

# PROMOTING KINDNESS

Early years professionals should create a “culture of kindness” to help prevent bullying behaviour.

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s evidence shows that bullying behaviour can start in children as young as 3, childcare providers should know how to recognise and prevent it in their settings.

The Anti-Bullying Alliance says bullying behaviour is “the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power”. It is different from two children simply falling out.

And it manifests differently among younger children compared with their school-age peers. “We don’t label behaviour in children in early years as bullying,” says Paula Timms, Chief Executive of Kidscape and a PACEY Trustee. “It’s behavioural-based. It can come from a place of emotional need, such as stress, anger, feeling left out or developmental delay. Childcare settings should try to



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## SUPPORTING Mixed-age GROUPS

Childminders offering wraparound care to children of different ages should consider this advice from Paula and Sam...

Paula says: "Bullying behaviour involves an imbalance of power, which can be exacerbated with children from different age groups. For example, older children may encourage toddlers to take things off babies, or the older children. Avoid the situation where that behaviour may come out and plan ahead. For example, provide the older children with a quiet area which they can use if they need some space from the younger ones."

Sam says: "I explain to the older children that the younger children haven't got the communication skills to tell them what they want. The younger child may want the older one to read to them. I put the ownership on the older child and change their viewpoint.

"I'll say, 'You're the teacher' and ask them if they can spend some time reading to them. The older child feels like they're doing a good job as they're helping me, so it's a positive experience for them."

understand why the child is doing the act they are doing."

### Showing signs

Paula says that some of the common signs that a young child is experiencing bullying behaviour from another child are changes in their own behaviour. "They may be louder, quieter, angry or sad. They may be scared to go to pre-school or take part in their usual activities, or they may have unexplained illness, like tummy bugs and headaches."

She adds that, as well as behavioural signs, there may be physical signs of bullying behaviour. "The child may have injuries or have their belongings taken from them."

### Preventing harm

The Anti-Bullying Alliance website says it's important for childcare and early years practitioners to know how to tackle bullying and prevent it from happening. It advises having an anti-bullying policy that you share with staff and parents, and supporting children to speak out if they think someone isn't being nice to them.

Paula adds that while it's helpful to know where to get help and to look out for

signs of bullying behaviour, it's more important to prevent it. She says: "Early years settings should create a culture of kindness to prevent bullying behaviour [see Guiding with Persona Dolls, opposite]. Staff can do this by modelling kind behaviour to children."

Childcare settings should embed the kindness theme across all they do, including in their organisational policies, Paula says. "This will make it easier to raise any concerns around bullying behaviour with parents. Practitioners can refer



## Guiding with persona dolls

**Sam Goldsworthy, a childminder in Cornwall, is using a persona doll with the children in her setting to help teach them about kindness, diversity and inclusion. It involves creating an identity and family background for the doll and sharing stories about them.**

Sam, who undertook persona doll training to learn how to use this approach in her setting, has a doll called Topsy who is African-Caribbean.

“The children absolutely love Topsy,” says Sam. “They see her as a friend. I talk to the children about similarities between them and Topsy, such as having siblings. Then we talk about differences between them and Topsy, such as skin colour and type of hair.

They’re very positive conversations.”

Sam uses Topsy to help manage challenging behaviour, such as pushing and shoving and snatching toys. “We’ll tell the children that Topsy is sad as another child has been snatching toys off her. It helps the children to explore negative behaviours in a different way.”

Sam is also instilling kindness in the setting by using a kindness jar and positive affirmations.

To find out more about persona doll training, watch the PACEY Live webinar: [What are persona dolls?](#)



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to the policies when having these conversations and remind parents about what they say.”

### Emotionally aware

Settings should also support children to develop social emotional awareness. Paula explains: “When some children go into primary school, they don’t have confidence. Others don’t have empathy. Some are not good at forming relationships and don’t understand how they work.

These can all lead to bullying behaviour. Early years settings should work to build these skills.”

Celebrating diversity is also important. Paula says that children in primary and secondary schools are usually bullied because

they’re different, culturally or through personal interests. She advises: “Early years settings should work with children to support them to feel proud of their differences and respectful of other people’s uniqueness.” <sup>CP</sup>

### Further resources

- Kidscape’s guide to writing an anti-bullying policy: [bit.ly/Kidscape-policy-guide](https://bit.ly/Kidscape-policy-guide)
- Kidscape lesson plans and activities for early years settings: [Kidscape-ey-resources](https://bit.ly/Kidscape-ey-resources)
- Advice from the Anti-Bullying Alliance: [bit.ly/ABA-ey-advice](https://bit.ly/ABA-ey-advice)