



GOOD

to know



*advice for parents and carers
of teenagers on bullying*



safer
scotland
SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

good good to know

This leaflet is for parents of teenagers. There is a further leaflet for parents of primary school children.

The leaflets provide information for parents to help them consider how to help and support their children to be confident and happy in their relationships with others.

As parents of teenagers you are doing one of the most challenging jobs around – logistics expert, domestic engineer, teacher, counsellor, mediator...all feature in your remit. At times relied on by your son or daughter, at times ignored, it's hard to balance interest, concern, support and respect for his or her independence.



to know

Relationships with friends and others are part of everyday life for young people. Things can go well when teenagers have the skills to cope with ups and downs. But bullying is a real concern for many parents – how to ensure teenagers cope with bullying and how to respond if they are bullying others.



Good to Know –

Positive support and fair expectations



Not going well?

Some suggestions



Schools and bullying



Useful information

GOOD TO KNOW

Life should not be a popularity contest, but to teenagers it may feel that way at times. Fitting in with friends, fashion, and society's stereotyped expectations of teenagers can be real concerns for young people. Parents can encourage young people to become confident and independent by recognising these needs while setting realistic limits on acceptable behaviour.

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It is normal to want to fit in with peers – this is part of healthy social development. But being a slave to other people's ideas of fashion or style can be a sign of peer pressure or low self-esteem.

Try to encourage your teenager to feel proud of who they are. Tell them they are great every now and then.

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It is also normal for young people to dress to identify with groups or to represent their taste in music. Don't expect your teenager's sense of taste to be an exact match with your own.

Set limits by asking other parents what is realistic, it might not be true that 'everyone' has the latest expensive gear. Most young people adapt their school uniform to create some form of individual identity, but uniforms can also help parents to set limits and keep extra spending under control. If the school feels the dress code has been stretched too far, then encourage your teenager to rein in their experimentation, at least while in school.

Strong friendship groups can be a great source of support and fun – except for the ones who feel left out. All parents want their teenagers to avoid the 'bad crowd', but it is tricky to try and influence who your teenager wants to be friendly with.

Help your teenager to find space for friendships and to meet in a safe place. Show an interest in friends without being too intrusive – their friends may appreciate being shown some respect by an adult, just as you would hope other adults would treat your teenager.

It's not so good if you hear your teenager dismissing, laughing at or excluding others (even when the other people are not there).

Expect that your teenager will show as much respect to others as you do (teenagers still look up to and learn from their parents, in spite of how much they pretend to ignore you). Make it clear that any disrespect shown to others is out of order.

Some young people prefer 1:1 friendships. Close friendships can be good, but if they don't last, it can be sore.

Try to encourage your teenager to keep up a range of contacts rather than exclusive friends.

Young people change, grow and learn at different paces. Teenagers may grow out of their friends, or be left behind themselves.

Encourage your teenager to accept change as a normal part of life. Change is not always comfortable at the time, but can be positive. Point out the qualities people learn when things are tough – strength and resilience. But if it feels really too tough or painful, talk about what you can do to help, perhaps being the friend your son or daughter needs until their own friendships are sorted out.



using 'in' expressions and words is one way of fitting in and helps young people in groups identify with each other. But terms used to put others down can be seen as discrimination or prejudice. Be careful though, check what your teenager understands by their language before you accuse them of discrimination – it may not mean what you think it does!

Discrimination and prejudice has to be a big clear no-go message from you to your teenager. But it is about more than words. Young people need a clear sense that everyone has equal value and they need to learn this from you as well as from their school.

You can do your teenager a favour by setting clear rules and boundaries. If they really need to say 'no' to their peers to avoid going along with things they don't want to do, then the phrase 'no, my mum and dad would ground me for a week' can come in handy for them!

You can support teenagers to learn some more useful skills in standing up for their own needs and wants, and their sense of what is right. Discuss with your teenager what styles of communication are aggressive, passive or assertive. Do they appreciate the difference?

