

## Anti Bullying in 2006

**We look at the issue of bullying, and how different groups are trying to tackle it.**

### Introduction

According to children's charity Childline, bullying has hit record levels. Over 36,000 young people rang the charities helpline between April 2005 and March 2006, compared with 32,500 the previous year.

Since it's such a big issue, we decided to see what support services are out there to help young people who are being bullied. We also wanted to find out what works when it comes to tackling bullying and what young people think we can do to stop it.

We wanted to find a range of projects and schemes across the UK so we started out by interviewing Simon Blake from the Anti-Bullying Alliance. The Alliance runs anti-bullying week every November and Simon told us about some projects they run in London that are particularly successful in helping young people.

We also wanted to profile small scale projects that young people have set up and are managing themselves. So we found two more innovative and successful projects. The first is the Bully Free Zone, a peer mentoring project set up to help young people in the North. We interviewed young people who work as peer mentors on the project and asked them why they got involved and the sorts of things they do as peer mentors. We also talked to the Volunteer Coordinator from the Bully Free Zone to get some background about the project.

The other anti-bullying project we think is really helpful is a website called Abs-Kids, set up by a Abby Morale, a 14 year old from Leicestershire. We interviewed Abby to find out why she set up the site and how it helps young people who are being bullied.

The final thing we wanted to do was find out what young people think about bullying and what they think can be done to tackle this problem. So we interviewed a range of other young people to find out what they had to say.

### Anti Bullying Alliance

#### **Bullying Prevention Project for the Camden Children's Fund (Camden, London)**

The Anti-Bullying Alliance is a group of over 60 organisations who work together to tackle bullying, by running various projects with young people in the community.

"One of the most important projects the anti-bullying alliance does is it runs anti-bullying week which happens in November each year," says Simon Blake, Acting Manager of the Anti-Bullying Alliance. "It's a week where we encourage schools, youth groups and community settings to do what ever they can with young people to ensure everyone knows that bullying is unacceptable and wrong and you need to do something about it."

The alliance was set up in July 2002 by The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) and the National Children's Bureau (NCB).

"The NSPCC and the NCB have always been very concerned about young people and violence," Simon explains. "Obviously bullying is a source of violence and we know bullying is one of the key things that young people and children tell us that affect their lives and their confidence."

One of the key projects the alliance has been involved in London is the Bullying Prevention Project for the Camden Children's Fund (CCF). The CCF commissioned 4Children/Young Voice to consult young people about bullying out of school and develop a campaign and training programme to raise awareness around bullying.

Over 200 young people aged 5-13 took part in music, art and drama activities. Young people involved in the project said one of the most enjoyable activities was working with Lyrickal, a freestyle beat boxer who helped them write raps and lyrics for a CD.

Over 500 copies of the CD have been distributed via youth clubs, play centres, schools and community organisations, along with 1000 copies of posters and postcards designed by the young people. Posters were even put up in 126 bus stops around Camden.

The project was highly successful, in getting the anti-bullying message across and identifying areas where bullying was reported outside of schools like canals, alleyways, car parks, bus stops, subways, blocks of flats, parks and outside shops.

#### **The Bully Free Zone (Bolton)**

The bully free zone is an anti-bullying peer support programme for young people in the North East of the UK. It was set up in 1996 and since then it's been involved in anti bullying peer support and training to thousands of children, young people, parents, teachers and youth workers.

The organisation runs many projects and much of their work is done in secondary and primary schools. They help schools to set up peer support teams where they train young people after school and college to help the other children.

Volunteer Coordinator Pete Kobryn explained to us that the project is funded in many different ways. "We have funding to work in schools and we're funded to work with young people and parents, because bullying doesn't just affect young people, it affects the whole family. We also have funding and receive donations for slightly older young people I work with to become volunteers."

We interviewed some of the young volunteers to find out what they do at the project. Rachel Green 18 said, "I'm a Millenium Volunteer and I help run the family support group, which means I do a lot of planning for all the activities that take place and actually carry them out on the young people when they meet. I also help support projects such as the project going on now which is the video project."

The video project consists of a group of young people who are writing a series of stills and a story board to show an example of bullying and they're going to act it and film it. "We're going to put music in it and ultimately it'll be like a music video," explains Rachel.

