



# COONAGH UNITED AFC

## Bullying Policy & Guidance

It is recognised that bullying affects the lives of an increasing number of children and can be the cause of genuine concerns about a child's welfare.

### What is Bullying?

Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression – whether it is verbal, psychological or physical – that is conducted by an individual or group against others. It is behaviour that is intentionally aggravating and intimidating, and occurs mainly among children in social environments such as schools. It includes behaviours such as physical aggression, cyber bullying, damage to property, intimidation, isolation/exclusion, name calling, malicious gossip and extortion. Bullying can also take the form of abuse based on gender identity, sexual preference, race, ethnicity and religious factors. With developments in modern technology, children can also be the victims of non-contact bullying, via mobile phones, the internet and other personal devices.

While bullying can happen to any child, some may be more vulnerable. These include: children with disabilities or special educational needs; those from ethnic minority and migrant groups; from the Traveller community; lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) children and those perceived to be LGBT; and children of minority religious faiths.

There can be an increased vulnerability to bullying among children with special educational needs. This is particularly so among those who do not understand social cues and/or have difficulty communicating. Some children with complex needs may lack understanding of social situations and therefore trust everyone implicitly. Such children may be more vulnerable because they do not have the same social skills or capacity as others to recognise and defend themselves against bullying behaviour.

In cases of serious instances of bullying where the behaviour is regarded as possibly abusive, you may need to make a referral to Tusla and/or An Garda Síochána.

All coaches/managers/volunteers/players/parents have a part to play in ensuring that nobody in soccer is the victim of any type of “bullying behaviour”. Everyone should be aware that bullying of any kind will not be tolerated and they have a duty to report any such behaviour to our managers/coaches/volunteers who will in turn report to the Committee.

### Peer Abuse

In some cases of child abuse, the alleged perpetrator will be a child. In these situations, the child protection procedures should be adhered to for both the victim and alleged abuser, that is, it should be considered a child protection issue for both children.

Work must be done to ensure that perpetrators of abuse, even when they are children themselves, take responsibility for their behaviour and acknowledge that the behaviour is unacceptable.



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It is important that clarity exists in respect of which behaviours constitute peer abuse, particularly child sexual abuse. Consultation with the health board should help to clarify the nature of any sexual behaviour by children which gives rise to concern.

Bullying is often defined in terms of three components:

- It must occur over time, rather than being a single aggressive act.
- It involves an imbalance of power, the powerful attack the powerless.
- It can be psychological, verbal, or physical in nature.

## *Types of Bullying*

**Child to child** – includes physical aggression, verbal bullying, intimidation, damage to property, stealing property and isolation

**Adult to child**- this includes the use of repeated gestures or expressions of a threatening or intimidatory nature, or any comment intended to degrade a child

**Child to adult**- this includes the use of repeated gestures or expressions of a threatening or intimidatory nature by an individual or group of children

A UK study found that the most common experiences of bullying and discrimination reported by young people was at the hands of other young people.

This included:

- Being called names, insulted or verbally abused;
- Being deliberately embarrassed and humiliated by other children;
- Being made to feel different or like an outsider;
- Being lied about;
- Being physically assaulted or threatened with violence;
- Being ignored.

In the study, boys were most likely to experience physical bullying or threats, have property stolen or damaged. Girls on the other hand, were more likely to be ignored or not spoken to.

Bullying by adults was a less common experience however one in ten reported this. Of this type of bullying the most common reported experiences were:

- Being deliberately embarrassed or humiliated;
- Being unfairly treated or verbally abused;
- Being ignored or not spoken to.

## **Response to Bullying**



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Vigilance is the most potent deterrent against bullying so that children and young people who bully will know that it will be dealt with, and the victims of bullying will have confidence in this.

There needs to be open discussion about bullying and a clear statement of its unacceptability. Managers/coaches/children/parents should be advised at the start of every season that “bullying” in any shape or form is not acceptable or permitted in Coonagh United.

In confronting the bully or bullies in relation to specific incidents it is important to:

- Be absolutely certain about the known facts
- Confront the “bully/bullies” with the allegations
- Make it clear that the behaviour is unacceptable
- See each “bully” separately if appropriate
- Be specific about sanctions if the bullying does not stop
- Follow up to check that the behaviour has ceased
- Record all instances of bullying and action taken.

