

The Highland Council

Education, Children and Adults Services Committee 11 November 2015

Agenda Item	14.
Report No	ECAS 102/15

Bullying Prevention Update

Report by Director of Care and Learning Service

Summary

In November 2014, members of this Committee agreed to the introduction of the Positive Relationships and Bullying Prevention Policy, Guidance and Toolkit to all Highland Schools; and that the Council sign up to participate in the Stonewall Education Champions Programme. This report provides information on implementation work undertaken during the first year.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Equality Act 2010 places a General Duty for public bodies in Scotland (with Education Authorities as “listed bodies” in their own right) to give due regard in all their work to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
 - Advance equality of opportunity, and
 - Promote good relations
- 1.2 The legal and policy framework also includes the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child; the national outcomes to tackle significant inequalities and improve the life chances of children, young people and families at risk, GIRFEC and Curriculum for Excellence.
- 1.3 The Highland Council’s equality priorities during 2012 – 2017 are presented in "A Fairer Highland". Actions relating to bullying in schools are:
- 5 - Pupils and school staff have a greater understanding of prejudice based bullying and its impact and
 - 6 - Pupils and school staff feel more confident in reporting prejudice based bullying incidents that they have experienced or witnessed
 - 15 - Staff and pupils have a greater awareness of how they can support equality through delivery of curriculum for excellence and wider school approaches following the principles of the Highland Practice Model and SHANNARI.
- 1.4 Addressing bullying behaviours is a significant element of equality and diversity work in Highland schools. The Education Improvement Plan makes the commitment that all Schools will have an active and revised Equal Opportunities Policy in place and delivered equality, diversity and children’s rights training by 2017. This training will include a focus on bullying prevention.

2. Positive Relationships and Bullying Prevention Policy, Guidance and Toolkit

- 2.1 [The Positive Relationships and Bullying Prevention Policy, Guidance and Toolkit](#) was developed by the Care and Learning Equalities Working Group and

underwent an extensive period of consultation which included teachers, parents, and pupils, the Highland Youth Parliament, and national groups including LGBT Youth Scotland, Stonewall Scotland and Respectme.

- 2.2 The Policy contains an extensive guidance section and toolkit with useful resources and teaching tools.
- 2.3 The Policy adopts the national definition that states that bullying can be understood as behaviour which leaves people feeling helpless, frightened, anxious, depressed or humiliated. Bullying behaviours may include:
 - name calling, teasing, putting down or threatening
 - ignoring, leaving out or spreading rumours
 - pushing, hitting, tripping, kicking
 - stealing and damaging belongings
 - cyberbullying: sending abusive text, email or instant messages
 - intimidation and extortion
 - making people feel like they are being bullied or fearful of being bullied
 - targeting someone because of who they are or are perceived to be
- 2.4 The focus of the Policy is prevention of bullying behaviours, exploring whole school approaches to reducing incidence of bullying behaviours, whilst streamlining the procedures for dealing with incidents of bullying behaviours. It avoids using language such as bully, victim, perpetrator recognising that bullying includes a range of behaviours and labelling a child as a bully or victim is not helpful.
- 2.5 The Policy closely aligns bullying prevention with the Equality Act 2010 which provides protection from discrimination, harassment and victimisation based on a range of '*protected characteristics*'. These characteristics are defined in the Act as: race; sex; disability; sexual orientation; religion or belief; age; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; and marriage and civil partnership. In addition to the protected characteristics covered by the Act, there is an expectation that other groups will be considered, for example: looked after children; young carers; children and young people living in deprivation; body image issues.

3. Reporting and Levels of Bullying in Highland Schools

3.1 Assessment

- 3.1.1 Given that the experience of bullying is a risk factor for lower attainment, enabling intervention based on accurate assessment will contribute to closing the gap. However there are many reasons why it is difficult to measure levels of bullying accurately in schools. For example, adults do not see everything that happens, and young people and staff can have differing ideas about what exactly constitutes bullying. As a result there can be a "fog" where teachers over- or underestimate bullying, and may try generic approaches where a simpler and more targeted intervention might work better.
- 3.1.2 The main solution to these problems is triangulation – comparing measures from different sources – and putting the emphasis on consultation with young people. For example, if many pupils say they are being bullied, then this requires intervention of some kind, regardless of whether this matches the adult perception.

3.1.3 The Care and Learning Service is committed in its Equalities Outcomes and *For Highland's Children 4* to decreasing the gap between reporting of bullying through formal mechanisms and self-reported experiences of bullying from children and young people. The following sections cover analysis of formal reporting, the Highland Lifestyle Survey and classroom surveys.

