

The Bullying Project 2018



What children and young people want sporting organisations to know about bullying



Bullying in sporting environments is not uncommon. It may occur between players, parents, coaches and others. But there are ways to fix it.

We are all much more aware of how bullying poses a significant risk to the physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing of our children and young people, which is why sporting clubs and organisations have a significant role to play in preventing bullying wherever possible.

It can take place on the playing field between players, at training or on the sidelines between children and parents, and sometimes between children and parents and coaches.

Legislative Requirements

All South Australian sporting clubs and organisations who provide services to children and young people under the age of 18 years are required to comply with the following South Australian legislative requirements outlined in the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017* and *Children's Protection Act 1993*:

- create and maintain a child safe and child friendly environment that protects children from harm
- ensure that within these environments children feel respected, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential; and
- promote and protect children's welfare at all times.

As part of her Bullying Project the South Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People (CCYP) Helen Connolly, consulted with children and young people to find out how they felt bullying impacted on them and what they wanted adults to do about it.

The children and young people with whom the Commissioner spoke most often talked about experiencing or witnessing verbal bullying in sporting environments, such as name calling, teasing, blaming and negative comments made between teams or team mates. They also consider excluding others and use of non-verbal behaviours to be forms of bullying.

"On the basketball court when you keep missing the shot and get payed out about it because you can't get it in."

"On the sporting field, deliberately finding them and niggling and getting under their skin."

Physical bullying behaviours were also talked about. In the sporting setting these may be more difficult to spot, particularly in high contact or competitive sports.

"Physical if they can get away with it – sport, not as clear to see."

Practices sometimes encouraged by parents and some coaches were also described by children and young people. There were behaviours that could be seen to be crossing the line and amounting to bullying behaviour that is encouraged and on occasions modelled by adults.

"During her club sports she is getting into fights and putting others down and always dishing out negativity and discouragement."

Bullying hurts people. There could even be legal consequences in severe situations.

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Recommendations to tackle bullying in sporting environments:

1 Sporting clubs could provide opportunities for children and young people to build skills to develop friendships, because sometimes they find this difficult.

Good relationships with friends, including team mates is an important part of bullying prevention as it develops respect for and between others.

2 Learning how to treat others with kindness, respect and acceptance is important in preventing bullying.

This is particularly important in sporting environments as children and young people often have competing interests. Sporting clubs have a clear opportunity to promote positive characteristics such as honesty, fairness, respect and mateship as key elements central to becoming a valued member of a sports team, club and code.

3 When bullying does occur children and young people recommend that support be made available for the person who is doing the bullying too.

Children and young people said that dealing with a person who has been bullying others in a kind, assertive manner is far more effective than excluding or punishing them.

4 Adults must take responsibility for their own behaviour and how it impacts on children, including not judging or arguing at sporting events, or showing disrespect to others, including on social media.

Sporting clubs and organisations can provide adults that have contact with their organisations clear expectations of their behaviours in various roles as coaches, parents and club supporters and can promote environments centred on taking responsibility and showing encouragement.

5 Ensure children and young people have a trusted adult they can speak to at their sporting club. Someone who listens to children and young people when they feel they have been bullied so that they feel valued and respected.

This includes making sure adults and coaches know how to support children and young people who are bullying or being bullied. Sporting clubs could arrange for training for adults and coaches in how to manage bullying behaviours more effectively. For example, it can sometimes be better for a team mate to speak to another team mate rather than an adult, parent or coach.

6 Promote sporting environments that are centred on offering encouragement to children and young people, rather than setting up competitive environments that emphasise what they're not doing right.

Everyone involved in sporting clubs has a role to play in helping to reduce and prevent bullying. It starts with ensuring that sport is a fun, inclusive and friendly activity that everyone can enjoy.



Visit ccyp.com.au to download the full **Bullying Project Report** and Fact Sheets on Bullying Prevention.



Children and Young People aged 10-19 years across the greater Adelaide region were consulted as part of the Commissioner's Bullying Project (2018). The information in this fact sheet is drawn from their responses.