

Equine organisations play an important role in creating a positive club ethos that challenges bullying. The following information will help those involved in equestrian support understand bullying and how it can be tackled.

More advice is available www.bhs.org.uk/safeguardingchildren

Bullying behaviour is damaging to all involved: the bully, victim, family members, those that witness the behaviour and the sporting organisation involved. Riders, parents, coaches, and equine organisations all have an ethical (and possibly a legal) responsibility to take action to prevent bullying occurring in sport and manage it, should it occur.

Types of bullying

Bullies may use one or several types of bullying to hurt their victim.

Physical - pushing, shoving, punching, hitting, kicking, taking away a person's belongings (this may also constitute assault).

Verbal - name calling, banter, threatening, teasing, intimidating, yelling abuse, using put-downs.

Psychological - ganging up, preventing a person from going somewhere, taking a person's possessions, sending hostile or nasty emails or text messages.

Socially - excluding, alienating, ignoring, spreading rumours.

Cyber bullying can take place online or through smartphones and tablets. Social networking sites, messaging apps, gaming sites and chat rooms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat can be great fun and a positive experience. But what do you do when things go wrong?

Cyber bullying

Using technology to deliberately harm or upset others. This type of bullying can happen in many ways, using mobile phones or the internet, and could include:

- Sending hurtful messages or using videos and images to humiliate
- Leaving malicious voicemails
- A series of silent calls
- Creating a website about other people to humiliate them
- Writing hurtful comments on social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter
- Excluding them from chat rooms or messaging forums
- 'Happy slapping' – sending videos or images of people being bullied, so others can see

Bullying and disability

Children and young people with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to being bullied for a variety of reasons. These include:

- The increased likelihood of social isolation

Bullying

- Having fewer outside contacts than non-disabled children, and perhaps having limited access to someone to disclose bullying to
- An impaired capacity to resist, avoid or understand bullying
- Being viewed as a 'safe target' for bullies

Homophobic and transphobic bullying

Homophobic and transphobic bullying can be hard to identify because it may be going on in secret. It may include a person being made to feel unwelcome, belittled or harassed (through gossip, name-calling, jokes and other hate acts – both in the virtual and 'real' world.)

Sometimes athletes witness homophobic or transphobic bullying or are subject to such abuse, even if they aren't lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT), they may be reluctant to report it in case the participants, coaches or other adults assume they are also homosexual, bisexual or transgender.

Racism

Young people (and their parents) from ethnic minority groups may have experienced harassment, racial discrimination and institutional racism. Although racism causes significant harm it is not, in itself, a category of abuse. All organisations working with young people, including those operating where ethnic minorities are numerically small, should address institutional racism.

Racism occurs when you are treated differently from others because of your race or ethnic origin.

Common examples are when someone is

- Called names
- Denied training
- Only offered unpopular jobs
- Shouted at
- Bullied

If a coach/instructor/volunteer is found guilty of race discrimination damages are unlimited and it could be a criminal offence.

When comments get abusive

- There are quite a few instant messaging apps including Snapchat, WhatsApp, Secret, Whisper and Instagram. They are a great way of sharing things with your friends and having fun. But if things turn nasty you can block people from seeing you are on line and you can save abusive conversations or print them out as evidence.
- It's tempting to have a go back if someone makes a rude posting on your online space, social network or app but don't. This is called flaming and it just makes the problem worse. Abusive comments are very upsetting but the best way to deal with them is to get them removed by the website. Read our advice on bullying on social networks to find out how to remove comments.

Inappropriate images

- It's easy to save any pictures of anyone on any site and upload them to the internet. Make sure that you have the person's permission to take a picture and that they're happy for thousands of people to see it on the internet. Be wary of tagging and hashtags as this will send the picture out to a wider audience than you may have originally intended.
- Don't upset people and then upload their pictures for other people to have a laugh. That could be harassment. Don't digitally alter pictures of people either because what you think is funny may be offensive to other people. Don't let anyone take pictures of you that might embarrass you.

Innocent bystander

- There is no such thing as an innocent bystander and if you have seen someone being bullied online, you can report it to the online site or app. Ignoring it may feel like the easiest thing to do but the person who is being subjected to that bullying may need your help and support to get it stopped. Most sites now have a report button which is something you can do and this will send the bullying comments to the site to investigate.

Bullying V. Banter - Advice for equine organisations, clubs and coaches

We understand that there can be lots of high spirited behaviour and banter within teams or activities. We appreciate that sometimes this is encouraged to help a team bond and to allow team members to get to know each other. However, there is a fine line between bullying and banter. If the banter targets one person and becomes persistent, this then becomes bullying. If it upsets the individual and has potential to damage their passion for the sport, self-esteem, confidence or ability to take part then this becomes bullying.

To address bullying successfully, a 'whole organisation' approach that includes coaches, volunteers, officials, young people and parents is needed

There are a number of policies and procedures that an organisation should have in place to address bullying, both in terms of prevention and response. These include:

- Codes of conduct – for parents, for staff and volunteers, and for parents and guardians
- An anti-bullying policy

How sports organisations and clubs can provide support

Action to help the young person being bullied and to prevent bullying in equine sport:

- Take all signs of bullying very seriously
- Encourage all children to speak about the bullying and share their concerns
- Help the person being bullied to speak out
- If you are concerned that a young person may harm themselves, seek professional help immediately
- Reassure the person being bullied that you can be trusted and will help them, although you can't promise to tell no one else
- Keep records of what is said (what happened, by whom, when)
- Report any concerns or allegations to the club's child protection or safeguarding officer

Dealing with the bullies

Action towards the young person or people doing the bullying:

- Talk to parents/guardians about the situation
- Talk with the bully(or bullies) , with engagement from parents/guardians, explain the situation, and try to get them to understand the consequences of their behaviour
- Seek an apology to the person being bullied
- Insist on the return of 'borrowed' items and that the bully (or bullies) compensate the person bullied
- Impose sanctions as necessary
- Encourage and support the bully (or bullies) to change their behaviour
- Hold meetings with the families to report on progress
- Inform all organisation members of action taken
- Keep a written record of action taken

Getting help

There are a number of different ways to get help for bullying in sport. They are:

- Contact the Safeguarding Officer in your member body
- Contact NSPCC on: 08001111
- Contact Bullying UK on: 08088002222

Information taken from the Child Protection in Sport Unit Website

BHS Safeguarding Team

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