



## BRANCHING OUT ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

### Introduction

Every service user should be able to attend in our environment free from bullying of any kind and they should feel safe and supported. There is no place for bullying at Branching Out. Each of us involved has a role in creating a culture where bullying is not tolerated. No service user deserves to suffer the pain and indignity that bullying can cause. We at Branching Out recognise the negative impact it has on the experiences and wider development of so many of our service users and people in Britain today.

Bullying has no place anywhere in our community and this applies both to the bullying of service users and staff. Providing a safe and happy place is essential to achieving improvement, raising achievement and attendance; promoting equality and diversity and ensuring the safety and well-being of all members of our community.

### Aims

We need to take an active approach to promoting good behaviour, respect for others and to tackling all forms of bullying – including prejudice driven bullying and cyber bullying. Staff, with the support of parents, the wider community, the local authority and service users themselves, need to take effective action to prevent bullying happening in the first place. A preventative approach helps to safeguard the well-being of the service users and staff as well as playing their part in creating a society in which we all treat each other with dignity and respect.

When bullying does occur, Branching Out needs to respond promptly and firmly. We need to apply preventative actions as necessary. We need to work with bullies so that they are held to account for their actions and accept responsibility for the harm they have caused. We need to, as well, support those being bullied.

At Branching Out through our policies are more importantly through our actions, our pastoral care, we are sending a strong message to all that bullying is not acceptable.

Service Users at Branching Out know that they do not need to “*suffer in silence*”.

All staff and service users have the tools and confidence they need to prevent and tackle bullying whenever and wherever it occurs and confidence in the readiness of the Branching Out’s senior management, the whole community and of course, our parents and carers to support them in doing this.

### Bullying

**Definition** – Bullying is the wilful conscious desire to hurt, threaten or frighten or exclude somebody. To be bullying, action must be persistent rather than on a single occasion.



*“Behaviour which can be defined as the repeated attack, physical, psychological, social or verbal, by those in a position of power, which is formally or situation defined, on those who are powerless to resist, with the intention of causing distress for their own gain or gratification”.*

**Physical bullying** – to use superior strength, size or numbers to force one’s will onto another against their wishes.

**Verbal bullying** – can be in the form of:

- Malicious gossiping
- Persistent teasing
- Name calling
- Taunting
- Intimidation
- Exclusion from a group
- Forcing another to act against their will
- Damaging, hiding or stealing another person’s equipment, property or belongings.

**Cyber bullying** – Cyber bullying can be defined as the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), particularly mobile phones and the internet., deliberately to upset someone else. It can be an extension of face-to-face bullying with technology providing the bully with another route to harass their target. However, it differs in several significant ways from other kinds of bullying: the invasion of home and personal space; the difficulty in controlling electronically circulated messages; the size of the audience; perceived anonymity; and even the profile of the person doing the bullying and their target.

**Homophobic bullying** – Homophobic bullying occurs when bullying is motivated by a prejudice against lesbian, gay or bisexual people.

Who can experience homophobic bullying?

- Young people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB)
- Young people who are thought to be lesbian, gay or bisexual
- Young people who are difference in some way – they may not act like the other boys or girls
- Young people who have gay friends, or family, or their parents/carers are gay
- Teachers who may or may not be lesbian, gay or bisexual.

**Bullying around race, religion and culture** – Branching Out needs to be at the heart of a tolerant and diverse community. Racism and bullying should have no place. Every service user deserves respect and a safe environment whatever their racial or religious background and every child needs to learn that modern British society values diversity and mutual respect. The law required the seriousness of abuse and attacks that are motivated by racism. At Branching Out we work hard to create an ethos where racist bullying rarely happens and is dealt with convincingly when it does, it is one way in which we fulfil duty and one aspect of the race equality policy.

We offer the following definition of racist bullying:



*“The term racist bullying refers to a range of hurtful behaviour, both physical and psychological, that makes a person feel unwelcome, marginalised, excluded, powerless or worthless because of their colour, ethnicity, culture, faith community, national origin or national status”.*

While all occurrences of racist bullying are racist incidents, not all of the latter necessarily amount to bullying (see definition of bullying).

***Bullying related to special educational needs and disability is a Hate Crime and will be treated as such by Branching Out.***

Bullying is one of the most damaging forms of discrimination. This guidance provides advice on dealing with bullying involving adults at risk with learning disabilities.

It is designed to help to:

- Support service users with disabilities
- Understand, prevent and respond to bullying of service users with disabilities
- Eliminate disability based discrimination and harassment
- Develop a non-bullying ethos and by doing so raise achievement and participation in safe, positive environments
- Meet legal safeguarding obligations and comply with the Disability Discrimination Acts and other legislation
- Build on requirements of Branching Out’s Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Uphold the fundamental human right of service users to be free from abuse.

