into Practice', a helpful workbook to guide them through the process of revising their policy at www.respectme.org.uk
- 5.6 Anti-bullying training is provided to our staff in partnership with *respectme*. It is available throughout the year and can be accessed through the service's Continuous Professional Development (CPD) catalogue. *respectme* also offers training and resources to parents and carers.

6. Roles and responsibilities

- 6.1 The senior manager in each education establishment (head teacher, head of centre or equivalent) has overall responsibility for preventing and responding to bullying behaviour and promoting respectful relationships within their establishment. They can do this by:
- promoting and role-modelling an environment where bullying cannot thrive. To develop a culture of positive behaviour and respectful relationships within their establishment;
 - ensuring that their establishment has its own anti-bullying policy in line with the timescales set out in this Policy, reviewed every 3 years, which reflects the Council's policy and the requirements set out in national guidance;
 - ensuring all staff within their establishment have a clear understanding of the policy on anti-bullying and their roles and responsibilities in relation to this;
 - identifying a lead for anti-bullying within their establishment;
 - ensuring that all children and young people within their establishment know how to report any concerns about bullying behaviour;
 - ensuring that staff adhere to all procedures for reporting, recording and responding to incidents of bullying behaviour;
 - monitoring information on incidents of bullying behaviour and taking appropriate action where required; and
 - ensuring staff are able to take up appropriate professional learning opportunities in relation to anti-bullying.
- 6.2 All staff must be aware of, and adhere to, the school and Council's policy and procedures in relation to bullying. All staff in each establishment are responsible for:
- contributing to a culture of positive behaviour and respectful relationships;
 - being aware of, and adhering to, the Council's and the establishment's anti-bullying policy;
 - ensuring that children and young people know how to recognise and report an incident of bullying behaviour and are comfortable with the means of doing so;
 - being aware of their responsibility to prevent and respond to prejudice-based bullying behaviour;
 - ensuring that they are aware of, and are adhering to, the procedures for monitoring and recording alleged incidents of bullying behaviour;
 - actively contribute to the development, delivery, and review of anti-bullying behaviour strategies within the learning environment; and
 - acting as a positive role model in establishing respectful relationships.

- 6.3 Establishments should ensure their anti-bullying policy also sets out expectations of behaviour for pupils and parents in reporting and resolving matters relating to bullying behaviour.

7. Support for Children and Young People

- 7.1 Support for children and young people affected by bullying behaviour is essential, both immediately following the incident, and, during an agreed period of review. This includes support for those children and young people who have exhibited bullying behaviour. Peer support, staff support, parental support and partner agency support can all play a vital role in ensuring there is little or no long-term effect on someone who has been subjected to bullying behaviour.

During the pupil consultation, most pupils stated that they value the relationships they have with adults and the care and support they offer, most feel safe at school and enjoy opportunities to be involved. Staff should continue to use their skills at building safe and meaningful relationships with pupils.

- 7.2 When responding to bullying or suspected bullying, staff should ask themselves the following questions:

- What was the behaviour?
- What impact did it have?
- What does this child want me to do?
- What do I need to do about it?
- Is there any evidence of prejudice behaviour or attitudes?

- 7.2 Remembering that bullying is both behaviour and impact, Renfrewshire Council staff are expected to address both behaviour and impact. Sometimes Renfrewshire Council staff may need to deal with behaviour such as prejudice-based language and threats that may appear to have little or no impact. The use of prejudice or derogatory language is never acceptable in Renfrewshire Council's establishments regardless of intent or impact and should always be challenged.

- 7.3 Approaches which schools may adopt to prevent and reduce incidences of bullying behaviour and promote respectful relationships include:

- making links between discussion and policies on children's rights, diversity, equality and positive behaviour and bullying to help ensure a whole school approach to relationships and behaviour.
- themed assemblies and guest speakers;
- curricular activity;
- playground initiatives;

- pupil-led programmes and activities;
- mentoring and/or buddy systems;
- health and wellbeing activities;
- regular discussions with pupil and parent councils;
- wider engagement with parents about particular issues (e.g. online behaviour);
- mediation; and
- actively promoting positive respectful relationships through establishment values rather than focusing on bullying behaviour.