Appreciating the difference

- LOOKING AT YOUR TEENAGER'S COMMUNICATION STYLE

Assertive young people feel it's ok to make mistakes, it's ok to not get things right all of the time, and that it's ok to believe they have skills, strengths and good qualities. They feel ok to say what they want and don't want without being rude or apologetic. Young people learn to be assertive by watching you and other adults as well as by learning from their friends.

aggressive -



'I'm going to come out on top of this even if I have to be mean – it's a tough world so toughen up!'

passive -



'I'm sure other people are right/are more important, I'll go along with whatever'.

assertive -



'I'm ok and you're ok. I have a right to be happy and be myself'.



the **FRESH** code

Parents can help teenagers to think about getting on with others by encouraging them to use the following code:



be fair to others and expect to be treated fairly



be polite, and show care for others



be friendly and let others join in



avoid hurting others and if you are hurt, tell someone



try to tell the truth

These simple messages work for people of all ages, at school, in the workplace and at home.

not going well?

There are many challenges to parenting a teenager, but two things stand out: what to do when you are concerned that your own teenager's behaviour might involve bullying others; and what to do when you are concerned that your teenager might be being bullied.

Bullying?

By the time your children are teenagers, much of their social contact is independent. You may not see too much of how your child behaves towards others. Their behaviour towards you, as every parent knows, can be much worse than the behaviour they present to the outside world! But if teachers or others report there has been a bullying incident involving your teenager, your help and support to your teenager will be important.



FAIR

Keep calm and show that you want to be fair, this will help your teenager avoid trying to blame others. It will help if your teenager focuses on solving the problem rather than trying to avoid punishment.





RESPECT

Taking responsibility for things we have done wrong takes courage. It may feel uncomfortable for your teenager to go into school, put things right and move forward, so show you respect them for doing this.



ENGAGE

Discuss calmly with your teenager what has happened. Discuss his or her feelings and ask how they imagine the other people involved are feeling. Bullying often happens because young people forget to consider how others may be hurt, embarrassed or upset by their actions or words.



SAFE

Your teenager must feel safe when discussing what has gone wrong. This means adults around them, including their parents and teachers, must make clear that attempts to solve the problem will be supported.



HONEST

Discuss with your teenager their own needs, hopes and worries. Is there anything going wrong for them that has made them act out and hurt others?

While supporting teenagers to put things right, parents should not condone poor behaviour. If the bullying has involved racist or homophobic language or words against a disabled person, then it is important to consider whether your teenager has a prejudice that needs to be challenged. Your teenager's future in the workplace, college or university may depend on their ability to treat all people with equal regard.

Bullied?

Bullying affects teenagers in different ways. Some teenagers may have low expectations of how they will be treated by others, and bullying confirms their low self-esteem. Other teenagers may laugh off bullying and by joining in with some self-mockery, to try to give the impression it does not affect them. Some teenagers try overly hard to fit in. Whatever their way of handling it, bullying can make teenagers feel absolutely miserable.



Bullying can happen to anyone – to shy and confident teenagers, large and small, for any reason. You may suspect your teenager is being singled out because of racism or other prejudice.

Many teenagers keep bullying to themselves – there is a strong culture in our society against being a ‘grass’ or a ‘clype’, or teenagers may feel that telling will make things worse. So parents should be aware of signs that may indicate their teenager is being bullied:

- Sustained low mood or anger
- Change in behaviour towards parents or brothers and sisters, or others close to them
- Obvious signs of physical hurt or damage to belongings
- Unwillingness to go to school, or truanting from school
- Other signs of stress, such as changes in eating or sleeping patterns, anxiety or nervousness
- Getting involving in bad or risky behaviour in order to ‘fit in’ with their peer group

You may feel there are two main goals in the situation: to make the bullying stop, and to help your teenager recover and feel strong against future bullying. It is tricky to balance respect for your teenager's independence and a strong desire to make it right for them. Try to consider how your actions will empower them, in the situation they are in.