***Disability: who do we mean?***

Two main definitions are used to inform decisions about supporting adults with learning disabilities. They are: the Disability Discrimination Act 1995’s definition of a disabled person as someone who has ‘a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities’

All service users who attend Branching Out have a Level 2 Social Care assessment.

***Adults with learning disabilities may:***

- Be adversely affected by negative attitudes to disability and perceptions of difference;
- Be more isolated, not have many friends;
- Not understand that what is happening is bullying;
- Have difficulties telling people about bullying.

Bullying will not be tolerated and should always be followed by an immediate and appropriate response.

Any kind of bullying is unkind, thoughtless, selfish and undesirable and will not be tolerated.



### ***Raising Awareness of Bullying***

- Application of Branching Out's Values throughout the organisation.
- Staff team training and mentoring
- Branching Out policies.

### ***Following a report of bullying:***

- If a member of staff believes that bullying is taking place, they should allow the victim to talk whilst reassuring the service user that Branching Out will deal with it sensitively but firmly.
- The member of staff must refer any incidents of bullying to the Team Leader or General Manager.
- The Team Leader discusses with the General Manager and decides on action to be taken.
- Talks with victim.
- Asks victim to communicate their version of events.
- Talks with alleged bully.
- Informs the parents/carers of both parties.
- Tries to resolve the problem through counselling/talking.
- If allegation is proven and serious the General Manager may take disciplinary action.
- Can provide support for the victim via their Key Worker, peer mentoring or external agencies.
- Team Leader liaises with Key Worker to monitor the situation, checking that further bullying is not occurring.
- All involved should record the incident and action taken.

### ***Guidance on advice to victim and protagonist***

#### **To the victim:**

- Revenge is not appropriate.
- Involving other service users, friends may not help.
- Report future fears, incidents to an appropriate staff member/carer/family member.
- Reconciliation or avoidance should be considered.

#### **To the protagonist:**

- Bulling
- Behaviour is unacceptable.
- Is recognised as designed to cause distress.
- Serious sanctions may follow.
- Reconciliation or avoidance should be considered.

#### **To the parents/carers:**

- Do keep Branching Out informed by asking their client to tell the staff or inform Branching Out as soon as possible.
- Reassure that Branching Out does its best to resolve all cases.
- Parents/carers who are made aware that their client is bullying other adults at risk are asked to explain that what he/she is doing is wrong and makes other service users unhappy.



### **Sanctions**

- Parents informed
- Service user temporarily withdrawn from social contact at lunch/break times if practical.
- Temporary exclusion from activities that other vulnerable adults at risk are taking part in, if practical.
- Review of suitability of placement at Branching Out if all efforts to support service user proactively have not resulted in the service user behaving in a safe way towards other service users and staff, in cooperation with a multi-disciplinary team.
- Workforce disciplinary procedures

The organisation will endeavour to ensure counselling is maintained even when sanctions have been applied.

### **Anti-bullying strategies**

The aims of Branching Out anti-bullying strategies and intervention systems are:

- To prevent, de-escalate and/or stop any continuation of harmful behaviour.
- To react to bullying incidents in a reasonable, proportionate and consistent way.
- To safeguard the service user who has experienced bullying and to trigger sources of support for the service user.
- To apply disciplinary sanctions to the service user causing the bullying and ensure they learn from the experience, through multi-agency support.
- To reduce bullying in the workplace.

### **Preventative strategies include:**

- Effective Branching Out leadership that promotes an open and honest anti-bullying ethos.
- Use of strategies (in particular PROACT SCIP<sup>r</sup> UK be used to discuss issues around diversity and draw out anti-bullying messages).
- Use of opportunities throughout the Branching Out calendar and at certain times of the day to raise awareness of the negative consequences of bullying (eg. Anti-Bullying Week each year and service users meetings).
- Engaging service users in the process of developing Branching Out's anti-bullying policy and promoting open and honest reporting.
- Improving the Branching Out environment, looking in particular at staff use of proactive strategies and joint work with partners, such as East Learning Disability Provider.
- Branching Out staff undertakes to target their attention on key times and locations where bullying is more prevalent; and works with service users to establish when and where those times and locations are.
- Workforce questionnaires.



Any disciplinary penalties have three main purposes, namely to:

- Impress on the perpetrator that what he/she has done is unacceptable;
- Deter him/her from repeating that behaviour; and
- Signal to other service users that the behaviour is unacceptable and deter them from doing it.

Sanctions for bullying are intended to hold service users and members of the workforce who bully to account for their behaviour and ensure that they face up to the harm they have caused and learn from it. They also provide an opportunity for service users and workforce members to put right the harm they have caused.

### ***Staff professional development***

Branching Out is mindful of the need to review general and specific staff induction and continuing professional development (CPD) and identify how to ensure staff training reflects the anti-bullying policy and practice of the organisation.

Where specific training needs have been identified for particular members of staff, the General Manager will ensure that those members of staff have access to the advice, training and development opportunities appropriate to their needs.

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