

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee
Thursday 13th November 2008

Anti-bullying in Schools
Update on Anti-bullying Strategies and their Impact

Purpose of the Report

- 1) To seek the committee's endorsement of the approach Wiltshire's Anti-Bullying Steering Group has taken/is taking in supporting schools' in developing effective anti-bullying policies and practices. To provide an update on the progress the local authority has made in the last 12 months in ensuring a coordinated approach to supporting and promoting anti-bullying in schools.

Action Required of the Committee

- 2) The committee is asked to consider, endorse and comment on the Anti Bullying Steering Group's report and its recommendation.

Background & Wiltshire County Council's (WCC) Current Position in regards to Anti-bullying

- 3) **National context** – Anti-bullying is one of the Department for Children, Schools and Families' (DCSF's) new performance indicators (PI 69). Both the Anti-Bullying Alliance and the National Strategies support and challenge the local authority to ensure that we are supporting schools effectively with anti-bullying. Between 2006 and 2008 the DCSF produced 5 key publications on anti-bullying in schools. The documents give specific information about types of bullying, how to create an environment that promotes anti-bullying and how to respond to bullying incidents. Copies can be downloaded at: www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications:
 - *Bullying around racism, religion and culture* (DCSF, 2006)
 - *Safe to Learn: Embedding Anti-Bullying Work in Schools* (DCSF, 2007)
 - *Safe to Learn: Embedding Anti-Bullying Work in Schools – Cyberbullying* (DCSF, 2007)
 - *Safe to Learn: Embedding Anti-Bullying Work in Schools – Homophobic bullying* (DCSF, 2007)
 - *Safe to Learn: Embedding anti-bullying work in schools – Bullying involving children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities* (DCSF, 2008)
- 4) **Local context** – Wiltshire County Council (WCC) has prioritised anti-bullying in the Children and Young People's Plan 2008 – 2011, particularly within the priority for improvement: 'Supporting mental wellbeing and overcoming emotional & behavioural problems.' Wiltshire has an Anti-Bullying Strategy in place with 4 main priorities. These are to:
 - Audit and manage information;
 - Provide guidance, support and training;
 - Disseminate good practice;
 - Involve children and young people in the development of anti-bullying.

WCC appointed a strategic lead for anti-bullying in educational settings (within the Personal Development Education Team) in October 2007. A multi-agency Anti-Bullying Steering Group was established in April 2008 with representation from

WCC, Wiltshire PCT and Wiltshire Police. The group has a clear action plan for the period 2008 – 2011 that works to address both Wiltshire's Anti-Bullying Strategy and the relevant priorities within Wiltshire's Children and Young People's Plan. Wiltshire's Anti-Bullying Steering Group took the definition of bullying and the aims and objectives of Wiltshire's Anti-Bullying Strategy to the Children and Young People's Trust Board in September 2008. All partners signed up to the definition and agreed to ensure that their team's/ department's/ organisation's policies were aligned with the aims and objectives outlined in Wiltshire's Anti-Bullying Strategy.

- 5) **Local data** – The DCSF is using the Tell Us Survey to identify the number of pupils who have been bullied and the frequency of the bullying (this data will be used to assess the local authority on performance indicator 69 – mentioned above). The data from the 2007 Tell Us 2 survey showed Wiltshire performing better than average in a number of areas:
- 67% children and young people in Wiltshire stated that their school deals with bullying **Very/Quite well** in comparison with 57% children and young people nationally.
 - 20% children and young people in Wiltshire stated that their school deals with bullying **Not very/Not at all well** in comparison with 30% children and young people nationally.
 - 27% children and young people in Wiltshire stated that they **had been bullied in school once or more in the last 4 weeks** in comparison with 30% children and young people nationally.

The data from the Tell Us 3 survey has just arrived with the local authority and will be analysed over the next couple of months.

In spring 2008 the local authority sent a survey to all schools on anti-bullying. We received a 48% response rate from schools. The findings showed that 100% secondary schools, special schools and Young People's Support Services and 87% primary schools have reviewed their anti-bullying policy since it was first introduced. It showed that 92% schools have a system in place to record and monitor incidents of bullying. 88% schools requested a model anti-bullying policy, therefore the local authority is currently developing guidance for schools in Wiltshire on how to develop and write an anti-bullying policy. Schools were asked to identify if there are any issues that have a significant impact on bullying, harassment or discriminatory behaviour, schools cited cyberbullying and racism as the two main issues. The LA intends to repeat this survey in spring 2009 to assess schools' progress and to continue to identify schools' training/support needs on anti-bullying.