## 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 health board or An Garda Síochana, dealing with bullying behaviour is normally the responsibility of all coaches/managers/volunteers in Coonagh United.

## How can it be prevented?

- Ensure that all members follow the code of conduct, which promotes the rights and dignity of each member.
- Ensure adequate supervision at all times
- 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 group of young people, helping them to understand the hurt they are causing, and so make the problem a ‘shared concern’ of the group, (see below)
- Reinforce that there is ‘a permission to tell’ culture rather than a ‘might is right’
- Encourage young people to negotiate, co-operate and help others, particularly new or different children
- Offer the victim immediate support and put the ‘no blame approach’ into operation
- Never tell a young person to ignore bullying, they can’t ignore it, it hurts too much
- Never encourage a young person to take the law into their own hands and beat the bully at their own game
- Tell the victim there is nothing wrong with them and it is not their fault
- All incidents of “bullying” should be reported to the Committee/Safeguarding Officer of Coonagh United

## Alternatively you may try the “No blame” Approach

### What is the ‘No Blame’ Approach?



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## Step 1 – Interview with the victim

- If you find that there has been an incident of bullying, first talk to the victim. At this stage find out who was involved and what the victim is now feeling. Try asking the following questions:
- Was it verbal or physical intimidation?
- How hurt is the victim
- Was it within his/her own peer group?
- Ensure the victim that his/her name will not come out in the investigation
- Actively listen

## Step 2 – Meet with all involved

- Arrange to meet with all those involved; this should include some bystanders, those who may have colluded, those who joined in and those who initiated the bullying.
- Have a maximum of six to eight in the group – keep the number controllable
- Make a point of calling a ‘special’ meeting
- Ensure the severity of the topic is understood by all
- Speak only of the hurt caused in general terms with no reference to the victim
- Play on the conscience of all – ask questions like: How would you feel? Would you like it done to you?



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## Step 3 – Explain the problem

- The distress being suffered as a result of the bullying incident is explained. At this stage the details of the incident or the allocation of the blame is not discussed.
- Explain the feelings of loneliness, feeling left out, rejected, laughed at. Try asking questions:
- Would they like it if it happened to them
- “Someone here in this group was bullied by someone within the group, what could we do to see it does not happen again?”
- Listen, watch out for reactions, and pick up on any without isolating anyone

## Step 4 – Share the responsibility

- Explain what steps / controls may have to be introduced to prevent further incidents and how everyone will loose out as a result

## Step 5 – Ask the group for their ideas

- At this stage the group is encouraged to suggest ways that would make the victim feel happier. All positive responses are noted. Use phrases “if it were you” to encourage a response. Listen to all suggestions and note them

## Step 6 – Leave it to them

- Now the problem has been identified, solutions suggested, the problem is now handed over to the group to solve. Arrange to meet again in a week’s time. Pass responsibility over to the group and give a time frame within which something must be done

## Step 7 – Meet them again

- Each member of the group, including the bully, discuss how things are going, who is doing what and have there been other incidents. This allows for continual monitoring and also keeps all involved in the process.
- Again enforce the idea of the ‘team’ looking after each other at regular intervals to ensure it is know that bullying or intimidating behaviour will not be tolerated.

Club personnel are advised that they are not expected to deal with all situations on their own as sometimes “bullying” can be very difficult to deal with. They can be assured that the Committee of Coonagh United are available to provide support and advice and if necessary professional expertise.

See also the following useful links:

[www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwiNntfLgL7qAhUktnEKHfASCI4QFjABegQIAhAB&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.tusla.ie%2Fuploads%2Fcontent%2FChildren\\_First\\_National\\_Guidance\\_2017.pdf&usg=AOvVaw1GxdMYZ7TdNMj7tJXHolEn](http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwiNntfLgL7qAhUktnEKHfASCI4QFjABegQIAhAB&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.tusla.ie%2Fuploads%2Fcontent%2FChildren_First_National_Guidance_2017.pdf&usg=AOvVaw1GxdMYZ7TdNMj7tJXHolEn)

[www.tusla.ie/services/child-protection-welfare/children-first/](http://www.tusla.ie/services/child-protection-welfare/children-first/)

[www.bullying.co.uk/schools/sport](http://www.bullying.co.uk/schools/sport)



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