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respectme
Scotland's Anti-Bullying Service

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Bullying in Scotland 2014

**A summary of survey responses by
respectme, Scotland's Anti-Bullying Service**

Bullying is not about just any kind of injury, nor just any negative impact. It involves a particular kind of harm. It is aimed at engendering a kind of helplessness, an inability to act, to do anything. It is an assault on a person's agency (Sercombe & Donnelly, 2012).

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This report was prepared by Brian Donnelly, Simon C. Hunter, and Rachel McDill.

About respectme

respectme, Scotland's Anti-Bullying Service was launched in March 2007. The service is fully funded by the Scottish Government and is managed by SAMH (Scottish Association for Mental Health) in partnership with LGBT Youth Scotland.

Our vision is of a respecting, just, equal and inclusive Scotland in which all children and young people can live free from bullying and harassment and are encouraged to reach their full potential. Our work is driven by a focus on children's rights.

What do we mean by bullying?

There have been many different definitions and theories about what constitutes bullying, but it's not helpful to define bullying purely in terms of behaviour.

Bullying is a mixture of behaviours and impacts, behaviours that can impact 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, it strips a person of their capacity for agency (respectme, 2013).

This behaviour can include:

- Being called names, teased, put down or threatened
- Being hit, tripped, pushed or kicked
- Having belongings taken or damaged

- Being ignored, left out or having rumours spread about you
- Receiving abusive messages, threats or comments on social media sites
- Behaviour which makes people feel like they are not in control of themselves
- Being targeted because of who you are or who you are perceived to be

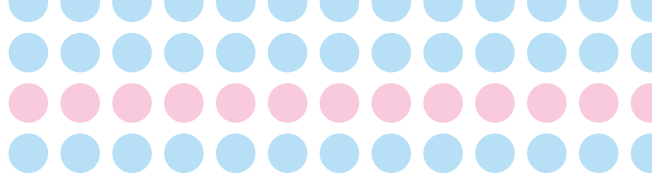
This behaviour can harm people physically or emotionally and many can take place in person and online. Although the actual behaviour may not be repeated, the threat may be sustained over time, typically by actions: looks, messages, confrontations, physical interventions, or the fear of these behaviours.

The research

The primary aim of this piece of research was to obtain a picture of how children and young people are experiencing bullying in Scotland in 2014.

This research was designed to:

- Identify the types of bullying that is experienced by children and young people
- Give a clear picture of where bullying happens and where online and offline/face to face experiences differ or crossover
- Identify from children and young people's own experience what they feel works and what is less helpful
- Identify where children and young people go online and what technology they use to get there



An online questionnaire was designed and tested and distributed to all schools in Scotland in May and June 2014. In total, there were 8310 responses, Of which 7839 were useable. Responses came from all over Scotland with all 32 Local Authorities represented. Respondents were aged between 8 and 19 years old. Sixty five percent were 12–14 years old.

This was an open survey and the findings presented here represent only the views of the children who took part.

Three focus groups took place with 45 young people to get a more detailed insight into children and young people's experiences of bullying – in particular, their thoughts on what happens online and in person, where these two are different and where they crossover.

Key findings

The key findings from the survey are as follows:

- 30% of children and young people surveyed reported that they have experienced some sort of bullying between the start of school in August 2013 and June 2014. Of this 30%:
 - 49% experienced bullying in person
 - 41% experienced bullying both in person and online
 - 10% experienced bullying online only.
- Children and young people surveyed reflected 12,003 experiences of bullying behaviours, meaning a number of children and young people had more than one experience of bullying. Of these experiences:
 - 60% took place in person
 - 21% took place both in person and online
 - 19% took place online only
- 92% of children and young people who were bullied knew the person bullying them (91% online and 92% offline.) Anonymity, therefore, may not be what is driving bullying online
- Behaviours such as name calling, hurtful comments and spreading rumours that make people feel angry, sad and upset happen both face to face and online
- Children and young people employ a range of strategies to cope with bullying; some are more successful than others
 - Almost half (48%) of children and young people who are bullied tell their parents
 - Friends and teachers are also providing support to a high number of children and young people who are bullied
- The most successful anti-bullying interventions are embedded within a positive ethos and culture and don't just focus on individual incidents
- Children and young people's use of technology, especially mobile technology and social media, is woven into their everyday lives
- A majority of children young people (81%) consider their online friends to be all or mostly the same friends they have in real life
- Children and young people access internet content on mobile devices, such as phones and tablets, more than any other devices, such as a PC or laptop
- Google, YouTube, Snapchat, Instagram and Facebook are the most popular websites and Apps used by children and young people when they go online



Next Steps

We will further analyse the data we have collected and use it to help develop effective policy and practice around bullying. The data is likely to help us to address some questions more effectively, including:

- Given the relatively low proportion of exclusively online bullying, and the similarity of online and offline bullying behaviour, to what extent is a specific response to online bullying needed?
- What are the appropriate responses to gender-specific differences in experiences of bullying?
- How can we help schools to further develop an anti-bullying ethos? And how can we continue to ensure that children and young people are involved and included in the process?
- How can we continue to support parents to respond when their children tell them about being bullied?



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