

Talking About Bullying – Support Guide for Parents and Carers

What is bullying?

While most children and young people will occasionally have issues with their friends and peers, bullying is:

- Intentional
- Sustained
- Repetitive

Bullying can be verbal, such as teasing, mocking or making threats, or physical, such as kicking, punching or slapping. It can happen in-person or online (also known as cyberbullying).

What to do if your child is being bullied

It can be upsetting to discover that your child is being bullied, either in school, online or somewhere else. You can sometimes struggle to know what to do, especially if you are not sure what is going on.

These suggestions can help you address the issue of bullying and enable you to best support your child.

1) Make time to actively listen to your child

Often, simply listening can be an effective way to open up a discussion around bullying, to find out what might be worrying your child.

- Create a safe and open environment where your child feels comfortable talking about their experiences.
- Stay calm and avoid reacting with anger, judgement or panic. This will help your child feel heard and supported.
- Let them share their feelings without interruption and reassure them that it's not their fault.

2) Establish open communication

Not all children will want to discuss what is going on in their lives, but it's still vital to set up clear communication.

- Encourage dialogue and reassure your child that you're always available to speak to them and listen to them.
- Through discussion, develop strategies for walking away or seeking help from a trusted adult.
- Regularly check in with your child about how things are going at their school, setting or service.

3) Seek professional support and guidance

It is advisable to involve staff from your child's school or service and seek further guidance and support.

- Speak to your child's teacher or any member of staff.
- Provide information about when and where the bullying is happening
- Visit the school website to access the school's anti-bullying policy.

Talking About Bullying – Support Guide for Parents and Carers

Guidance on cyberbullying

Online bullying, or cyberbullying, is when perpetrators use the internet or other technology to harass their victims. This can happen publicly for others to see, for example on social media, or privately, for example by texting or emailing.

Cyberbullying may include:

- Sending hurtful or threatening comments
- Sending inappropriate or sexual images, or asking for them
- Spreading rumours online
- Posting embarrassing images or videos without consent
- Posting private information online without consent
- Impersonating someone online or tampering with their profile

Addressing cyberbullying

Many of the ways you can address cyberbullying are the same as those you would use to address bullying that happens in person.

It can be tricky to address cyberbullying as it happens online, and children and young people may not share what they are experiencing on their phone or device. However, there are some steps you can take that relate specifically to cyberbullying.

1) Open lines of communication

- Have conversations about online safety. Regularly talk to your child about what they do online, who they interact with, and what to do if they experience or witness cyberbullying.
- Establish trust. Encourage your child to come to you if they encounter bullying online and reassure them that they won't get into trouble for reporting it.

2) Help your child to respond to cyberbullying

- Block and report. Show your child how to block the bully and report inappropriate behaviour on social media platforms and gaming sites.
- Save evidence. Encourage your child to save screenshots or messages as evidence if they experience online bullying.
- Avoid retaliation. Advise your child not to respond to the bully as this may escalate the situation.

3) Get in touch with relevant authorities

- Many social media platforms have procedures in place for reporting cyberbullying. Encourage your child to use these tools to report harmful content.