Your support:

- Try to spend some time alone with your teenager without the distraction of brothers and sisters and domestic chores, perhaps doing something your teenager enjoys.
- Try to get them to talk about feelings in general, about their hopes and ambitions as well as their worries. Share your own. This may help set the scene for information about bullying to be shared.
- Try to respect your teenager's confidentiality. They should know that they can trust you, and that you won't act without their agreement. You may feel, after due care and consideration, that the situation is so serious, you have to breach their trust. If this is the case, be prepared to explain your actions to your teenager, and to deal with their feelings about this.
- Listen!



Your help to solve the problem:

- Help to sort out all the facts of the story – slowly and calmly.
- What does your teenager want to happen next? It is important that you listen and respect their views, once they have trusted you with information.
- You may consider strategies together about how to cope with the bullying, but fighting or revenge should not be among them.

Take action:

- Your teenager may not want you to take action. This can be a tough choice for parents, as you will want to avoid going behind their back. But, if you are concerned about their safety and wellbeing, discuss this with them, and give them the reasons why you will approach the school. It may be affecting other young people as well as your teenager.
- Share all the facts that you know honestly and allow the school time to find out more and respond.
- Take action which reassures your child, rather than embarrasses them. Keep calm, and show fairness and respect to all people involved.
- Focus on the outcome you want – that your teenager feels safe and respected, puts the difficulties behind them and enjoys school again. It is for the school to work out how the bullies should be dealt with.

schools, positive behaviour and anti-bullying

You or your teenager should be able to speak to any member of staff in the school, if your teenager feels he or she is being bullied, or if others are being bullied. This may be the guidance teacher or registration teacher, or any other member of school staff who your teenager feels comfortable with.

The school should then take the same steps as a good parent; be supportive, help to solve the problem and if necessary take action to stop bullying.

You can also expect the school to follow the FRESH CODE:

- The school must hear all sides of the story – other young people may have different views about what is going on. The school will try to be **fair**.
- The school should treat all of the pupils involved with **respect** and dignity.
- The school will try to **engage** the pupils and parents in solving the problem.
- The school has a responsibility to ensure all pupils are **safe** while at the school.
- The school should discuss openly and **honestly** any bullying or other problems with parents of the pupils involved.



Schools are expected to have a number of measures in place to promote positive behaviour:

A positive school ethos – The school should feel welcoming and caring.

Rules and rewards – Clear school rules which are recognised by everyone, including parents. Good behaviour by pupils is recognised with rewards such as certificates, and parents can help by showing appreciation.

Anti-bullying policy – All schools should have an anti-bullying policy which states how the school will prevent and respond to bullying.

Tackling discrimination – The school should help pupils to learn to treat others equally and to challenge prejudice.

Additional support – Sometimes pupils need extra help to learn or to cope with school life. Additional help should be discussed and planned with parents (for more information see back page).

Complaints – School handbooks should explain how parents can make a complaint if they feel the school has let them, or their teenagers, down.

Parents have a responsibility to help schools meet the needs of their children. If anything happens in your child's life that may affect learning, relationships or the general wellbeing of your teenager, such as an upset in the family, tell the school.

NEW APPROACHES TO POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR AND ANTI-BULLYING

These initiatives are being supported by the Scottish Executive to help education authorities and schools promote positive behaviour.

Problem-solving

Some schools are trying new approaches called restorative practices, which involve pupils in solving problems. Some schools have involved pupils as mentors or 'peer mediators', to help when there are disagreements or difficulties between classmates. Restorative practices have been trialed in parts of Highland, Fife and North Lanarkshire.

School ethos

Some headteachers are developing their whole school to be a 'solution-oriented school' or a 'motivated school'. These initiatives are involving pupils and staff in building a positive atmosphere in school and respectful relationships between everyone in the school. Solution-oriented schools were first developed in Morayshire and Motivated schools were developed in Glasgow.



