Anti-bullying Policy

Policy Holder	Head of Behaviour	Date of Next Review:	March 2027
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Introduction

Our policy on Anti-bullying has been developed with due consideration of autistic individuals and has considered research and studies based on and around anti-bullying and the needs of our service users.

Our key aim is to facilitate safe and happy individuals who use our services and staff who enjoy coming to work and experience positive relationships with all whom they meet.

These positive relational experiences are fundamental to our positive ethos and this policy fully supports this.

Resources for Autisms' model is based on acceptance and validation. The groups and services are designed to promote and support this methodology. Resources for Autism always uses positive behaviour strategies.

Rationale

The cohort served by Resources for Autism are autistic and may have other co-morbid conditions. They may not have sufficient understanding or awareness that certain behaviours directed towards others may be unwanted and could be construed as bullying. Conversely, service users with autism who are on the receiving end of bullying may be unable to express or communicate that they are distressed by this in the moment or to supporting staff.

All Resources for Autism staff and volunteers have a duty to not only be aware of bullying but also to respond quickly and appropriately.

Aims

Resources for Autism aims with this policy to have a supportive, caring and safe environment without fear of bullying for all service users.

We aim to promote a consistent approach and have an environment in which all types of bullying are clearly unacceptable.

We aim to achieve this by:

- Involving, training and informing staff, volunteers, parents, carers and services in the prevention of bullying.
- Keep our approach up to date by learning at all levels and seeking advice from external specialist organisations where appropriate.
- To keep up to date with new developments in technology.
- To always intervene where we see something that doesn't sound, feel or look right.
- Create an inclusive, non-judgemental and safe environment in which differences which could motivate bullying are challenged and openly talked about.
- Make it easy for service users to highlight if they are being bullied or feel uncomfortable with the actions of others towards themselves.

What do we define as Bullying?

Preventing and Tackling Bullying (Department for Education July 2017) defines bullying as behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally.

Bullying can take many forms (for instance, cyber bullying via text messages, social media, gaming or the internet) and is often motivated by prejudice against protected groups for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation or because a child is adopted, in care or has caring responsibilities.

It might be motivated by actual or perceived differences between children.

Many experts say that bullying involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. This could involve perpetrators of bullying having control over the relationship, which makes it difficult for those they bully to defend themselves.

The imbalance of power can manifest itself in several ways – it might be physical, psychological, derive from intellectual imbalance and by having access to the support of a group, or the capacity to socially isolate.Suggestion: being socially isolated?

It can result in the intimidation of a person or persons through the threat of violence or by isolating them either physically or online.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is a different form of bullying and can happen both at day and night. The reach of cyber bullying can extend to a potentially bigger audience. With the rise of technology, social media applications, coupled with the ease of access to these this can mean that more people forward on content with one click.

The Behaviours of Autistic People and the Characteristics of Bullying Behaviour

Autistic people are likely to be unaware that certain behaviours have the characteristics of bullying and other socially unacceptable behaviours. It is possible for example, that one service user may develop an obsession with another, which may cause distress and anxiety. Such behaviours could include wanting to be near them or making unwanted physical contact or potential harm such as hitting or kicking.

Staff and volunteers have a duty to be vigilant and alert to these behaviours and experiences. They must be intuitive and aware of what is happening for and to their service users. They must share this information on a need-to-know basis as soon as possible.

Record Keeping and Reports

These incidents should be reported in:

- Books
- Leader Supervision
- Incident Forms
- Concerns Forms
- Log Sheets

The Targeted Service User

It is important to support the target of the bullying. We also need to consider that they could have difficulties communicating their experiences.

Resources for Autism must provide the preferred method of alternative communication to make this discussion meaningful and follow up with skills training for the individual – such as consent and saying no.

Preventative Work

In all our work we must support and emphasise the importance of developing social skills and respect for others. Where service users struggle with interaction then staff should model and guide their awareness. This could be individually, as a group or in a targeted project.

Staff are important role models. How service users see them interacting with each other and towards the service users is a highly effective tool for preventing and decreasing bullying by setting the right example. Many autistic people will learn better visually and by example. Staff will be offered anti-bullying training as part of their professional development and can seek support from their line managers as and when they need it.

Staff will observe and inform themselves about the situation at hand. They will think about what causes conflict and develop strategies to stop the bullying or to prevent it occurring in the first place. This might involve running sessions on diversity, through events or projects or one to one conflict resolution. If needed, we will call on the expertise of safeguarding boards and anti-bullying organisations for advice and resources.

Resources for Autism will involve parents in the discussion and prevention. Resources for Autism will take concerns raised by parents seriously and create an atmosphere where they feel safe to do so and confident it will be acted on.