

Rathgar Tennis Club

BULLYING / ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Types of Bullying

Bullying can occur:

- child to child - includes physical aggression, verbal bullying, intimidation, damage to property and isolation
- adult to child - includes the use of repeated gestures or expressions of a threatening or intimidatory nature, or any comment intended to degrade the child
- child to adult – includes the use of repeated gestures or expressions of a threatening or intimidatory nature by an individual child or a group of children

The Individual

- Respect every child's need for, and rights to, a play environment where safety, security, praise, recognition and opportunity for taking responsibility are available
- Respect for every individual's feelings and views
- Recognise that everyone is important and that our differences make each of us special
- Show appreciation of others by acknowledging individual qualities, contributions and progress
- Ensure safety by having rules and practices carefully explained and displayed for all to see

Bullying

- Bullying will not be accepted or condoned. All forms of bullying will be addressed. Bullying can include:
 - physical pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching etc
 - name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, persistent teasing and emotional torment through ridicule, humiliation and the continual ignoring of individuals
 - sectarian/racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
 - sexual comments and /or suggestions
 - unwanted physical contact
- Children from ethnic minorities, disabled children, young people who are gay or lesbian, or those with learning difficulties are more vulnerable to this form of abuse and may well be targeted.
- Everybody has the responsibility to work together to stop bullying – the child, the parent, the coach, the youth worker, the sport's official
- Appropriate forums should be established within the organisation, including children, parents, youth workers and other agencies, to address, monitor and stop bullying

- Commitment to the early identification of bullying and prompt, collective action to deal with it
- Policy and practice should be agreed through consultation with clubs, parents and children
- Children should be encouraged to take a role in stopping bullying in their club
- Policy and practice should be reviewed regularly in the light of changing needs and changes adopted by other agencies (e.g. schools)

Support to the Child

- Children should know who will listen to and support them
- Any advice and assistance should be given by an appropriately trained and experienced worker
- Children should have access to Helpline numbers
- Children should be told what is being recorded, in what context and why
- Systems should be established to open the door to children wishing to talk about bullying or any other issue that affects them. Barriers to talking need to be broken down to enable children to approach adults
- Anyone who reports an incident of bullying will be listened to carefully and be supported, whether the child being bullied or the child who is bullying
- Any reported incident of bullying will be investigated objectively and will involve listening carefully to all those involved
- Children being bullied will be supported and assistance given to uphold their right to play and live in a safe environment which allows their healthy development
- Those who bully will be supported and encouraged to stop bullying
- Sanctions involving long periods of isolation, or which diminish and make individuals look or feel foolish in front of others, should be avoided

Support to the Parents/Guardians

- Parents/Guardians should be advised on local policy and practice about bullying
- Any incident of bullying will be discussed with the child's parent(s)/guardians
- Parental/Guardian advice on action will be sought and agreements made as to what action should be taken
- Information and advice on coping with bullying will be given

Support should be offered to the parent(s) including information on other agencies or support lines.

Anti-Bullying Policy

An Anti-Bullying Policy and Code should be drawn up and enforced and procedures should be clearly established to deal with any incidents. While it is important to have rules about bullying, a whole group policy is the best solution. This means not 'bullying the bully' but working with bullies and the group of young people, helping them to understand the hurt they are causing, and so make the problem a 'shared concern' of the group. Group discussion methods have a big advantage over punishment in that they do not drive the problem underground or escalate it by making the bully more excluded or more of a social failure. This is known as the "No blame approach" (see below)

What is the 'No Blame' Approach?

Step 1 – Interview with the victim

If you find that there has been an incident of bullying, first talk to the victim. At this stage find out who was involved and what the victim is now feeling. Try asking the following questions:

- Was it verbal or physical intimidation?
- How hurt is the victim
- Was it within his/her own peer group?
- Ensure the victim that his/her name will not come out in the investigation
- Actively listen

Step 2 – Meet with all involved

Arrange to meet with all those involved; this should include some bystanders, those who may have colluded, those joined in and those who initiated the bullying.

- Just have a maximum of six to eight in the group – keep the number controllable
- Make a point of calling a 'special' meeting
- Ensure the severity of the topic is understood by all
- Speak only of the hurt caused in general terms with no reference to the victim
- Play on the conscience of all – ask questions like: How would you feel? Would you like it done to you?

Step 3 – Explain the problem

The distress being suffered as a result of the bullying incident is explained. At this stage the details of the incident or the allocation of the blame is not discussed. Explain the feelings of loneliness, feeling left out, rejected, laughed at. Try asking questions:

- Would they like it if it happened to them
- "Someone here in this group was bullied by someone within the group, what could we do to see it does not happen again?"
- Listen, watch out for reactions, and pick up on any without isolating anyone

Step 4 – Share the responsibility

Explain what steps / controls may have to be introduced to prevent further incidents and how everyone will loose out as a result

Step 5 – Ask the group for their ideas

At this stage the group is encouraged to suggest ways that would make the victim feel happier. All positive responses are noted. Use phrases "if it were you" to encourage a response. Listen to all suggestions and note them

Step 6 – Leave it to them

Now the problem has been identified, solutions suggested, the problem is now handed over to the group to solve. Arrange to meet again in a week's time. Pass responsibility over to the group and give a time frame within which something must be done

Step 7 – Meet them again

Each member of the group, including the bully, discuss how things are going, who is doing what and have there been other incidents. This allows for continual monitoring and also keeps all involved in the process.

Again enforce the idea of the 'team' looking after each other at regular intervals to ensure it is know that bullying or intimidating behaviour will not be tolerated.