Pupils stated that they value the opportunity to be involved in and lead on initiatives in schools and establishments. This can include senior pupils talking to younger pupils and delivering scenario-based training to staff where appropriate.

- 7.4 As bullying behaviour also occurs outside of the school day and often through social media, there should be greater emphasis on the need for pupils, parents, and communities to be aware of the signs of bullying behaviour. The head teacher/head of establishment should seek to raise awareness of the school's policy through its pupil and parent councils. Bullying that takes place outside of school that has an impact on a child or young person must still be taken seriously. When schools are made aware of such incidents, staff will work in partnership with their communities to address these issues.
- 7.5 Labelling children and young people as 'bullies' or 'victims' can be disempowering and unhelpful in changing their behaviour or supporting their recovery from being bullied. Labelling an action as bullying is a more effective way of motivating a child to change their bullying behaviour. Adults dealing with bullying behaviours are expected to be able to distinguish between a person and their behaviour.
- 7.6 Any bullying behaviour must be challenged; however, all people (including those who are bullying) should always be treated with respect. Not labelling children does not diminish the seriousness nor impact of bullying behaviour; rather, it is an essential way of maintaining the adult's focus and response on the problematic behaviour.
- 7.7 This is a solution-oriented approach that is designed to help people change the way they behave without being stigmatised. Rather than labelling them, staff and volunteers can help children and young people change by telling them that the behaviour is bullying and that what they did is not acceptable.
- 7.8 Renfrewshire Council is committed to ensuring children and young people have a voice in the development of anti-bullying policy and practice in their local authority and in their school. Schools should reflect this in their local policies.

- 7.9 Pupils told us that they think it is important to tell pupils in all schools and establishments that it is okay not to be friends with everyone, but you do not have to be mean to people that you are not friends with. Adults should consider how to discuss this locally and use it as a principle to underpin discussions on relationships.
- 7.10 A majority of pupils told us they would like better supervision in the playground. All school should consider their approach to levels of supervision and how they respond to behaviour and concerns in the playground. Initiatives that involve children in the playground are valued. Some expressed that adults telling them to 'ignore bullying' was not helpful advice.
- 7.11 Pupils also shared that they sometimes feel that concern or worry from adults feels the same as anger or disappointment. Adults should be mindful of this and seek to clearly express how they feel with children and young people directly. If they are concerned or worried, to be explicit about this.

8. Working with Parents and Carers as partners

- 8.1 It is vital that when devising a local policy all establishments involve parents in the development of any policy. All establishments must ensure they have processes in place to engage with parents and carers and foster an approach that promotes partnership and shared responsibility. The development of school policy on bullying should include consultation with parents/carers.
- 8.2 Establishments should ensure that copies of both the local and the authority-wide bullying policy are easily accessible to pupils, parents and carers, and staff. Both policies should be available on the establishment's website and hard copies available on request. Consultation has indicated that school websites and social media are valued as a means of communication with parents and schools should reflect that.
- 8.2 Staff should use their professional judgement to determine at which stage parents/carers should be involved when there are bullying concerns. Renfrewshire Council expects its staff to consider the wishes of a young person in relation to sharing concerns about bullying with parents. Staff should act in the spirit of GIRFEC and consider the best interest of a child. If a child or young person indicates that telling a parent could cause harm or distress, this needs to be considered. Their right to privacy is not an absolute right, and where there is a child protection concern, local procedures must be followed. Local policies should reflect a partnership between schools and parents/carers in tackling bullying.

9. Reporting, recording, and responding to concerns

- 9.1 Educational establishments will provide a number of ways in which alleged incidents of bullying behaviour can be reported by children and young people.

