



RDA Ireland Anti-Bullying Policy

Our anti-bullying policy is an integral part of the whole organisation's safeguarding policy, which states that every child, person we support, and volunteer has a right to:

- participate in RDA Ireland activities without fear of bullying or racist abuse
- participate and compete in an environment which is calm and purposeful
- To be confident that they can contribute to the sport without fear of embarrassment or criticism
- To expect that the disruptive behaviour of others will not be allowed affect their own participation
- To be treated courteously by all members of RDA Ireland

We know that all sports have bullying. The mark of a good sport is how well they identify and take action in response to issues arising from bullying.

Our Anti-Bullying Policy sets out our commitments in respect of the above statement. The policy will outline the following:

- Definition of bullying
- How do we prevent bullying
- Categories of bullying
- Procedures for dealing with bullying
- Support and advice given to the people we support, and the volunteers
- Advice for parents and guardians
- Monitoring, evaluation and review

Definition of bullying:

Currently there is no legal definition for bullying. The Northern Ireland Anti -Bullying Forum (NIABF) has defined it as: "Bullying is the repeated use of power by one or more persons intentionally to harm, hurt or adversely affect the rights of another or others."

What do we do to prevent bullying?

- Ensure that all our members follow the relevant 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 people we support, and volunteers, helping them to understand the hurt they were causing, and so making the problem a "shared concern" of the group.
- Reinforce that there is a "permission to tell" culture rather than a "might is right"
- Encourage the people we support, and volunteers to negotiate, co-operate and help others, particularly new or different children or people we support, and volunteers
- Offer the victim immediate support and put the "no -blame approach" into operation.
- Never tell the people we support, or volunteers, to ignore bullying - they can't ignore it, it hurts too much.

- Never encourage a person we support, or a volunteer, to take the matter into their own hands and beat the bully at their own game.
- If a child, person we support, or a volunteer, reports an incident of bullying to you, tell them there is nothing wrong with them and it is not their fault.

Categories of bullying:

Prejudice-Based Bullying:

Bullying, no matter how it happens or why it happens, is always wrong. To better understand the behaviour and our response, it can be helpful to think about different themes of bullying. Some forms of prejudice-based bullying include:

Racial Bullying:

When a child, person we support, or a volunteer, experiences bullying based on the colour of their skin, their ethnic or perceived ethnic origin, or cultural or religious background.

Sectarian Bullying:

When a child, person we support, or a volunteer, experiences bullying based on their real or perceived religious or cultural background.

Disablist Bullying:

Bullying behaviour that makes a child, person we support, or a volunteer, feel unwelcome or marginalised based on a perceived or actual disability or special need.

Homophobic Bullying:

When a child, person we support, or a volunteer, experiences bullying because they are lesbian, gay or bisexual, or because others think they are.

Transphobic Bullying:

Bullying behaviour that makes a child, person we support, or a volunteer, feel unwelcome or marginalised based on their real or perceived gender identify.

Cyber bullying:

Cyber bullying is bullying that takes place through electronic technologies, such as:

- Mobile or smart phones – eg. calls, texts, BBM, etc. Smart phone apps – eg. Kik Messenger, Snapchat, WhatsApp, etc.
- Social network websites – eg. Facebook, Twitter, Ask.FM, Instagram, etc.
- Gaming consoles – eg. Xbox Live, Playstation, etc.

It can involve some of the following incidents through the above outlets:

- Posting hurtful, embarrassing or threading material about a person we support, or a volunteer, on social media websites
- Sending nasty text messages or leaving rude voicemails on a person's mobile phone
- Excluding someone from an online game or sports group
- Setting up fake profiles on a social network to make fun of others.

Procedures for dealing with bullying:

All incidents of bullying should initially be investigated by the Welfare Officer within the RDAI Group. In all cases the parents/guardian of the person we support will be contacted.

People who have been bullied will be helped by the following:

- Discussing what happened
- Discovering why the person became involved
- Establishing the wrong-doing and need to change
- Informing parent(s)/guardian(s) of both the victim and the bully about the incident.

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 statutory authorities, dealing with bullying behaviour is normally the responsibility of the Welfare Officer within the RDAI Group. You can liaise with the RDAI National Welfare Officer or with the Horse Sport Ireland National Children's Officer.

Support and advice given to people we support, and volunteers

- Do not suffer in silence, there is someone in the organisation you can tell
- If a bullying incident does occur, please tell an adult coach/mentor or Children's Officer immediately, or even an older athlete
- Tell a member of your family
- Check out online resources for anti-bullying
- Most importantly, do not blame yourself for what has happened.

Where bullying behaviour involves an adult volunteer

The Welfare Officer should approach the adult and ask to speak with the adult separately, away from any young person or other adults. The Welfare Officer should describe to the adult the type of behaviour witnessed, or behaviour they have been made aware of, and the effect it is having on others, especially people we support. The adult involved in the bullying behaviour should be reminded about the Club Anti-Bullying Policy, and the Code of Conduct, and asked not to continue with the bullying behaviour. If the adult denies the behaviour, or the behaviour doesn't change, the Welfare Officer may need to issue immediate sanctions to protect the people we support, or others. The Welfare Officer may also put a report into the Complaints & Disciplinary Committee for further action, if necessary. The Welfare Officer should also speak with the target of the bullying behaviour and let the person we support, or volunteer, know that this behaviour will stop, and what will happen if it does not.

Outcome of dealing with the issue

The volunteer target and the parents/guardians of the people we support, if not already aware, should be informed of the issue and how it was dealt with. This encourages everyone to support the policy of dealing with issues immediately, and to the benefit of all involved. It is important to check the bullying behaviour does not continue by observing the group, checking in with those involved, and to encourage all group members to talk to a trusted person if they are worried about bullying behaviour.

Support and advice for parent(s)/guardian(s)

Parents should watch out for signs that their child is being bullied. Early signs may include:

- Reluctance to come to a venue or take part in training/activities
- Physical signs (unexplained bruises, scratches or damage to belongings)
- Stressed caused illness - headaches or stomach-aches which are not usual for the child or person we support
- Fearful behaviour (fear of walking to training/events, asking to be accompanied)
- Changes to behaviour (withdrawn, moody, upset, distressed, not eating, drop in sporting performance)

This list is not exhaustive and there may be other possible reasons for many of the above. The presence of one or more of these is not proof bullying is taking place but are signs you should monitor and perhaps speak to your child's/supported person's coach if you are concerned.

Monitoring, evaluation and review

RDA Ireland will review this policy on a continual basis and assess its implementation within our organisation. The policy will be promoted and implemented at RDA Ireland national level and NGB/HSI level. Please refer to HSI website for further resources on Anti Bullying.

<http://www.horsesportireland.ie/governance/child-protection/>