Shanice Sterling 15, recently joined the project as a Millennium Volunteer.

"I became a peer support worker to give children the support and opportunities that they need and that I didn't get when I was being bullied."

Shanice says the most common age for victims of bullying is between 7-12 because they are changing schools and some young people find the transition difficult. She says, "The bully free zone is very successful because victims get to make friends outside of school who have been in the same situation as them."

### **Abs-Kids website (Hinckley, Leicestershire)**

Abs-kids is an anti-bullying website set up by 14 year old Abby Morale from Hinckley in Leicestershire. The site contains useful resources and practical advice on how to beat bullying, including tips on places to avoid and how to keep safe. If young people can't find the advice they're looking for, they can also email Abby directly to get help with their problems.

The site has had over 7000 visitors and Abby says she set it up because she had so many bad experiences and wanted to turn her life around and help other people.

"I've been verbally bullied, physically bullied and even cyber bullied so I decided to start the site so I can turn my bad experiences into advice and help other young people who are being bullied."

In addition to running her own website, Abby also works for Leicestershire's Anti-Bullying Team. A group of young people who go into schools around Leicestershire, where they ask young people how they can help tackle bullying and how they can get involved. "It helps to get the word across to as many people as we can and let them know that were there for them," says Abby.

Abs-Kids is funded by donations from local businesses and churches but Abby says, "I still needing funding because at the end of November I'm going to host the website myself."

As a way of getting young people directly involved in her site, Abby recently ran a poster competition. "The competition's put up on the website and then young people email their posters so the public can look at them and give there opinion. Then the winners get there posters scanned and put on the site," she says.

Abby's site has been so successful that she was asked to appear on the Sharon Osbourne show. "Sharon was really nice and we were treated really well by ITV. We had our own car to collect us and our own dressing room. She made us feel really relaxed. She was lovely to me and gave me a lot of praise on my work as well as plenty of hugs. What a day. One I'll remember forever."

### **Vox-pops**

#### **Becky, female 17**

One way we can help to stop bullying is by trying to give victims more courage to tell people what's happening because young people are often too scared to tell adults. If we can give them more confidence in that area then that could help.

We can do this by encouraging teachers and adults to be more open and listen to victims. If you're in a situation where they're less likely to listen then your confidence levels go down. If something happens you should feel like you can tell them.

#### **Usman, male 15**

In our school they try to tackle bullying by choosing young people from year 10 to find out who's bullying other young people. They write their names down and then at the end of the day they give it to the teachers. Then the teachers or youth support people talk to the bullies. But this doesn't always work because people carry on bullying.

Sometimes excluding young people for bullying works but it depends how strict their parents are. I guess if nothing else works and the bullying gets really bad then you can always change schools.

#### **Fayaz, male 17**

Bullying happens because of insecurities on the part of the bully. I think we need education on both sides. The victim needs to know they're no less of a person when they're bullied and the bully needs education so they can stop bullying.

Its hard to find a balance between helping a young person by interfering and getting in the way of their personal development. If you're told to fight back then that won't really help because then you'll be escalating violence and making the problem worse. I think reluctance to exclude young people who are bullies in the state school system adds to the problem.

#### **Ashleigh, female 15**

People who say you can talk to a teacher when you're being bullied have probably never been bullied themselves because it doesn't usually work. It's such a big problem now with teenagers dying and bullies using knives and guns. The government says it's cracking down but they don't understand what its like to be stopped in the street and told to take off your trainers. You can't just say 'you're a bully' and walk away.

Telling someone or confiding in a teacher might help you feel better but it won't stop the problem. I think the government needs to listen to the views of young people if they really want to tackle bullying.

### **About the team**

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### **1 comment**

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If you want to stamp out bullying, here's how. Pass a law that makes parents jointly responsible for the kids' actions under 16. Then offer a reward for anyone videoing an act of bullying. When found guilty of assault or harrassment, culprit and 1 parent are locked in a room for 48 hours together with no tv etc. 2nd offence 2 weeks in a detention centre.

After all, if a teacher puts his hand on a child's shoulder, that's an assault.

C Walledge from Rochester, Kent, 30 December 1899 00:00

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