3.2 Formal Reporting

3.2.1 For the academic year 2014 – 15, a total of 41 bullying incidents were reported in Highland schools: 25 in primary schools and 16 in secondary schools. These incidents involved 47 pupils displaying bullying behaviour (13 girls and 34 boys) and 44 pupils experiencing bullying behaviour (13 girls and 30 boys). The total school cohort was 30,777.

3.2.2 The majority of these incidents took place within schools, including the grounds and classrooms.

3.2.3 This is an increase on formal reporting for 2013/14, where a total of 8 bullying incidents and 10 racist incidents were reported. This is likely to relate to improved reporting. (Note that there is likely to be duplication with some incidents being double reported as both bullying and racist.)

3.2.4 New reporting mechanisms through SEEMiS mean that bullying behaviours reflect all of the protected characteristics of the Equality Act, rather than only racist incidents. Anecdotal information suggests that teachers continue to have anxieties about labelling pupils as bullies through reporting incidents and appear to be deciding on individual thresholds of what will be reported. It is anticipated that training will go some way to address this.

3.3 2015 Highland Lifestyle Survey

3.3.1 Survey responses are being analysed and a full report will be presented to this Committee in January 2016. Initial findings in relation to bullying behaviours are outlined below.

3.3.2 In response to the previous 2013 Highland Lifestyle Survey, the number of young people who said that they had '*felt bullied during the last week*' was: P7 – 20.4%; S2 – 25.1%; S4 – 17.2%.

3.3.3 To gather a more accurate picture of pupil experiences of bullying, the survey question was changed in the 2015 Survey to '*Have there been times when you felt bullied in the last year?*'

3.3.4 As summarised in the table below, initial results from 2015 indicate that 42.7% of P7s, 38.7% of S2s and 26.6% of S4s responded that they had been bullied at least once in the last year.

Males & Females	P7	S2	S4
Once or twice	26.6%	23.6%	17.8%
Between 3 and 6 times	8.9%	7.2%	3.2%
More than 6 times	7.2%	7.9%	5.6%
Totals	42.7%	38.7%	26.6%

(note base total 3317)

- 3.3.5 Pupils with caring responsibilities were more likely to report that they had been bullied, with 16% of P7s, 18% of S2s and 13% of S4s reporting to have been bullied more than 6 times in the past year. Similar proportions of pupils with a disability reported being bullied more than 6 times.
- 3.3.6 For P7s pupils who were bullied, the most common place for this to occur was the school playground. For S2 pupils this was in school; in the classroom, playground and other school areas. For S4 pupils, again the classroom and other school areas like corridors were common areas for bullying to take place. For S4 pupils, almost a third of bullying was reported as taking place online.
- 3.3.7 Pupils also had the opportunity to note any other places they had experienced bullying. Places identified included in the park; other places in the community, for example 'outside' and 'in the street'; out of school clubs, such as dance classes or the Boy's Brigade; during break time, on public transport, on the telephone, on Facebook and 'behind my back'; at work; and during a holiday.
- 3.3.8 Responses by gender indicate that S2 females appear to be bullied online more than S2 males (27% compared to 13%). In S4, males experienced bullying in the playground more than females (38% compared to 19%) and females experienced bullying online more than males (36% compared to 18%).
- 3.3.9 Across all age groups, young carers experienced bullying online more than young people who are not young carers. Young carers and young people with disabilities in S2 and S4 also appeared to experience more bullying at home.
- 3.3.10 Younger pupils were more likely to tell someone if they had been bullied: 49% of P7s and 36% of S2s who were bullied told someone compared to 22% of S4 pupils. 47% of S4 pupils did not tell someone.
- 3.3.11 Across all age groups approximately half of pupils were aware of their friends having been bullied. Young carers and young people with disabilities in S2 and S4 were more likely to answer 'yes' to this question.
- 3.3.12 In response to '*If you or your friends have been bullied did anyone help out?*' Younger pupils were more likely to have had some help, with 83% of P7s and 70% of S2s answering 'yes' compared with 61% of S4 pupils.
- 3.3.13 92% of P7 pupils, 77% of S2 pupils and 75% of S4 pupils would tell someone if they were bullied in the future with 94% of P7s, 87% of S2s and 87% of S4s responding that they know where they can get help if they feel bullied.

3.4 Classroom Surveys

- 3.4.1 The new Policy introduced an optional electronic classroom survey which can be used alongside lessons relating to bullying behaviours. It is a short (10 minute) web-based survey to help schools find out how often pupils are experiencing bullying, where it happens, and the causes. The purpose is to help school managers and others decide what, and whether, intervention is needed, and to be able to target this at particular groups or issues. It also enables, if repeated over time, the assessment of whether interventions have been successful, or whether new issues have arisen.
- 3.4.2 Testing with pupils helped to refine the questions in the Survey, which are

presented in **Appendix 1**.