6) **Success criteria**

The two main success criteria on which the work of the Anti-Bullying Steering Group will be judged are:

- To reduce the percentage of children who have experienced bullying once or more in the last 4 weeks, in line with DCSF's Performance Indicator 69 which is monitored through the Tell Us Survey.
- To reduce the incidence and impact of bullying (in line with the C&YPP 2008 - 2011 priority for improvement: 'Supporting mental wellbeing and overcoming emotional & behavioural problems').

- 7) **Training/support on anti-bullying for schools** – Members of the ABSG have provided/are providing wide-ranging training/support for schools on anti-bullying. The support/training has been listed here under the four key strands of Wiltshire's Anti-Bullying Strategy:

a) Audit and manage information

- i) A county-wide definition of bullying has been unanimously agreed by the ABSG and adopted by the Children and Young People's Trust Board.
- ii) An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) on the Anti-Bullying Strategy has been conducted and the recommendations in the EIA have been included in the ABSG's action plan. The EIA highlighted the continuous need to actively promote and support initiatives around anti-bullying in relation to all strands of equality and the need for continuous monitoring to gauge progress and assist in further development of Wiltshire's Anti-Bullying Strategy and the ABSG's action plan.
- iii) The Tell Us Survey is conducted annually and the results collated and analysed.
- iv) The anti-bullying survey for schools in Wiltshire is conducted annually and the results are collated and analysed.
- v) As a part of the Child Protection Audit, all schools will be asked when their anti-bullying policy was last updated on an annual basis.
- vi) A racist incident log is in place in all schools and data is collected annually by the LA and analysed.

b) Provide guidance, support and training

- i) E-Safety is one of the strategic priorities for the Local Safeguarding Children's Board for 2008/9. A LSCB E-Safety officer has been identified and a LSCB E-Safety Group was established in May 2008. An E-Safety Policy for the LSCB has been drafted. Considerable policy advice has been sent to schools by WCC on e-safety/cyberbullying: Guidance for secondary schools on how to tackle cyberbullying, a revised e-safety policy template; a procedure for investigating web-based content; an Acceptable User Policy for Schools (all schools have signed this, thus allowing proactive monitoring of illegal access to web content and subsequent intervention). Extensive training has been delivered to schools on e-safety/cyberbullying, including training for primary and secondary teachers, governors and parents/carers.
- ii) A consultant for racial equality and diversity is in post and supports this area of work within the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service. WCC has sent schools guidance in writing a Race Equality Policy and guidance on how to log racist bullying incidents alongside a proforma. Racist incident 1:1 support is offered to parents/carers, pupils and schools.
- iii) In a project initiated by Youth Justice Board funding 78 teachers have participated in a 5 day course around the use of restorative practices in secondary schools. A further two courses will take place this financial year involving over 32 teachers. Restorative practice recognises that good relationships, mutual respect, safety and a sense of belonging are seen as key to successful teaching and learning, and there is an inextricable link between restorative practice and the development of emotional literacy. One of the strategies adopted around the promotion of restorative work has been to work with those secondary schools which are actively involved in the Secondary SEAL programme.

The challenge above and beyond providing training has been to work alongside schools to help embed the practice on a day to day basis. In some schools this had been very successful. Naturally, the use of restorative practice has a discernible impact upon bullying. In one particular secondary school in Wiltshire there was an initial increase of 68% in the

number of incidents recorded (indicating a considerable growth in the faith of students in the systems that deal effectively with bullying), and since, an 83% decrease in incidents reported. Restorative work is in its early stages in Wiltshire schools but it is a key element of Wiltshire's anti-bullying strategy and the early indications are that it can have a significant impact on decreasing levels of bullying in schools.

