Bullying

Foster Carer Handbook · https://handbook.co.uk/docs/bullying/

1 | Why this matters

Many children in care have already experienced power-imbalance and shame. Bullying—whether face-to-face or online—can re-traumatise, reinforce negative self-beliefs and derail placement stability. Our goal is therefore **prevention first, rapid safeguarding second, restorative learning always**. The agency operates a **zero-tolerance, "telling organisation"** approach, as set out in the Anti-Bullying & Discriminatory Policy.

2 | Creating a bullying-safe climate

Trauma-informed principle	Everyday practice
Safety & predictability	Clear house rules displayed in words/pictures; regular family meetings so every voice is heard.
Trust & transparency	Explain what bullying is and how carers will act; children know who sees their disclosure and why.
Empowerment	Praise "up-stander" behaviour; teach assertive (not aggressive) responses.
Cultural sensitivity	Challenge racist, homophobic, faith-based or disability-based language immediately; link to Equality & Diversity Policy.
Collaboration & repair	Use restorative conversations so those who bully understand impact and practise new skills.

Online safety (gaming, social apps, group chats) follows the expectations in the Social-Media Policy—privacy settings high, devices in shared areas, open dialogue not bans.

3 | Spotting the signs

Changes in routine, unexplained injuries or property loss, sudden school refusal, secretive phone use or aggressive outbursts can all be indicators. Treat *any* unexplained behaviour change as a potential bullying red flag and explore gently with PACE questions ("You seem quieter after school—what was that like for you today?").

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4 | If your foster child is bullying others

1. **Gather facts** – speak with school / club staff for a clear, non-emotive account.
2. **Inform professionals** – tell the child's social worker and your Supervising Social Worker (SSW).
3. **Explore need beneath behaviour** – worries about birth-family contact, peer pressure, sensory overload?
4. **Agree a Restorative Action Plan**
   - teach alternative coping skills (deep-breathing, walking away, journaling);
   - use proportionate, linked sanctions (repair/replace items, service to the peer group);
   - schedule daily praise for positive interactions.
5. **Record** – log incident and plan in Daily Record and, if serious, complete Incident Form (24-h rule).

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5 | If your foster child is being bullied

1. **Listen & reassure** – "I'm glad you told me; you're not to blame."
2. **Safety check** – is the child physically safe right now? If not, follow Safeguarding Policy escalation.
3. **Evidence gather** – screenshots, dates, names; keep originals safe.
4. **Multi-agency response** – inform school, social worker, SSW; request school's Anti-Bullying lead.
5. **Empower the child** – rehearsed scripts, assertive body language, safe friendship circles.
6. **Follow up** – daily check-ins; review Risk Assessment and Child Safer Caring Policy.

Cyberbullying: block/report user, adjust privacy, involve platform if needed; never remove the device as punishment (can feel like double-victimisation).

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6 | Recording & notifications

Form / action	When	Who sees it
Incident entry in Daily Log	Same day	SSW, child's SW
Incident Report Form	Within 24 h for serious or repeated bullying	Manager, LA & (if hate-crime) Police
Update Risk Assessment	Within 48 h	SSW, care team

Persistent / severe bullying may become a **child-protection concern** (peer-on-peer abuse) and follow the Safeguarding escalation pathway.

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7 | Linked policies

- **Anti-Bullying & Discriminatory Policy** – definitions, zero-tolerance stance, restorative options.
- **Social-Media Policy** – cyber-safety rules, monitoring, privacy settings.
- **Equality & Diversity Policy** – responding to racist, homophobic or disability-based bullying.
- **Behaviour Management Policy & Guidance** – proportionate sanctions, PACE approach.
- **Safeguarding Policy** – when bullying crosses harm thresholds.

Key message for carers: Bullying thrives on silence. Create a home where every child knows *"I will be believed, I will be helped, and we will fix this together."*