Anti-Bullying Policy

What is Bullying?
Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression be it verbal, psychological, physical or cyber conducted by an individual or group against others.

It is behaviour that is intentionally aggravating and intimidating and occurs mainly in social environments such as online, schools, clubs and other organisations working with children and young people. It includes behaviours such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting and extortion behaviour by one or more children against a victim.

The acronym **STOP** – **S**everal **T**imes **O**n **P**urpose - can help you to identify bullying behaviour.

How would you know if a child is being bullied?
All bullies operate using furtiveness, threats and fear. Bullying can therefore only survive in an environment where the victim does not feel empowered to tell someone who can help or in which it is not safe to do so.
The following indicators are warning signs that a young person might be getting bullied …

- Reluctance to come to a venue or take part in activities.
- Physical signs (unexplained bruises, scratches, or damage to belongings).
- Stress-caused illness – headaches, and stomach aches which seem unexplained
- Fearful behaviour (fear of walking to a meeting, going different routes, asking to be driven).
- Frequent loss of, or shortage of, money with vague explanations.
- Changes in behaviour (withdrawn, stammering, moody, irritable, upset, distressed)
- Attempting suicide or hinting at suicide.
- Anxiety (shown by nail-biting, fearfulness, tics).

There are other possible reasons for many of the above

Who should deal with bullying?
While the more extreme forms of bullying would be regarded as physical or emotional abuse and are reported to the health board or An Garda Síochana, dealing with bullying behaviour is normally the responsibility of all Leaders within this club / organisation.

How can it be prevented?

- Ensure that all members follow the code of conduct, which promotes the rights and dignity of each member.

- Deal with any incidents as they arise.
- Use a whole group policy or 'no-blame approach', i.e., not 'bullying the bully' but working with bullies and the group of young people, helping them to understand the hurt they are causing, and so make the problem a 'shared concern' of the group, (see below).
- Reinforce that there is 'a permission to tell' culture rather than a 'might is right'.
- Encourage young people to negotiate, co-operate and help others, particularly new or different children.
- Offer the victim immediate support and put the 'no blame approach' into operation.
- Never tell a young person to ignore bullying, they can't ignore it, it hurts too much.

What is the 'No Blame' Approach?

Step 1 – Interview with the victim

If you find that there has been an incident of bullying, first talk to the victim. At this stage find out who was involved and what the victim is now feeling. Try asking the following questions:

- Was it verbal or physical intimidation?
- How hurt is the victim?
- Was it within his/her own peer group?
- Ensure the victim that his/her name will not come out in the investigation.
- Actively listen.

Step 2 – Meet with all involved

Arrange to meet with all those involved; this should include some bystanders, those who may have colluded, those who joined in and those who initiated the bullying.

- Have a maximum of six to eight in the group – keep the number controllable
- Make a point of calling a 'special' meeting.
- Ensure the severity of the topic is understood by all.
- Speak only of the hurt caused in general terms with no reference to the victim.
- Play on the conscience of all – ask questions like: How would you feel? Would you like it done to you?

Step 3 – Explain the problem

The distress being suffered as a result of the bullying incident is explained. At this stage the details of the incident or the allocation of the blame is not discussed. Explain the feelings of loneliness, feeling left out, rejected, laughed at. Try asking questions:

- Would they like it if it happened to them?
- "Someone here in this group was bullied by someone within the group, what could we do to see it does not happen again?".
- Listen, watch out for reactions, and pick up on any without isolating anyone.

Step 4 – Share the responsibility
Explain what steps / controls may have to be introduced to prevent further incidents and how everyone will lose out as a result.
Step 5 – Ask the group for their ideas
At this stage the group is encouraged to suggest ways that would make the victim feel happier. All positive responses are noted. Use phrases "if it were you" to encourage a response. Listen to all suggestions and note them.
Step 6 – Leave it to them
Now the problem has been identified, solutions suggested, the problem is now handed over to the group to solve. Arrange to meet again in a week's time. Pass responsibility over to the group and give a time frame within which something must be done.

Step 7 – Meet them again
Each member of the group, including the bully, discuss how things are going, who is doing what and have there been other incidents. This allows for continual monitoring and keeps all involved in the process.

Again, enforce the idea of the 'team' looking after each other at regular intervals to ensure it is known that bullying or intimidating behaviour will not be tolerated.