Each establishment will ensure children, young people and parents are aware of how concerns can be raised.

- 9.2 Establishments should consider ways to promote discreet or anonymous reporting mechanisms for pupils.
- 9.3 Parents and carers should be informed of how they can raise concerns formally and informally. Reports of alleged bullying made by parents/carers/others will be treated as bullying incidents and schools will aim to complete an investigation and implement any remedial action within 3 working days and communicate the outcome to affected children, young people and their parents. Investigations into alleged incidents of bullying behaviour should begin, in the establishment, on the day the incident is reported. If the incident occurs at the end of the school day or outwith school hours, the investigation should commence at the start of the following school day. If a parent/carer is not satisfied with the way in which the establishment has handled an incident of alleged bullying, they should be referred to Renfrewshire Council's complaints procedure.
- 9.4 Each incident of bullying which takes place in a school will be recorded in the Bullying & Equalities module within SEEMIS Click & Go, which is the main information system used to hold pupil information in Scottish schools. The Scottish Government Guidance on 'Recording and Monitoring of Bullying Incidents in Schools' can be accessed here - <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/supplementary-guidance-recording-monitoring-bullying-incidents-schools/>
- 9.5 When recording bullying incidents, the following information must be included:
- The children and young people involved as well as other adults
 - The type of bullying experienced – name calling, threats or rumours etc.
 - Any underlying prejudice including details of any protected characteristics
 - The impact of the bullying incident, including consideration of personal or additional support needs and wellbeing concerns and
 - Actions taken including resolution at an individual or organisational level.
- 9.6 This section of the policy is concerned with the processes to be followed in relation to bullying, typically after adults have responded to what happened and the impact it had. Renfrewshire Council's practice and approach to bullying is detailed in the earlier sections of this policy and this should be reflected in any subsequent recording. All Renfrewshire Council staff are directed to the content of Sections 5, 6, 7 and 8 of this policy on how to approach and respond to concerns about bullying.
- 9.7 Renfrewshire Council staff should use their professional judgement when deciding when to record on the SEEMIS module. In line with the national guidance and this policy, not all disagreements between children and young people are necessarily bullying and staff should consider the behaviour and

the impact before deciding if it is bullying and should be recorded. The purpose of recording is for schools to learn about what kind of bullying is happening in their school and to identify if there are trends or issues that require addressing, based on what the recording tells them. It should be seen as an improvement tool.

- 9.8 All data recording, monitoring and reporting will be undertaken in line with current data protection legislation.
- 9.9 Recording and monitoring the number and nature of incidents of bullying behaviour ensures that appropriate responses can be made and supports the identification of trends and opportunities for early intervention.
- 9.10 Information on incidents of bullying behaviour is used for management information purposes and will be monitored by senior managers within each establishment. It may also be discussed as part of the Council's quality improvement framework for establishments.
- 9.11 The monitoring of incidents of bullying behaviour will include monitoring of incidents relating to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.
- 9.12 Incidents that happen away from school can still impact on the health and wellbeing of children and young people and they will require help and support at these times. Schools may also choose to record incidents (in line with this guidance) that they have been made aware of that are affecting a pupil or pupils.

10. Policy review and development

- 10.1 This policy was developed in line with the revised guidance published by the Scottish Government in November 2017.
- 10.2 This policy will be reviewed no more than 3 years after its implementation date and thereafter at intervals of no more than 3 years. This is in line with national guidance.
- 10.3 The Chief Education Officer is responsible for ensuring that the policy is reviewed every three years or when there has been a significant change to national policy.
- 10.4 Renfrewshire Council will consult with relevant stakeholders as part of the regular policy review.

Appendix A: Prejudice-based bullying

This section outlines the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010 as well as other characteristics which may lead to bullying that are not covered by the Equality Act 2010.

