



Diane Engelhardt House, (Unit 2) Treglown Court, Dowlais Road, Cardiff, CF24 5LQ
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02920 108081 | nspcc.org.uk

Janet Finch-Saunders AM
Chair
Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff CF99 1NA

Dear Ms Finch-Saunders

RE: Petition P-05-862 Tackling School Bullying

Thank you for asking NSPCC Cymru/Wales' views on the above petition. Besides providing face to face services to children and families in Wales, we provide the Childline service and our Speak Out Stay Safe school service to primary schools, which urges children to speak out and seek help if they are experiencing abuse, neglect or bullying.

In 2018/19, Childline delivered 15,851 counselling sessions to children and young people across the UK where bullying and online bullying was their main concern. Bullying was the fourth main reason why children and young people contacted Childline.

This is why NSPCC Cymru/Wales is supportive of efforts to develop more effective approaches to prevent and tackle bullying.

What do children and young people tell Childline about bullying?

In 2018/19, Childline delivered a total of 8,823 counselling sessions where the child or young person said they were from Wales¹. Childline delivered 501 counselling sessions about bullying to children and young people who said they

¹ As Childline is a private and confidential service, it's up to children and young people how much they tell us, so we may not know where they are contacting us from.

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were from Wales in 2018/19, with over 60% of those sessions being delivered to girls. Bullying was the biggest worry that young people aged between 12 and 15 who said they were from Wales contacted us about.

Emotional bullying was the top concern discussed, followed by physical bullying, for both girls and boys. Young people told us about friends spreading rumours about them, being blackmailed, being called names, receiving threats and being bullied physically and online.

The effect of bullying on children and young people

Bullying is a safeguarding issue and has a serious negative impact on young people's well-being. Those who contact Childline talk about feeling hurt, isolated and some even say they feel suicidal:

"I am not in school today as I am pretending to be ill. I have been bullied every day since I started school and have been having thoughts about ending my own life. I am called fat and ugly and have been told that nobody would care if I died. I feel really sad and want it to stop." Gender Unknown, 15

Strengthening a preventative approach to bullying in Wales

The NSPCC feels that strengthening a preventative approach to bullying in Wales needs to be strongly aligned with other elements of the improving well-being in schools agenda. The revision of the Welsh Government's Respecting Others guidance presents a key opportunity to review and strengthen arrangements to tackle bullying in schools and the support provided to young people who are bullied.

We fully support the Children's Commissioner for Wales' recommendations to enable a robust response to bullying across Wales and effect change:

- **A duty to record bullying in schools as an essential part of an effective anti-bullying approach:** we are concerned that the new draft Welsh Government Respecting Others guidance continues with the current system of optional recording for bullying incidents. This does not allow schools to put in place effective strategies for preventing and tackling bullying. This system does also not send a message to young people who are being bullied that their experience is being taken seriously. This needs to change: young people have a right to feel safe in school.
- **New anti-bullying guidance should be linked to other evaluation and accountability mechanisms:** it is important that the effectiveness of schools' anti-bullying policies is properly evaluated and monitored, so that there is an incentive to keep learning about what works and to implement the Welsh Government's anti-

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bullying guidance. We agree with the Children's Commissioner for Wales that this could be monitored at national level through inspection.

- **New anti-bullying guidance should be integrated with other whole-school approaches to well-being:** the revised Respecting Others guidance should clearly link across to the current approach to developing a whole school approach to well-being. NSPCC Cymru/Wales believes that Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE), and learning about keeping safe, healthy bodies and healthy relationships is a core entitlement all children should receive and preventing bullying should be a clear part of this. We believe RSE and anti-bullying messages are best delivered as part of a whole school approach where they are embedded across the curriculum and in wider school policies, ethos, behaviours and communications.

Supporting children and young people

Children and young people who experience bullying should feel listened to and supported. It is important that the revised Welsh Government Respecting Others and subsequent schools' anti-bullying approaches clearly signpost young people to places where they can receive support, such as Childline.

There is a wealth of information for young people to access if they are being bullied on the Childline website itself and also some message boards where young people can share their experiences and support each other. ²

Bullying consistently features among the main concerns children and young people contact Childline about. Childline helps empower young people to speak out about bullying and to seek support on their terms, at their own pace:

"I just wanted to thank the two Childline counsellors I have spoken to recently. You both have made a huge impact on my life and have helped me gain confidence. I hope you keep helping people who are being bullied like you did with me. Tomorrow I am going to tell my mum due to you so again I say thank you so much." Girl, 12, Cardiff Childline base.

NSPCC Cymru/Wales has also recently developed safeguarding resources (a bilingual poster and animation) with support from Welsh Government, which helps professionals implement interpersonal skills when a child discloses to them that they are being abused. The resources are available on the NSPCC Learning platform at www.nspcc.org.uk/listen and the skills are applicable to situations where a young person is reporting bullying.

NSPCC Cymru/Wales is grateful for the opportunity to comment on this petition. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact NSPCC Cymru/Wales' Policy and Public Affairs Team on publicaffairs.cymru@nspcc.org.uk

² <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/types-bullying/>

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Yours sincerely



Des Mannion
National Head of Service for Wales
NSPCC

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