Pupils supporting others

The Scottish Executive has recommended that schools should involve pupils as much as possible in developing positive schools. Many schools have buddying and mentoring schemes, where older pupils develop different ways to support younger pupils. Buddies may hold clubs during breaks and lunchtimes or offer friendship and support, mentors may support others in activities such as reading or homework.

There are other practices that are common in schools:

Pupil councils

Pupil councils often develop anti-bullying activities in their school.

Support bases

Support bases are sometimes used in school to enhance pupils' learning, or offer special programmes to help them develop communication or social skills.

Sources of advice and information for parents

ParentLine Scotland

A free confidential helpline for parents and anyone caring for a child in Scotland. You can call them about any problem – big or small.

0808 800 2222

www.children1st.org.uk/parentline

Children 1st, 83 Whitehouse Loan,
Edinburgh, EH9 1AT

YoungMinds Parents Information Service

A free, confidential telephone service providing information and advice for any adult with concerns about the mental health or emotional wellbeing of a child or young person.

0800 018 2138

Open: Monday & Friday 10.00 am – 1.00 pm
Tuesday & Thursday 1.00 pm – 4.00 pm
Wednesday 1.00 pm – 5.00 pm &
6.00 pm – 8.00 pm

www.youngminds.org.uk/pis

YoungMinds, 102-108 Clerkenwell Road,
London, EC1M 5SA

Parentzone Scotland

An online resource for parents, guardians and others responsible for school-age children. With information about education in Scotland, and advice about how to support your child's learning.

www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk

Parents Enquiry Scotland

Provides information and support for parents and families of people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.

0131 556 6047

helpline open 9 am – 10 pm

www.parentsenquiryscotland.org

parentsenquiry@hotmail.com

Enquire

The Scottish advice service for families of children with additional support needs.

0845 123 2303 (charged at local rate)
Open: Monday & Friday 9.00 am – 5.00 pm
Tuesday & Thursday 9.00 am – 5.00 pm &
7.00 pm – 9.00 pm,
Wednesday 8.00 am – 5.00 pm

info@enquire.org.uk

www.enquire.org.uk

**Enquire, Children in Scotland,
5 Shandwick Place, Edinburgh, EH2 4RG**

Kidscape

A national charity offering support and advice to parents of bullied children.

08451 205 204

www.kidscape.org.uk

**Kidscape, 2 Grosvenor Gardens,
London, SW1W 0DH**

Enable

Scottish learning disability charity.

0141 226 4541

enable@enable.org.uk

www.enable.org.uk

**6th Floor, 7 Buchanan Street, Glasgow,
G1 3HJ**

Commission for Racial Equality

Information and advice for people who have suffered from racial discrimination.

0131 524 2000

scotland@cre.gov.uk

www.cre.gov.uk/scotland

**CRE Scotland, The Tun, 12 Jackson's
Entry off Holyrood Road, Edinburgh,
EH8 8PJ**

Govan Law Centre

National organisation offering free legal advice and representation on educational matters, with a particular focus on the rights of disabled pupils and pupils with additional support needs.

0141 445 1955

advice@edlaw.org.uk

www.edlaw.org.uk

47 Burleigh Street, Glasgow, G51 3LB

Sources of advice and information for teenagers

ChildLine Scotland's Anti-Bullying Line

Scottish helpline dedicated to listening to and helping young people who are concerned about bullying problems.

0800 44 11 11

ChildLine

A UK national helpline offering information and advice for children and young people concerned with any problem.

0800 11 11

Freepost 1111, Glasgow G1 1BR

www.childline.org.uk

Newsround

Website from the BBC's popular children's news programme, with sections on bullying and school issues.

www.news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews

Young Scot

Resource for Scottish young people aged 12-26, including information on bullying, transitions to high school, and making and keeping friends.

info@youngscot.org

www.youngscot.org



For further contacts, please see the children's and young people's anti-bullying leaflets.



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