Additional Support Needs: These can arise for any reason and be of short or long-term duration. Additional support may be required to overcome needs arising from learning environment; health or disability; family circumstances or social and emotional factors, and therefore may relate to a protected characteristic. A child or young person may be bullied because they have an additional support need and crucially being bullied can also lead to an additional support need.

Age: Age is a protected characteristic although prejudice and discrimination based on age is not applicable in school settings, it can affect children and young people in a variety of other settings - for example, in workplaces, further and higher education and in wider society.

Asylum Seekers and Refugees: Children and young people who are asylum seekers or refugees may be at greater risk of bullying directly and indirectly. Some bullying behaviour against these groups may be of a racist nature which, given that race is a protected characteristic, can contravene equality legislation and have hate crime implications. Stigma, due to lack of knowledge and, given that race is a protected characteristic, understanding of asylum seekers and refugees, and reluctance to burden parents with extra worries can allow bullying to go undetected and continue.

Body Image and Physical Appearance: This can be hugely important to children and young people with bullying because of body image having the potential to negatively impact on their wellbeing. In some cases, body image and physical appearance may relate to a protected characteristic, such as race or disability.

Disability: Disability is a protected characteristic. People who bully others may see disabled children and young people as being less able to defend themselves and less able to tell an adult about the bullying. The language and behaviour used may be a result of a lack of understanding about the nature of a person's disability. Increased knowledge and understanding about disability and the impact it can have can help reduce bullying.

Gender Identity and Transphobic Bullying: The term 'transgender' is an umbrella term for those whose gender identity or expression differs in some way from the sex that was assigned to them at birth. Gender identity reflects an individual's internal sense of self as being male, female, neither or aspects of both. Gender reassignment is a protected characteristic. Transgender people face significant societal prejudice largely because they are perceived as not conforming to gender stereotypes, expectations and norms. As a result, transgender children and young people can be particularly vulnerable to bullying. This can manifest in many ways including transphobic name calling or deliberately misgendering them. An individual may also experience transphobic bullying if someone is perceived to be transgender or someone they are associate with, is transgender, i.e a parent, relative or other significant figure.

The term 'gender reassignment' is a protected characteristic within the Equality Act 2010 and refers to those who propose to go through, are going through, or have gone through a process of gender re-assignment.

Gypsy/Travellers: Children and young people who are Gypsy/Travellers may be at greater risk of bullying directly and indirectly. Some bullying behaviour against these groups may be of a racist nature which, given that race is a protected characteristic, can contravene equality legislation and have hate crime implications. Perceived risks about bullying and given that race is a protected characteristic parents' own experiences of discriminatory behaviour may lead to low levels of enrolment and poor attendance for Gypsy/Traveller children and young people as well as early exit from formal education. Other traveller families, such as Roma, may have similar concerns.

Sexual Orientation, Homophobic, Biphobic and Transphobic Bullying: Sexual orientation is a protected characteristic within the Equality Act 2010. Bullying based on sexual orientation is largely motivated by prejudice towards lesbian, gay or bisexual people. Homophobic bullying is when a young person's actual or perceived sexual orientation is used to exclude, threaten, hurt, or humiliate them. Any young person can be homophobically bullied, whether they are LGBT or not. Sometimes young people can be homophobically bullied because others think that they are LGBT, because they have LGBT family or friends or often because they are seen as different or not conforming to traditional gender stereotypes. Transgender children and young people can therefore also experience homophobic bullying. Homophobic language and jokes around the school can create a climate of homophobia; for example, the use of the word 'gay' to mean sub-standard or uncool. This type of language should therefore be addressed.

Intersectionality: Understanding the different and unequal social and economic outcomes for particular groups, based on intersections between race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and age. In the context of anti-bullying, it is important to understand the connection between the experience of belonging to one or more of these groups and a resultant inequality in attainment and wellbeing.

