

# Child Wellbeing and Protection Policy for Scottish Football – Referee Associations

## ANTI-BULLYING

This Practice Note applies to Referee Association members (herein referred to as “members”) and sets out the best practice in relation to recognising and responding to any concerns of bullying behaviour directed towards or displayed by young people involved at the Referee Association. The principles set out in this Practice Note will also apply to children and young people who members come into contact with through their role in football and any concerns of bullying behaviour must be reported to the relevant Referee Association’s Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer.

***“Bullying is never acceptable; it doesn’t make a child better or stronger to get through it and it should never be seen as a normal part of growing up.” (respectme)***

Children’s wellbeing can be seriously impacted by bullying behaviour. Bullying can take some children’s rights away from them. Bullying is both behaviour and impact, the impact is on a person’s capacity to feel in control of themselves. This is what is termed as their sense of ‘agency’. Bullying takes place in the context of relationships; it is behaviour that can make people feel hurt, threatened, frightened and left out. This behaviour happens face to face and online. (respectme 2015)

### ***What is bullying?***

Bullying behaviour can harm people both physically and emotionally. Something only has to happen once to make a child feel worried, scared, threatened, left out and hurt. The actual behaviour may not be repeated but the threat may be sustained over time, typically by actions, looks, messages, confrontations, physical interventions, or the fear of these. Bullying behaviour is not always deliberate, but that does not mean that the bullying behaviour does not need to be appropriately challenged.

The Referee Association appreciates that bullying behaviour can be difficult to identify because it often happens away from others and young people may be reluctant to tell adults for fear of repercussions or an ‘over-reaction’ by adults. This Practice Note provides guidance for its members to recognise ‘signs’ of bullying behaviour and to understand the impact bullying can have on the child or young person who is being bullied. It sets out how its members should respond should they have any concerns about bullying behaviour.

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### *Prejudice-based bullying*

Prejudice-based bullying is when bullying behaviour is motivated by prejudice based on an individual's actual or perceived identity and can be based on characteristics unique to a child or young person's identity or circumstance e.g. their ethnicity or religion or sexuality. When the bullying behaviour is as a result of prejudice, there is a need to address the root cause of the prejudice as well as effectively responding to incidents as they arise.



### *How to recognise bullying behaviour*

#### **Bullying behaviour can include:**

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Being called names, teased, put down or threatened (face to face and/or online)</li><li>• Being hit, tripped, pushed or kicked</li><li>• Being ignored, left out or having rumours spread about you (face to face and/or online)</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sending abusive messages, pictures or images on social media, online gaming platforms or by phone</li><li>• Being targeted because of who you are or who you are perceived to be</li></ul> |
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#### **The impact can include:**

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reluctance to get involved at the Referee Association</li><li>• Performance can be hindered or the young person may show a lack of interest</li><li>• Change in behaviour when around particular people at the Referee Association or refereeing for games involving particular clubs/leagues e.g. being more withdrawn or appearing fearful</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Change in behaviour in general e.g. may appear more anxious or more guarded</li><li>• Unexpected absences at matches or training events</li><li>• Unexplained injuries – this may include injuries which have been self-inflicted as a means of coping</li></ul> |
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#### ***The Referee Association will:***



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- Seek to prevent, reduce and respond effectively to bullying behaviour, through the implementation of this Policy and by ensuring that young people know what to do and who they can speak to if they are worried
- Highlight bullying based on prejudice and perceived differences to ensure our practices are effective in dealing with these issues
- Seek to understand the experiences and address the needs of children and young people who are bullied, as well as those who bully, within a framework of respect, responsibility, resolution and support
- Create an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated and is responded to in the best interests of the children and/or young people involved

### ***How to create the right environment***

Environments that promote respect, celebrate difference and encourage positive relationships and behaviour, are less likely to see bullying as acceptable behaviour. Creating the right environment can discourage bullying behaviour and encourage young people to share any concerns.

### **How to create the right environment**

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cultivate an ethos where there is an anti-bullying culture – it is especially important that adults are good role models for young people</li><li>• Take all signs and reports of bullying seriously</li><li>• Take all allegations seriously and take action to ensure that the child or young person is safe</li><li>• Do not label young people as “victims” and “bullies”. Talk about ‘bullying behaviour’ and help and support the young person to change their behaviour and to understand and recognise its impact</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Respond to each incident of bullying behaviour individually and adopt different practices, if necessary, to find the most effective response</li><li>• Encourage all young people to speak and share their concerns. Help those being bullied to speak out by being open and encouraging young people to a trusted adult who can help them</li><li>• Speak to those being bullied and those displaying bullying behaviour separately</li></ul> |
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### How to respond to bullying behaviour

When responding to incidents or accusations of bullying behaviour the approach should be to ask:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What was the behaviour?</li><li>• What impact did it have?</li><li>• What do I need to do about it?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What attitudes prejudices or other factors have influenced the behaviour?</li><li>• What does the young person who has been bullied want to happen?</li></ul>
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**NEVER allow bullying behaviour, in any form, to go unchallenged and unreported**

### What to do when bullying incidents and behaviour occur

#### How to support the child or young person who is being bullied

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Listen to and give the young person your full attention, exploring options together of what you can do to help</li><li>• Reassure the young person reporting the bullying that you can be trusted and will help them, although you cannot promise to tell no-one else</li><li>• Explain what will happen next and how they are going to be kept informed</li><li>• Report any concerns to the relevant Referee Association's Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer. This should include a record of what was said</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Be clear that online bullying behaviour will be treated as seriously as any other form of bullying behaviour</li><li>• In cases of online/electronic bullying advise young people who are being bullied by text, email or online:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ to report the behaviour to the social media site and retain the communication e.g. a screenshot or to print it out</li><li>➤ check their privacy settings to ensure their account is private and that no one can post on their page without them accepting the post</li><li>➤ consider blocking the person who is making negative or offensive comments</li></ul></li></ul> |
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### How to support the child or young person who is exhibiting bullying behaviour

- Talk with the young person who has been displaying bullying behaviour. Explain the situation and try to get them to understand the consequences of their behaviour
- Identify the feelings that cause them to act this way and develop alternative ways of responding to these feelings
- Encourage and support those displaying bullying behaviour to change this behaviour. Ask them to consider the impact their actions are having on the other person
- Aim to restore positive relationships. In some cases it might be worth considering seeking an apology from those involved in bullying behaviour (for example where those on the receiving end wish reconciliation). However, apologies are only of real value when they are genuine
- Be sensitive and use good judgement when it comes to informing the parents/carers of those whose negative behaviour is impacting on others. Put the young person at the centre – will telling their parents/carers result in more problems for the young person? What are the young person's views on their parents/carers knowing? If in any doubt seek advice from the Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer before responding
- Only consider imposing consequences as necessary to ensure the safety of children and young people, e.g. exclusion from the particular activity or refereeing until behaviour standards are improved



These guidelines have been informed and developed with support from *respectme*, their publication 'Bullying in Scotland 2014' and the *Respect for All: National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People*, Scottish Government 2017. Copyright remains with *respectme* and we acknowledge all and any material taken from [www.respectme.org.uk](http://www.respectme.org.uk)