- iv) In September 2008, 68% schools in Wiltshire had achieved National Healthy School Status (NHSS). The Emotional Health and Well-Being theme within NHSS has a clear focus on anti-bullying and developing pupils' social and emotional skills. Many schools are actively consulting with pupils on anti-bullying strategies and developing anti-bullying policies in 'child speak'. The Personal Development Education Team works very closely with schools to support them in working towards NHSS. New Healthy Schools National guidance on Emotional Health and Well-Being has been disseminated to schools.
- v) Guidance for schools in developing and writing an anti-bullying policy is currently being finalised by WCC and will be launched to schools in December 2008/January 2009.

c) Disseminate good practice

- i) Wiltshire's annual 'Walk Tall' anti-bullying week is now coordinated with national anti-bullying week. In November 2008, 3 cross-county anti-bullying conferences have been organised by Wiltshire's Anti-Bullying Steering Group for primary, secondary and special schools to share good practice and involve children and young people in discussing anti-bullying (at least 47 schools in Wiltshire are participating in these conferences).
- ii) Good practice is disseminated in secondary schools on anti-bullying through Behaviour & Attendance Group meetings. Behaviour and Attendance leads from virtually every secondary school in Wiltshire attend these meetings 3 times a year. These are led by the LA's Behaviour & Attendance Consultants. These meetings provide Behaviour & Attendance leads in secondary schools with the opportunity to share good practice on logging and monitoring bullying incidents and promoting anti-bullying.

d) Involve children and young people in the development of anti-bullying

- i) The youth work curriculum includes addressing, relationships, safety and bullying. All are regularly addressed with young people through the youth work process. This is underpinned in the 'Youth Charter'. A Youth Development Policy concerned with Young People and safety has been finalised.
- ii) The Anti-Bullying Steering Group liaises with children and young people for their ideas and views for promoting anti-bullying, particularly through the Wiltshire Assembly of Youth and the Trowbridge focus group for young black pupils. During 2008/9 we will also access children and young people's views through a council for looked-after children and through the anti-bullying conferences (at which 2 pupils from each school will be represented).

Conclusion

- 8. The ABSG and the Regional Anti-Bullying Alliance Adviser believe that WCC is making good progress in providing support to schools in promoting anti-bullying and challenging bullying. The strengths of WCC in this area are:

- WCC has a multi-agency steering group that is working across agencies and coordinating support for schools on anti-bullying very effectively;
 - The Anti-Bullying Strategy and the Anti-Bullying Steering Group's action plan give a clear vision of what we want to achieve by 2011 and the actions that need to take place;
 - Members of the Anti-Bullying Steering Group are delivering diverse and targeted support/ training to schools on specific aspects of anti-bullying;
 - The Tell Us 2 Survey results from November 2007 are very encouraging (when compared to the national statistics) – although we are keen not to be complacent.
9. The ABSG is continually striving to improve the support/training it is providing to schools. The areas that we are currently focusing on are:
- The LA has organised peer support training in conjunction with Childline and this will be available to primary schools in spring 2009;
 - The LA plans to conduct qualitative interviews with children and young people to identify specific bullying issues and methods of tackling these problems as a part of the cross-county anti-bullying conferences which will be held in November 2008;
 - The LA plans to consult with schools and determine whether schools should be asked to report the number of bullying incidents children and young people have reported to the LA (although this could not be statutory).
10. Wiltshire's Anti-Bullying Steering Group has a remit to support and promote anti-bullying in educational settings and in travelling to/from these settings. The ABSG recognises that children and young people live/work/play in other settings where they may bully/be bullied and we believe it is important that all settings have the same definition of bullying and a consistent approach to preventing and responding to bullying incidents.
11. The ABSG has already made progress, in that all partners on the Children and Young People's Trust Board have signed up to the definition of bullying and to the aims and objectives of the Anti-Bullying Strategy in September 2008. The ABSG now feels that anti-bullying outside educational settings needs to be focused on by appropriate officers and partners of Wiltshire County Council.

Recommendation

12. The ABSG recommends that Wiltshire County Council establishes another steering group that will work alongside the ABSG. The remit of this group would be to support and promote anti-bullying for all agencies working with children and young people (other than in educational settings and travelling to/from these settings). This group could have representation from youth provisions, leisure providers, children's homes, foster care, NEET, voluntary organisations, community safety officers. The ABSG already has wide representation and a broad remit in working in all educational settings and travelling to/from these settings and we therefore feel that a second group with a separate remit would be able to focus on other settings and give priority to this work (whilst working in partnership with the ABSG).

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Appendix of Acronyms

Anti-Bullying Steering Group (“ABSG”)

Equality Impact Assessment (“EIA”)

Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (“EMAS”)

Local Authority (“LA”)

Local Safeguarding Children’s Board (“LSCB”)

National Healthy School Status (“NHSS”)

The DCSF’s Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning resource (“SEAL”)

Wiltshire County Council (“WCC”)

Young People’s Support Service (“YPSS”)