Looked After Children and Young People: Looked after children and young people can be particularly vulnerable to bullying. Children can face bullying behaviour simply because they are looked after and seen in some way as 'different'. Children who are looked after away from home can also experience bullying behaviour in their residential care home, at school and in their community. Looked after children and young people may not always have a stable support network to turn to when experiencing bullying. For some children, forming positive relationships with peers and adults can be more difficult due to their early childhood adversity. Developing trusting and supportive relationships between children and practitioners is required to address bullying of all forms and in all settings.

Marriage/Civil Partnership: Marriage and civil partnership is a protected characteristic. Whilst it is unlikely that a school-aged pupil will be in a same sex marriage or civil partnership and directly experience prejudice and discrimination as a result, there could be instances of indirect discrimination, for example, if the child or young person is associated with someone (parent, sibling, etc.) who is in a same sex marriage or civil partnership or in a same sex relationship. Marriage and civil partnership discrimination and prejudice can also affect children and young people in a variety of other settings, for example, in workplaces, further and higher education and in wider society.

Racism and Race: Race is a protected characteristic. Children and young people from minority ethnic groups often experience bullying based on perceived differences in dress, communication, appearance, beliefs and/or culture as well as their skin colour and accent. The status of the ethnic group a child belongs to (or people assume they belong to) in a school, community or organisation can often lead to a child or young person experiencing bullying behaviour. This can arise from a misguided and/or learned belief that they are less valued and 'deserve' to be treated differently, or with less respect.

Religion or Belief: Religion or belief is a protected characteristic. Lack of knowledge and understanding about the traditions, beliefs and etiquette of different faiths can lead to religious intolerance. Lack of awareness about the differences in practices of religions such as prayer times, dietary requirements, fasting and the wearing of religious clothing or articles of faith can result in misunderstandings and stereotyping, which may lead to bullying. People who have a religion or belief as well as those who do not, are protected under the Equality Act 2010.

Sectarianism: Most people understandably associate sectarianism with religion, which is a protected characteristic. The reality of prejudice, however, means that your family background, the football team you support, the community you live in, the school you attend and even the colour of your clothing can mark you out for sectarian abuse – whatever your beliefs may be. In Scotland, sectarianism is most often related to Protestant and Roman Catholic divisions within Christianity but can also relate to other religions, for example Sunni and Shia Muslims within Islam, and Orthodox and Reform Jews within Judaism.

Sexism and Gender: Sex, sexual orientation and gender reassignment are all protected characteristics. Bullying in the form of derogatory language and the spreading of malicious rumours can be used to regulate both girls' and boys' behaviour – suggesting that they are not being a real man or a real woman. These terms can be of an explicit sexual nature and it is worth noting that many can involve using terms for people who are gay and lesbian as a negative towards a person's masculinity or femininity. Sexism and gender stereotypes feed into homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. Gender stereotyping, based on the notion of acceptable and unacceptable male and female behaviour, can leave children and young people who are perceived not to conform to these notions vulnerable to indirect and direct bullying. Personality traits that do not fit into the unwritten rules of 'appropriate' male and female behaviour can lead to bullying because of the prejudice towards their perceived difference.

Socio-economic Prejudice: Bullying due to socio-economic status can take place in any community. Small differences in perceived family income/family living arrangements/ social circumstances or values can be used as a basis for bullying behaviours. These behaviours, such as mocking speech patterns, accents, belongings, clothing, etc can become widespread through those considering themselves to be in the dominant socioeconomic group. Bullying of children who endure parental substance misuse can also be prevalent.

Young Carers: The lives of young carers can be significantly affected by their responsibility to care for a family member who has a physical illness or disability, mental health problem, sensory or learning disability or issues with the misuse of drugs or alcohol. Young carers are at risk of bullying for a variety of reasons. Depending on responsibilities at home, they may find themselves being unable to fully participate in school or after-school activities or 'fun stuff'. This can make it difficult for them to form relationships; it can hinder successful transitions or lead to educational difficulties.