- 3.4.3 Two Primary Schools tested the survey with P6 classes and this has showed that the survey gives helpful information on pupil perceptions of the levels of bullying experienced, where it happens and also on the reasons for bullying. It covers the protected characteristics under the Equality Act, but also other areas suggested by pupils. Even if the absolute levels are subject to interpretation, the pattern is likely to be robust, and it is clear how this could support work to reduce bullying.
- 3.4.4 Schools will be encouraged to use the survey at least annually to guide their planning. Without identifying individual schools, the data can be analysed twice per year to provide a stream of information to support planning that complements and extends the existing formal report system, and greatly assist efforts to meet obligations under the Equality Act.
- 3.4.5 All Highland schools will be encouraged to carry out the classroom survey during National Anti-Bullying week 16th – 20th November.

4. Stonewall Education Champions Scheme

- 4.1 As part of participation in the Scheme, a Highland submission was included in the UK wide Stonewall Equality Index. Highland was listed as 32nd out of all 47 submissions, which is a good result for a first submission.
- 4.2 Feedback has indicated that our policies: Equality and Diversity, Bullying Prevention and Transgender, are viewed as very good and robust, as is partnership working.
- 4.3 The areas we need to improve on are policy implementation and roll out of training. A Sub Group of the Care and Learning Equalities Working Group is taking this forward, and a further entry will be submitted to the Equality Index by March 2016.
- 4.4 A survey has been carried out in one Highland Secondary School that explored pupils' experiences of homophobic bullying aiming to inform whether homophobic bullying is an issue for young people in Highland and to provide some assessment of any need for intervention. 13% of the respondents said that they were currently affected by homophobic bullying at least monthly; 44% of respondents could remember homophobic bullying occurring in Primary School; and of those young people currently experiencing homophobic bullying, two-thirds are heterosexual, indicating that homophobic bullying is about gender prejudices as much as it is about homophobia.
- 4.5 Work is now underway to carry out a survey of teaching staff in one Secondary and one Primary School to complete the analysis of homophobic bullying in Highland Schools.

5. Staff Training

- 5.1 Schools are expected to deliver and cascade training on equality, diversity, children's rights and bullying prevention. A staffing vacancy has meant that support to do this has not been adequate. This situation has now been addressed.

- 5.2 In addition to the resources and guidance available in the policy, teachers have access to a wide range of information and resources via the Highland GLOW Equality, Diversity and Children's Rights site.
- 5.3 A programme of bullying prevention training is being developed that will include input from Stonewall Scotland and Respectme and the introduction of a school specific online learning resource which is being developed in partnership with Learning and Development.

6. Implications

- 6.1 **Resources:** There is a membership cost of £1,250 per year, for a minimum of two years, for the Stonewall Education Champions Programme. This has been funded until January 2017.
- 6.2 **Legal and Risk:** The implementation of the actions detailed in this report will reduce the risk of legal challenge to the Council.
- 6.3 **Equalities:** The content of this report contributes to the implementation of the Council's Fairer Highland Action Plan. The actions detailed will contribute to the reduction in inequalities across all protected characteristics and reduce attainment gaps.
- 6.4 **Gaelic, Rural, Climate Change/Carbon Clever:** There are no implications arising from the content of this report.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 Committee is asked:
- to note the progress made in implementing the Positive Relationships and Bullying Prevention Policy, Guidance and Toolkit; and
 - to agree that a progress report is submitted to this Committee in November 2016.

Designation: Director of Care and Learning

Date: 3 November 2015

Authors: Cath King, Health Improvement Policy Manager
James McTaggart, Educational Psychologist
Catriona Coull, Policy Co-ordinator

Sample of Classroom Bullying Survey Items

If you were bullied, why did this happen? (Tick as many as apply):

Reason for bullying	
Being called "gay" or "lesbian" – even if you are not	
Finding school work difficult	
About being black, white, English, Polish, Gypsy Traveller, or other	
The way you or your friend(s) look	
The clothes you or your friend(s) wear	
About being a boy or a girl, or being different to how a boy or girl is expected to be	
Not being sporty	
Supporting a particular football team	
Other (please specify)	
Your or your friend(s) religion or beliefs	
How much money you or your friend(s) family has	
Not being in with the 'in crowd'	
Where you or your friend(s) live	
Any disability you have	
Working hard in school	
Not taking part in activities	
Jealousy about property (e.g. iPod etc.)	

Where did bullying take place?	All
During break or lunch time	
Outside school	
On the way to or going home from school	
In the dining hall	
In class	
On the school bus	
Online or on a mobile phone	
At home	

How often?	
Never	
Sometimes (1 to 3 times)	
Often (4 or more times)	
Most days	